CORINTH ON THE ISTHMUS: STUDIES OF THE END
OF AN ANCIENT LANDSCAPE

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By
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* * * * *

The Ohio State University
2006

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ABSTRACT

The Roman colony founded at the crossroads of land and sea, on the narrow Isthmus connecting northern Greece with the Peloponnese and the Adriatic with the Aegean Sea, became one of the most famous commercial centers of the ancient Mediterranean. The city of Corinth was uniquely positioned on a land bridge with two harbors, at the gate to the Peloponnese, and near the major sanctuary of the pan-Hellenic Isthmian games. Corinth was physically connected to the broader world through the Isthmian crossroads, and, by consequence, the city’s image became closely bound to its eastern territory. This is a study of the transformation of that city in its landscape in the period of Late Antiquity (3rd - 7th centuries AD).

This dissertation argues that the prominent image and myth of Roman Corinth centered around its place as a commercial and traveler’s cosmopolis, and its unity with its connective eastern landscape, the Isthmus. “Corinth” on the Isthmus brought to mind stories of travel, connectivity, commerce, wealth, and even sexual immorality; so the proverb ran: “it is not for every man to sail to Corinth.” These associations were conceptually and imaginatively linked to the transient geography of the Isthmus in Mediterranean-wide networks, and were reinforced by the physical structure of the eastern territory itself, transcribed with its settlements, good harbors, and dependable commercial facilities. The physical landscape communicated the central myth of the city, while stories (in the literal sense) reinforced a particular vision of the landscape. The eastern territory of Roman Corinth, in other words, reflected and structured the image of the city.
In the course of Late Antiquity, this image of *Corinth on the Isthmus* was fragmented and redefined concomitantly with the broader transformation of the Mediterranean world. The study analyzes two main bodies of evidence that speak to this phenomenon. On the one hand, it discusses (Ch. 2-3) the wide array of literary testimony for the city and countryside across the broad Roman period, and argues that during Late Antiquity, a strong tradition of conceptualizing and talking about Corinth as the traveler’s crossroad and commercial city on the Isthmus ceased to cohere in light of a general decline in classical literature and the developing narratives of a Christianized society. An ancient conceptual landscape (a “landscape of famous places”) that had for so long characterized the way that the city was read and understood fragmented along various trajectories—the myth of ancient Corinth died. On the other hand, the dissertation discusses (Ch. 4-6) the archaeological evidence for extra-urban structures of trade, settlement, and land use in the eastern territory during this period, especially the data collected by the Eastern Korinthia Archaeological Survey. The rural structures of the eastern Corinthia remained stable in Late Antiquity, contributing to the city’s commercial resources as long as broader Mediterranean networks of trade and commerce to which the city connected remained vital and flourishing. Only in the later sixth century is there good evidence for the localization of the city and the decline in importance of the connective eastern territory.

The dissertation, then, offers an analysis of the continuity, discontinuity, and transformation of a prominent ancient definition of the city between the early Roman and late Roman periods. It highlights the messy process by which that identity became fragmented during Late Antiquity: the myths and stories (in the literal sense) being redefined from the fourth century AD, and the city’s (physical) rural structures continuing to function through the sixth century. This study shows the value of adopting broader conceptual approaches like landscape for understanding the end of the ancient city, and the importance of addressing both material (archaeological) and conceptual (literary testimony) bodies of evidence in writing local history.
To my parents
Dissertations, generally, are big things, and this one especially was a long time in the making. I am certainly grateful to God that I’ve been allowed to see this project through completion and am glad for this chance to name some of the many who have encouraged me through it.

My greatest thanks to my parents, Hal and Sharon, for encouraging me in my various hobbies, interests, and pursuits of life that converged somehow, eventually, on history and archaeology. Who I am today personally and professionally is very much a product of their faith in me. Dedicating this study to them is a small way of thanking them for their friendship and support throughout the years.

The more immediate origin of this dissertation began in the summers spent walking through the fields of the Eastern Korinthia counting Late Roman combed-ware body sherds with the Eastern Korinthia Archaeological Survey (EKAS) project. I am indebted to the co-directors of that project, Timothy Gregory and Daniel Pullen, for the opportunities to be involved with EKAS and for their permission and encouragement to examine the data. Richard Rothaus and Lee Anderson essentially created and completed the GIS and MS Access data structures that have been invaluable for the kinds of analyses attempted in this study. The various other staff of EKAS, including Joseph Rife, Lita Tzortzopoulou-Gregory, Dimitri Nakassis, Bill Caraher, Thomas Tartaron, Sarah James, and Rob Schon discussed with me numerous interpretive issues for understanding the EKAS data. A big thanks to the fieldwalkers who counted pottery as members of EKAS teams, as well as the ceramic analysts who read their counted pottery—your work has been fundamental to this study.
A broader group of ‘Corinthians’ offered sound feedback and discussion. Thanks especially to Guy Sanders and Ioulia Herbst, for conversation and the chance to dig at Panayia Field. James Herbst, Kathleen Slane, Betsy Robinson, and Amelia Brown have discussed various points relating to Roman and Late Antique Corinth. *Kai mia megali efcharistia* to the Marinos family, Nikos and family, Iannis Elias, and the many others who provided me wonderful hospitality in the village for so many summers.

It has been a pleasure to complete my research at the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, and I am grateful for the staff there for making it such an easy place to work. During the 2005-2006 school year, I was funded by the ASCSA Jacob Hirsch Fellowship, which allowed me to complete research on this dissertation. Being present in Athens also brought me friendships with Jen Palinkas, Laura Gawlinski, and Jon Frey.

Penelope Allison, Simon Ellis, M. Moore Morison, R. Scott Moore, Linda Hall, Jenni Hjohlman, Ioannes Lолос, Michael Given, Clare Pickersgill, and William Dancey, took time out of their busy schedules to answer specific questions related to my research.

It is, of course, the Ohio State University history department that has made all of my studies possible. My archaeological involvement in Corinth was supported by several OSU funding sources including the Ruth Higgins Award for Summer Research from the Department of History; the College of Humanities G. Michael Riley International Academic Fund; the Office of International Education Dissertation Research Grant; and several Isthmia Fellow research assistantships from the history department. That I completed my degree at all owes much to the practical support provided by OSU history department staff, including Chris Burton, Alan Beycheren, Ken Andrien, and especially Joby Abernathy, the best and most constant ally a grad student could ask for.

A number of colleagues, friends, and advisors at Ohio State University offered suggestions and criticisms on my ideas throughout the process of dissertating that have, I
trust, improved and sharpened my argument. My colleagues John Glover, Daniel Sarefield, Bill Batchelder, and Mike Fronda read or heard versions of ideas developed in this thesis at a time when they were hardly in formation. Jon Frey, R. Scott Moore, and Linda Hall also read drafts more recently. I appreciated the exchange of ideas with Professors Joseph Lynch (History) and William Dancey (Anthropology). At the time of my defense, Nathan Rosenstein and Anthony Kaldellis participated as committee members and offered really good specific critical feedback—well appreciated since it is so hard to get anyone these days to read a dissertation, let alone carefully. Their suggestions and criticisms made the defense enjoyable and caused me to rethink at a fundamental level what exactly I was trying to argue. I am especially indebted to Bill Caraher who has never failed to read a draft of a chapter or paper and has forced me to defend and rethink virtually any argument I have made—my scholarship is more nuanced from his good critiques.

My advisor, Timothy Gregory, has had an incredible influence on my work. His influence on my thesis topic, approach, and methodology has been immense and permeates this entire dissertation: my use of regional and landscape approaches for studying the past, the methods of archaeological survey, the topic of the Corinthia, Late Antique religion and society, and even how I frame the historiographic questions. He has been the best model for how to use the ordinary objects of daily life in antiquity—even the smallest potsherds and tiles—to speak to the most significant issues of modern historiography. And besides the normal things that a good advisor does, he has provided constant opportunities for fieldwork in Corinth and Kythera and literally read much of the EKAS pottery that forms the basis for this study. This study would have been impossible without his support and friendship.

Finally, various friends ‘back home’, Kraig Hissong, Dave Hartman, James Yavorsky, Larissa Howell, watched me dissertate and made me explain to them simply and clearly what I was studying. Some of my most engaging discussions in graduate school and developments in my thinking about history, religion, and epistemology occurred with Chene Heady and Andrew Mitchell over weekly breakfasts and dinners at
Nancy’s Diner, serving the best home-cooked meals in all of Columbus. My dear friend, Jarrod Voltz, introduced me to Bakhtin’s chronotope (to say nothing of Russian literature and liturgical Christianity) and had a profound impact on my life; his passing on February 11, 2006 was a great personal loss for me. May the Lord grant him eternal rest, and continuing peace to Amy and Hayden. I will not forget his friendship.

Finally, my wife, Katie, saw me through my final stage of this “dark time and fast” and was wonderfully patient as I typed away all day long in our little Pagkrati apartment. She has heard more than her share about density data, Kromna, and conceptions of Corinth, and ensured that I saw and experienced the modern Greek world along with the ancient. I look forward to seeing with her the coming spring.
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<td>AA</td>
<td>American Antiquity</td>
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<td>ABSA</td>
<td>Annual of the British School at Athens</td>
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<td>AJA</td>
<td>American Journal of Archaeology</td>
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<td>AR</td>
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<td>WA</td>
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<td>ZRG</td>
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CHAPTER 1
Corinth\(^1\) and the End of the World

The Roman colony founded at the crossroads of land and sea, on the narrow Isthmus connecting northern Greece with the Peloponnese and the Adriatic with the Aegean Sea, became one of the most famous commercial centers of the ancient Mediterranean. The city of Corinth was uniquely positioned on a land bridge with two harbors, at the gate to the Peloponnese, and near the major sanctuary of the pan-Hellenic Isthmian games. It was linked in ancient fame to all the images of a cosmopolis—bustling commercial activity, a diverse and lively population of foreigners and locals, veneration of important deities, the presence of Roman governors and important officials, substantial wealth and luxury, and even rampant immorality and promiscuity. Roman Corinth was counted and mythologized as one of the renowned ‘ancient’ cities of Greece, placed in a broader travelscape of merchant, sailor, politician, and pilgrim, who bypassed, visited, or, like St. Paul, came and stayed for a time.\(^2\)

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\(^1\) In respect to ancient place names, I have chosen the Greek spellings over the Latinized forms. Hence, I use Lechaion rather than Lechaeum, Kenchreai rather than Cenchreae, and Kromna rather than Cromna. The only exception to this is that I use the more common Latinized form “Corinth” rather than Korinth. The exception to this exception is when I refer to the project and data of the Eastern Korinthia Archaeological Survey (EKAS).

\(^2\) The Roman colonization of Corinth dates to 44 BC, more than a hundred years after the Roman conquest and destruction of the Greek city in 146 BC. The new colony occupied the location of the earlier Greek city but was distinctly Roman in its political, religious, and social outlook. Despite the obvious discontinuity in urban life in the second century BC, and the rather embarrassing refoundation, the Roman city would nonetheless appropriate many of the mythologies, histories, and significance of the former Greek city.
The urban center of Roman Corinth has been uncovered through a century of excavations by the American School of Classical Studies. Archaeological research has revealed the architectural layout of the Roman city, with its centralizing forum, and most important public buildings, temples, shops and theaters of the first and second century AD. Some three dozen monographs present detailed studies of the architecture, sculpture, inscriptions, and artifacts of the Greek and Roman cities, and excavations at Isthmia and Kenchreai have revealed the remains of the extra-urban sanctuary and eastern harbor. These investigations have demonstrated the monumental and opulent character of the Roman city befitting its status as provincial capital. Archaeology and textual sources together testify to the flourishing of this commercial center between the first and fourth centuries.

During the period known as Late Antiquity (late third-seventh centuries AD), however, our image of the city is seriously marred and conflicted by a confusing literary tradition and murky material record. Sources from the period state that the city suffered earthquakes, plagues, and barbarian invaders, but remained metropolis and capital of the province of Achaia. Archaeological investigations have shown that public buildings fell down while habitation continued throughout the town and country; that temples and sanctuaries were destroyed while new enormous basilica churches were erected; that the old forum was abandoned as the city center shifted eastward; and that the city shed its former public appearance while yet retaining much of its ancient character. This dark cloud of evidence has produced modern assessments of the ancient city ranging from utter decline to health and efflorescence. Unsurprisingly, historical conclusions about Corinth’s end have typically fissured along lines created by different methodological and interpretive frameworks; writing the ‘end’ of ancient Corinth is closely bound to the paradigms, methodology, and evidence brought to bear on the question.

This study argues at a general and methodological level that examining a complex phenomenon like the end of the ancient city demands the broadest conceptual and methodological frameworks.\textsuperscript{4} Although the ancient city (and its decline) is often studied in terms of its urban layout and public buildings, the city was a dynamic entity existing well beyond its walls—in its territory, in extra-regional networks, and even in the ancient imagination—and shaped by the confluence of local, inter-regional, and Mediterranean worlds. The “end of the ancient city,” in other words, involved not simply the decline or transformation of urban life (although that was important), but the redefinition of an entire cultural context and set of relations, most notably the relationship of the city to the wider world. Examining the uneven processes of continuity, discontinuity, and change requires broad frameworks able to integrate the variety of evidence and deal with its complexities. “Landscape approaches” can provide more sophisticated and variegated assessments of the way that a local world was transformed at the end of antiquity.

This is a study of Corinth in Late Antiquity on the basis of the city’s Isthmian territory that connected the urban center with its twin gulfs and formed a crossroads of land and sea. The study posits that the Roman city of Corinth was embedded in its eastern landscape, and that the Isthmus was integral to the city’s social and economic identity, mythology and imagery, and historical memory. It argues, on the one hand, that despite broad changes affecting the physical fabric of the urban center during Late Antiquity, the city remained an important metropolis in the broader world largely because the broader place of ancient Corinth remained vital in Mediterranean contexts. The Isthmus as a crossroads and connective landscape continued to contribute to the city’s material prosperity, reinforcing its position as one of the great ancient cities of Greece; most of the settlements and places on the Isthmus (e.g., the two harbors, the site of Isthmia, rural houses) had vital Late Antique lives, and reinforced the important role of

\textsuperscript{4} References to the ‘end’ of the ancient city in this study are not intended to imply a general sense of decline, nor an interest only in the discontinuities in the ancient world. Rather, the use of the term ‘end’ refers to 1) the period of Late Antiquity generally, a period associated with transformation, and 2) the processes by which the ancient world became a medieval one at the local level. These processes involved elements of continuity, discontinuity, and transformation. How the city specifically ended is, of course, the subject of this study.
the city in the Mediterranean world. Yet, on the other hand, it also highlights radical elements of discontinuity and change in this period. Despite the vitality of the physical territory and extra-urban structures, ancient and classical traditions of perceiving and imagining the city ended, replaced by new (Christian) myths and stories about Corinth and its landscapes. The study, then, provides evidence for the long-term continuity of both configurations of settlement and Corinthian places in Late Antiquity, while also showing how a territory laden with mythological and sacred meanings was re-inscribed with new significance and the narratives of a Christianized society.

The remainder of this chapter discusses the historiographic problem of the city in Late Antiquity (Section 1.1), details the particular historical scholarship on late Roman Corinth (1.2), and outlines (1.3) how a landscape approach offers a potential solution to the problems outlined in the first two sections. The chapter ends with a brief overview (1.4) of the direction of the study.

1.1. The City in Late Antiquity

Since Edward Gibbon’s colossal study of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire over two centuries ago, the period of the third to seventh centuries AD has been the subject of undying debate. A generation of recent scholarship has restructured the terms of this debate, but the discussion remains focused on the ways that an ancient world became a medieval one in terms of political structure, religion and ideology, and economy and society, while yet retaining some vestige of its former self. The principal questions of the field have centered on the nature of this great transformation and the degree to which antiquity really ended. How did the ancient world die, survive, or change, and, as importantly, where and when?5 If these questions continue to evoke

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spirited debate, the proper conceptual and spatial framework for addressing them has shifted to the localized context of city, countryside, and landscape.

The ancient city, that most integral institution of the ancient world, has traditionally stood at the center of questions about the passage of antiquity into the middle ages. As M. Rostovtzeff and A.H.M. Jones well demonstrated long ago, the ancient Mediterranean was a world of cities, which formed the political, social, economic, cultural, and ideological focus of ancient life. Whether the rural population barbarized the towns, as Rostovtzeff had argued, or the civic elite abandoned the cities for their self-sufficient estates as Jones suggested, something radical happened to these Mediterranean cities in the course of Late Antiquity. What exactly happened is the subject of much debate that is tied directly to historical methods and evidentiary frameworks.

The scholarship that has most greatly influenced Late Antique scholarship is based largely on the evidence of literary testimony, including especially hagiographic literature (Peter Brown), or epigraphy, such as A.H.M. Jones’ work on Late Roman imperial and civic administration. High-quality and abundant literary and epigraphic sources, however, simply do not exist for most cities of the Late Roman Empire. The evidence that allowed Liebeschuetz to produce an administrative history of Antioch in Late Antiquity, for example, is the exception rather than the rule; Constantinople, Rome, and Alexandria number among the few other cities where inscriptions and texts are abundant enough to fuel historical research. In only a few other large cities is there enough evidence that it is possible to explore broader facets of urban life; local histories remain possible using the widest variety of source material.

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8 See, for example, L.J. Hall, *Roman Berytus: Beirut in Late Antiquity*, London 2004.
For most cities of the Mediterranean, material evidence is our principal source of knowledge for reconstructing civic life, and historians, by consequence, have begun to turn to archaeological methods to generate evidence for examining the city. While the use of archaeology for discussing cities has a history as old as Rostovtzeff’s *Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire* (1926), the last two decades have witnessed a veritable archaeological revolution—the excavation of many urban centers of the Mediterranean and their subsequent publications. The marketplace is becoming flooded with books on the transformation of the city, and material approaches now figure prominently in much of this new scholarship. These developments have the enormous potential to illuminate civic histories across the Late Roman Mediterranean, revealing the material dimensions of not only the small cities for which there is scant surviving literary and epigraphic evidence, but even the largest cities of the ancient Mediterranean whose histories are still based mainly on a different kind of evidence—documentary and epigraphic sources.

While these new trends may well revolutionize our understanding of Late Antiquity generally, they may also bind the image and history of the city to a specific method and evidence, the excavation of the urban center. One can see the close relationship between excavation methods and historical conclusions in the recent focus in scholarship on urban topography. In a bibliographic essay on the Late Antique city by L. Lavan, 

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urban change and topography assume center stage, with subtopical themes including city
walls and urban layout, the destruction and refurbishing of civic buildings, the palaces
and governors’ houses, transformation of the urban fabric, and intramural burials,
churches, and Christianization.12 The unavoidable bias of such scholarship, of course, is
that it offers the narrowest glimpses of material change in the local world during Late
Antiquity based on the particularities of what the spade and shovel have uncovered.
Even in cities that have been subject to long periods of excavation, there remains a real
risk of producing truncated visions of civic life. Broader conceptual and methodological
frameworks are important for escaping the dangers of particularism and offering more
robust pictures of the ways that an ancient local world became a medieval one in Late
Antiquity.

Broader views are most common today in the form of regional studies of the rural
world. Individuals in antiquity derived their political and social identity from their
association with towns but inhabited cultural spheres beyond the urban center, especially
the territory of the ancient city where the local population worked, farmed, traveled, and
worshiped.13 The rural world has traditionally played an important role in the
historiography of the later Roman Empire,14 but only in recent years has the development
of methods for studying the countryside, especially survey archaeology, allowed
archaeologists to talk about the particular countrysides of particular cities.15 The

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13 For general discussion, see essays in G. Shipley and J. Salmon (eds.), Human landscapes in classical
antiquity: environment and culture, London 1996; for early discussions of the countryside in Late Antique /
early Byzantine times, see essays in R.L. Hohlfelder (ed.), City, Town and Countryside in the Early

14 Bowden and Lavan, p. xix. Long ago Rostovtzeff posited that the ancient city was overcome by the rural
world from the third century on, while A.H.M. Jones would claim that the flight of the urban elite
(curiales) to the countryside precipitated the end of antiquity.

15 On the importance of archaeological survey for understanding the countryside, cf. T.E. Gregory,
“Intensive Survey and its Place in Byzantine Archaeology,” in Byzantine Studies/Études Byzantines 13,2
(1986 [1990]), 155-75; T.E. Gregory, “Archaeology and Theoretical Considerations on the Transition from
Antiquity to the Middle Ages in the Aegean Area,” in P.N. Kardulias (ed.), Beyond the Site. Regional
Studies in the Aegean Area, Lanham, MD 1994, 137-59; and B. Ward-Perkins, “Land, Labour and
employment of survey methods has created a watershed for local histories that complement the explosion of urban studies based on the excavated remains of civic buildings.

The Late Antique countryside has today become its own thriving field of study centered on patterns of rural settlement and fueled by the methods of archaeological survey. On the positive side, regional survey is relatively efficient and cheap, and consequently widely employed, with the result that it is now possible to talk about and compare countrysides around the Mediterranean. In the eastern Mediterranean especially, survey projects have populated numerous regional maps with Late Antique villages, villas, and farmsteads, and provided new information about aspects of rural life, including patterns and forms of settlement, land use and labor, and even ownership and tenancy. Most importantly, survey has underlined the social and economic health of the rural world in Late Antiquity, strong evidence against generalized pictures of impoverished or abandoned countrysides by A.H.M. Jones and others. The privileging of the methods of archaeological survey, however, has also contributed to modern visions of the late Roman town and countryside that are unsatisfying in two important respects.

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First, the methods and terms for studying the countryside are so different from those for studying the urban center that the differences reinforce a division of ‘urban center’ and ‘countryside’ that was less rigid in antiquity than it may appear to us today. Archaeological survey highlights categorical terms like ‘farmsteads,’ ‘country homes,’ and ‘dispersed settlements’, which underpin a vision of the rural world as isolated and idyllic, downplaying the variety of ways that the urban world penetrated the rural, and the rural the urban. While ancient writers did make distinctions between urban (astu) and rural (chora), the spheres of daily life were fluid and overlapping as individuals traveled between town and country, and beyond to neighboring cities and provinces.19 Even the countrysides were busier than we might imagine, peopled not only by farmers, day laborers, and shepherds, but also travelers and pilgrims, thieves and ruffians, and emperors, governors and local officials (to say nothing of vampires, gods, mythical heroes, and golden asses), en route to local sanctuaries, monuments, and festivals, or simply passing through. Our principal methodological paradigms for studying the Late Antique city—excavation and regional survey—tend to flatten and compartmentalize a vital and fluid local world into the strict spheres of either town or countryside.

Second, excavation and archaeological survey have illumined the structures of urban and rural life but have poorly revealed the individuals behind the material culture, the daily flow of human activity in town and territory, or the senses of place common to the urban and extra-urban worlds.20 Excavation reports of town and country houses, for

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19 See F.R. Trombley, “Town and Territorium in Late Roman Anatolia (late 5th–early 7th c.)”, in Lavan 2001, 217-33, summarized on p. 231: “In the 5th- and 6th-c. Anatolia it can be said that the city penetrated its territorium—physically, politically, economically and culturally. …There was a great deal of social contact between city and territorium as dwellers of one zone crossed to the other; many people divided their time between the two, whether for reasons of economic gain or religious piety. This is ultimately not surprising as the population intra muros was fundamentally dependent on the rural population.” See also Bowden and Lavan 2004, xvii-xviii, on problems of definition of ‘countryside’.

instance, necessarily center on stratigraphic units, dating evidence, and catalogues of finds. The conceptual vocabulary common to studies of the ancient countryside, moreover—dispersed and nucleated settlements, agrarian regimes, labor and peasants, demography, and the like—is generally derived from materialist theory, economic geography, and the discipline of settlement archaeology developed to study societies without texts. Certainly generic categorical terms like ‘smallholders’ and ‘farmsteads’ communicate poorly the rich texture of ancient life or the vivid stories, myths, histories, and meanings that the ancients ascribed to their mountains, caves, rivers, tombs and habitation.21 Dealing with the fuller range of human activity, experience, and meaning is fundamental for understanding the end of the ancient city;22 it was not simply buildings and settlements but the entire local world—a context and a language—that underwent change in dramatic ways.23

21 Studies of how the rural world was experienced, mythologized, and embedded with meaning are as uncommon for Late Antiquity as they are for other periods, with important exceptions including scholarship that has developed around the Christianization of the countryside. See Chavarría and Lewit 2004, 38-43; B. Caseau, “The Fate of Rural Temples in Late Antiquity and the Christianization of the Countryside,” in Bowden and Lavan 2004, pp. 105-44; J. Mitchell, “the Archaeology of Pilgrimage in Late Antique Albania: the Basilica of the Forty Martyrs,” in Bowden and Lavan 2004, 145-86.

22 There is a richer scholarship about human activities in Late Antique countryside from scholars working with literary texts and ancient inscriptions. For some instances, see F.R. Trombley, “Town and Territorium in Late Roman Anatolia (late 5th-early 7th c.)”, in Lavan 2001, 217-33; F.R. Trombley, “Epigraphic data on village culture and social institutions: an interregional comparison (Syria, Phoenice Libanensis and Arabia),” in Bowden and Lavan 2004, pp. 73-101. Archaeologists have seldom attempted to integrate this other kind of evidence with their pictures of the countryside (or historians with archaeological evidence!). See the recommendations of Bowden and Lavan 2004, xxiv-xxv, for a more integrated picture, where and when possible.

23 In their recent analysis on Late Roman countrysides, Bowden and Lavan similarly argue that the picture of the Late Antique countryside is today still drab, a result of knowing very little about the ecological particulars that create the local environmental backdrop for human experience. See Bowden and Lavan 2004, xxii-xxiii. “The result of these gaps in research interests is that the Late Antiquite countryside can be said to appear to us above all as a landscape of people and places. It is a landscape of places thanks to field survey and excavation. The lively people in this landscape owe their prominence in part to the inspirational writings of Peter Brown. However, if one tries to imagine this landscape, from Brown’s work or from the life of a rural saint, one perceives a world that is still rather drab. It is probably best imagined as a white canvas, with people and buildings in gray or black. It is a long way from being green, yellow or brown. It is a world in which people farm, go to church and go to market, but not one in which one can imagine ancient terraces, distant woodland or winding lanes—in short all those elements which make up a rich human experience of the countryside.” I am less bothered by this shortcoming in countryside studies than by the principally materialist paradigms for studying the countryside that lack any connection to human story and meaning. When possible, the scholar of the ancient countryside must enrich bland descriptions
Although the threads of urban and rural studies outlined above remain valid and popular approaches to studying the late Roman city, we must admit that our typical picture of the local world suffers that gray drabness caused by our dependence on the methodological terms of excavation and survey. One can still hear M.I. Finley’s dictum that the history of individual ancient cities is a dead end since the evidence that might provide color and detail to a picture of the local world are generally scanty. And yet, in an academic climate that shuns ‘big history’ for local and micro-regional approaches, local history will certainly remain an important component of historical discourses. We must then develop ways to discuss the ancient local world that seek to balance local complexity with broader historical significance, recognizing the importance of the minutiae but not losing sight of the larger historiographic scope. The ancient city is an entity dynamic enough that broader purviews are fundamental.

The remainder of this study argues that a landscape approach (see 1.3, below) constitutes a valuable paradigm for studying the ancient town and country and analyzing the complexity inherent to the transformation of the local world in Late Antiquity. The Roman city of Corinth is an ideal candidate for such a study because the city was famously connected to its eastern landscape (the Isthmus) in antiquity, and the city’s history between the third and seventh centuries is so poorly understood today. More importantly, Corinth was a major city throughout the Roman period, and its landscape and pasts were widely known and discussed at the time, even if not in the detail that the modern scholar would prefer. It is, consequently, possible to study Corinth in its landscapes in more vivid and specific ways than is common for most cities of the Mediterranean.

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1.2. The End of Ancient Corinth

The historical and archaeological scholarship on Corinth in Late Antiquity is currently in process of significant revision. In place of conventional narratives of the ancient city ending in the later fourth century, scholars have begun to reassess both the appropriateness of decline models for understanding the city generally, the specific evidence seeming to support the traditional picture, and the overall chronology of change. The increasing corpus of archaeological evidence from both town and countryside, especially, is being used to generate optimistic visions of the city’s flourishing in the fifth and sixth centuries. Whereas previously scholars had pointed to the destruction of urban buildings as a sign of the end of the ancient city, they now point to material culture that demonstrates the continuity of the city’s metropolitan character. And in place of general models of decline, scholars have become more interested in questions of civic continuity and redefinition. Historians of Late Roman Corinth now face a greater challenge in defining where “antiquity” resided in the life of the ancient city and which kinds of evidence are brought to bear on the question. A brief overview of the historiography as it relates to methodological and evidentiary frameworks can provide a sense of the problems involved with interpreting Corinth for this period and highlight profitable paths for future work.

Modern historical sketches of Late Antique Corinth have traditionally followed the testimony of ancient authors like Zosimus, Evagrius, and Procopius, who suggest that Corinth fared disastrously between the later third and seventh centuries AD, suffering an unending series of death blows from invaders, earthquakes, and plagues.25 The sixth century historian Zosimus, for instance, says that following the death of Valentinian,26

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Earthquakes likewise happened in many places. Crete was very much shaken, as was likewise the Peloponnese, and all Greece, many places being destroyed; indeed almost all were overturned, except Athens and the country of Attica….

Later in the fourth century (Zos. 5.6-7), Alaric and his Goths

…left all Attica uninjured, and proceeded to Megaris, which he took at the first attempt. From hence, meeting with no resistance, he proceeded towards the Peloponnesus. Gerontius thus allowed him to pass over the Isthmus, beyond which all the towns, being unfortified and confiding in the security which they derived from the Isthmus, were capable of being taken without the trouble of fighting. For this reason Corinth was first assaulted and immediately taken, with the small towns in its neighborhood, and afterwards Argos, with all the places between that and Lacedaemon. Even Sparta shared in the common captivity of Greece.

Jerome himself named the Alaric invasion as one of the ‘catastrophes of our times’ indicating nothing less than:27

The Roman world is falling: yet we hold up our heads instead of bowing them. What courage, think you, have the Corinthians now, or the Athenians or the Lacedaemonians or the Arcadians, or any of the Greeks over whom the barbarians bear sway? I have mentioned only a few cities, but these once the capitals of no mean states.

In the sixth century, Procopius and others enumerate Corinth among the cities overthrown and destroyed by ‘terrible earthquakes’ and decimated by the plague.28 To round out the disasters, the Slavs rolled through in the late sixth century exterminating


26 Zosimus Book 4, and 5.6-7. The English translation is from the 1814 edition by W. Green and T. Chaplin. Standard and accepted English translations are used in this study, when available. Unless otherwise stated, the translations of the classical sources are from the Loeb Classical Library series, and the patristic translations are from the Eerdmans Publication series of Early Church Fathers, now widely available in the public domain and in on-line format: http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/ Zosimus’ main source for Greece in the fourth century is the early fifth century historian Eunapius.

27 Jerome, Ep. 55 (To Heliodorus). The English translation is from the Eerdmans series. See also Claudian, In Rufinum 2.186-191, for the destruction of the city’s harbors.

28 See Proc. Anec. 18.42.6; Aed. 4.2.24, who list multiple terrible earthquakes, including some under Justinian. Cf. also Evagrius Schol. 159.12; John Malalas Chron. 418.4; and Cosmas Indic. Topog. Christ. 1.22.14, for passing details. There is confusion in the historiography tradition about whether these earthquakes occur during the reign of Justin or Justinian, or both.
what remained of the population or driving them into exile.\textsuperscript{29} Taken uncritically and read together, these sources form a chronicle of disastrous events that include perhaps four barbarian invasions (Herulians (AD 267), Visigoths (396), Vandals (c. 450), and Slavs (580s)), at least three epic earthquakes (360s, 370s, and 520s), and a deadly plague in the early 540s AD. In some historical depictions, the city entered a tailspin of decline as early as the third century from which it never recovered.

A century of archaeological work at Corinth, Isthmia, and Kenchreae has uncovered numerous Late Antique buildings, which, when read through the ancient authors, have materialized narratives of decline and produced an image of \textit{Corinth in ruins}, a city stripped of its Greco-Roman character by AD 400.\textsuperscript{30} The vision of Corinth as a destroyed, derelict, or despoiled city was advanced most forcefully in the last century by scholars including J. Finley, O. Broneer, and R. Scranton (among many others) but has remained to this day a standard interpretation of the material remains.\textsuperscript{31} Relatively recently, for instance, Ivison argued that the Roman forum was abandoned as a civic space by the fifth century when the spread of burials through the area signaled a definitive end and transformation of the ancient city.\textsuperscript{32} Similarly, D. Engels explicitly and vividly linked the public face of the city with the civic values of a service society; the


\textsuperscript{30} Barbarians and earthquakes have together provided enough specific dates that it has been possible for scholars to connect most broadly dated Late Antique destruction layers with particular historical events. For critiques of approaches that interpret the archaeological evidence in light of the literary testimony, cf. Rothaus 2000, 16-26; Sanders 2005; Brown 2005.


\textsuperscript{32} E.A. Ivison, “Burial and urbanism at Late Antique and early Byzantine Corinth (c. AD 400-700),” in N. Christie and S.T. Loseby (eds.), \textit{Towns in Transition: Urban Evolution in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages}, Brookfield, VT, 1996, 99-125; but see responses by Rothaus 2000, 21-26, and K.W. Slane and G.D.R. Sanders, “Late Roman Horizons established at Corinth,” in \textit{Hesperia} 74.2 (2005), 243-97, who argue that these burials should be dated at least a half century (and perhaps a full century) later than Ivison suggests and indicate the movement of the agora of Corinth out of the forum!
buildings destroyed in the fourth century represented nothing less than the heart of classical civilization and individuals guided by the principles of a civic stoicism.\footnote{D. Engels, Roman Corinth. An Alternative Model for the Ancient City, Chicago 1990, esp. pp. 66-91.}

Change is rarely as immediate as destruction and there are many reasons for doubting a historiographic tradition characterized principally by decline. The most immediate arguments against the paradigm generally are that the city was rebuilt following the fourth-century disasters and remained the provincial capital of Achaia and the metropolitan see through the sixth century.\footnote{There is certainly wide evidence for destructions in this broad period, but many questions remain about when these occur, and whether they can be tied to one or even several destruction events. The fourth century is summed up by Rothaus 2000, 21, “What is clear, despite questions of precise chronology and cause, is that Corinth was heavily damaged in the late fourth century.” For another review of the evidence, see Robinson 2001, 121-31.} Over the last two decades, moreover, archaeologists have generated a variety of archaeological evidence problematizing an overly pessimistic picture of decline. This scholarship varies greatly in subject matter and approach but is united in assessing the archaeological evidence independently of the scattered literary references, as well as its sharp criticism of the ancient sources.\footnote{Rothaus 2000, 16-26; Sanders 2004; Brown 2005.} In this respect, this scholarship marks a departure from previous perspectives that read archaeological material through the literary sources. This new research of town and countryside is contributing in important ways to more nuanced visions of the city and has established several different approaches for future scholarship on the city.

First, recent investigations in Corinth’s urban center have produced strong evidence for general continuity in building culture (i.e., new foundations) and the traditional configuration of the city center into the sixth century.\footnote{G.D.R. Sanders, “A Late Roman Bath at Corinth: Excavations in the Panayia Field, 1995-1996,” in Hesperia 68 (1999), 441-480; G.D.R. Sanders, “Problems in Interpreting Rural and Urban Settlement in S. Greece, AD 365-700,” in Christie and Scott 2004.} Excavation at the Panayia field, southeast of the Roman forum, for instance, has produced direct and vital evidence for several phases of large-scale, presumably private, expenditure, from the fourth to the
sixth centuries AD, including a fourth century villa and sixth century bath.\textsuperscript{37} The Roman forum itself, the central space of the Roman colony, continued to function as a civic space through the later fifth century (and not the early fifth century, as had been previously proposed).\textsuperscript{38} In her recent analysis of the fountain of Peirene, B. Robinson has argued that the elaborate triconch court of the fountain of Peirene should be down-dated from the second to the fourth century, and the associated pool may date to the fifth century, thereby providing evidence for the remaining importance of this traditional Corinthian place through Late Antiquity.\textsuperscript{39} K. Slane and G. Sanders have assembled the evidence for building activity in the Roman city in the fifth and sixth centuries, which includes baths, houses, and the monumental and exquisite Early Christian churches.\textsuperscript{40} Their work in refining Late Roman and Byzantine period ceramic chronologies may radically alter the monumental history of the city by down-dating the destruction contexts of many important civic buildings by half a century, well beyond the supposed devastation events of the late fourth century.\textsuperscript{41}

Second, there is a significant corpus of scholarship that now argues that the city continued to function as a metropolis and Roman city through the sixth century,\textsuperscript{42} even if many public buildings of the old Roman colony and its hinterland fell out of use.\textsuperscript{43} In addition to the continuity of civic spaces and buildings like the Roman forum and the fountains, noted above, there is evidence for continuity in the city’s religious outlook,


\textsuperscript{38} Rothaus 2000, 21-26; Slane and Sanders 2005.

\textsuperscript{39} Robinson 2001.

\textsuperscript{40} Slane and Sanders 2005; Sanders 1999, 2004.


\textsuperscript{42} See Slane and Sanders 2005.

\textsuperscript{43} But see the dating problems for the Roman forum: Rothaus 2000, 21-26; Slane and Sanders 2005.
lamp industry, and place in commercial networks. R. Rothaus has assembled the evidence for continuing pagan cult in the Corinthia and has posited a late date for the Christianization of the city—largely at the hands of the emperor. Slane and Sanders have shown that the city participated in Mediterranean-wide trade networks through the sixth century. The discontinuity of old Roman Corinth, embedded in its social, economic, religious, and political structures, must then be reconciled with the strands of continuity in the life of the ancient city. In light of an ever-increasingly diverse picture, it may be profitable to ask why certain facets of Roman civic life and architecture continued while others did not. Framing questions in this way shifts the debate away from general models of decline to questions of civic continuity and redefinition in a period of radical change, while still allowing for elements of discontinuity and building destructions by barbarians, earthquakes, Christians, or the simple passing of time.

Finally, archaeological research in Corinth’s extra-urban territory (Fig. 1.1) has produced a picture of the region in Late Antiquity that appears both positive and healthy. P.N. Kardulias has shown, for instance, that even at Isthmia, the construction of the Byzantine fortress evoked an expenditure of energy and wealth that is not compatible with decline paradigms; certainly, Timothy Gregory’s study of the 7.5 km long trans-Isthmian wall might demonstrate a similar phenomenon. Scholars using the methods of

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45 Rothaus 2000. See also Sanders 2005 for new archaeological evidence.

46 Slane and Sanders 2005.

47 For recent discussions, cf. R. Rothaus, Corinth, the First City of Greece: an Urban History of Late Antique Cult and Religion, Leiden 2000; and Slane and Sanders 2005.


surface survey have argued that the Corinthia was flourishing in Late Antiquity, with a variety of country houses, villas, and rural buildings. Kardulias, Gregory, and Sawmiller, for example, have argued that the Late Antique Corinthia shows signs of greater agricultural exploitation, population, and economic flourishing than ever before. Gregory has argued that the rural structures of the classical *polis* come to an end not in the late fourth century but in the late sixth, when society collapsed, effecting the transformation from antiquity to the medieval period in Greece. Accepting that the urban center of Corinth had strong social, economic, and cultural links with its countryside, we may wonder whether a flourishing countryside is better suited for an urban center in decay, or in prosperity. These are questions that can now be addressed to profitable ends.

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52 Among others, see T.E. Gregory, “Archaeology and Theoretical Considerations on the Transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages in the Aegean Area,” in P.N. Kardulias (ed.), *Beyond the Site. Regional Studies in the Aegean Area*, Lanham, MD 1994, 137-59.

The new images of Corinth in Late Antiquity that are emerging from excavation and survey are based on more sophisticated readings of the archaeological evidence (and independently of the literary testimony) and offer positive interpretations of the city as healthy, even flourishing, in this period.\textsuperscript{54} This growing body of scholarship provides a number of appropriate frameworks for discussing change, epistemological tools for reading evidence, and indices useful for measuring the passing of antiquity into the middle age in the local world. Assessing the end of ancient Corinth and its transformation into a Byzantine town, in other words, may be approached in different ways through careful articulation of how an ancient past was embedded in a material

\textsuperscript{54} Rothaus 2000, 17-18; Sanders 2004; Brown 2005.
world at the local level. While the new composite picture may be a more vibrant Late Antique city, we should not expect it to be as neat and tidy as the decline paradigm, which envisioned the city’s demise; rather, we might expect instead something like a celebrated building textured with old and new elements, antiquity unevenly spoliated and redefined in a new construction.

If the approaches outlined above provide a solid basis for imaging Corinth in Late Antiquity, they offer only an important initial step for thinking about the end of the ancient city as a place formed through a variety of cultural contexts. Here I would argue that there is great value in instilling the literary tradition into ancient histories in order to understand how ancient authors envisioned the city during the period. It was not, after all, only Zosimus and Procopius who had things to say about Late Antique Corinth, but historians, geographers, philosophers, poets, bishops, preachers, and travelers scattered across the Mediterranean (to say nothing of the Corinthians themselves), who mention the city and its history, sporadically but consistently throughout this period. Their testimonies are usually cursory and seemingly irrelevant, but they provide a texture of story, myth, perception, and narrative that enhances our otherwise dry archaeological narratives detailing the material phases of the Late Antique city. The ancients provide that ‘sense of place’, which is often biased and inaccurate but should nonetheless be assimilated rather than dismissed—even misinterpretations can offer direct views into ancient perceptions, which create an entirely different approach to studying the past.

55 This complexity is inherent to studies of Late Antique / early medieval cities. Cf. B. Ward-Perkins, “Urban Continuity?”, in Christie and Loseby 1996, 4-17. For a recent defense of the concept decline, see Liebeschuetz, Decline and Fall of the Roman City; and W. Liebeschuetz, “The uses and abuses of the concept ‘decline’ in later Roman history, or Was Gibbon politically incorrect?”, in Lavan 2001, 233-38, with responses (238-45) by A. Cameron, B. Ward-Perkins, M. Whittow, and L. Lavan. The general response was that the use of the term ‘decline’, like the term ‘continuity’, must be properly qualified and defined (if it is used at all) in reference to the specific facet of ancient culture.

56 This point is easily demonstrated by a simple search of the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae (TLG) for ‘Corinth’ between the fourth and seventh centuries which turns up more than a thousand hits.

57 The weaknesses of the literary record as they relate to regional studies are well-discussed. See, for instance, G. Shipley, “Ancient History and Landscape Histories,” in Shipley and Salmon (eds.), Human Landscapes in Classical Antiquity: Environment and Culture, London 1996, 1-15. Recently, however, landscape archaeologists have become increasingly optimistic about the role of texts in archaeological investigations, as, for instance, Bowden and Lavan 2004; Athanassopoulos 2004. For the Mediterranean
In writing local histories, there is greater value in adopting expansive purviews of place that entail thinking about the ancient city in broader spatial and conceptual scopes. Broad but textured views can reduce the risk of myopic visions of the Late Antique city and enable understanding the transformation of an entire local context and world during a period of great change. To study the end of the city is to study the end of a whole experienced context and set of relations, as well as their many continuities and redefinitions. As I will develop in the course of this study, landscape provides an effective context and framework for more nuanced images of the city in the third to seventh centuries AD.\(^{58}\)

1.3. Corinth in a Landscape

This is a study of Late Antique Corinth in terms of the connective landscape linking the urban center to its two seas and the wider Mediterranean. This study argues that the central image of Roman Corinth as a maritime city and traveler’s cosmopolis was based on the historicized relationship of the city with its eastern territory, the Isthmus, and the Isthmus with the world. The eastern landscape of Corinth defined the city, communicating its most significant civic myths and histories in material and conceptual forms, and contributed to the city’s material prosperity and commercial character. The study examines continuity and change in this landscape (and by consequence, the city) during Late Antiquity. On the one hand, despite radical changes to the public monumental configuration of the urban center, sanctuaries, and even harbors in the third to seventh centuries, the physical territory of the Isthmus continued to act as a crossroads world, including especially important territories like the Corinthia, it is actually possible to reconstruct the process of ‘signification’ and the ‘world of meaning’ in a way that does not require that we ‘create a surrogate discourse’ (Layton and Ucko 2000, 12). This is in sharp contrast to the problems confronting prehistorians working in other parts of the world. See Layton and Ucko 2000 for discussion. In light of this fact, it is surprising that incorporating and employing ancient texts in Mediterranean landscape archaeology is so exceptional.

\(^{58}\) For a rich study that illustrates the potential of integrating excavation records with literary sources, and roots monuments in conceptual and historicized landscape, see Robinson 2001, who argues that the sense of place, history, and the Greco-Roman past embedded in the fountain of Peirene remains alive through Late Antiquity.
that enabled and facilitated trade and travel, promoted the city’s cosmopolitan significance, and undergirded the relationship of the city to the world. And yet, on the other, the Isthmus itself, which was so rich in historical, mythological, and sacred place, was conceptually redefined in the same period, losing its former significance and gaining the newfound significance and narratives of a broader Christianized society. Examining the landscape, then, provides an effective index for understanding the end of the ancient city and the changing relationship of the city to the broader world.

This dissertation uses the term ‘landscape’ in ways that will become apparent in the unfolding of the study, but it is important to be explicit here about how this term has been employed in Mediterranean scholarship generally, its potential value for assessing the end of the city, and how I will use the concept. In Mediterranean studies, ‘landscape’ is a very shifty term.\(^59\) In its conventional and most common usage in regional studies, it refers simply to a geographic territory or region, the natural environment which people settle and exploit. In this use of the term, landscape is the proper spatial framework for addressing questions of long-term cultural change, whether broad theoretical issues rooted in the approaches of cultural ecology, processualism, and the Annales school,\(^60\) or


\(^60\) Perhaps the most explicit and coherent study of this sort is the Argolid Exploration Project, which concluded the main publication of their survey with a chapter examining the ‘co-evolution of landscape and human settlement’ over a period of some 50,000 years. See M.I. Jameson, C.N. Runnels, and T.H. van Andel, A Greek Countryside. The Southern Argolid from Prehistory to the Present Day, with a Register of Sites by C.N. Runnels and M.H. Munn, Stanford 1994. But there are many examples in the Mediterranean of application of the concept landscape in an environmental sense: G. Barker, Landscape and Society: Prehistoric Central Italy, London 1981; J.L. Bintliff (ed.), Archaeology and the Annales School, Leicester
more specific historiographic problems relating to changing patterns of demography, settlement, and the ancient economy.  

All such studies are united in their emphasis on landscape as a physical entity and territory, an object of human activity, exploitation, and settlement. The term employed in this way is rarely defined, and its implicit use points simply to the land itself, or the human traces on the land.

Archaeologists and anthropologists hailing from post-processual and post-structural perspectives are more squeamish about attributing to landscape a specifically natural character or, for that matter, any definition whatsoever. In the new school of landscape archaeologies, landscapes are better described than defined, as pinpointing the term is to put to death what many see to be its principal values: its ambiguity, fluidity, mutability, and contingency. In this regard, some scholars have likened landscape to a ‘process’ or structure of relations that is constantly being contested and transformed. Bender, for instance, calls landscape

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63 B. Bender (ed.), Landscapes: Politics and Perspectives, Oxford 1993. See also B. Bender, “Theorising Landscapes, and the Prehistoric Landscapes of Stonehenge,” in Man 27 (1992), 735-55. More recently, landscapes are a “way in which people—all people—understand and engage with the material world around them…landscapes are always in process, potentially conflicted, untidy and uneasy.” Cited from B.
polysemic, and not so much artefact as in process of construction and reconstruction. The landscape is never inert, people interact with it, re-work it, appropriate it and contest it. It is part of the way in which identities are created and disputed.

There is, however, no single dominant interpretative thread in the postmodern ‘archaeologies of landscape’ but only a multiplicity of approaches fissured along different lines.64 Hence, while some theorists may use the concept to refer to a cultural process, a mode of social interaction, and a constantly changing text of human agency,65 many scholars (and most field archaeologists) see landscape as an entity, materially and territorially situated, albeit mutable and changing.66 What is nonetheless common to almost all of these more recent approaches is the rejection of landscape as simply a passive and neutral backdrop for human activity and exploitation, or a natural environment studied only from ecological and economic perspectives. Emphasis is instead given to the total cultural landscape, the product of human experience and cognition, meaningfully constituted, symbolically structured, and phenomenologically focused.67 As such, landscapes form material and cultural contexts charged with meaning.


66 Certainly one of the most significant divisions in the scholarship of cultural landscape is this one that exists between ‘explicit’ and ‘inherent’ approaches, or landscapes as ‘entities’ vs. landscapes as ‘relational structures’. For discussion, see P. van Dommelen, “Exploring Everyday Places and Cosmologies,” in Ashmore and Knapp (eds.), Archaeologies of Landscape: Contemporary Perspectives, Oxford 1999, 277-86; J. Thomas, “Comments on Part I: Intersecting Landscapes,” in Bender and Winer (eds.), Contested Landscapes: Movement, Exile and Place, Oxford 2001, 181-88.

derived from specific historical, social, and political spheres. Knapp and Ashmore may be representative in seeing landscape as

“an entity that exists by virtue of its being perceived, experienced, or contextualized by people,” but one that is also “neither exclusively natural nor totally cultural: it is a mediation between the two.”

Indeed, many scholars, and particularly archaeologists, use the term in a way that assumes an integration of the conceptual and material. Landscapes are cultural and ideational but also physical, historically contingent entities created and structured by human agency, experience, and perception. In this sense, landscapes also refer to and reflect the modern conceptual frameworks of analysts and scholars themselves. To summarize, as the term is used in post-processualist literature, landscape represents an entity and a context, perceived and material, as well as a modern framework. The ambiguities and vagueness of such definitions are precisely why many scholars adopt landscape approaches: landscape is a flexible and fluid concept useful for analyzing the complexities of change to local worlds.


69 Knapp and Ashmore 1999, 1, 20-21. See also Given and Knapp 2003, 3-4: “We believe landscapes exist only when they become contextualized, perceived, and experienced by people.”

70 See, for instance, Stoddart’s concise summary of themes in landscape archaeology: S. Stoddart, “Introduction,” in Stoddart (ed.), *Landscapes from Antiquity*, Cambridge 2000, 5: “The most convincing approaches attempt to involve both the natural and the cultural. Individuals may have different views of landscape, but are still affected by its physical form and have to define practical ways to survive and thrive in any given landscape….The most judicious approaches acknowledge that there is an interrelationship between the symbolic and the practical which avoids the current polemics of dichotomy.” And Ucko and Layton 2000, 1: “Landscapes are particular ways of expressing conceptions of the world and they are also a means of referring to physical entities. The same physical landscape can be seen in many different ways by different people, often at the same time…the term may refer both to an environment, generally one shaped by human action, and to a representation (particularly a painting) which signifies the meanings attributed to such a setting. These multiple senses give rise to what Gosden and Head call landscape’s ‘useful ambiguity’: ‘Landscape encompasses both the conceptual and the physical’ (Gosden and Head 1994: 113).” See also A. Flemming, “Prehistoric Landscapes and the quest for territorial pattern,” in P. Everson and T. Williamson (eds.), *The Archaeology of Landscape: Studies Presented to Christopher Taylor*, Manchester 1998: Manchester University Press, 42-66.

71 Knapp and Ashmore 1999, 12; See also Given and Knapp 2003, 311-12; Given 2004.
Despite the relevance and applicability of these ‘cultural landscape’ approaches to classical archaeology and ancient history, their implementation is rare in Mediterranean studies. Most recent edited collections of landscape studies, for instance, employ the concept only to refer to the physical environment. The use of the term in this narrower sense is understandably related to the methodological frameworks of particular disciplines, and the seeming irrelevance of theoretical approaches generally within those disciplines. Moreover, as Lavan recently observed in his introduction to a work on Late Antique archaeology, historians may feel they have little need for the generic terms of social and anthropological theory (e.g., ‘elite’ and ‘social life’) when they already possess historically specific vocabulary (e.g., curiales and humiliores) for discussing the end of

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72 On the undeveloped potential of cultural landscape approaches in Mediterranean archaeology, see comments by Cherry 2003, 157-59; Athanassopoulos and Wandsnider 2004, 9-10; Given 2004. Susan Alcock, of course, has produced several significant landscape studies: S.E. Alcock, Graecia Capta. The Landscapes of Roman Greece, Cambridge 1993; Alcock and Osborne 1994; S.E. Alcock, Archaeologies of the Greek Past: Landscape, Monuments, and Memory, Cambridge 2002. Until relatively recently, however, she has been one of the few exceptions to the processual trend. Other examples include Given and Knapp 2003, 1, who defined the region of the Sydney-Cyprus Survey Project “based not only on its spatial and geomorphological attributes but also on what we perceived to be its likely cultural coherence within the northern Troodos region and its historical continuity in terms of mining zones and agricultural communities.” And M. Given, “From Density Counts to Ideational Landscapes: Intensive Survey, Phenomenology, and the Sydney Cyprus Survey Project,” in E.F. Athanassopoulos and L. Wandsnider (eds.), Mediterranean Archaeological Landscapes: Current Issues, Philadelphia 2004, 165-82, who attempts to use artifact distributions to deal with past conceptions of the land. For a recent study of Corinth’s fountains in terms of its developing landscapes, see B.A. Robinson, Fountains and the Culture of Water at Roman Corinth, Unpublished Dissertation, History of Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia 2001.

73 The lack of interest in landscape in this broader sense is apparent in the near total absence of interpretative and symbolic approaches in the five volume set of the POPULUS series, despite the explicit awareness of the diverse meanings of landscape in the general introduction: G. Barker and D. Mattingly, “General Editors’ Introduction: The POPULUS Project,” in J. Bintliff and K. Sbonias (eds.), Reconstructing Past Population Trends in Mediterranean Europe (3000 BC-AD 1800), Oxford 1999, iii-ix. Moreover, in Athanassopoulos and Wandsnider 2004, only the essays by Given and Wandsnider deal with cultural landscapes.

74 Certainly many post-processual studies adopt an incomprehensible and vague terminology and discourse that can be difficult to follow. See, for instance, the review of post-modern landscape literature by S.H. Lekson, “Landscape with Ruins: Archaeological Approaches to Built and Unbuilt Environments,” Current Anthropology 37 (1996), 886-92. The use of the term ‘landscape’ to refer to the physical environment is also rooted in its own theoretical and conceptual frameworks, even if these are usually unstated.
the ancient world.\textsuperscript{75} And yet, the concept can provide a valuable framework for integrating so many kinds of historical evidence into a coherent picture of the ancient city. As a way of demonstrating the potential of the concept, I will return briefly to the weaknesses in town-and-country paradigms outlined at the conclusion of section 1.1 above to show how cultural landscape perspectives provide new ways of conceiving the problem of the end of the ancient city.

First, landscape provides flexible and fluid spatial frameworks that need not (but can) assume a rigid division between urban center and rural world. Conventional distinctions of ‘urban’ and ‘rural’ are sometimes helpful for analyzing facets of social and economic life, but this traditional division can lead to truncated and unrealistic visions of the local world based on the compartmentalization of ancient life and experience into urban or rural spheres. Such views discourage perceiving the ways that ancient people traveled and ranged widely between and through town and country, down well-traveled pathways, by land and sea to the important places of their world. Cultural landscapes suggest richer perspectives and senses of place, prodding us to think about cities beyond institutions and the built environment, as places imbued with histories, significance, and meanings.\textsuperscript{76} A landscape approach encourages thinking more deeply and broadly about the local world, permitting the conventional division between town and country but also different conceptions when such divisions prove irrelevant. Scholars studying the Late Antique city can benefit greatly from thinking about how a world “bedecked in places,”\textsuperscript{77} —an entire spatial context and configuration of places and structures—was formed, maintained, and transformed.


\textsuperscript{76} See especially C. Tilley, \textit{A Phenomenology of Landscape: Places, Paths and Monuments}, Oxford 1994; Alcock and Osborne 1994; S. Feld and K.H. Basso (eds.), \textit{Senses of Place}, Santa Fe, NM, 1996; R. Bradley, \textit{An Archaeology of Natural Places}, London 2000; Bender and Winer (eds.), \textit{Contested Landscapes: Movement, Exile and Place}, Oxford 2001. “Places”, like “landscapes”, are better described than defined, but refer to the way that humans, as groups and as individuals, structure their world.

\textsuperscript{77} See E.S. Casey, “How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: Phenomenological Prelegomena,” 13-52, summarized pp. 44-45.
Second, a landscape approach gives value to the full range of human experience and meaning, including but not limited to ancient social and economic conditions. Hence, landscape approaches provide a richer purview of a local context, uniting human activity and behavior with patterns of thought, social and economic data with histories, mythologies, and meanings.\(^78\) As Ingold puts it,\(^79\)

> For both the archaeologist and the native dweller, the landscape tells—or rather is—a story. It enfolds the lives and times of predecessors who, over the generations, have moved around in it and played their part in its formation.

The idea that landscapes tell, or embody, ancient histories, stories, and narratives, is one poorly explored in regional studies in the Mediterranean.\(^80\) And yet landscape in this sense is potentially a powerful concept that enables new perceptions of the end of antiquity, especially as so many ancient literary sources speak only to this end. Enriching our definitions of landscape and place allows for and encourages the incorporation of stories and mythologies about particular territories with the picture formed from archaeological data.

This dissertation employs the concept landscape in several ways consistent with the different landscape approaches outlined above. First, landscape is used to refer to and focus on a particular physical territory, the *Isthmus of Corinth*, the connective crossroads of land and sea from which the city derived much of its cultural and historical

\(^{78}\) See Ucko and Layton 2000, 11.

\(^{79}\) T. Ingold, “The Temporality of Landscape,” in *World Archaeology* 25 (1993), 152-74, citation at pp. 152-53. Also van Dommelen 1999, 278-79: “landscape can effectively be understood as ‘the most solid appearance in which a history can declare itself.’”

\(^{80}\) Textual approaches to reading places are common for ancient studies generally. For instance, *reading the city* as text and narrative has a longer history in ancient studies, and has today become common, especially in respect to the important cities like Rome. See, for instance, C. Edwards, *Writing Rome: Textual Approaches to the City*, Cambridge 1996; D. Favro, “The city is a living thing: the performatory role of an urban site in ancient Rome, the Vallis Murcia,” in B. Bergmann and C. Kondoleon (eds.), *The Art of Ancient Spectacle*, New Haven, CT, 1999, 204-19. It is also easy to point to many cases of sacred sites, or even entire areas, such as the Holy Land, where landscape is *read*: e.g., E.D. Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage in the Later Roman Empire AD 312-460*, Oxford 1982.
significance and imagery in the Roman period. It is in this sense, interchangeable with
the ‘countryside’ and ‘extra-urban world’, but is broadly focused to the north and east
(rather than the south and west) and emphasizes the city’s connective qualities; its
borders are not fixed and unchanging. But my use of the term also refers to the
interpretive and conceptual context through which Corinth on the Isthmus was
experienced and imagined. It refers to the spatial territory of the Isthmus but with the
conceptual and historical overtones and sense of place connected to that territory, in
short, “the world as it is known” to the Roman city’s inhabitants, visitors, and
illustrators. Finally, landscape highlights my own framework for integrating the many
facets of ancient life—town and countryside, settlement and sacred place, human activity
and meaning, the physical and ideational, and myth, perception and experience—into a
coherent context. In this study, then, landscape refers both to the physical and
interpretive Isthmus of Corinth, as well as my own approach. I will elaborate on these
points below as they relate to modern scholarship of Corinth’s territory.

81 There is some flexibility, of course, in this use of the term, as the Isthmus was defined and conceived
differently in the Roman period. The second chapter will address this issue.

82 Ingold 1993, 156.

83 Although certain kinds of evidence (e.g., documentary sources, inscriptions, potsherds) may highlight the
emic perspective of Corinthians themselves or etic perspectives of travelers to Corinth, this distinction is
somewhat superficial. For Corinth, the spheres of insider and outsider overlapped considerably in different
ways. This study will underscore that overlap of local and translocal.

84 For the convenience of dealing with different bodies of evidence, the study will use the terms
“conceptual landscape”, “imaginary landscape”, and “landscape of famous places” to refer to the territory
of Corinth as it was imagined and preserved in ancient stories and literature; and “physical landscape” and
“material landscape” to refer to the material dimensions of the territory (settlements, sites, physical places)
revealed by the analysis of archaeological data. This categorical distinction is somewhat artificial as it
could be seen to imply that archaeological empirical evidence is somehow superior to documentary
evidence. This is obviously not my intention for both kinds of sources must be conceptualized and
interpreted. Rather, organizing the evidence in this manner is useful in so far as it highlights different
facets of the history of the Isthmus, as revealed through qualitatively different bodies of evidence, which in
turn underscores the complexity of change in Late Antiquity. It could also be argued that because
landscape is always interpreted, it is imperative to discuss not a single landscape but multiple landscapes
(in the plural) existing at any point in time. While this may be correct, such an approach would favor the
trees (particular landscapes) for the forest (the context), making a diachronic study of this sort impossible.
Studying the city of Corinth in terms of its topography, land, and territory, has a history as old as antiquity and it is important to discuss how a landscape study of Corinth differs from the important scholarship already existing on the Corinthia (See Fig. 1.1). Comprehensive and topographical studies for all or parts of the Corinthia have been provided by M. Sakellariou and N. Faraklas, and J. Wiseman, and most recently by G. Lolos (Sicyonia) and J. Marchand (Cleonaea). Wiseman’s work aims to provide a study of topography and physical evidence for all human activity, and is consequently comprehensive and descriptive. There are a number of discussions of land and its use in the Corinthia, including the work of J.B. Salmon for the Archaic and Classical countryside, T.E. Gregory, P.N. Kardulias, and R. Rothaus for Late Roman / Early Byzantine settlement, and D. Romano’s studies of the centuriation of the early Roman colony. There is also a rich history of archaeological investigations of ‘extra-urban’ sites including excavations at the Isthmian sanctuary, the harbors at Kenchreai and Lechaion, studies of the trans-Isthmian fortification walls, and numerous rescue excavations by the Greek Archaeological Service in the modern nomos of the Corinthia.

By “Corinthia” here, I mean the modern nomos. For a fuller discussion of definitions of the Corinthia, cf. the second chapter.


Wiseman 1978, 6.


The excavations at Kenchreai and Isthmia have been published in their own series, Kenchreai and Isthmia. The excavations at Lechaion have received preliminary reports by D. Pallas in Archaiologikon.
This research has been fundamental for the development of this current study, but there are important differences. The basic analytical and spatial framework for this study is not Corinthian land but, rather, landscape. While landscape does focus on the city’s territory, it gives unbalanced attention to the Isthmus at the expense of other areas of the Corinthia. A comprehensive history of land use in antiquity, such as that of Sakellariou and Faraklas, or Wiseman, would consider the western and southern Corinthia, as well as the city’s northeastern territory. Historical studies of the Classical-period polis would be justified in focusing on the agricultural capacities of the rich plain west of the city, or the southeastern Corinthia where the territory borders the Epidauria. But for the Roman and Late Roman period, so much of Corinth’s political, economic, social, cultural, and symbolic importance and imagery derived from the territory that connected the city to the broader world, and the broader world to the city. If this study appears overly focused on the Isthmus, it is not because other areas of Corinthian territory were socially or economically unimportant, but because they were less central to the definition and image of the city in the Roman era. The city’s eastern landscape and the world to which it connected formed a rich historicized context, meriting a study in its own right.

The term landscape also highlights the attention given in this study to human experience, meaning, and story. Most landscape studies in Greece have centered on social and economic dimensions of human interaction with the land—agricultural potential; site size, location, and hierarchy; forms of exploitation; and population estimates, to name a few—or the history of a particular territory, but landscape is a concept that can speak to many spheres of life, including human experience and meaning,

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90 Salmon 1984.

senses of place, and memory and history. This study strays from the typical focus given to social and economic questions to explore how the Corinthia was experienced and known to the outside world, in addition to the region’s inhabitants. It offers an interpretation of the end of ancient Corinth on the basis of the city’s continuing and changing place and role in that wider world, as evident in the literary and material evidence for the Isthmus.

Third, the use of the organizing concept ‘landscape’ undermines the conventional urban / rural and town / country divides that are so common in regional studies today (see section 1.1, above). While conceptual distinctions of ‘town’ and ‘country’ are at times appropriate analytical categories, they are not satisfying for the Corinthia in the Roman period. As others have noted,92 Corinth’s ‘countryside’ was never far removed from the urban center, and totally integral and bound to the life and functioning of the city. For the Roman cosmopolis that gained its wealth and reputation from its connectivity to the broader world, divisions between urban and extra-urban worlds were hardly firm. This study presents evidence for why we are warranted in seeing this Isthmian territory as an extension of the urban center rather than an extra-urban ‘other.’ The use of the term landscape underlines the connectivity of the urban center to its suburban and extra-urban territory, eastern sanctuary, harbors, and ultimately, the world, thereby linking places that are usually studied in isolation. If the use of excavated material from the urban center in this study seems limited or incomplete, this is a result of pragmatic rather than conceptual limitations—the use of excavated material from the town is complex enough that it warrants a careful consideration in its own right.93

92 See Rothaus 1994, citing Pallas; and Rothaus 2000, 26-29, for the social links between town and ‘countryside’ and a discussion of ‘villas’.

93 There is a great opportunity to refine the history of the urban topography of the city in the fourth and fifth centuries through reappraising excavation contexts based on revised ceramic chronologies. Anyone focusing on urbanization issues in respect to Late Antique Corinth, however, must deal with the very real methodological problems outlined by Sanders (2005), including rereading evidence with sensitivity to the new chronology. This involves, of course, sorting through the messy world of baskets, notebooks, and site reports, and a competence in dealing with the details of stratigraphy, let alone pottery!
A final word must be said about landscape archaeology and the methods of archaeological survey. Many of the generation who introduced archaeological survey into classical lands intentionally pitted the new methodology against both the historian’s reliance on documentary sources for reconstructing ancient society, and the excavator’s hyper-intensive methods that reveal limited perspectives of a region’s material culture. The last two decades have seen much of this initial optimism dissipate in light of the growing acknowledgment of different kinds of ‘source problems’ for using survey data to reconstruct land use patterns. And yet, for so much of the ancient Mediterranean, archaeological surface survey remains our best method for saying something, anything, about the extra-urban world, and must therefore remain a central method for landscape studies. As someone who has contributed to this debate over the nature of archaeological survey evidence, I am aware of the limitations and problems, but also the potential, of using such evidence.

This study aims to use data from the Eastern Korinthia Archaeological Survey (EKAS) in a way that is innovative but responsible, integrating this kind of data with a variety of other evidence. For a region as significant and famous as the Corinthia (Fig. 1.1), archaeological survey is only one kind of source available to the ancient historian. The meager epigraphic evidence has rarely been studied or included in histories of the city in Late Antiquity, but it can be directed easily to such questions. As noted earlier, the recently completed Eastern Korinthia Archaeological Survey has revealed a ubiquitous Late Roman presence, including many new sites. The Eastern Korinthia Archaeological Survey (EKAS) was carried out between 1998 and 2001, with study seasons following between 2002 and 2004. The project was directed by T.E. Gregory (Ohio State University) and D. Pullen (Florida State University). I was in all seasons. The archaeological data from these regional projects was collected by the methods of intensive archaeological survey: teams of archaeologists systematically walking across the landscape, counting and collecting artifacts (pottery and tile fragments especially), and recording the locations of cultural activities. Survey data was collected using “siteless” survey methods, similar to those employed by the Pylos Regional and Sydney Cyprus Survey Projects. Artifacts were counted, collected, and recorded according to small survey tract / unit. For a preliminary analysis of the Late Roman material from this survey, cf. Pettegrew 2004; and Caraher, Nakassis, and Pettegrew 2006.

There is no up-to-date epigraphic collection for this period, but there are older collections in J.H. Kent, Corinth. Vol. 8, part III. The Inscriptions, 1926-1950, Princeton, NJ 1966, 162-209; D. Pallas, “Επιγραφες απο την Κορινθο”, in Ephemeris Archaeologike 1977, 61-85; and scattered references in E. Sironen, The Late Roman and Early Byzantine Inscriptions of Athens and Attica, Helsinki 1997, 401-8.
the city of Corinth was the subject of more discussion in antiquity than is usually acknowledged, and dismissed, today. The Corinthia is a region rich in archaeological investigation, including rescue excavations, more systematic excavation, and archaeological survey in its extensive (topographical) and intensive forms. Altogether, these sources allow for a multivariate approach with the potential to integrate different evidence and enrich our picture of the city on the Isthmus in its Roman and Late Antique world. Landscape is a framework conceptually broad enough to incorporate both the data-specific spatial analysis of archaeological survey and the imaginative musings of writers such as Strabo, Pausanias, and John Chrysostom.

A study of the transformation of ancient city in terms of its local world cannot have rigid spatial and chronological parameters, even if the subject, as described above, centers around the land mass known as the Isthmus in the period of Late Antiquity. While the spatial core of this study focuses on the Isthmus, I often refer to excavations at Corinth as well as the southern and western Corinthia. A study of the crossroads of a famous commercial city must make constant reference to the wider world to which the Isthmus connected, as well as the imagined and perceived landscape known and discussed by those who never even visited the city. The dynamic interaction of the local, regional, and Mediterranean-wide contexts is in fact the proper subject of this study, for the city was a place and entity formed in the cultural confluence of such spheres. In respect to chronological parameters, this dissertation examines the “Late Roman” or “Late Antique” period, often defined for Greece as the period between the mid-third and early seventh centuries AD. Yet, this study takes as its subject the ancient city, and

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96 Although the literary evidence is not great, it is now possible to do more exhaustive searches via computer databases of the TLG and integrate this data into the picture of the region.

97 By the Isthmus, I refer usually to the territory between the urban center of Corinth and the mountains of Gerania and between the Corinthian and Saronic Gulfs. More precise definitions are unnecessary, as chapter two will argue.

98 There is much confusion and inconsistency over the use of the terms “Late Roman”, “Early Byzantine”, “Late Antique”, and “Early Christian” in a Mediterranean context (Cf. J. Vroom, After Antiquity: Ceramics and Society in the Aegean from the 7th to the 20th Century A.C. A Case Study from Boeotia, Central Greece, Leiden 2003, 25-26). In this study, I use the terms “Late Antique” and “Late Roman” interchangeably to denote the period between the middle of the third and early seventh centuries AD.
explores the ways that Greco-Roman ‘antiquity’ lived on in the place. The chronological parameters therefore center on Late Antiquity, but range backward and forward in time to explore the ways that the late Roman landscape was both made and remembered.

1.4. Directions

In conclusion, this study argues that the definition of ancient Corinth—a maritime capital situated on the Isthmus and well-connected to the wider world—was transformed in Late Antiquity, carrying on as an important metropolis while yet casting off many of the garments of its former image. If the story of Roman Corinth was inscribed on its physical landscape, and if the classical tradition narrated how to read that landscape, then examining the Isthmus and its interpretations in Late Antiquity should provide an appropriate index for understanding the end of the ancient city.

The dissertation is divided into seven chapters, followed by an epilogue and several appendices. This general introduction (Chapter 1) is followed by a second chapter (“Corinth in a Landscape”) highlighting the significance of the Isthmian crossroads for a study of Roman and late Roman Corinth. Chapter Two introduces some of the chief images and historical reputations of the ancient city in antiquity—Corinth as a wealthy commerce city, a traveler’s cosmopolis well-situated at the crossroads of land and sea, and connected to a wider world—and discusses the material importance of the Isthmus for the life of the Roman city. The chapter argues that visions of commercial Corinth at the end of antiquity cannot ignore the most important connective landscape that shaped and defined its historic identity and image as a maritime city. The urban center and its eastern territory were materially and conceptually bound together, and the landscape communicated the most significant myths and narrative of the city. Consequently, this physical landscape (and the conceptions of it), so central to the city’s resources and

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Late Roman period, as defined by the Eastern Korinthia Survey corresponded to the dates AD 250-700+. The broad Roman period was divided in half, between the Early Roman period—about 31 BC to AD 250—and the Late Roman Period, between AD 250 and AD 700+. Artifacts that could not be dated to either Early Roman or Late Roman were dated to simply Roman, which was 31 BC to AD 700+, as were artifacts that overlapped the AD 250 division.
reputations, forms an appropriate index for studying of the end of the ancient world. This chapter is intended as an introduction to the Isthmus and its importance for Roman Corinth, including the city’s image and identity, introducing the framework that will be developed in the remaining chapters.99

Chapter Three (“The Image of the City”) is about the stories of the Corinthian landscape that circulated through the Roman period. It examines the significant places in the Isthmus mentioned in traveler accounts or in passing, and the various meanings that they possessed. The chapter discusses the ways in which a landscape of famous places (Isthmia, Nero’s Canal, and the harbors) was created, maintained, forgotten, and redefined in the first to seventh centuries AD. It highlights how the common perceptions of the territory in Roman times reinforced a particular image of Corinth as a maritime city of travel and commerce, one of the crossroads of the broader world. This conceptual landscape was so compelling that it dominated discussions of the territory and ‘blinded’ ancient travelers (and many modern scholars) to the ordinary places spread across the territory (Ch. 4 and 5). The imagined landscape was, moreover, tied to the medium of classical literature and the phenomenon of tourism to Greece, which both suffered significantly from the third or fourth centuries AD; consequently, the territory grows dim in the literary testimony of Late Antiquity. An ancient pattern of reading and interpreting the Isthmus in light of classical literature fragments in this period, and the traditional image of the city is radically redefined. The chapter explores how the city’s conceptual landscape, this landscape of famous places, changes, despite broad material continuity in the territory (Ch. 4-6).

The fourth chapter, “A Busy Countryside,” presents the ceramic data collected by the Eastern Korinthia Archaeological Survey in terms of Corinth’s reputation as a famous commercial city. It shows that despite the scant documentary evidence about settlement

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99 As the second chapter will make clear, arguing that the Isthmus was important for the city’s economy is not to argue that the city’s economy was determined by and entirely based on this particular territory. This study takes for granted that all Corinthian territory played into and contributed to local economy. It was, nonetheless, mainly the Isthmus that fascinated the Roman world, including (as chapter two will show) even the Corinthians themselves.
on the Isthmus (Ch. 3), the *physical landscape* was very busy. The chapter tackles a major interpretive problem common to regional surveys in Greece—how to understand the pattern of Late Roman abundance of artifacts compared to a relatively empty Early Roman landscape. It presents a case for ‘source criticism’ in interpreting survey data, arguing that Late Roman material is more visible than Early Roman on account of a more diagnostic artifact assemblage, which is itself related to patterns of trade and distribution in the Roman period. The chapter argues that the Isthmus contributed vitally to Corinth’s commercial reputation beginning in the early Roman period and lasting through the sixth century. The ceramic material found in archaeological survey of the Isthmus supports the ancient image of the Roman city as a major commercial center, but one whose structures of trade and settlement were not confined to the urban center but existed in its extra-urban territory. The abundance and continuous distribution of Late Roman pottery on the Isthmus indicates that the eastern territory remained a fundamental place in Mediterranean-wide distribution networks through the sixth century, despite the concomitant fading significance of this territory in the ancient imagination (Chapter 3).

Chapter Five (“The Crossroads”) builds on the previous chapter by discussing the broad area of habitation that emerged at the major crossroads of the Isthmus known as “Kromna” between the sites of Isthmia / Kenchreai and the urban center of Corinth. Despite the fact that this specific crossroad was never mentioned in antiquity—“Kromna” was not a major town of the Isthmus, as has often been argued—the ubiquity of Early and Late Roman pottery confirms that the area was significant as a crossroads and emporium. The abundant material culture in the area throughout the Roman period provides telling evidence for the longevity of the city’s extra-urban structures of commerce and habitation. The continuing importance of this crossroads through the sixth century AD—as well as rural settlements on the Isthmus generally—demonstrates again that the material resources of the territory remained vital for the city, even if the documentary evidence for the city is so weak. The physical structures of extra-urban habitation on the Isthmus reinforced the city’s traditional place in Mediterranean markets.
Chapter Six, “Inhabiting Time” explores the meaning of the longevity, continuity, and reuse of *ordinary places* in Corinthian territory in Late Antiquity. This chapter examines rural and urban villas and buildings, contextualized in terms of Roman and Late Roman attitudes toward private building. Despite the discontinuities in public buildings of ancient Corinth, more ordinary places had long lives stretching through Late Antiquity. Processes such as refurbishing constituted the kind of basic ways that antiquity was continued, renewed, and redefined between the third and sixth centuries, while the forms of building show that the inhabitants of the city were well aware of private building trends elsewhere. This chapter, then, provides another piece of evidence demonstrating the economic and cultural health of the region and city in Late Antiquity and the way that the city interacted with the broader world.

A final chapter offers a very brief conclusion about future prospects for this study. A fuller discussion of the Christianization of the Corinthian landscape, including both a remaking of the city’s myths and the proliferation of a Christian material culture in the territory, would significantly round out and complete the current study.

An appendix follows detailing the discussion of methods for defining Late Roman sites in the Eastern Corinthia as revealed by EKAS; and a presentation of those sites.

These chapters together offer a study of the way that the image of the city continued and was redefined in the course of Late Antiquity. It is not meant to be exhaustive but does aim for coherence, shedding light on how local antiquity survived, died and was reborn. *Corinth on the Isthmus* represents my first effort to sort through the colorful stories surrounding a famous city of antiquity, and the physical remains of those who lived, moved, and passed their while where the roads of the world converged.
CHAPTER 2
Corinth in a Landscape

“Not for every man is the voyage to Corinth” (Strabo 8.6.20)

One of the most striking signs of arriving in Ancient Corinth every year is traveling by public transportation from Athens, along the steep coastal road, through the mountain range of Gerania, rounding the bend near Ayioi Theodorii, and seeing Acrocorinth, the most salient physical landmark of the city. That rock is the visual focal point of a trip coming from the Scironian pass and appears as the immediate end to the road from Athens. Even at a distance, it feels near and overshadowing, signaling to the traveler his arrival at Corinth as though the city were already reached in the view of the rock. This limestone rock must have made the ancient journey to Corinth pass more quickly.

From the apex of that rock, the visitor acquires a view of the entire structure of Corinthian topography: the western coastal plain that runs to Sicyon and climbs upwards to the hills beyond; the mountains rolling southward to the Argolid; and the fascinating eastern landscape delimited sharply by the two gulfs and constricting to the bottleneck formed at the narrow Isthmus. It is this eastern landscape that is most visually fascinating when viewed from above, giving the city its imageable character and topographic uniqueness among countless Greek poleis to emerge in the Aegean basin. Whether viewed from the peak looking eastward, or from the Isthmus looking westward, the city sits in one of the most visually compelling landscapes of Greece.
If the well-known book by J.B. Salmon detailing the history and resources of the Archaic and Classical *polis* of Corinth can begin by highlighting the importance of the rich agricultural plain to the north and west of the urban center,¹ a study of the city’s cultural landscape in (Late) Roman times must understandably emphasize the eastern territory. For in the Roman period especially, the Isthmus and eastern landscape pointed toward the broader world and constituted the most direct route outward. The eastern landscape created and supported the commercial town and colored the imagination about ancient Corinth as a secular and wealthy cosmopolis. Although Corinth’s total territory remained important for the resource base of the Roman city, the image of the city centered decidedly in the Isthmus.

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce briefly some of the ways that the Roman city of Corinth was united to its eastern landscape and how the Isthmus was cemented to the city’s image, mythology and associations as a maritime and commercial city. It was

not simply an urban center that was dramatically redefined at the end of antiquity, but an entire cultural context and set of relationships focused on the territory between two seas. This chapter will attempt to show how the place of the Isthmus mattered for the life of the Roman city, and why the end of that city must consider the end of its broader landscape.

The chapter shows how the structure of the topography of the eastern territory (2.1) binds the city to the Isthmus and the wider world, and, as importantly, affects the perception of the city in its territory; and, on the other hand (2.2), how individuals in the Roman period understood the influence and consequence of geographic structure on the city’s history, as relating directly to the city’s identity, wealth, and reputation. A final section (2.3) suggests that this structure of the landscape and its ancient interpretations need not mean geographic determinism for the city’s history, and that a study of this kind (i.e., this dissertation) is justified in its focus on the Isthmus. The chapter is designed to introduce the well-known features of the eastern Corinthian territory—as these will be the basis for discussion in the remainder of the dissertation.

2.1. The Physical Landscape

When many people today think about ancient Corinth, they think of the urban remains excavated by the American School of Classical Studies over the course of a hundred years. Corinth, however, existed in a broader physical and imagined landscape that gave the city its prestige and definition in antiquity. While Corinth’s urban center, harbors (Lechaion and Kenchreai) and gulfs, Isthmian sanctuary, graves, roads, quarries, and rural settlements are often studied in isolation, dissected separately by modern scholars (and groups of scholars), the ancient town and country together constituted a narrative of places relating the city’s histories, meanings, and significant identities and associations. Despite the conventional modern designation of “Corinth” as the urban center specifically, the name in Roman times could refer to a much broader spatial and conceptual sphere.
As the ancients put it, Corinth was the city on the Isthmus. To them, the most interesting thing about the city was its position and relation to the Isthmus, and how the Isthmus was connected physically and conceptually to ancient travel and the wider world. Corinth was a city linked in ancient minds to travel and passage to and from points elsewhere. So ran the most common proverb, “It is not for every man to go to Corinth.” That phrase, however differently interpreted, always retained its basic associations with going. This particular dominant image of ancient Corinth was formed from the geological and topographical structure of the city’s territory (2.1.1 and 2.1.2) mythologized and historicized (2.2) in ancient travel literature, historical accounts, and material investments and memorializing of particular places in the land.
2.1.1. Mountains, Seas, and Land

The landscape of the Corinthia is subdivided and differentiated by a number of topographic features, including most immediately the mountains. The highest range of Mount Oneion sets a rigid backdrop to the Corinthian plain, although it did not mark the southern border of the Corinthia in either the Classical or Roman period. The southern Corinthia is continuously hilly and mountainous terrain running to the Argolid and Epidauria, marginalized from the busier northern plain by the formidable physical barrier of the Oneion range. The mountain range of Gerania east of the Isthmus, constricting at the dangerous Scironian Road, marks the easternmost territorial boundary while the land north and west of the city is visually continuous to a rise of elevation well past the Corinthian-Sicyonian border; the territory’s traditional western border was one of the north-south rivers that run through and dissect the land. The gulfs form the visual termination of Corinthian territory to the north and east, although several small islands (e.g., Evraionisos) in the Saronic Gulf belonged to the city.

Figure 2.3. The Oneion Mountain Range, with the Perdhikaria Ridge in the foreground (facing south)
At the end of the Oneion mountain range lies Acrocorinth, the geological signpost of Corinth, one of the greatest symbols of the central Corinthia that was forged by the temperaments of seismic activity. The acropolis overshadows Corinth and reaches out in all directions toward its territory, and indeed, can be seen from afar from all parts of its territory. Ridges running east-west subdivide the Isthmus into several east-west corridors whose visual termini (from the east) are the giant limestone rock Acrocorinth.

The Isthmus is the visually dramatic feature of Corinthian territory when viewed from above as the seas from both sides appear to encroach on the land. The Isthmus is most visible from Acrocorinth (or the mountains of Oneion) but the twin seas can be perceived simultaneously from lower elevations, including even the Ayios Dimitrios Ridge. This luck of geography meant that the gulfs with outlets to Asia and Italy were close enough to encourage the use of overland transport of goods but far enough to hinder the completion of a canal in antiquity; that all land travel from the east would be funneled
through the Corinthian Isthmus; and that urban center and harbors would communicate and meet in the eastern territory. The proximity of the Isthmus to the urban center also meant that the Isthmus would be a natural point of defense against invasions from the north into the Corinthia and southern Greece, a fact that further bound the city to its eastern landscape.

![The Isthmus of Corinth, from Acrocorinth (facing east)](image)

**Figure 2.5. The Isthmus of Corinth, from Acrocorinth (facing east)**

More important for this discussion, however, is that Corinth on the Isthmus was uniquely positioned at a Mediterranean crossroad, between the landed traffic of central and southern Greece, and the watery voyages of Asia to Italy, an interesting configuration noted constantly in the Roman period (see below). Corinth was “twin-sea” and “washed from both sides” and said to be wealthy because of its position, controlling the traffic everywhere surrounding it.

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2.1.2. *The Structure of the Landscape*

However we interpret ancient testimony that describe the centrality of the Isthmus for Roman Corinth (see below), the geographic features discussed above must have seriously affected the ancient experience of the city. Three important consequences of this topography can be noted.

First, the physical features of the land form several major east-west corridors that in antiquity functioned as natural conduits for roads, routes, and travel. The Isthmus and Acrocorinth are the visual eastern and western poles of a corridor flanked by a formidable mountain range (Oneion) to the south and the Corinthian Gulf to the north; harbors exist at natural breaks in the coastline to the north and east and link the city to its seas. The east-west ridges of the Corinthia separate the coastal plain from the less fertile territory immediately north of Mt. Oneion; even the terracing of the slopes and the lay of the fields reinforce these east-west corridors and structure the terrain. As Wiseman well puts it (1978, 64),

Gigantic prehistoric seismic upheavals on the Isthmus not only created the prominent elevations that terminate the land-bridge on the south (Rachi, Ayios Dimitrios ridge, Mt Onium) and southwest (Acrocorinth, Penteskouphia), but also left the flat lands terraced in a series of long rifts that run more or less east-west. Erosion and further land-shifts created a few natural ascents along this great natural stairway and they are especially important for convenient passage in the central part of the Isthmus. They provide obvious routes for cart-roads and, although the escarpments themselves are not high enough in most places to hinder greatly the traveller on foot, it is the cart-road and not the foot-path, of course, that becomes the most travelled route.

The good connections of the primary and secondary roads made possible by the natural corridors turned the entire Isthmus into a veritable travelscape (Fig. 2.7) for both locals and visitors to the region.

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3 As David Romano’s analysis suggests, even the centuriated field divisions extending across the Isthmus reinforce this basic division. See D.G. Romano, “Post–146 B.C. Land Use in Corinth, and Planning of the Roman Colony of 44 B.C.,” in T.E. Gregory (ed.), *The Corinthia in the Roman Period*, JRA Suppl. 8, Ann Arbor, MI, 1993, 9–30; and recently, D.G. Romano, “City Planning, Centuriation, and Land Division in Roman Corinth: *Colonia Laus Iulia Corinthiensis* and *Colonia Iulia Flavia Augusta Corinthiensis*”, in Williams and Bookidis 2003, 279-301.
The resulting network of roads on the Isthmus has been often discussed by topographers and historians. James Wiseman suggested at least eight travel arteries on the Isthmus (Fig. 2.8), all within the natural corridors and generally following the routes of the modern roads (Fig. 2.7). Fowler and Stilwell also suggested many smaller secondary roads and paths in the plain of the Isthmus. The entire structure of the landscape, including the division of the agricultural plain into east-west zones, and even the territory’s deep north-south ravines, funneled constant traffic along several important routes, interconnected by a variety of smaller roads. The modern roads of the Isthmus and the probable paths of the ancient roads (after Wiseman 1978) can be seen in Figures 2.6-2.8 below, as well as the following images.

These land routes, together with the four harbors of Corinth—the large harbors Lechaion and Kenchreai as well as the two ports serving the ship-road—turned the Corinthia into a crossroads of land and sea. The roads of the Isthmus connected Corinth with the Argolid, the deep Peloponnese, Sicyonia, and Megara, while the harbors connected the city to the central and northern Greece, Attica and the Aegean, and the western and eastern Mediterranean. It is often assumed that visitors to the region would have had to pass through the city center on their way, but for the traveler on the go, the more direct routes across the Isthmus would have been easier. In any case, whatever the actual volume of commerce and travel in the Roman period, there is little doubt that the Isthmus was relatively speaking a “busy” territory.

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4 J. Wiseman, *The Land of the Ancient Corinthians*, Göteborg 1978; see also Fowler and Stillwell 1932, 106: When Corinth was a great and prosperous city, when Kenchreai and Lechaem were busy ports, and when the Isthmian Games attracted crowds of visitors, there were without doubt many roads and paths in the comparatively flat region of the Isthmus and the plains that stretched along the shores of the Corinthian and the Saronic gulfs; but of these there are no vestiges remaining.

5 In Fig. 2.8, I have added the road that must have cut straight across the Isthmus, alongside the ship-road.


7 For Lechaion and connectivity, see Rothaus 1995, 294. For how the diolkos fit into travel systems of the Corinthia and the broader world, see R.M. Cook 1979, 152-53; MacDonald 1986, 192-93. See also Sanders and Whitebread 1990, *BSA* 85, 353-65.
Figure 2.6. Map of Isthmus, with Major Ancient Place Names

Figure 2.7. Map of Isthmus with modern roads: highway, well-paved roads, and tertiary roads
Second, the visibility of Acrocorinth from some twenty kilometers away creates a compelling visual focus for the traveler from all directions. When approaching Corinth from the east, even as far as the terminus of the Scironian rocks the peak is visible, becoming invisible only through changes in elevation and blockage by ridges. The entire topography is drawn to Acrocorinth, as though a gravitational pole. The mountains to the north (Perachora) and south (Oneion), the Corinthian Gulf, and even the east-west marine terraces and ridges (e.g., Ayios Dimitrios) reinforce the pull toward the city, signified by its rock. This topography even structures the journeying itself, for the traveler by foot has Corinth (in the form of its acropolis) in sight at least two to three hours before arriving at the urban center. The walking distances between Corinth, Isthmia, and the harbors were short enough that travel ended as quickly as it began, and the small sites seen along the way were forgotten or unmentioned in light of the principal nodes and destinations (Chapter 3).
Third, the Isthmus was no typical idyllic Greek countryside with strong borders separating it from its town, but was constantly connected to the town in innumerable ways. Besides the visual and conceptual links between town and the Isthmus (see above), the eastern territory was also physically linked to the urban center by its roads and traffic. A constant and steady flow of travel east and west, north and south, linked Corinth’s urban center with its sanctuaries, rural sites, harbors, and ultimately, the broader Mediterranean. Thousands of visitors per year passed to and from, between harbors and town, and town and Isthmus, continually, but also according to the patterns and seasons of agriculture, commerce, travel, and religious festival. Consequently, we can put out of our minds the picture of a quaint and rustic countryside with isolated farmsteads scattered like dots on a map. Rather, most places on the Isthmus lie along or close to major roads with significant traffic, and were thereby highly visible to travelers and passersby and constantly linked with each other and the urban center through daily activity. The cultural features of the Isthmus—the settlements, terraces, tombs, and walls—formed
only the gathering points, physical nodes, and visual markers in a well-traveled and connected territory. The experience of this landscape in the Roman period occurred both at the nodes (e.g., the sites of Kenchreai and Isthmia) as well as in the *journeying* between these points along the network of roads. City and country did not neatly separate from one another but were united constantly in this landscape through topography and travel.

Figure 2.10. View northward from Stanatopi, with the harbor of Kenchreai in foreground and inlet of the Saronic Gulf to the Isthmus in background

Ultimately, then, the Isthmus hardly fits a typical model of town and countryside. The constant points of connection between hinterland and urban center, rather, reinforce the impression of an extension of the city to the north and east. The experience of Corinth for both visitors and residents took place well outside the town, at the harbors, games, in the fields, or walking along the way. The concepts explored here will be discussed throughout the remainder of this study.
2.2. The Myth of a Landscape

How was the Corinthian landscape understood in the Roman period? The geographic structure of the region not only predicated a certain historical and economic prestige to the city, but was itself a constant literary *topos* of the early empire. The role of geography in affecting and even determining Corinth’s history, identity, and associations was by the first-second centuries AD among the most frequent myths circulating about the city. The ancient history, mythology, and conceptions surrounding ancient Corinth in the Roman periods were linked constantly to the city’s unique geography and role as a traveler’s city. This section will explore two interrelated themes about the city and landscape in Roman times: 1) in ancient conception, the city of Corinth was tightly bound to its eastern landscape, the Isthmus; and 2) Roman authors viewed the Isthmus as a crossroads that made the city a ‘traveler’s town’ and formed its reputations for wealth, loose living, and cosmopolitanism.
2.2.1. Corinth on the Isthmus

In Roman times, Corinth was linked to the Isthmus, and the Isthmus to the city. Corinth was the city on the Isthmus, and the Isthmus was significant and remarkable as both a land bridge and a crossroads. This conceptual tie, which had been articulated hundreds of years before during the period that the Greek city existed, was ascribed fully to the developing Roman city of the first two centuries AD. As numerous authors in this period noted, the favorable position of Corinth in its landscape made it the famous city that it was.

There were three key landscape features that became cemented to the image of the city by the early Roman period: 1) the peak of Acrocorinth that offered a view in all directions; 2) the twin seas that formed the northern and eastern borders of the city; and 3) the land known as the Isthmus stretching eastward from the urban center and constricting to a narrow band of land only 6 miles wide. These features, the most visually distinct facets of the territory (see above), formed the most (if not only) important points in Corinthian geography by which the city was read and identified, even before the Roman colony redeveloped into an important cosmopolis.

Although today we are accustomed to thinking about the social and economic importance of the total land and territory for the ancient Corinthians, the popular conception of the Roman city was tilted unevenly toward its eastern territory demarcated by twin seas. This is evident, for example, by examining two commentaries on Corinthian territory in the period: Strabo’s Geography 8.6.20-23, written in the late first century BC, immediately after the refoundation of the city, and Pausanias’ Description of Greece 2.1.1-2.5.5, written in the middle of the second century AD. Both accounts depict a landscape situated in the Isthmus. Strabo’s survey of the Corinthia begins with the Isthmus (and Isthmia), and proceeds to Acrocorinth, the Peirene spring, the urban center, and the places visible from the peak. Strabo’s account largely passes over the southern and western Corinthia—the exception is a brief discussion of the town of Tenea (8.6.22) and a vague passing reference to the “parts of Corinthia and Sicyonia which lie across the
gulf opposite to Phocis, that is, towards the west.”8 His discussion of the eastern
territory, on the other hand, names Isthmia, the Scironian Rocks, Lechaion, Kenchreai,
Schoenus, the Diolkos, the sanctuary of Acraean Hera, Crommyon, and the two gulfs.
Pausanias, although lengthier in content, is hardly different in geographic focus. His
discussion of Corinthian territory includes Crommyon, the Isthmus (and the sacred sites
connected with it), Kenchreai and Lechaion, Helen’s Bath, Corinth, and Acrocorinth. His
only mention of the south or west includes brief references to Tenea and the burnt temple
on the road to Sicyon.

The western and southern territories of Corinth, in fact, are hardly mentioned in the
Roman period. Strabo says that Corinth’s territory “was not very fertile, but rifted and
rough; and from this fact all have called Corinth ‘beetling’…Corinth is both beetle-
browed and full of hollows.”9 The geographer when speaking of Corinthian territory
obviously has in mind the Isthmus, passing by the proverbial fertile western territory
between Corinth and Sicyon.10 Generally speaking, the fertile western plain was hardly
mentioned in the Roman period, despite the fact that modern commentators frequently
cite the ancient proverb, “Fair is the land between Corinth and Sicyon.”11 Even Cicero,
who is sometimes cited in this respect because he mentions the sale of the rich western
land,12 connects the previous city’s wealth not to its land but to its advantaged location.13

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8 Strabo 8.6.21, Loeb translation.
9 Strabo 8.6.23, Loeb Translation.
10 Wiseman 1978, 444 FN9, has Strabo’s text read, “Fair is the land between Corinth and Sicyon” but this
appears to be a suggested restoration of on an ellipsis in the Greek text.
11 Those who refer to that land are eruditely quoting the Delphic Oracle with no apparent allusion to
contemporary use. See, for example, Ael. Arist. Or. 28.9; Diod. Sic. 8.21.3; Athenaeus, Deip. 219A; Diog.
Gramm. Paroemiae 2.60.1; Zen. Soph. Epitome collectionum 3.57.1; Parke and Wormell, The Delphic
Oracle, vol. II, no. 46. One exception from the late Hellenistic period includes Livy’s account describing
the events of 208 BC (27.31.1), which apparently refers to real events of 208 BC, “Publius Sulpicius sailing
from Naupactus put in with his fleet between Sicyon and Corinth and ravaged a region of the most noted
fertility far and wide.”
12 Cicero refers (On the Agrarian Law 1.5; 2.51) to the sale of Corinth’s rich and fertile land but does not
specifically place the territory.
13 Cicero Agr. Law 2.87.
For travelers, geographers, and pilgrims of the early Roman period, the western and southern territory of Corinth stood at the fringe of their interests. For all practical purposes, most people thought of the Isthmus as equivalent to Corinth’s territory, and the Corinthians as inhabitants of the Isthmus.\textsuperscript{14} The rest of the territory was, relatively speaking, uninteresting.

By contrast, the twin gulfs and the territory of the Isthmus between urban center and the Geranian mountain range were bound closely to the image of the city. One finds a fascinated preoccupation with this landscape throughout the literature of the Roman period, as is suggested by the ancient epithets: the “Corinthian Isthmus”, the “Isthmus of Corinth”, “Corinth of the twin seas” or “sea-girt Corinth.”\textsuperscript{15} The linking of these features of the city’s territory in part relate to the simple interrelated viewsheds discussed in the previous section. The geographer Pomponius Mela specifically refers to the view of the Isthmus and seas from Acrocorinth,\textsuperscript{16} as does Strabo, reflecting for both a first-hand visit to the area. Livy describes Aemilius Paulus’ trip to the city before its destruction in 167 BC:\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{14} One of Lucian’s characters states as common knowledge that the Isthmus was equivalent to Corinthian territory. Luc. \textit{Pseudol.} 15.10. “Indeed, any old man, full of years, who is unacquainted with such expressions is not, I think, even aware that the city of Athens is in Attica, Corinth at the Isthmus, and Sparta in the Peloponnese.” Or consider Paus. 8.1.1: “The first people within the peninsula are the Corinthians, living on the Isthmus.” Both are Loeb translations.

\textsuperscript{15} Corinth at the Isthmus: Lucian \textit{Pseudol.} 15.10; Corinthian Isthmus: Agathemerus Geogr. 24.6; Sea-girt Corinth: Julius Pollux Gramm. \textit{Onom.} 9.18.1; Corinth of the twin-seas: Hor. \textit{Carm} 1.7.2; Terentianus Maurus 2101-2107.

\textsuperscript{16} “Megara’s territory runs up to the Isthmos, which gets its name because the Aegean Sea, being at a remove of four miles from the Ionian Sea, ties the Peloponnesos to Hellas by a narrow neck of land. On it is…Corinth, a city once famous for its wealth, better known later for its destruction, and now a Roman colony. Corinth has a view of both seas from a peak of the acropolis they call Acrocorinth.” Pomponius Mela \textit{Chor.} 2.48.5-6. Translation from F.E. Romer, \textit{Pomponius Mela’s Description of the World}, Ann Arbor MI 1998, University of Michigan Press.

\textsuperscript{17} Livy 45.28, Loeb translation. In a slightly different account, Polybius 30.10.3, Aemilius was most impressed with the city’s favorable position, controlling the districts both within and outside the Isthmus.
This city was at that time, before its destruction, a place of outstanding beauty; its citadel, within the walls, rising up to an immense height, abounding in springs of water, while the Isthmus separates by this narrow passage two neighbouring seas to the east and to the west.

And Pliny the Elder writes,\textsuperscript{18}

The narrow neck of land from which it [the Peloponnese] projects is called the Isthmus. At this place the two seas that have been mentioned encroach on opposite sides from the north and east and swallow up all the breadth of the peninsula at this point, until in consequence of the inroad of such large bodies of water in opposite directions the coasts have been eaten away so as to leave a space between them of only five miles, with the result that the Morea is only attached to Greece by a narrow neck of land…. In the middle of this neck of land which we have called the Isthmus is the colony of Corinth…its habitations cling to the side of a hill, 7-1/2 miles from the coast on either side, and the top of its citadel, called Acrocorinth, on which is the spring of Peirene, commands views of the two seas in opposite directions.

Citadel, seas, and isthmus interlink and form defining points in the landscape that are reinforced by visual contrast. Even Acrocorinth overshadows the twin seas and landscape.\textsuperscript{19} The physical features of Corinth’s landscape that mattered to individuals in the Roman period stretched from the urban center eastward to its seas and land bridge.

Corinthian mythology and history circulating in the Roman period further reinforced connections between mountain, seas / harbors, and isthmus, infusing them with sacred and historical structure.\textsuperscript{20} Even before the first inhabitants settled in the land, the gods were said to have fought over and divided Corinth’s territory.\textsuperscript{21} Acrocorinth fell to Helios and Aphrodite, and became associated with the nymph Peirene, Bellerophon, and Pegasus; the Isthmus, seas, and harbors fell to Poseidon. The children of the spring Peirene were Cenchrias and Leches, who possessed the harbors. As a second century AD...

\textsuperscript{18} Pliny, \textit{Nat. Hist.} 4.9-11, Loeb translation.

\textsuperscript{19} Statius Theb. 7.106.

\textsuperscript{20} For a recent discussion of Corinthian myth in the Roman period, especially as it pertains to Acrocorinth and Peirene, see B.A. Robinson, \textit{Fountains and the Culture of Water at Roman Corinth}, Unpublished Dissertation, History of Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia 2001, 185-203.

\textsuperscript{21} Menander Rhet.; Lucian \textit{Salt}. 42.
orator summarizes the mythological structure of Corinthian territory in a panegyric address to the city.  

But supposing my statue to be actually of the ancient craftsmanship of Dadalus, for what strange reasons would it have taken leave of your city, the city for which they say the two gods, Poseidon and Helius, vied with one another, the one being lord of fire, the other lord of water? And after the twain had striven and had entrusted the decision to a third god who was their elder. ‘Whose heads were man, many too his arms’ (Briareus), having, as I say, left to him the decision, they both have held this city and district ever since, surely no slight or obscure sign of its superiority over all other cities. For while the others are the portion and prosperity of the gods individually—Argos of Hera and Athens of Athena—and while, with reference to these very gods of whom I speak, Rhodes belongs to Helius and Onchestus to Poseidon, Corinth belongs to each of the two. You might imagine, since the myth suggests it, that the strip of land between two seas was an exceptional grant made by Helius because Poseidon wished it so.

The foundation of the games in honor of Melicertes, the boy washed up on the back of the dolphin, were also said to have been a double foundation of the gods. The inhabitants of new Roman City itself promoted these connections and landscape, as evident by coinage of the imperial period and investments in sites like Isthmia. There were in the second century AD local guides who could point out the particular places on the route to Corinth associated with these mythical events. This mythologized landscape formed a chronotope of space and time that created the scene for additional stories. Ovid has Hades, in his rape of Persephone, gallop through the place “where the Bacchiadae, a race sprung from Corinth between two seas, had built a city between two

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25 For example, Pausanias 1.44.7-8: “There are legends about the rocks, which rise especially at the narrow part of the road. As to the Molurian, it is said that from it Ino flung herself into the sea with Melicertes, the younger of her children. Learchus, the elder of them, had been killed by his father. One account is that Athamas did this in a fit of madness; another is that he vented on Ino and her children unbridled rage when he learned that the famine which befell the Orchomenians and the supposed death of Phrixus were not accidents from heaven, but that Ino, the step-mother, had intrigued for all these things. [1.44.8] Then it was that she fled to the sea and cast herself and her son from the Molurian Rock. The son, they say, was landed on the Corinthian Isthmus by a dolphin, and honours were offered to Melicertes, then renamed Palaemon, including the celebration of the Isthmian games.” Loeb translation.
harbours of unequal size.” Seneca’s *Medea* calls on the Sun to allow her to set ablaze Corinth between its twin gulfs and flood the Isthmus. The city’s territory was well articulated in respect to its mythological connections.

These important nodes in the landscape, the acropolis, Isthmus, and seas, could separately or together be used as a symbol for the city itself, or vice versa. Apuleius, for example, begins his Grecian tale by referring to the famous Isthmus as one of his boyhood tutors when he obviously has in mind Corinth town. Strabo, quoting Euripides, refers to Corinth as the acropolis washed by its seas, “I am come, having left Acrocorinthus that is washed on all sides, the sacred hill-city of Aphrodite.” “Corinth” was itself a shorthand for denoting Lechaion, Isthmia, and Kenchreai. As Aelius Aristides panegyrized (*Oration* 46), the city stretched outward to its twin seas, as though the entire eastern territory of the Isthmus constituted a thriving commercial city. Even the imagined experience of Corinth was linked to the natural features of the Isthmus and seas. The son of Oedipus “leaves Sciron’s ill-famed cliffs and Scylla’s fields where the purple ancient ruled and wealthy Corinth; and in mid land hears two shores.” Just as the Taygetus of Alpheus could refer to Sparta and Olympia, so too were Corinth’s famous geographic features the Isthmus, harbors, and seas. To experience the city was to experience these facets of the broader landscape, and vice versa.

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27 Seneca *Med.* 35.

28 Twin Seas: Ovid *Fast.* 4.501; Ovid *Met.* 5.407; Horace *Carm.* 1.7.2; Pomponius Porphyrio *Carm.* 1.7.2; Gaius Caesius Bassus *Metr.* 6.394.

29 Strabo 8.6.21. This is the Loeb translation by H.L. Jones. As Jones remarks (p. 195, FN1) Euripides clearly intended by “washed on all sides” the city washed by both the Corinthian and Saronic Gulfs (and not, as Strabo interprets it, flowing with springs). In a Late Antique context, Stephanus Byz., defines Acrocorinth as simply another name for Corinth: *A k r o k o t i n q o j .... i ε γ e t a i d e \ k a i K o t i n q o j a p l w j 30*

30 Alciphron *Ep.* 4.2.1.3; Galen, *De proprietum animi* ("The Affections and Errors of the Soul") 5.18-19; Flav. Philostratus *VA* 7.10.

31 Statius *Theb.* 1.334.

32 Seneca *Thyestes* 124 and 627-629.
The link between city and landscape was so compelling that the city’s fate was thought to be tied to its eastern territory. Although there is relatively little literary evidence describing the Roman sack of the territory, the epigrammatist Polystratus in the aftermath of the Greek city’s destruction described Lucius Mummius’ sack of Corinth with:33 “Lucius has smitten sore the great Achaean Acrocorinth, the star of Hellas, and the twin parallel shores of the Isthmus.” Certainly other passages describe the destruction of Roman Corinth in this way.34 Seneca has Medea curse the city by invoking Helios against the Isthmus,35 “Corinth, which blocks a pair of gulfs, must be consumed by flames and let the two seas converge…..Every outrage the Phasis or Pontus saw, the Isthmus will see.” We will see that in Late Antiquity too, descriptions of disasters such as the Gothic invasions will assume very similar forms.

2.2.2. The Consequences of Geography

According to ancient authors, Corinthian geography had two principal consequences on the city’s historical development. First, the narrowness of the land constricting at the Isthmus created a line of division between northern and southern Greece, which the city controlled by its position. Corinth stood at the point of access by land to the Peloponnese and central-northern Greece,36 and was for this reason known as both the gatekeeper and the key to the Peloponnese, and one of Greece’s “fetters” or “shackles.” The general or state that possessed Corinth had all of southern Greece in hand because he could control who entered or exited the Peloponnese.37 This facet of Corinthian history is well discussed in modern scholarship.

33 Greek Anthology 7.297, Loeb Translation.

34 Antipater of Sidon mentions the loss of the beauty, fortifications and towers, and wealth of the destroyed city. Only the Nereids, symbolic of the two seas, survive to weep for the city. Greek Anthology 9.151.

35 Seneca Medea 35, Loeb translation.

36 See Strabo 8.1.3 for discussions of the Isthmus and Greece.

37 Plut. Apothegnata Laconia 221F; Strabo 9.4.15.5; Velleius Paterculus History of Rome 1.3.3. And Strabo 8.4.8: “And so Demetrius of Pharos seems to have spoken aptly to Philip the son of Demetrius when
Second, the ancients recognized that the Isthmus facilitated travel and generated a great volume of traffic that contributed immensely to the city’s commerce, wealth, and reputation. The Romans considered the city the promenade (peripatos) of Greece, the gateway to the Peloponnesese, and the town between two harbors. These harbors, Lechaion and Kenchreai, were the great havens of ships from around the world and attracted innumerable voyagers, travelers, and pilgrims. The connection of Corinth to this landscape of travel, journeying, and, by consequence, commerce, was one of the most common literary topoi of antiquity.

These “consequences” of Corinthian geography—both relating to the Isthmus and the concepts of passage and travel—together fostered a particular reputation and fame of the ancient city. Individuals of the Roman period, for example, recognized that the city’s “advantageous position” was essential to the wealth and power of both the destroyed Greek city and the emerging Roman city. Cicero, a contemporary to the Roman refoundation of Corinth, explained that:

In the whole world there are only three cities capable of sustaining the name and dignity of empire, Carthage, Corinth, and Capua...Scarce a trace remains of Corinth. Placed in the narrowest part of Greece, as in a pass, it held on the land side the keys of the country and on the other side almost united, so narrow was the space between them, two seas open to navigation in diametrically opposed senses.

In another text, Cicero proffers that the Roman destruction of Corinth regrettably occurred because of the city’s advantageous location, posing a potential Greek threat to

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38 Favorinus, *The Corinthian Oration* 7; Alciphron *Letters of Parasites*, n. 24 (3.60).


40 Cicero *Agr. Law* 2.87, Loeb.
rising Roman power. Strabo too posits (8.4.8) that the city’s position had made it an object of contention previously and also an attraction for Rome in refounding the city.

That favorable position was the cause of the city’s wealth in the Greek and Roman periods. In an often-cited passage, Strabo explains,

Corinth is called ‘wealthy’ because of its commerce, since it is situated on the Isthmus and is master of two harbours, of which the one leads straight to Asia, and the other to Italy; and it makes easy the exchange of merchandise from both countries that are so far distant from each other. And just as in early times the Strait of Sicily was not easy to navigate, so also the high seas, and particularly the sea beyond Maleae, on account of the contrary winds; and hence the proverb, “but when you double Maleae forget your home.” At any rate, to land their cargoes here was a welcome alternative to the voyage to Maleae for merchants from both Italy and Asia. And also the duties of what was exported by land from the Peloponnesse as well as on what was imported into it belonged to those who held the keys. And to later times this remained ever so. But to the Corinthians of later times still greater advantages were added, for also the Isthmian games, which were celebrated there, were wont to draw crowds of people.

The Isthmus was said to have contributed to the Greek city’s commerce and tariffs, and the biennial Isthmian games to have increased that traffic, as did (allegedly) the great body of sacred prostitutes. In a second century AD account by Dio Chrysostom, the famous Hellenistic Cynic Diogenes allegedly moved to Corinth because “the city was situated as it were at the cross-roads of Greece.” Diogenes noticed that the harbors and the prostitutes attracted large crowds of people and subsequently settled down to offer his services “where the sick are most numerous.” Aelius Aristides (2nd c. AD) praises the city for this attribute specifically: “The poets decided to call the city of Corinth ‘fortunate’ because it is located on the Isthmus and receives those journeying in either direction.”

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41 Cicero De Officiis 1.35.8, Loeb Translation: “Our forefathers actually admitted to full rights of citizenship the Tusculans, Aequians, Volscians, Sabines and Hernicians, but they razed Carthage and Numantia to the ground. I wish they had not destroyed Corinth; but I believe they had some special reason for what they did—its convenient situation, probably—and feared that its very location might some day furnish a temptation to renew the war. In my opinion, at least, we should always strive to secure a peace that shall not admit of guile.”

42 Strabo 8.6.20-23, Loeb Translation.


44 See Ael. Arist. Or. 27 (Panegyric on Cyzicus) Behr’s Translation.
Although we might note that these early Roman conceptions are not observations about the contemporary Roman colony of Corinth but are describing the former Greek city’s historic wealth, such mythology and imagery about the Greek city was freely applied to the developing Roman city in common conception. In a text directed to Corinthians in the later second century AD, Favorinus is even explicit about the antiquity of such attributes:

For you accorded me this honour, not as to one of the many who each year put in at Kenchreai as traders or pilgrims or envoys or passing travellers, but as to a cherished friend, who at last, after a long absence, puts in an appearance….You are now, as the saying goes, both prow and stern of Hellas, having been called prosperous and wealthy and the like by poets and gods from olden days.

Favorinus interprets the contemporary city through the ancient imagery, as though there were seamless continuity, and enumerates the famous individuals visiting the city since ancient times. In a similar vein, the Early Roman efforts by figures such as the Emperor Nero to cut a canal through the Isthmus in order to facilitate travel constituted points in a continuum stretching back at least to the Hellenistic period. Pliny the Elder included Nero’s and Caligula’s failed attempts with those of Julius Caesar and the Hellenistic King Demetrius. The later Philostratus similarly has Apollonius predict Nero’s cutting the canal,

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45 See, for example, Thucydides 1.13, which is clearly a source for Strabo’s description: “Corinth, planted on its isthmus, had been from time immemorial an important mercantile centre, though in ancient days traffic had been by land rather than by sea. The communications between those who lived inside and those who lived outside the Peloponnese had to pass through Corinthian territory. So Corinth grew to power by her riches, as is shown by the adjective ‘wealthy’ which is given to her by the ancient poets. And when the Greeks began to take more to seafaring, the Corinthians acquired a fleet, put down piracy, and, being able to provide trading facilities on both the land and the sea routes, made their city powerful from the revenues which came to it by both these ways.” Translation is that by Rex Warner.


48 Nat. Hist. 4.9-11, Loeb translation.

49 Phil. *VA* 4.24, Loeb translation.
And he was at the Isthmus, when the sea was roaring around Lechaeum, and hearing it he said: ‘This neck of land shall be cut through, or rather it shall not be cut.’ And herein he uttered a prediction of the cutting of the Isthmus which was attempted soon afterwards, when Nero after seven years projected it.

There seems to have been little awkwardness in connecting the myths, stories, and descriptions of the Greek city to the character of the Roman city, or linking events of the cityscape in the Roman period to the city’s ‘ancient history.’ Despite the century-long episode of discontinuity (146 BC – 44BC) in fact, the panegyrics about the Roman city intentionally delved into a preexisting literary bank of images, associations, and information to create and explain its contemporary image. The ancient qualities were

The topoi surrounding the geography of the city, and especially the Isthmus, were an explanatory and conceptual bridge connecting two cities with very different identities and histories. Indeed, the revived interest in particular places on the Isthmus, including the harbors, the canal, and the sanctuary served to reconnect the new Roman colony with its Greek predecessor. The survival of place, and imagery and stories connected with places, created conceptual continuity between the two cities. Stories about landscape features like the canal served to reinforce basic perceptions of Corinthian geography and the importance of the Isthmus.50 Like Corinth’s mythology discussed above, such stories reinforced the importance of certain facets of the Corinthian landscape (the Isthmus, the sea, the harbors) as well as attributes and characteristic features of the city in its landscape (the city’s connections to travel and commerce especially). The ancient stories that circulated about famous Corinthians who had lived six hundred years earlier—the lyre-player Arion who amassed a fortune in his travels to Italy, Ameinocles the shipbuilder, and Demaratus the wealthy Bacchiad—further promoted the perception of the commercial character of the Roman city.51

50 Strabo 8.2.1, Loeb translation: “The width of the Isthmus at the ‘Diolcus,’ where the ships are hauled overland from one sea to the other, is forty stadia, as I have already said.”

51 Ameinocles: Thucydides 1.13; Pliny Nat. 7.207.4; Dion. Hal. Th. 19.31. Arion: Maurus Servius Honoratus, Ecl. 8.55.6; Favorinus, The Corinthian Oration 1-4; Hyginus, Fab. 194; Aulus Gellius Attic Nights, 16.19; Fronto, Arion. Demaratus: Dion. Hal. 3.46.3-5; Strabo Geog 5.2.2.
It was no doubt Corinth’s perceived geographic structure and commercial character that sustained its image as a beautiful and pleasant, luxury-loving city. In a passage quoted above, Livy describes the city of the early second century BC as a place made beautiful by its natural topography and cultural features (e.g., the city walls).52 The pleasantness of the Corinthian landscape during the summer was connected to another tradition of Diogenes, who was said to have come to Corinth in the summer time because of the breezes blowing off the seas.53 In the late second century AD, Alciphron found the city’s reputation for opulence and wealth a great disappointment:54

I did not enter Corinth after all; for I learned in a short time the sordidness of the rich there and the misery of the poor…Such is the gateway to the Peloponnese, the town that lies betwixt two seas, a town charming indeed to look upon and abounding in luxuries, but inhabited by people ungracious and unblessed by Aphrodite.

Nor is the orator any kinder to the city in another letter where he describes the unpleasant time he spent among the Corinthian luxury-lovers.55 Even still, the passages highlight how the Roman city was also linked to luxury, pleasantness, and beauty, products of the Corinthian landscape. The city’s connection to this sensuousness is often noted in modern guidebooks about the ancient city.56

In a negative twist on this theme, Corinth on the Isthmus also came to be seen as a depraved secular city, associated with sexual licentiousness, immorality or moral weakness, and bawdy tales. The city’s vices were already well established in the Greek period and were (again) related directly or indirectly to the topographic features of the

52 Livy 45.28, Loeb translation.

53 Dio Chrys. Discourses 6.1-6. “In Corinth, on the other hand, the summer was breezy since currents of air always met there on account of the bays that dented the shore. Acrocorinth, too, overshadows it, and the city itself rather inclines towards Lechaeum and the north.”


55 Alciphron Ep. 3.15.1.4.

56 See, for example, Martin Garrett, Greece: A Literary Companion, London 1994, 53-57.
landscape.\textsuperscript{57} Juvenal, for instance, couples the “scented sons of Corinth” with the “unwarlike Rhodians,” two cities whose maritime character contributes to their excessive luxury such that youth perfume themselves and shave their own legs.\textsuperscript{58} Cicero directly articulates an explanation relating commerce and traffic at a city like Corinth to its immorality:\textsuperscript{59}

Maritime cities also suffer a certain corruption and degeneration of morals; for they receive a mixture of strange languages and customs, and import foreign ways as well as foreign merchandise, so that none of their ancestral institutions can possibly remain unchanged. Even their inhabitants do not cling to their dwelling places, but are constantly being tempted far from home by soaring hopes and dreams; and even when their bodies stay at home, their thoughts nevertheless fare abroad and go wandering. In fact, no other influence did more to bring about the final overthrow of Carthage and Corinth, though they had long been tottering, than this scattering and dispersion of their citizens, due to the fact that the lust for trafficking and sailing the seas had caused them to abandon agriculture and the pursuit of arms. Many things too that cause ruins to states as being incitements to luxury are supplied by the sea, entering either by capture or import; and even the mere delightfulness of such a site brings in its train many an allurement to pleasure through either extravagance or indolence.

Corinth is the prototype for Greek cities grown wealthy and immoral by their disposition to commerce, traffic, and sea faring—the city ultimately suffers destruction because of such a disposition. This description of a weak and immoral city is a twist on the typical panegyric praising the city as the promenade and crossroads of Hellas with the world’s traffic flowing into the Isthmus.

All the consequences of geography were summed up in antiquity by the proverbs “It is not for every man to sail to Corinth” and “Not every man may fare to Corinth town.” These famous sayings, quoted often by modern historians, city guides, and New Testament commentators, originated early in the Greek period,\textsuperscript{60} and had a variety of interpretations and explanations in Roman times. Certainly the most common understanding of the saying related it to Corinth’s reputations for both sexual

\textsuperscript{57} Even Aristophanes in the fifth century BC notes that to be called Corinthian was to be called immoral.

\textsuperscript{58} Juvenal \textit{Sat.} 8.112-16, Loeb translation, with Murphy-O’Connor’s commentary, pp. 110-11.

\textsuperscript{59} Cic. \textit{On the Republic} 2.7-9, Loeb.

\textsuperscript{60} See, for instance, Aristophanes frg. 902 a K.
licentiousness and wealth. Strabo tells a fantastic story about the city’s thousand temple prostitutes who had served all pilgrims and travelers to the Temple of Aphrodite when the Greek city still existed.\(^{61}\) It was because of these prostitutes, Strabo notes,\(^{62}\)

that the city was crowded with people and grew rich. For instance, the ship-captains freely squandered their money, and hence the proverb, “Not for every man is the voyage to Corinth.”

Others explained the proverb by relating it to Corinth’s *hetae* in general (and not necessarily sacred prostitutes, as Strabo says) who charged heavy fees for their services, leaving the foreigner penniless.\(^{63}\) In some anecdotes, it was the famous Corinthian prostitute Lais who charged so much for her embraces that she left many wealthy Greeks broke—Demosthenes himself was outraged by the demanded price!\(^{64}\) Who could afford to go to Corinth? The proverb could also imply that not everyone could stomach the trip to such an immoral secular city, a wicked city even, where the patron deities (e.g., Aphrodite) were the most deviant, and the most lucrative business was prostitution. In this light, Corinth was the prototypical secular and deviant city, the kind of place where a matron might sleep with a donkey, or a mother kill her children.\(^{65}\) Again, that many of these vices describe the Greek city did not keep Romans from applying them to the city

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\(^{62}\) Strabo 8.6.20, Loeb translation. See also Strabo 12.3.36.


\(^{64}\) Aulus Gellius *Attic Nights*, 1.8.3-4: “But no one was received who did not give what she demanded, and her demands were extravagant enough…. For in vain would any man go to Corinth to visit Lais who could not pay her price.”

\(^{65}\) Cf. H.J. Mason, “Lucius at Corinth,” in *Phoenix* 25 (1971), 160-65, who argues that Apuleius deliberately uses the city of Corinth in Book 10 as the perfect symbol of a secular city: “The city on the Isthmus became Vanity Fair, or worse; it was a symbol of the secular life which Lucius/Apuleius rejected in the final Isis-book.” (p. 165).
in their own day. The sexual problems described in the letters of St. Paul to the church of Corinth have served to reinforce the city’s many basic vices and sexual associations.

There were less explicitly bawdy explanations for the proverb, as well as more general applications. Just as not every ordinary man got the opportunity to sail to a luxury capital like Corinth, so it was not for every man to get an education or to create laws. The fluidity and flexibility of interpretation in antiquity, however, is united in its theme that travelers worldwide were drawn to the great worldly city, the city on the Isthmus. Voyaging to Corinth was one of the great topoi associated with the city. In a small step away, Lucian’s *Hermotimus* must surely have in mind the popular conceptions and proverb about Corinth when he chose the city for his metaphorical example of traveling down the philosophical path:

> But whether he has seen the one he should have seen (that in which you and I want to live) or whether, when he should have gone to Corinth, he has arrived at Babylon and thinks he has seen Corinth, I still do not know—certainly not everyone who has seen a city has seen Corinth, if Corinth is not the only city. What particularly makes me uncertain is this—my knowing that only one road can possibly be the right one. Only one road is the Corinth road, and the other roads lead anywhere except to Corinth.

Lycinus, in expressing his doubts about which philosophical school is the true one, chooses Corinth as the destination, as the metaphor for the true city, the true philosophy. In ancient conception, Corinth on the Isthmus was the paradigm for travel, voyage, and destination. Corinth denoted the secular city to visit or avoid, and brought to mind the passage itself. Traveling to Corinth was among the predominant and most common images of the city in the Roman period tied in different ways to the perceptions of the affects of a landscape on the ancient city.

66 This is the implied meaning of Ael. Arist., *Or.* 29.17: “For who of you does not know that first of all such education is not within the capacity of the masses, no more than legislation and making proposals in the assembly? Or shall we believe that ‘not every man can sail to Corinth’, while every man will understand the journey throughout the whole of life and with what pursuits it must be made and while everyone will sit at these tillers and convey the youth here and there as it pleases him?” Translation is Behr. Cf. p. 389 footnote: “Corinth was famous for its luxury and vice, and only the rich could benefit from the trip.” In a similar vein, Horace *Ep.* 1.17.36 uses the phrase to imply that not everyone can gain virtue.

67 Lucian *Herm* 27-29, 45.
2.2.3. Conclusion: Corinth in the Mind

The modern idea of what Corinth was in antiquity is a conflation of different ‘pasts’ in the city’s long history based on what people recorded about the city in both the Greek and Roman periods, and supplemented by archaeological research of the last century. Although it is impossible to imagine a monolithic or coherent ‘identity’ of the city in antiquity, there are certainly broad thematic groupings that lay behind many of the city’s ancient associations and reputations. This section has argued that the city’s eastern landscape, the Isthmus, was one such grouping that became linked to the city’s reputations for travel, wealth, commerce, luxury, and lasciviousness. The most salient characteristics of the ancient city that have become canonical in modern guidebooks and overviews of the city relate to both the shape of the physical landscape and the ancient interpretive traditions about the consequences of that landscape on the character of the city. In other words, one of the prominent modern images of ancient Corinth—the city as a traveler’s paradise and pleasure-loving place—is a product of modern authors interpreting the city based on what classical authors thought were the effects of geography on the city’s character.

68 See, for example, the overviews in S. Meletzis and Helen Papadakis, *Corinth, Mycenae, Tyrins, Nauplia*, English Translation, Sixth Edition, Athens 1984, and at pp. 5 and 6: “Corinth, again, famous on accounts of its wealth and the number of its inhabitants—it was the most populous town in Greece in ancient times—, achieved its great renown not because of the altars and temples of its gods, but through commerce and trade: lying as it did at the foot of Acrocorinth it was master of two seas, the Saronic to the east and the Corinthian to the west….Corinth, one of the oldest and most important cities in the whole of Greece, owed its foundation, wealth and development to its favourable situation: lying as it did on the Isthmus between the Peloponnesian and mainland Greece, it not only had firm control of this landstrip in classical times but maintained its hold on it….” Or, consider Athena G. Kaloyeropoulou, *Corinthia, Old Corinth; Diolcos—Isthmia—Lechaeon*, Athens, M. Pechlivanides & Co., pp. 5-6: “Ancient Corinth…has not left in history the memory of intellectual struggle or of high ideals to which its citizens devoted their faith and energy, or for which they suffered. From early times it became a great commercial centre, it gained fabulous wealth and ceaselessly adorned itself; everywhere it was successful, and had incredible good fortune in being reborn from its ashes after each of the disasters that successively laid it low; each time it blossomed afresh and piled up more wealth. Its daily life was a whirl of pleasure… one thing about Corinth is certain: its geographical position played an enormously important role in its development. This was in every way privileged. But, after saying this, we should not omit to mention how greatly the successive inhabitants of this site exploited its unique advantages….the great flourishing city, so famous for its luxury and its atmosphere of gaiety….Corinth soon became a centre of trade between the cities of the Ionian and Aegean seas, whose influence stretched further to the west. Thus, with little difficulty, she became the centre of exchange between East and West, and held this position for a long time. Her wealth and prosperity was a natural consequence.”
Without even commenting on the material “realities” behind such images, it is fair to say that Corinth on the Isthmus—as a thoroughfare and crossroads—formed a historical thread linking ancient perceptions of the city from one end of antiquity to the other. Perceptions of the city’s landscape were carried along through ancient literature, stories, anecdotes, and proverbs, and these together helped to form the image and myth of the city that became common in the Greek period and passed into the Roman period. The links between the city and its landscape were, in fact, so powerful and consistent that it is easy to forget that they embellish, exaggerate, and inaccurately communicate much about the city and its territory. The person reading these sources too literally can be blinded to Corinth’s other resources, its agriculture, its quarries, and the world existing in between significant places. Nonetheless, these sources confirm strongly an ancient fascination with the harbors, isthmus, and seas, and the eminence of these features as symbols of the ancient city. They form an interpretive layer associated with the physical territory, the Isthmus, and a context for knowing and reading Corinth. The image of the city was cemented to the Isthmus in a mythologized landscape, richly imbued with meaning, history, and significance. The following chapters will document the nature of this landscape in the Roman and Late Roman periods.

2.3. Wealthy Corinth

Two decades ago, when J.B. Salmon published his *Wealthy Corinth*, one reviewer astutely reminded readers that Edouard Will had cautioned against geographic determinism in thinking about ancient Corinthian history. Salmon’s book had turned its back on the consequences of geography by arguing that the western coastal plain was the agricultural center, and consequently, the economic heart of the Archaic and Classical *polis* of Corinth, and had more economic influence on the developing city than even the connecting isthmus. As Salmon suggested in the first paragraph to his book, before Corinth could have ever benefited from commerce, its rich arable territory gave it the reputation of being “wealthy.” Commerce, while important to the Archaic-Classical city, was not nearly as significant as ancient sources from the Greek period would suggest.
Only six years after the publication of Salmon’s monograph, D. Engels published (1990) a book on Roman Corinth that argued that the Roman city could never have been an “agro-town” whose principal resource base was agriculture. According to Engels, Corinth was a “service city” whose principal economic resource was the constant influx of outsiders, travelers, pilgrims, and administrators. Critical reviews of this book centered on the nature of Corinth’s economy and the factors that gave rise to the city in Roman times. Did Corinth really depend principally upon service for its economic sustenance and how significant was commerce for its ancient economy? Certainly many ancient authors in the Roman period suggested that commerce made the city wealthy, as have modern scholars following them.

In the end, the historiographic discussion surrounding both of these works demonstrate the complexity of Corinthian economic history, caution against simplistic and monolithic views of the city’s economic development, and encourage careful and critical interpretation of ancient literary sources. Both books also raise important questions that relate to the subject matter of this study: Does the focus on the Isthmus and the eastern territory revert to a geographically deterministic model for Corinthian history? Why focus on the city’s travelscapes and connectivity when other facets of the territory were also important for the Roman city? And why downplay and ignore the western and southern Corinthia, or other conventional territories of ancient Corinth? Two observations demonstrate the potential weaknesses of a model of Corinth’s economy that focuses only on its significant geographic position.

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First is that J.B. Salmon’s general argument about the resources of arable land for the life of the Archaic and Classical-period city also applies to the Roman city.\(^71\) Salmon argued that long before the Greek city could have profited greatly from commerce due to its geographic position, it was known as “wealthy”; agricultural resources must always have constituted the city’s principal economic resource (supplemented, of course, by a variety of other resources). This observation should relate also to the city in the Roman period. Before the Roman city regained a reputation as a luxurious commercial town, the agricultural capacity of its rich western territory must have figured prominently in its local economy. The coastal plain to the north and west of Corinth is incredibly fertile territory; a couple of ancient sources noted above indicate that the Romans recognized the potential of this land in the refoundation of the city as a colony. Moreover, despite Strabo’s “beetle-browed” view of Corinthian territory, the Isthmus is relatively fertile today as it was in antiquity, with the capacity of producing a variety of crops, and even less arable land is useful for olives and vines.\(^72\)

Some of the most telling support for the importance of agriculture for the early history of the Roman colony is David Romano’s longstanding scholarship on centuriation: the land itself provides evidence for several parceling episodes of the Corinthian coastal plain and isthmus in the late Hellenistic and early Roman period. Moreover, as chapters four to six of this study will show, there is plentiful evidence for agricultural installations, farmsteads, and villas on the Isthmus itself.\(^73\) Despite the

\(^{71}\) Salmon 1984.

\(^{72}\) Cf. M. Sakellariou and N. Faraklas, *Corinthia-Cleonaea*, Athens 1971, Appendix I for some comparative discussion of Corinthian territory: the central ekistic area including all of the coastal plain and most of the Isthmus has far more arable land, much larger populations, and greater numbers of livestock than all the other areas of the modern Corinthia, even when factoring in differences of scale’. See also discussion in Fowler and Stillwell 1932, 107-114, which is mainly a reprint of Carl W. Blegen, “Corinth in Prehistoric Times,” *AJA* 24 (1920), 8-13; and Athenaeus V,219a; Schol. Aristophanes, *Birds*, 969.

relative absence of literary sources from the Roman period and D. Engel’s unsuccessful attempts (1990) to minimize the importance of agriculture for the economy of the Roman city, there is no reason to doubt that the entire territory itself continued to form an important sector in the city’s society and economy.

Figure 2.12. Western Corinthian coastal plain, from Acrocorinth (facing west)
And second, beyond strictly agriculture, Corinthian territory has numerous other natural resources that played significantly in the local Roman economy. As Chris Hayward has shown, the limestone quarries were exploited in Roman times and used for both local and regional purposes. T. Gregory and V. Anderson-Stojanovic have discussed the importance of apiculture in the late Classical and Late Roman Corinthia, and Gregory has noted the possible exploitation of marine sources in the Roman period. Moreover, the production of Corinthian ceramic lamps resumed in the late Roman period and tapped local clay deposits. The production of bronze in Corinth was evidently an

74 There is very little reference to Corinthian quarrying although this must have formed an enormously important resource for the city. See C.L. Hayward 2003, and C.L. Hayward, Construction-Stone and Ancient Quarries of the Corinthia, In Preparation.

75 Gregory 1985; Virginia R. Anderson-Stojanovic, and J.E. Jones, “Ancient Beehives from Isthmia,” in Hesperia 71 (2002), 345-76. See also Paus. 10.37.3.5, for instance, notes that “Bulis lies on high ground, and it is passed by travellers crossing by sea from Anticyra to Lechaeum in Corinthian territory. More than half its inhabitants are fishers of the shell-fish that gives the purple dye.”

important industry, whatever “Corinthian bronze” actually refers to. Although the topic is underexplored in Corinthian studies, marginal lands were valuable for their supplies of timbers and wood, resin, and grazing land. The Corinthia, like most regions of the Mediterranean, had a variety of resources important for the local economy.

Given such observations, how does this historical study of the (Late) Roman landscape justify its neglect of the total Corinthian territory and the full variety of the resources of the territory in favor of a narrow study of the connective isthmus? The remainder of the dissertation will provide a variety of answers to this question, but the short response is that as the Roman colony of Corinth developed in the high empire, it played a different role in the world than the Greek city had in its own. Instead of a great polis whose citizens depended for their livelihood and political involvement upon their territorial allotments, Corinth redeveloped as a cosmopolitan, commercial, and administrative node in the broader world. It was that relation and connection to the broader world—as a provincial capital at an important Mediterranean crossroads—that served to imbue the city with so much significance and value. The specific territory of the Isthmus, serving as the relational bridge between urban center and the world, played a functionally distinct role when compared with other parts of the territory. Although the southern territory still connected Corinth to Argos, and the western territory to Sicyon and Patras, the landscape most encountered and known by the ancient traveler, merchant, and pilgrim was that one linked to its large harbors, gulfs, and the wider world. Despite their importance, the southern and western Corinthia lacked the same degree of traffic and connectiveness to Corinth’s urban center.


Additionally, this is not a study of the land but of the landscape, with a focus on the territory as it was known, imagined, and historicized in (Late) Roman times. From this perspective, the western and southern territory of the city simply did not achieve in the Roman period the fame and imagined link to the city as did the Isthmus. Although the western Corinthia no doubt continued to yield its fruit in season, the wealth of that land was hardly remembered after Strabo, save for diligent scholars and orators like Libanius. In the Roman period, when the political, social, and cultural centers of the Mediterranean lay elsewhere, the interior-looking territories of Corinth were culturally marginalized, unknown, or forgotten. The more important and fascinating land was the Isthmus, which became historicized and signified with important places throughout the Roman period. As discussed above, and as will be developed below (in chapter five), the conventional
divide between town and countryside is unhelpful for discussing this eastern landscape that was thick with habitation, as though forming an extension of the town to the east.\textsuperscript{79}

And finally, to argue that the eastern landscape was economically and socially significant to the city is not to state that it was the only important territorial component of the city.\textsuperscript{80} It is not necessary to measure or quantify the effects of this territory for the local economy to say that it was nonetheless important and played into the economy of the city. To privilege this facet of Roman Corinth’s identity also does not mean that travel and “service” were the only or main components of the city’s resources. Indeed, for a city as well resourced as Corinth, we must allow for the variety of economic resources available to the city. And yet, as this study will argue, a cultural analysis of a particular landscape is certainly justified by the nature of the evidence. This study is only one of many histories of the Late Antique city that might be written, and there are other facets of the ancient city that a historical study of the end of the city might be built on.\textsuperscript{81}

But a cultural study of landscape must examine the territory that was known and mythologized, structured with meanings and embedded with places. The structure and significance of this landscape was rooted in and directed to its connectiveness, which was tied to the myth of the city as it developed in the second century AD, as it outstripped its status as a mere colony. The Eastern Corinthia both reflected and contributed to the image and reality of a cosmopolitan city. The material (archaeological) and conceptual (literary) bodies of evidence both speak, albeit differently, to this cultural context.

Landscapes tell, create, and structure stories and narratives. The Isthmian landscape of the second century AD represented a millennium of stories, narratives, and associations, embedded in ancient literature, historical memory, and places in the land,

\textsuperscript{79} A strict dichotomy of town and country is implied throughout Engels’ discussion of the Roman city. As should become clear in this study, the countryside was thickly settled, resembling a suburbia rather than the conventionally pictured rural farmsteads.

\textsuperscript{80} Some have argued that Corinth’s exploitation of its position for trade and commerce goes back to the prehistoric period, and in fact, may have been, in addition to agriculture, one of the reasons for attracting settlement in the Bronze Age. Cf. Blegen 1920.

\textsuperscript{81} Consider B. Robinson’s study (2001) of water and Acrocorinth.
and given new life in the early Principate. The literary narrative of this landscape was by no means concrete but it did contain canonical elements (e.g., the Isthmus and travel/commerce) and centered on a few important places in the territory mentioned time and again in myths and histories as, for instance, the twin harbors, Poseidon’s sanctuary at Isthmia, and the famous canal. Most physical features in the land, however, lacked a literary pedigree and constituted ordinary places such as rural farmsteads and villas, graves, and limestone quarries. The physical forms of this landscape, ignored by ancient travelers and represented today by only broken pottery scatters and a few cut limestone blocks, also (like the literary narrative) told the story of Corinth’s history and reinforced the place of the territory in the broader Mediterranean world. Taken together, this physical and cultural landscape was a principal local context in which the city was known, read, and perceived in the Roman era.

The rest of this dissertation is a study of the history of this local world, especially as it changed during the period of Late Antiquity. The remaining chapters elaborate on the themes developed in this chapter—connectivity, travel, trade, myth, rural places, and relationships to the world—as they relate to the continuity and redefinition of local society. The study posits that an appropriate measuring stick for analyzing the end of ancient Corinth is the shifting relationship of the city to the Isthmus, and the Isthmus to the world, that is, a point of measurement beyond the town itself. The chapters argue that Ancient Corinth “ended” when the Isthmus ceased to play into the physical and imaginative topography of the city, and the predominant ancient civic narratives written on the landscape lost their former significance and were drastically rewritten in light of broader trends. It ended, in short, when the predominant ancient myth of the city, its relationship to the Isthmus, was redefined, and its important extra-urban structures (e.g., settlements and harbors) came to an end. How this landscape so rich in antiquity—this world known to those dwelling therein—was transformed at the end of antiquity is a complex process. The remaining chapters will explore them in their messy detail.
CHAPTER 3
The Image of the City

“Landscape tells—or rather is—a story. It enfolds the lives and times of predecessors who, over the generations, have moved around in it and played their part in its formation.” (T. Ingold)

“Farther on, the pines still grew by the shore at the time of my visit, and there was an altar of Melicertes. At this place, they say, the boy was brought ashore by a dolphin; Sisyphus found him lying and gave him burial on the Isthmus, establishing the Isthmian games in his honour” (Pausanias, 2nd c. AD)

“At the Isthmus the sea cast up a miserable carcass” (Eusebius of Caesarea (4th c. AD), quoting Clement of Alexandria (2nd c. AD))

Landscapes tell the stories of regions, territories, and cities. But ‘stories,’ in the more literal sense of the word, also articulate what is significant about landscapes. The stories about the Corinthia by the time of Pausanias consolidated myths, anecdotes, and conceptions stretching back to the time of the city’s foundations. This narrative was by no means determined or unchanging but it did take recognizable forms, consolidating around significant people, events, and especially places, structuring the ways in which individuals thought about, perceived, and understood the city of Corinth. If Roman interest in Corinthian territory centered on the Isthmus and seas, even this eastern landscape was a highly articulated one, with prominent nodes and concentrating points at Kenchreai, Lechaion, and the Isthmus proper. These were obviously not the only places existing in the city’s eastern territory, but they were certainly the most famous, mentioned repeatedly.

This chapter examines common conceptions of Corinth’s eastern landscape over the course of the entire Roman period. It explores two principal issues in Corinthian history. First (3.1), it highlights the kind of literary image and conceptual map of the Isthmus that
existed throughout the Roman period, and makes suggestions for how a ‘landscape of famous places’ was tied to and reinforced Corinth’s history, identity, and place as a city connected to travel and commerce. The chapter discusses the places on the Isthmus that were deemed meaningful in the high empire, as well as the parts of the territory glossed over as undifferentiated travelscapes lying between larger, more significant points.

Secondly, the chapter examines (3.2) how and when this landscape of famous places changed as the world of the later Roman Empire was dramatically, albeit gradually, redefined. It highlights ways that a ‘classical landscape’ ended,¹ despite the material continuity of habitation and place (Ch. 4-6) and the concomitant creation of new landscapes, narratives, and histories of the city.

¹ When I use the word “classical” in lower case, I use it synonymously with “Greco-Roman” and “Ancient.” I use the upper case “Classical” when I refer specifically to the Classical Period (5th-4th Centuries BC).
3.1. A Landscape of Famous Places

Around the mid-second century AD, the periegete and traveler Pausanias passed through the Corinthia and described the major sites of the region. His account mentions the famous town of Crommyon and a tepid spring called Helen’s bath, and discusses at length the Isthmus (i.e., Isthmia), harbors, and urban center, detailing their rich histories and mythologies. His description is thick with imagery, but is also highly selective. It includes little mention of the various settlements, the villas, rural sanctuaries, crossroads, or the numerous tombs and graves throughout the Isthmus. In fact, his description of the territory between Isthmia and the town is summed up by a brief comment that there were various monuments on the way up to Corinth, leaving the reader wondering what and where these monuments were.² While reading Pausanias might superficially suggest a largely empty countryside save a few important sites, the author actually provides a highly learned and literary map of the Isthmus, displaying places both significant to his account and the world of his day.

Although the title of Pausanias’ Periegesis is routinely translated as the Description of Greece, scholars have well demonstrated that it is not in any sense a systematic or complete description of Greece of the second century AD. Archaeologists have criticized Pausanias’ incompleteness, biases, and perception, while other recent studies have underscored the various rationales and logic that guided his interpretation of the significant monuments of the world of his day.³ A collection of recent essays (Alcock et al. 2001), for instance, underscores the different ways that the account was tied to an imaginative geography of the second sophistic.⁴ William Hutton’s recent analysis places

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² Paus. 2.2.4, with discussion by Wiseman 1978, 69.
Pausanias into his second century intellectual context and presents the ancient traveler as a sophisticated, highly literate and educated commentator on Greece in the second century.

And yet, if Pausanias records the Corinthia (and landscapes of Greece, generally) according to his own organizational schema, his account is also embedded in a tradition of perceiving the ancient landscape in a particular way for the basic ingredients of his account (the places) are consistent with those mentioned by earlier writers. Strabo’s geography, for example, although written fewer than two centuries earlier and for different purposes, mentions most of the same places recorded in Pausanias’ account. And in fact, most surviving literature from the Roman period that alludes to the city’s eastern territory indicates that there were little more to the territory than urban center, harbors, and Isthmian sanctuary. For visitors to this region in antiquity, Corinth, Kenchreaei, and Isthmia, were, in conceptual terms, the only real places that mattered or were worth mentioning.

The following discussion highlights the places of significance and interest in the Corinthia of the second century AD and the diversity and range of meanings they had acquired by that time. The discussion suggests that the myths and stories, passed on through the Roman period, reinforced an historic image of the city tied to its eastern landscape and the role of the territory as a Mediterranean crossroads. This ancient configuration of important places undergirded a traditional narrative and storyline of the city developed from the Archaic period and maintained even into Late Antiquity. The end of this conceptual landscape involved not the material discontinuity in places on the Isthmus (for indeed, many places had vibrant late Roman lives) but the end of ancient ways of thinking about the landscape, which were themselves embedded in an antique literary tradition. A tradition of conceptualizing and discussing the Corinthian landscape was redefined as classicism itself developed and changed in the later Roman Empire.
3.1.1. The Isthmus

As Fowler and Stillwell pointed out in the early twentieth century, the “isthmus” (Fig. 3.1) was itself a multivariate term that was used in three principal ways in antiquity: 1) the general landscape between the Scironian Rocks and the city of Corinth; 2) the narrowest land between two seas where lay the diolkos and the canal trenches; and 3) the specific site most sacred to Poseidon and home of the site of Isthmia. The latter two uses of the word will be discussed in sections 3.1.2 and 3.1.3 below.

![Figure 3.1. Corinth on the Isthmus, with modern and ancient place names](image)

The “isthmus,” in the broadest sense of the word, was used in a general way to refer to the landform itself, physically focused in the narrow bottleneck that tied Greece to the Peloponnese, and where seas were separated by only five kilometers (e.g., “Corinth on

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5 Fowler and Stillwell 1932, 49-50; Wiseman 1978.
the Isthmus”, the “isthmus of Greece”). Even in this sense, however, the Isthmus was not well-bounded and ancients understood its borders in different ways. Most authors in the Roman period conceived the western boundaries of the Isthmus at Corinth town and Lechaion probably because the urban center and northern harbor formed a natural, topographical, and visual breaking point, and the acropolis afforded a view back to the east. The heart of the Isthmus was the site of Isthmia, the diolkos, and Kenchreai, but ancient authors were less clear about the Isthmus’ eastern border, which became associated and confused with other borders—that of Corinthia / Megara (or Attica), the Peloponnese and Ionia, and Achaia / Hellas. Sources, for instance, tell of the famous stele once existing in mythical times that signaled to the traveler he was entering (or departing) the Peloponnese / Ionia. Strabo’s account places the ancient sign somewhere near Krommyon on the Isthmus but also at the boundary of Attic-Megarian and Corinthian-Peloponnesian territory. But later discussions in the Roman period suggest that the start of the Isthmus was well west of the traditional boundary between Megara and the Corinthia, placing the sites associated with the mythical adventures of Theseus (e.g., towns of Crommyon and Sidous; the altar of Melicertes) within Corinthian territory but beyond the Isthmus. Certainly the monumental Roman arch at Isthmia, which funneled all major traffic from the north and east through that entrance, may have been built to articulate the entrance to the Isthmus or even the Peloponnese in the imperial

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6 E.g., In some historical accounts of the city, Aletes was said to have founded Corinth on the Isthmus over the former site of Ephyra, the key to the land of Pelops. See Velleius Paterculus History of Rome 1.3.3.

7 Pomponius Mela 47-48; Pliny NH 4.18; Paus. NH 2.1.5. Kenchreai was a natural southeastern border to the Isthmus.


9 The account is preserved in Plut. Thes. 25.3-5; Strabo 3.5.5; 9.1; Fowler and Stillwell 1932, 49-50; Wiseman 1978, 17. See also Pliny NH 4.5 (12) and 4.7 (23) for definitions of the Isthmus.

10 Strabo 8.6.22; 9.1.1.6.

11 Paus. 1.44.6-10; Paus. 2.1.3; Ps-Scylax Periplus 55. Wiseman 1978, 17-18, 38 note 14 argued (on the basis of Ps-Scylax) that Crommyon was certainly not within the bounds of the Isthmus.
era. But Pausanias placed the beginning of the Isthmus nearby at the place where the evildoer Sinis used to kill travelers by violently stretching them between pine trees, indeed the place where Sinis himself was eventually done in by Theseus.

Given the generally vague or various knowledge that travelers in the Roman period possessed about the places they visited, it may be best to imagine a fluid eastern boundary to the Isthmus that might be placed differently according to differing education and knowledge of ancient literature; it might conceptually terminate at the entrance to the sanctuary of Poseidon or be extended to even the Scironian Rocks. As importantly, the famous places east of the *diolkos* became in the Roman period firmly embedded with narratives of travel along the Athens-Corinth coastal road. We meet places associated with Sciron the villain who tossed travelers from the rocks into the sea; the wretched Sinis who quartered his victims; Theseus who cleared the road of villains; the spot where Melicertes was brought to shore by the dolphin; and boundary markers as signals for the travelers. The beginning of the Isthmus provided a good indication of the character of the eastern Corinthian landscape and its city to the west, known to travelers coming down the east-west road.

3.1.2. The Diolkos and Canal

Approaching by the main road from Athens and points further east, the traveler arrived at the narrowest point of the Isthmus where seas were separated by less than six kilometers. Across this stretch of land, a narrow paved road (the so-called *diolkos*) was laid in the Archaic period to facilitate the transporting of merchant ships, or at least cargo. It is also the place where the emperor Nero (and others) attempted to canal the Isthmus, still visible even to the nineteenth century by trenches and earthen mounds at the Saronic and Corinthian Gulfs. The ship-road and canal were two lines across the narrow

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12 Gregory and Mills 1984.
13 Paus. 2.1.4.
14 Paus. 2.1.3; Wiseman 1978, 17.
isthmus along much the same path and together formed another physical marker of the Isthmus itself, indicating to the traveler the center of the land bridge connecting the territory to the broader world.\(^{15}\)

As James Wiseman and others have pointed out,\(^{16}\) the obvious advantages of providing an alternate short cut to sailing around cape Malea and the southern tip of Greece must have occurred to the Corinthians rather early in their history. The twin seas encroach on the land so closely on both sides that simple practical and economic considerations encouraged attempts to facilitate sea-born traffic between east and west, the Adriatic and the Aegean. As Strabo suggested, following the Thucydidean account, the communication of the Isthmus between seas and lands contributed a steady income of taxes and levies that turned Corinth into a wealthy city.\(^{17}\) The physical road and the canal cuttings formed tangible reminders of the importance of the Isthmus to Mediterranean trade and transport networks. The ship-road was the reality for which the canal was an unrealized ideal.

On the other hand, the two physical monuments that symbolized the role of the Corinthian isthmus as a transport zone between twin gulfs were remembered disproportional to their actual economic function in antiquity. The ship-road, which was constructed as early as the reign of Periander (late 7\(^{th}\) century BC) and remained a consistent structure in the Corinthian economy through the Roman period (see below),


\(^{16}\) Wiseman 1978, 45.

\(^{17}\) Thuc. 1.13.5; Strabo 8.6.20.
was rarely mentioned in antiquity. The building of the canal, which was never close to being completed in antiquity and had no history before the Roman period, was mentioned frequently in Roman descriptions of the territory. Relatively speaking, the canal came to assume a much more significant place in the literary culture of the Roman era despite being less economically significant for the city and less physically consistent in the territory than the diolkos. In literary accounts, the canal had much greater place value than the simple ship-road, tied more immediately to the personalities of emperors, kings, and wealthy men.

The typical use of the word diolkos to refer to the ship-road itself is also a bit of a misnomer, for the word never acquired this specific connotation in ancient literature and referred more generally to the narrowest part of the Isthmus. Strabo states explicitly that the diolkos was the narrow part of the Isthmus, formed between the concave shores of the Corinthian Gulf and the Saronic Gulf at Schoenus and Isthmia. This narrow area was, of course the place where the “ships are hauled overland”, but the use of the word denoted the narrow itself and not the road per se. Hesychius defines the diolkos as the place (topos) from Lechaion to Kenchreai, and calls the holkos the roadway and the hauling machines. Besides Strabo and Hesychius, there are no other references to a diolkos (as a place or road), although there are numerous early references to individuals dragging ships across the Isthmus.

The reason for quibbling over words is that when modern archaeologists and historians use the word diolkos, they give the road itself a quality of place that it never

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19 Strabo 8.6.4; 8.6.22.

20 Strabo 8.2.1.

21 Wiseman 1978, 74, note 9, states that in this definition of holkos, Hesychius is confusing the holkos with the diolkos. But the latter word never referred to the roadway specifically. Hesychius is certainly reading Strabo in the right sense.

22 E.g., Polybius 4.19.7; 5.101.4; Thuc. 8.8.3; Ar. Them. 647-54; Pliny *NH* 4.10; Dio 51.5.
possessed in antiquity. Certainly the ancients knew of a road across the Isthmus, since Ps-Scylax at least referred to one running 40 stades from sea to sea. Excavations in the 1960s also revealed the narrow track of a road at the Lechaion Gulf near the modern canal.23 It is, of course, not unlikely that the two features, the physical road and the narrowest part of the Isthmus, were conflated by some in antiquity into a single identity called the diolkos. The point that I wish to make is that the diolkos per se had much less place-fame in the Roman period than it possesses in modern scholarship. Strabo and others refer to the unloading of goods and their transport across the Isthmus on trolleys (or the ships on trolleys),24 but the process was rarely given the specificity of place nor was it an important theme in literature in the Roman period—and this despite the obvious significance of the road for the economy of the Corinthia.

Although modern scholars have commonly discussed the diolkos as though it referred to a physical entity (the ship-road),25 this is not an assumption evident in the ancient sources. The fact that the diolkos is not mentioned frequently in the Roman period cannot be taken as evidence that it was abandoned at this time, as has sometimes been suggested.26 Given the importance of commerce for the Corinthian economy and the continuing place of Corinth in Mediterranean trade networks, it seems altogether improbable that there did not exist a paved road (or several such roads) used to convey

23 Wiseman 1978, 45-47; Ps-Scylax Periplus 40.

24 Strabo 8.6.20; Pliny NH 4.9-11.

25 Scholars have admitted that most sources refer to the dragging of ships across the isthmus rather than the ship-road per se: Wiseman 1978, 45; MacDonald 1986, 192, FN6; Cook 1979, 152, FN7. However, they have generally assumed (incorrectly) that other sources refer to the diolkos as the physical road. Hence, Cook 1979, 152: “Not much attention is given to the diolkos across the Isthmus of Corinth, nor is much known about it. There are a dozen or so explicit or probable references to it in ancient literature, one relevant inscription and some remains of its track.” But the references and inscription he alludes to do not refer to the road.

26 Cook 1979, 152-53 (especially FN 7 and 8), for instance, posits that the dearth of testimony about the diolkos indicates that it was only a modestly (but not highly) successful endeavor for the city in the Classical period. He also speculates that the diolkos (by which he means the ship-road) fell out of use in 67 BC [sic], evident in the construction of Nero’s canal through its western end, and that it was unlikely used in later Byzantine times. This reading is unnecessarily skeptical, however, and is based on the misunderstanding that the literary evidence refers to the diolkos as the physical road (which it does not).
cargo across the narrowest part of the Isthmus through the late Roman period (see Section 3.2.1, below). That our literary sources did not mention it says more about their own interests than about the importance of the road in daily life. Discussion of another entity, the canal, can demonstrate through contrast the ship-road’s poor imageability.

The construction of the Corinthian canal never came close to completion in antiquity but it achieved (in contrast to the ship-road) a remarkable place in the literature of the period. It may seem obvious today that a society centered on the Mediterranean might wish to canal the Isthmus of Greece but there is no good evidence that anyone seriously planned for or initiated the project before the Hellenistic era. Historians often refer to Diogenes Laertius’ comment that the tyrant Periander considered canal constructing, but there was no popular tradition for this and the silence of others (such as Herodotus) regarding the tyrant’s conception is itself cause for skepticism about an earlier Greek tradition. It is easier to see the assertion itself as a product of the Roman period—a desire to connect a major personality of Corinthian history with conceiving a feat connected with kings and emperors.

It is in the early Roman period that the canal enters the repertoire of common themes in literary discussion, at a time when the maritime character of the (refounded) city was itself a common topic. Strabo gives the earliest evidence for canal constructing in Demetrius Poliorcetes’ plans to ease the passage of his naval squadrons. Pliny the Elder connects canal construction attempts directly to the narrowness of the Isthmus and the eagerness to facilitate naval traffic in the early Roman period.

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27 Without solid archaeological evidence, it is difficult to determine the later history of the ship-road. That

28 Diogenes Laertius 1.99. There is no other evidence that Periander conceived this endeavor, despite the frequency of stories about him in the Roman period. Wiseman 1978, 48, and J.B. Salmon, Wealthy Corinth: A History of the City to 338 B.C., Oxford 1984, 134, 202, accept the possibility.

29 Strabo 1.3.11.

30 Pliny NH 4.9-11.
The circuit of the Morea is a long and dangerous voyage for vessels prohibited by their size from being carried across the Isthmus on trolleys, and consequently successive attempts were made…to dig a ship-canal through the narrow part.

A value of canal construction for Strabo and others is that it would create a sophisticated upgrade to the old trolley road at the diolkos, allowing sizable ships to cross the Isthmus. In Pseudo-Lucian’s early third century imaginary dialogue between Musonius and Menecrates, Musonius suggests that Nero’s intentions for the canal were “to save seafarers the voyage round the Peloponnese past Cape Malea.”

Pseudo-Lucian has Nero reason that canalling the Isthmus would contribute to the commerce of the entire region, coastal and inland sites included. In this respect, stories about constructing the canal reinforced the rationale for and function of the diolkos—creating a direct path between two seas to facilitate travel and commerce—reminding Romans of the importance of this stretch of land for Corinth, for Greece, and for broader Mediterranean networks of transport and commerce.

On the other hand, stories of canal constructing were more potent and tangible than mere descriptions of dragging the boats across the Isthmus. The limitations of a pre-industrial society, depending on slave labor over machinery, made canalling the Isthmus a task so great that even the expressed desire or plan to dig demonstrated an ambition fit for only a king or emperor wanting to leave a signature in the physical landscape. The lists of canal constructors varied in antiquity, and the act of listing is itself a Roman phenomenon. Nero is typically connected with a major canal construction, but there was uncertainty about who else expressed interest and actually made attempts. Strabo provides an early testimony that Demetrius Poliorcetes planned such an attempt. Pliny’s list of canal diggers includes Demetrius Poliorcetes, Julius Caesar, Caligula, and Nero. Suetonius names the latter three, but says that only Nero actually initiated work

31 [Lucian] Nero. This dialogue is in some traditions ascribed to Lucian, but was probably written by the first Philostratus. See the Loeb introduction to the Pseudo-Lucian volume.

32 Strabo 8.2.1; 8.6.22.

33 Strabo 1.3.11.

34 Pliny NH 4.9-11.
with a dramatic groundbreaking ceremony following his performance in the Isthmian Games. Pausanias himself does not name Nero specifically in connection to the canal construction, but only refers to the one “who tried to make the Peloponnese an island.”

Canal constructing and the desire to dig became in the Roman period a kind of signature mark of ambitious personalities of kings and emperors who desired to accomplish by force an unattainable goal. Suetonius remarks that Caligula’s greatest unaccomplished plan was to canal the Isthmus, greater even than his plans to rebuild and finish temples in Ephesus and Samos. Plutarch numbers the expedition to dig through the Corinthian isthmus as one of Caesar’s numerous impassioned lusts for glory. Pseudo-Lucian’s early third century account of Nero’s attempts has the emperor overcome in a kind of drunken passion to canal the Isthmus at the moment he noticed the character of the landscape:

> It was only when he had seen what the place was like that he fell in love with a grandiose scheme, when he thought of the king who once led the Achaean against Troy and how he severed Euboea from Boeotia by digging the Euripus at Chalcis, and when moreover he thought how Darius had bridged the Bosporus to attack the Scythians. Perhaps even before either of these he had thought of the feat of Xerxes, the mightiest of all mighty works, and how moreover by giving men a short route of access to each other he would make it possible for foreigners to enjoy the glorious hospitality of Greece. For tyrannical natures, though intoxicated, yet somehow thirst to hear praises of this sort.

Philostratus links Nero’s attempts to some of the greatest ambition hunters of ancient history that included Agamemnon, Darius, and Xerxes. Ascribing connections between such personalities of history did not typically signify positive character marks, but hubris and sacrilege. Pausanias’ description is explicit that undertaking “to make the

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35 Suetonius *Julius* 44; *Gaius* 21; *Nero* 19, 37. See also Josephus *Jewish War* 3.540, who states that Vespasian sent 6,000 Jewish prisoners to Nero to help with the canal.

36 Paus. 2.1.5. Although it is possible that Pausanias deliberately refuses to name Nero (or anyone else), it may also suggest a confusion already by the second century about who had dug the canal pits then visible.

37 Suetonius *Gaius* 21.

38 Plutarch *Vita Caesar* 58.

Peloponnesus an island” signified a violent effort to alter a landscape designed by the gods, and brought to his mind other failed ancient isthmus excavations in Asia Minor, such as Alexander’s attempts at Mimas (4th c. BC) and the Cnidian efforts to canal their territory (6th c. BC). Pliny’s account even relates the demise of the various canal cutters to their sacrilegious acts! The emperors themselves were not deterred as successive failed attempts to canal only provided a momentum for later personalities seeking to win eternal glory.

The close connections between the greatest ambitions of ancient history and the passion to alter permanently the Greek landscape is summed up in a story told by Philostratus about Herodes Atticus.40 The passage is colorful and can be quoted in full:

Though he had achieved such great works, he held that he had done nothing important because he had not cut through the Isthmus. For he regarded it as a really brilliant achievement to cut away the mainland to join two seas, and to contract lengths of sea into a voyage of twenty-six stades. This he longed to do, but he never had the courage to ask the Emperor to grant him permission, lest he should be accused of grasping at an ambitious plan to which not even Nero had proved himself equal. But in conversation he did let out that ambition in the following way. [552] For as I have been told by Ctesidemus the Athenian, Herodes was driving to Corinth with Ctesidemus sitting by his side, and when he arrived at the Isthmus Herodes cried: ‘Poseidon, I aspire to do it, but no one will let me!’ Ctesidemus was surprised at what he had said and asked him why he made the remark. Whereupon Herodes replied: ‘For a long time I have been striving to bequeath to men that come after me some proof of an ambition that reveals me for the man I am, and I consider that I have not yet attained to this reputation.’ Then Ctesidemus recited praises of his speeches and his deeds which no other man could surpass. But Herodes replied: ‘All this that you speak of must decay and yield to the hand of time, and others will plunder my speeches and criticize now this, now that. But the cutting of the Isthmus is a deathless achievement and more than one could credit to human powers, for in my opinion to cleave through the Isthmus calls for Poseidon rather than a mere man.’

This account ties together so many different associations of the Corinthian landscape. Herodes traveling (to Corinth) by land from Athens approaches the place sacred to Poseidon where so many before had planned or attempted to facilitate Greece’s sea traffic but failed. The aristocrat pronounces his desperate desire, thereby placing himself among the greatest, most ambitious persons of history while simultaneously emphasizing

40 Flav. Philostratus, VS 2.551-2.552.
his lower status relative to kings, emperors, and gods. To alter the earth signaled nothing less than a deathless achievement fit for Poseidon, or for a god-like emperor or noble.

In this final respect, the stories of canal constructing and the physical evidence of that construction on the Isthmus reminded the traveler that he had reached the domain of Poseidon, the center of the Isthmus and place most sacred to him. In Pausanias’ account, discussion of failed canal construction at the Isthmus led him naturally to think of the city’s mythological structure as it related to Corinthian territory, divided between Poseidon and Helius. Canal cutting was an impiety against Poseidon because his domain centered on the Isthmus and the sanctuary lying less than a kilometer beyond the canal. In Dio’s account of Nero’s endeavors, at the moment of excavation, blood gushed from the earth, phantoms appeared, and groans and loud noises were heard throughout the land—terrifying phenomena that the tyrant simply ignored!\(^{41}\)

Cutting the Corinthian canal was never accomplished in antiquity but the very attempts became a principal topos in the literature of the Roman era. The succession of failures reinforced both the sacrilegious character and physical impossibility of making the Peloponnese an island, while also underscoring the centrality of Greek geography for the wider world and the important place of Corinth within that geography. The canal became a place linked in literature with some of the most ambitious men of the Roman period and formed a popular topic of discussion of the physical world (e.g., would a hypothetical canal flood Aegina?) or a setting to place discussions of philosophers like Musonius and Demetrius.\(^{42}\)

The literary medium, moreover, also structured and affected how individuals read the physical landscape in the Roman period. On the way to Corinth one would encounter at roughly the same location both the ship-road and the physical evidence of canal construction. The canal excavations could be recognized in the physical features at the

\(^{41}\) Dio Cassius 44.5; 62.16-17. For another brief account of the actual episode of digging, cf. Suet. *Nero* 19.

\(^{42}\) e.g., Philostratus, *VA* 5.19.
junction of the coastal roads with the *diolkos*, the narrowest point of the Isthmus.\(^43\) The *diolkos* itself, represented by the more consistent physical line of a ship-road between two seas at the narrowest point, would have been highly visible to the traveler. The person who traveled along the ship-road from one sea to the other would have seen the canal cuts and earth moles on both ends, as well as the relief of (probably) Heracles in the rock of the canal wall presumably commemorating the attempt.

How the traveler read such features depended on which places he thought were significant and wanted to see, as well as how informed he was by ancient literature. Pausanias saw the remains of the canal attempt near Isthmia in the second century AD,\(^44\) but does not specify who cut the canal; he also makes no mention of the *diolkos* (as either the narrow part of the Isthmus or as a specific ship-road) although it would have been visible to him. Walking across the Isthmus along the ship-road, the better educated Roman traveler seeing the Heracles relief might have recalled the Herculean attempts to cut the divinely shaped land and perhaps the succession of failures of that enterprise. His path across the *diolkos* may have ultimately reminded him of the physical distinctiveness of the land bridge of Greece and its constancy and permanence, despite man’s desires to alter it.

The ancient traveler of the Roman era need not have known all the stories and associations connected with these places to make some sense of it, and even Pausanias does not name Nero (or any persons specifically) as responsible for the trenches. The uneducated traveler might only have noticed the ship-road and the canal trenches and recognized the central place of the Isthmus for the geography of Corinth, Greece, and the Mediterranean world. A more educated traveler would have read and known some of the

\(^43\) A study by B. Gerster has highlighted the archaeological evidence for the excavated ancient canal. B. Gerster, “L’Isthme de Corinthe,” *BCH* 8 (1884), 225-32.

\(^44\) Pausanias 2.1.5-2.1.6 claims to have seen the site where the excavation occurred and even remarked that the digging failed to penetrate the rock, an observation confirming his belief that the act was sacrilege as well as his probable location on the eastern Saronic side, near the site of Isthmia. For discussion, see J. Murphy-O’Connor, *St. Paul’s Corinth: Texts and Archaeology*, Collegeville, MN, 1983, 9-10.
anecdotes about the important personalities of recent history who tried to pierce the Isthmus and connect the seas of the wider world beyond. He might have read the ship-road and canal cuts as the physical axis of the Isthmus of Corinth and Greece, recalling the stories of the city’s relationship to the broader world and the sacred character of a landscape refusing to become an island.

3.1.3. Isthmia

The conceptual center of the Isthmus occurred where the land narrowed to the bottleneck and was marked by the ship-road, canal trenches, a number of regular roads, and especially the sanctuary and sites sacred to Poseidon. This area, often referred to as the Isthmus (proper) or Isthmia, was the major place of the eastern territory discussed in ancient literature. Its location near the intersection of numerous roads from all directions, made the area one of the important nodes in the Corinthian landscape, and its connection to the Isthmian games invited pilgrims and tourists from all over Greece. Much of the site of Isthmia has been excavated over the last half century and the results published in the *Isthmia* series volumes of The American School of Classical Studies at Athens. These volumes detail the material history of the site from pre-history to post-antiquity, so my brief overview here will simply highlight the meanings and conceptions of the place of Isthmia in the literature of the Roman period.⁴⁵

The sacred poles of the Corinthia in the Roman period were Acrocorinth and Corinth town on the one end, and Isthmia (and by connection, the entire isthmus generally) on the other. The entire Corinthian landscape was, of course, sacred to a multiplicity of deities, and Pausanias’ account highlights the variety of sanctuaries and shrines that existed in the eastern territory. But a principal myth that circulated about Corinth reinforced the sacred split of the two most distinct features of Corinth’s eastern territory—Acrocorinth and the Isthmus. In the end, Helios gained control of Acrocorinth, and Poseidon the Isthmus and the sea. This latter god’s domain was centered in the sanctuary at Isthmia, a little more

⁴⁵ *Isthmia*, Eight Volumes, Princeton, NJ, 1971-Present: American School of Classical Studies at Athens. For a good recent overview of the site in the Roman and late Roman periods, see J. Rife, Forthcoming.
than a kilometer from the sea; here, at Poseidon’s sanctuary, Greeks came from all across
the Mediterranean every other year to celebrate the games in honor of another important
deity connected with the sea, Palaemon/Melicertes.

The story of Palaemon is a sad one. Melicertes was the son of Ino, who was
plunged into the sea with his mother when she (along with her husband pursuing) was
driven mad by the Furies sent by Hera (that’s another story). The boy drowned but was
brought ashore at the Isthmus on the back of a dolphin where, at least according to a
predominant tradition, Sisyphus found him and established the Isthmian games near the
Sanctuary of Poseidon in the honor of Melicertes. Poseidon and the boy were
themselves closely linked, for it was the sea-god who transformed the drowned
Melicertes into Palaemon, and their sacred homes touched in a single place, Isthmia. As
Aelius Aristides would say, Poseidon made Palaemon and his mother partners in his
empire, and Poseidon, Amphitrite, Palaemon, and Leucothea were the principal deities
honored at the sanctuary.

There were, however, numerous other aquatic and divine figures connected with the
Isthmus and the sea, and the site itself (and Corinth, by connection) became bound
closely to imagery of the sea. In the mid-second century, Pausanias saw numerous
statues and reliefs of gods at Isthmia, nearly all associated with the sea: there was
Poseidon, Amphitrite, Sea and Calm, Tritons, Palaemon on the dolphin, Ino, Leucothea, a

46 “Palaemon” is the name of the transformed and deified Melicertes.

47 In another account, Melicertes had already been boiled by his mad mother before being thrown into the
sea. For an alternate tradition about Leucothea, cf. Ael. Arist. Or. 46.34-39; Plut. These. tells of another
tradition that linked the founding of the games with Theseus. Regarding the rites of Melicertes, see Flav.
Philostr. Heroes 53; Paus. 2.2.1; Plut. Theseus 25; Philostratus Imagines 2.16. Also: H. Koester,
“Melicertes at Isthmia: a Roman Mystery Cult,” in D.L. Bach, E. Ferguson, and W.A. Meeks (eds.),
Greeks, Romans, and Christians: Essays in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe, Minneapolis 1990; and C.
Bonnet, “Le culte de Leucothéa et Mélicerte en Grèce, au Proche-Orient et en Italie,” in Studi e Materiali di

48 Ael. Arist. Or. 46.15, 31. One is also reminded of Pseudo-Lucian’s description of Nero canalling the
Isthmus, which began with the emperor hymning Amphitrite and Poseidon and singing to Melicertes and
Leucothea. Cf. [Lucian] Nero 3
whale-like horse, young Aphrodite, Bellerophon, Nereids, and the sons of Tyndareus. Such concentration of sea-residing beings in one place could explain how some versions of the story of Arion and the dolphin told of his landing at Corinth, rather than Taenarum where most others placed him. Ampelius, in his brief discussion of the wonders of the world, noted that near the sea at Corinth, there was a whale bone so large that a person could not embrace it, as well as a sanctuary of Aphrodite with a marble vase of Lais; it has been suggested that Ampelius is referring to the site of Isthmia. Even the sea creatures (Triton and Icthyocentaur, Nereids, Eros, dolphins, and fishes) depicted in the mosaic floor of the second-century bath at Isthmia remind the visitor of the broader seascape connected with this sacred site.

Those who have visited the modern site of Isthmia, located in the quiet village of Kyras Vrysi, can quickly forget that the area must have been thronging with travelers. The volume of actual travel is hard to measure but certainly pilgrimage, the games, and simple transit through the Isthmus made the site a veritable travel node. Our sources are direct, if colorful, about the numerous travelers and pilgrims. Strabo notes that the Isthmian games drew large crowds of people that had contributed to the wealth of the

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49 Paus. 2.1.7-2.2.1. Ael. Arist. Or. 46.40-41, also mentions several of these images.

50 The canonical version of the story (Hdt. 1.24) is as follows: Arion the lyre player lived in Corinth at the time of Periander and sailed to the cities of Sicily and Italy to play his lyre; there he amassed a great wealth. One day the sailors, eager for his wealth, attempted to kill him, but as a final request before plunging into the sea, Arion played his lyre, which in turn summoned a dolphin that carried him ashore at Taenarum; there was, supposedly, a monument of Arion on the dolphin there in antiquity. The version told by the Latin author Hyginus (Fabulae 194 (Arion)), however, has Arion come ashore at Corinth rather than Taenarum. This need not imply that Hyginus ‘got it wrong’, but that myths were reworked in different ways in antiquity.

51 Ampelius, Liber Memorialis 8.8: Corintho ballenae costa est magna secundum mare, quam homo complecti non potest; eodem in loco fanum est Veneris, in quo uas marmoreum Laidos.

52 See Marie-Pierre Arnaud-Lindet (Trans.), Liber Memorialis (L. Ampelius), Paris 1993, with commentary on p. 62, Note 12. Arnaud-Lindet suggests that the marble vase could refer to a perirrhanterion, now at the Corinth museum but found at the entrance of the sanctuary of Isthmia and dedicated to Poseidon. It may be that Ampelius’ brief description of Corinth is itself a conflation of different places.


54 Cf., for instance, the quiet image of the site of Isthmia in its landscape: Nikos Paphatzis, p. 40.
former city, and Livy describes (see below) the gathering effect in some detail, remarking also on the marketplace at the site. In a colorful and well-known account, Dio Chrysostom places the Cynic philosopher Diogenes in the midst of this environment:

When the Isthmian games were in progress, Diogenes, who probably was sojourning at Corinth, went down to the Isthmus. He did not attend the great public gatherings, however, with the same motives as the majority, who wished to see the athletes and to gormandize. No, I warrant he came as an observer of mankind and of men’s folly. He knew that men show their real character most clearly at public festivals and large gatherings.

Dio Chrysostom has visitors arrive from Asia Minor, Sicily and Italy; Libya, Massilia, and the Black Sea, crowding around Diogenes and listening to him as a kind of local attraction, a person whom the locals, accustomed to his babbling in the Craneion district, found less amusing. Isthmia was the perfect chronotope for a philosopher like Diogenes to find numerous crowds; and it was possibly a contributing factor in St. Paul’s use of Corinth as a base for his mission.

There were other reasons to visit the site beyond the games. The presence of the ship-road nearby—the most direct route across the Isthmus—and the convergence of other important roads from Athens, Corinth, and the Lechaion Gulf positioned Isthmia at one of the most important crossroads in the eastern Corinthia and made the site highly visible even during the off-years. Pausanias’ brief description of the Isthmus proper, for example, focuses not on the games per se but on the interesting sacred facets of the site, including the temples of Poseidon and Palaemon and the sculpted images of the gods. The most interesting facets of Isthmia for the periegete were the exquisite images highlighting Corinth’s famous deities, as mentioned above. Pausanias’ description highlights another way that the Isthmus attracted visitors and pilgrims through the Roman

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55 Strabo 8.6.20; Livy 33.32.
56 Dio Chrys. Or. 9.4ff. Loeb translation. See also the comments of Murphy O-Connor 1984, 96-98, that this scene reflects the “personal experience” of Dio Chrysostom in the late first century AD.
58 Paus. 2.1.7-2.2.2.
period, even apart from the games. The use of the area as a crossroads and marketplace is also well-attested in the literature.\textsuperscript{59}

For all of these reasons, Isthmia became another conceptual focal point of the Isthmus and achieved remarkable place-fame during the Roman period. It was a place, much like the canal discussed above, that fascinated individuals and possessed an imageability that warranted its frequent discussion in literary accounts. It also possessed a rich history, often connected with freedom and pan-Hellenic unity. Here at Isthmia, as everyone knew, Philip II of Macedon and then Alexander his son held conferences in 338 and 336 BC to prepare the Greeks for a united campaign against the Persians. And in 196 BC the Roman commander Flamininus chose Isthmia and the games as the place and time to proclaim the liberation of the Greeks from Macedon.\textsuperscript{60}

The appointed time of the Isthmian Games was at hand, a spectacle always, even on other occasions, attended by crowds, on account of the fondness, native to the race, for exhibitions in which there were trials of skill in every variety of art as well as of strength and swiftness of foot; moreover, they came because, on account of the favourable situation of the place, lying between two opposite seas and furnishing mankind with abundance of all wares, the market was a meeting place for Asia and Greece. But at this time they had assembled from all quarters not only for the usual purposes, but especially because they were consumed with wonder what thenceforth the state of Greece would be, and what their own conditions…

Even the emperor Nero stepped into this long line of notables, and, having initiated the construction of the canal nearby, entered a tragic contest in the theater there (he had his opponent’s throat slashed with writing tablets).\textsuperscript{61} Suetonius remarks that Nero’s final act in Greece was the mock pronouncement of freedom to the whole province during the Isthmian Games,\textsuperscript{62} an act that situated him in the historical pedigree of other notables establishing or proclaiming freedom (Theseus, Philip II, and Flaminus) at a place associated with pan-Hellenic endeavors (the Hellenic League, resistance to Persian Wars, resistance to Persian Wars,

\textsuperscript{59} E.g., Livy 33.32.

\textsuperscript{60} Livy 33.32. See also Polybius’ account of this event, Polybius 18.44-46.

\textsuperscript{61} [Lucian] \textit{Nero} 8-9.

\textsuperscript{62} Suet. \textit{Nero} 24.
initiation of campaign against Persia (338 BC), and the Games). Isthmia was a place where famous individuals of the Roman period could step into the historical narrative, blow their trumpets and shout, or at least, a place where later narrators felt these people belonged. It was significant in the early empire not only because of its importance for the games, but the fact of its antiquity, its associations with pan-Hellenism, and a series of famous historical persons and events, contributed to its fame.

The place of the site in the imagination of authors of the high empire can be summed up in the panegyric delivered by Aelius Aristides in AD 156 for the celebration of the festival. The famous Isthmian Oration (Or. 46) is dedicated to Poseidon and begins by praising the role of the god in his dominion over the seas, showing humans how the land and sea could be united to create a medium connecting societies and producing commerce. His speech comes to a climax centered on the place of Poseidon at the Isthmus:

Nothing is so dear, beloved, and honored by him as this isthmus and this region here. And I call this Poseidon’s chancellery, palace, court—just as Homer spoke of the ‘court of Zeus’—, and the headquarters of his kingdom. I base my judgment, among other reasons, on the fact that he centered the whole sea on every side around this point after he had set gates on either side of it and had spread the land which is called the Isthmus equally to the east and west of it, and at the same time had closed it off so that the seas might not join, not with a great expanse of land, but, as it were, with a narrow pipe, and had legislated and had ordained for the seas, that each preserve its own boundaries, and again had spread them all open and had given to each a somewhat wide expanse in the distance, so that—and this is the strangest and at the same time most pleasant of all spectacles on the earth—people on each side sail in and sail out at the same instant with favorable breezes and men put out to sea and into port with the same winds in this land and sea alone of all, and everything from everywhere comes here both by land and sea, and this is the reason why the land even from earliest times was praised as ‘rich’ by the poets, both because of the multitude of the advantages which are at hand and the felicity which is embodied in it. For it is, as it were, a kind of market place, and at that common

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64 See C.A. Behr (Tr.), P. Aelius Aristides, The Complete Work, for translation, with commentary at pp. 422-24.

65 Or. 46.20-23. Translation is C.A. Behr.
to all the Greeks, and a national festival, not like this present one which the Greek race celebrates here every two years, but one which is celebrated every year and daily.

Aelius Aristides goes on to explain that Isthmia was a daily festival of exchange between cities, a passage for every traveler and the common metropolis of all Greece, pleasant, beautiful, and charming to the visitor, an obvious offspring of Aphrodite herself. Even the appearance of Corinth showed the favor of Aphrodite and Nymphs, its greatness demonstrated by its continuous habitation extending to all the seas, as though the city were a merchant ship surrounded by the sea of its own goods. The historical pedigree of the city included a variety of notable heroes, gods, and persons who were, by some association, linked to the Isthmus. In this final excerpt, Aelius Aristides brings together in a single image the numerous stories, associations, deities, and personalities connected with Corinthian history, as well as the central myth of Corinth married to its eastern territory. The Isthmus was no less than the heart of the city, a crossroads linked by its seas to the wider world. This is good solid panegyric, but it consolidates numerous strands of Corinthian myth and stories under the conceptual banner of the city on the Isthmus centered in Poseidon’s chancellery and the marketplace of all mankind.

3.1.4. The Twin Harbors

Although Corinth had at least four harbors in use in the Roman era—Lechaion, Kenchreai, and the two small ports marking the end of the diolkos (Schoenus and modern Poseidonia: see 3.1.6 below)—only the first two were substantial or particularly famous. Lechaion and Kenchreai were the twin harbors of the city, best known as geographic points of reference in a broader narrative of travel and sailing. They were

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66 Or. 46.26-27.


68 For brief discussions of the literary evidence for these harbors, cf. Wiseman 1978, 52-53; 87-88; Murphy-O’Connor 1983, 17-21, 104-5; Rothaus 1995, and further references in Section 3.2.1 below. For some non-specific mentions of these harbors in the Roman period, see Strabo 8.6.4; Acts 18.18; Galen, De propriorum animi 5.18.12; Lucian Hist. Conscr. 29; Lucian Nav. 32.2; Paus. 7.6.7; Polyaeon. Statag. 6.5.1; Ps-Scymnus Geogr. Ad. Nicom. Regem 508; Ptolem. 3.14.34; Phil. VA 4.24-25; Pliny NH 4.12.3; Paus. 8.1.2; Ael. Aris. Or. 1.290.
called harbors (epineion) and only occasionally given more specific definition. In the first century BC, for example, Strabo refers to Kenchreai as a harbor (limen) and village (kome), but it clearly became the major extra-urban town on the Isthmus in the early empire, as Apuleius says, “the most noble town” of Corinth. The northern harbor, Lechaion, was close enough to Corinth town that it lacked the distinct status of town, and was, as Rothaus has noted, probably a dependent suburb of the city. Lechaion was referred to as Corinth’s northern port, and Strabo remarks that there were few houses there. Like so many other places in the Corinthian landscape, Lechaion and Kenchreai were remembered and named in vague terms.

Yet, the twin harbors also had a reputation that preceded them, representing nothing less than the economic arms of the commercial city. It was because of these harbors, observed Diogenes the Cynic (and Dio Chrysostom), that large crowds gathered at Corinth. Strabo adds that the two harbors, together with the Isthmus, facilitated exchange and made the city wealthy. Although the distance between Corinth town and its larger northern harbor, Lechaion, was significantly less than between Corinth and Kenchreai, ancient authors conceived the two as a pair of outlets to equally important twin gulfs. Pausanias claims the two harbors were given their names by Leches and

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69 Epineion: Ptolem. 3.14.27.2; 3.14.34; Aelius Herod., De prosodia catholica 3.1.284.32; Harpocr. Lex. 193.3.

70 Strabo 8.6.22.

71 Pomponius Mela 2.48.6 and Apul. 10.35 both use the term oppidum to describe Kenchreai.

72 Rothaus 1995, 300.

73 E.g., Livy 32.23; Pliny NH 4.12.3. See Wiseman 1978, 87-88 for an overview.

74 Strabo 8.6.22. This comment, made immediately after the first Roman refoundation of the city, need not mean that the area was uninhabited in the course of the Roman era. Only full investigations would reveal the character of habitation.

75 Dio Chrys. Discourses 8.5-10.

76 Strabo 8.6.20.

77 Twin Seas: Ovid Fast. 4.501; Ovid Met. 5.407; Horace Carm. 1.7.2; Pomponius Porphyrio Carm. 1.7.2; Gaius Caesius Bassus Metr. 6.394. On the unequal size of the two harbors: Ovid Met. 5.407.
Cenchrias, the two children of Poseidon and Peirene, and were thereby positioned at the heart of civic mythology.\textsuperscript{78} The harbors in fact were conceptual and actual focal points for Corinth’s identity and landscape.

The centrality of the two harbors can be recognized in how some individuals understood their role in structuring the entire Corinthian landscape. Beyond simply noticing their economic importance, Strabo remarks that the harbors formed the conceptual starting point for the seaboard on both sides.\textsuperscript{79} Pausanias neatly describes the Isthmus of Corinth as stretching from the sea at Kenchrea to the sea at Lechaion, as though the seas were physically centered in their harbors.\textsuperscript{80} The view of such a landscape from Acrocorinth was particularly compelling. Pliny explains.\textsuperscript{81}

The narrow neck of land from which it projects is called the Isthmus. At this place the two seas that have been mentioned encroach on opposite sides from the north and east and swallow up all the breadth of the peninsula at this point, until in consequence of the inroad of such large bodies of water in opposite directions the coasts on either side have been eaten away so as to leave a space between them of only five miles...In the middle of this neck of land which we have called the Isthmus is the colony of Corinth, the former name of which was Ephyra; its habitations cling to the side of a hill, 7-1/2 miles [60 stades] from the coast on either side, and the top of its citadel, called Acrocorinth, on which is the spring of Peirene, commands views of the two seas in opposite directions.

A description of this sort creates a powerful image of Corinth in the mind, centered equidistant from the two harbors by sixty stades, as though the seas proportionally framed the urban center. In this conception, the gulfs, centered in their harbors, also framed and defined the Isthmus with Corinth town in the middle. The parallel shores of the Isthmus shores could also be designated by the names of their harbors.\textsuperscript{82}

\textsuperscript{78} Paus. 2.2.3.
\textsuperscript{79} Strabo 8.6.22.
\textsuperscript{80} Strabo 2.1.5.
\textsuperscript{81} Pliny NH 4.9-11. Loeb translation.
\textsuperscript{82} Paus. 8.1.2: “On the Lechaion side”; Or consider Strabo 8.6.22: “The beginning of the seaboard on the two sides is, on the one hand, Lechaeum, and on the other, Kenchreai, a village and a harbour distant about 70 stadia from Corinth.” (Loeb)
The harbors were also the most recognizable symbols of connection between Corinth and the world, the nodes of contacts between a cityscape and the rest of the Mediterranean. The harbors were linked to seas running in two directions, the one to Asia, the other to Italy; Corinth in the middle grew wealthy as a result. Lucian decries a pathetic historian of Corinth who never undertook a journey further than a walk from Craneion to Lerna—both within the walls of Corinth! He never “set a foot outside Corinth nor even left home for Kenchreai; he had certainly not seen Syria or Armenia.” The early third century “Corinthian Oration” praises Corinth as the promenade (peripatos) of Greece, its very “prow and stern”, the place where the innumerable traders, pilgrims, travelers, and passersby annually land at Kenchreai, injecting prosperity and wealth in the famous city. Apuleius has Lucius the ass quickly gallop the distance to Kenchreai to participate in the rites of Isis. In stories like these, the twin harbors act as traveler nodes that reinforce a basic historical identity of Corinth on the Isthmus, connected to a wider world and the half-way house to many a wandering voyager.

Although poorly discussed, the two harbors were occasionally given sacred, historic, and mythological significance in ancient literature. Pausanias briefly records a sanctuary and image of Poseidon at Lechaion, and, at Kenchreai, a temple and image of Aphrodite, a Poseidon statue, and sanctuaries of Asclepius and Isis. Plutarch likewise places the famous Dinner of the Seven Wise Men (7th century BC) near the shrine of Aphrodite in the area of Lechaion; walking through throngs of travelers to the harbor, Periander and

83 Strabo 8.6.20.
84 Lucian Hist. Conscr. 29.
85 Favorinus, The Corinthian Oration 7-8, 36.
86 See J. Murphy-O’Connor 1983, 21, for skepticism about the size of the town.
87 Paus. 2.2.3.
the others arrive at the shore and visit the racetrack, gymnasium, and the beautiful park.\textsuperscript{88} Apollonius, standing at the Isthmus, with the sea roaring around Lechaion, uttered the prediction of Nero’s canal cutting which takes place at Lechaion (even though the actual trenches were far east of the harbor, at the \textit{diolkos}).\textsuperscript{89} Near the climax of Apuleius’ \textit{Metamorphosis}, the donkey skips to Kenchreai,\textsuperscript{90}

which is the most famous town of all the Corinthians, bordering upon the seas called Aegean and Saronic. There is a great and mighty haven frequented with the ships of many a sundry nation, and there because I would avoid the multitude of people, I went to a secret place of the sea-coast, hard by the sprinklings of the waves, where I laid me down upon the bosom of the sand to ease and refresh myself; for now the day was past and the chariot of the sun gone down, and I lying in this sort on the ground did fall in a sweet and sound sleep.

The following day, in the parade of the goddess, Apuleius is transformed back into his human state. Corinth’s famous harbors, although rarely given descriptive detail, formed important conceptual nodes in a broader landscape of travel and trade, and, on occasion, formed the scenery for the historic and fictional actors of Corinthian history.\textsuperscript{91}

\textbf{3.1.5. The Trans-Isthmian Wall}

The walls of the Isthmus had a role in ancient literature longer-lasting than many other places on the Isthmus. The topographic and defensive potential of the Isthmus has been well-discussed through the studies of Wiseman, Stroud, and most recently, Caraher and Gregory.\textsuperscript{92} Gregory’s study of the trans-Isthmian wall documented both the extant

\textsuperscript{88} [Plut.] \textit{Mor. (Septem Sapientium Convivium} 2&3) 146D-E, 148B; see Wiseman 1978, 87; Murphy-O’Connor 1983, 104-5; Rothaus 1995, 302-3. The description surely describes the Lechaion of the early Roman period.

\textsuperscript{89} Phil. \textit{VA} 4.24.

\textsuperscript{90} Apuleius 10.35, Loeb translation, S. Gaselee edition. J. Murphy-O’Connor 1983, 21, is skeptical about the size of the harbor (probably from reading Scranton’s comments) based on excavated remains, but Kenchreai would have included a broader area than simply the buildings on the moles. R. Rothaus, \textit{Corinth, the First City of Greece: an Urban History of Late Antique Cult and Religion}, Leiden 2000, 64-83, addresses this issue directly.

\textsuperscript{91} Cf. also Statius \textit{Theb.} 1.334: The son of Oedipus, crossing the Isthmus heard two shores in mid land.

literary testimony for walling the Isthmus and the chronological and material character of
the construction. What has received somewhat less direct discussion is how the wall
and episodes of walling the Isthmus were embedded in the history of the city,
communicating a variety of meanings about the place of the landscape for both the city
and all of southern Greece.

Beyond the important immediate function of walling off the Isthmus to prevent
invasions into the Peloponnese, it is important to recognize the historical prestige and
fame that the Isthmus gained in later periods due to Herodotus’ well-known account of
the walling episode. The fifth century BC historian tells the story of Xerxes’ Persian
invasion and the moment of decision that came immediately after the Persian break
through Thermopylae. The Peloponnesians gathered in conference at the Isthmus and
voted to take their stand there by hastily constructing the wall while the Athenians
decided to meet the enemy by sea.

Since their number was myriads and since every man worked the task proceeded well.
They brought in stones and bricks and wood and baskets filled with sand and those who
were helping never ceased work during the night or the day.

Herodotus wagers his own opinion that if the Persians had gained control of the sea, the
wall across the Isthmus would have done the Peloponnesians little good. And yet, the
walling of the Isthmus was nonetheless significant to Herodotus for its pivotal place in
the story of the Greek cities fighting against invading barbarians—the Peloponnesians
yoked the Isthmus as a line of final defense, perhaps a Greek parallel matching Xerxes’
bridging of the Hellespont and cutting of the isthmian canal near Athos.

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dissertation by J. Frey, *In Process*, which is examining the nature of spolia in the wall itself.

94 Hdt. 8.71.

95 Hdt. 7.139.

96 T.E. Gregory has suggested that the symbolism of this episode is the “yoking” of the Isthmus. See
below.
The effect of this earlier incident on later narratives is, of course, difficult to measure as later episodes of walling the Isthmus were also tied to a very practical concern to keep invaders out of the Peloponnese. But the most obvious impact is that the Herodotean account preserved the memory of the event as it was recounted in later historical accounts of Greece and the world, even given new details and nuance. Diodorus, for example, adds that the walling extended over a distance of 40 stades, a common assessment of the length of the Isthmus, and placed the wall specifically between the harbors of Lechaion and Kenchreae.97 This was also the distance and course that the same author ascribed to the wall built in advance of the march of Epamenondas in 369/368 BC; and it was, like the previous walling, built hastily.98 Pausanias relates another episode in 279 BC that the advance of the Gauls did not concern the Peloponnesians because of the potential protection afforded by the Isthmus.99

The march to Thermopylae against the army of the Gauls was left alone by all the Peloponnesians alike; for, as the barbarians had no ships, the Peloponnesians anticipated no danger from the Gauls, if only they walled off the Corinthian Isthmus from the sea at Lechaemum to the other sea at Kenchreae. This was the policy of all the Peloponnesians at this time.

One can perhaps hear in the reasoning of the Peloponnesians the inverse of the observation made by Herodotus that a trans-Isthmian wall would be ineffective if the barbarians controlled the seas; here, because the barbarians did not control the seas, the Peloponnesians could trust in their Isthmus.100

The stories of fortifying of the Isthmus reinforced the perception of its significance as a land bridge between southern and northern Greece and the role of Corinth as the strategic “key” to the Peloponnese.101 They also underscored how central the Isthmus

97 Diod. Sic. 11.16.3.

98 Diod. Sic. 15.68.2-5: “From Kenchreae to Lechaeum they fenced off the area with palisades and deep trenches, and since the task was quickly completed…they had every spot fortified before the Boeotians arrived.” Loeb translation.

99 Paus. 7.6.8. Loeb translation.

100 Hdt. 7.139.

101 See Strabo 8.1.3 for discussions of the Isthmus and Greece.
was to the geography of Greece, at the very point of entry by land to the Peloponnese and central-northern Greece. In ancient narrative, it was known as the “fetters” or “shackles” of Greece and even the key to the Peloponnese.102 Stories of walling the Isthmus again reinforced the importance of the territory as a travelscape; the walls allowed a general, state, or cities to control that travel. Although stories of walling the Isthmus fade in contemporary importance during the early Roman period, they gain a new vitality in the events of the later Roman and Byzantine history.

3.1.6. Other Famous Places

The only other famous Corinthian place in the literature of the Roman period was Corinth town itself, including especially the Craneion district, the Peirene fountain, and Acrocorinth.103 The city center of Corinth itself was conceptually uneven. Although centuriation divided the city along east-west and north-south axes, which extended to its countryside, only certain places in the city center acquired a reputation and fame that evoked frequent response. In reading Pausanias, we can see the movement of someone interested in religious monuments embedded in the city’s deeper history. Corinth’s eastern suburb, the Craneion, also became one of the most famous places of the city, linked to Diogenes the Cynic, Menippus the Cynic, Alexander the Great, and the prostitute Lais.104 Other imagined places within the city center existed, but not in abundance.105 It is beyond this study to discuss the different ways that individuals

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102 Plut. *Apothegmata Laconia* 221F; Strabo 9.4.15.5; Velleius Paterculus *History of Rome* 1.3.3. And Strabo 8.4.8: “And so Demetrius of Pharos seems to have spoken aptly to Philip the son of Demetrius when he advised him to lay hold of both these cities if he coveted the Peloponnesus, ‘for if you hold both horns,’ he said, ‘you will hold down the cow,’ meaning by ‘horns’ Ithome and Acrocorinthus, and by ‘cow’ the Peloponnnesus.” Loeb translation.


105 E.g., We learn from *Acts of the Apostles* that St. Paul’s trial occurred on the bema, the most central and immediate symbol of public declaration, linked to the seat of the provincial governor and Roman authority. Others will also highlight the city’s connection as the provincial capital.
imaged and conceptualized the urban center itself, but it is worth emphasizing that the urban center was perceived and read in much the same way as the eastern territory. Although the city was physically well-structured, its discussion in the literature of the Roman period was highly differentiated and uneven—read in terms of the historical associations and meanings of a more ancient history.

There were also a number of other less significant places in the Corinthia mentioned in literature of this period, but they are exceptional and poorly imagined and are usually named because they have some connection to the history of the city, however trivial that connection is, or because of their proximity to a more important site like Isthmia and Kenchreai. This second tier of famous places would have been most meaningful for those well-read in ancient history and who knew to look for them. They were also generally sites “on the road”, so to speak, visible and in easy access for the visitor.

There are not many such surviving places. Strabo, Pliny, and others knew of a small port (limin) called Schoenus at the Saronic Gulf termination of the diolkos, which was mainly significant as a coastal marker in ancient geographies;\(^{106}\) the termination of the diolkos at the modern site of Poseidonia on the Corinthian Gulf apparently had no or little place-fame in antiquity since there is no extant evidence for its name. Although “Kromna” has now become embedded in maps of the eastern Corinthia, there is little evidence that it ever existed in the Classical or Roman period (see chapter 5). Pausanias in his own day, reading the Archaic poet Eumelus, speaks (hypothetically) of the graves of Sisyphus, the ancient Corinthian king, and Neleus, Pylus’ father, but recommends not

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\(^{106}\) The port is probably to be connected with the modern village of Kalamaki at the canal. See Fowler and Stillwell 1932, 49; Wiseman 1978, 46, 74 note 12-13. Strabo 8.6.4; Pomponius Mela 2.48; Claudius Ptolem. Math. 3.14.34; Pliny NH 4.18. There is a surviving tradition, preserved in a scholion on Pindar Isthm. Argum. that the dolphin dumped Melicertes on shore at Schoinountia, a name that Wiseman would like to connect to the same harbor Schoenus. Certainly others, however, like Pausanias (2.1.3) did not connect Melicertes specifically with the place-name Schoenus, but simply an altar in an area of pinewoods along the shore.
looking for them!\textsuperscript{107} He also mentions a temple of Artemis on the road between Kenchreai and Isthmia, and the warm salty spring known as Helen’s Bath near Kenchreai, places unknown elsewhere in ancient literature.\textsuperscript{108} And in a surprising but passing explanation for a burnt temple on the road to Sicyon, Pausanias admits that there were, of course, extra-urban houses and temples in the Corinthia that had themselves been burnt down through the wars in the region!\textsuperscript{109} Such places largely lacked significant pedigrees and had relatively little appeal for most travelers passing through a landscape so rich in important famous places. They do remind us, however, that travelers better-read in ancient history might have observed more in the physical landscape than the ordinary sailor, merchant, and passerby.

\subsection*{3.1.7. Non-Place Space in the Corinthia}

The discussion above has highlighted the famous places of the eastern Corinthia, as well as the stories that circulated about them in the Roman period. It was an uneven landscape, defined by only a handful of traveler’s nodes, including the town and acropolis, the two harbors and seas, and the Isthmus centered at the sanctuary of Poseidon.\textsuperscript{110} Despite its non-specificity, these nodes supported a perception of Corinth as a maritime city at the crossroad of the world. We might ask, as a kind of concluding discussion for this section, what can be said about the remainder of the eastern Corinthia outside of, beyond, and between these significant places?

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{107} Paus. 2.2.2; Pausanias remarks that even in Eumelus’ own day (i.e., a thousand years earlier), these were difficult to find. Wiseman 1978, 74.
\item \textsuperscript{108} Paus. 2.2.3. Wiseman 1978, 52-53. Regarding the site of “Kromna”, often mentioned as a significant place in the Corinthia, cf. chapter five, which argues that there was no town of that name.
\item \textsuperscript{109} Paus. 2.5.5. These “houses” outside the wall, of course, will be the subject of discussion in chapters 4-6.
\item \textsuperscript{110} See, for instance, Pomponius Mela 2.48.6, who sums up the Isthmus as a neck of land, on which are 1) the town of Kenchreai; 2) the sanctuary of Poseidon (associated with the Isthmian Games); and 3) the famous wealthy city of Corinth, now known as a Roman colony; and the 4) famous Acrocorinth that gives a view to both seas.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Generally speaking, the rest of the landscape of Corinth in the Roman era was, in literary conception, empty space sitting between more important sites like the canal, the Isthmus, the harbors, and the urban center. This space was *unplaced* insofar as it was never specifically discussed or given distinct form, existing only as imagined liminal space between the major nodes of the Corinthia. But even the very process of mentioning passage and voyage between points like Kenchreai and Isthmia, Corinth town and Kenchreai, Corinth town and the Isthmus reinforced the central myth of the city as a travelscape at the crossroads of Greece. As later chapters (4-6) will discuss at length, the entire eastern territory was hardly empty in antiquity but was rich in places—villas and houses, rural buildings, tombs, quarries, agricultural installations, walls, and the like—that would have been immediately visible to the ancient traveler. Why, then, did the ancients not mention any of these?

First, this is a general source problem to the study of regional environments. On the one hand, there is little doubt that in the Roman period, there were numerous documents in circulation that concerned daily life, detailing social and economic transactions, agricultural productivity, and facets of the rural world. The papyri sources from Egypt, for instance, are well preserved, thereby providing a more precise representation of rural life and allowing a comprehensive historical treatment of social and economic history.\(^{111}\) Elsewhere, though, the ordinary documents of daily life are exceptional, and scholars have to rely on random passing references in ancient literature. Forms of rural settlement, the organization of agricultural labor, and patterns of land use typically lacked the color and story potential *per se* to enter consistently the kind of literature that was preserved from most provinces of the Roman world. Ordinary rural activities and places were, relatively speaking, uninteresting, and fascination with the environment for its own sake had little appeal. To be sure, rural places appear in idyllic poems about rural life,

ancient novels, and late Roman monastic accounts. But places and features in the land that did not achieve extraordinary significance are rarely discussed in antiquity. The eastern Corinthia had plenty of “ordinary places” beyond the famous sites discussed in this chapter, but they belonged to the profane realm of the everyday, the world of agriculture, industry, and daily labor. This is a common problem to attempting local history for the ancient world at all.

Second, there is arguably something about the structure of Corinthian territory itself that may have encouraged stories of voyage. As discussed in the previous chapter, Acrocorinth overshadowed the Isthmus, signaling the city center and drawing the traveler, while the Isthmus demarcated by its twin seas and visible from Acrocorinth are the other fascinating physical features of the landscape. Such physically unique and contrasting features in the territory highlighted topographic and cultural nodes, making the points in-between inconsequential. The ordinary places along the way were not worth discussing or even mentioning when the important travelers’ nodes (the Isthmus proper, Corinth town, and the harbors) were within several hours walking distance and always in visible sight. The distances between these places were short enough that travel would end as quickly as it began, and the significance for most lay not in the journey but the destination, at the end of the road. Such geography formed the structure by which the city and country were known and experienced.

Third, setting aside the literary image discussed in this chapter, the eastern Corinthia was in fact a travelscape, the city’s connective territory and primary point of contact with the world. What we know about this landscape from ancient literature is based almost entirely on the experiences, speeches, and stories of outsiders, travelers, and visitors to the region. Their visions of the landscape were defined by their encounters with the

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112 See, for instance, how ordinary places can gain color when gangs of robbers, romantic couples, and thinking asses are injected into the scenes. Cf. Apuleius, Metamorphosis throughout.

principal travel nodes (the harbors and isthmus) and their interest in pilgrim sites (the Isthmus, the canal, Isthmia, the lavish city center, and the acropolis). They were less fascinated by the kinds of buildings, settlements, and cultural features that were familiar to them from their own homelands.

Finally, and most importantly, as this chapter has argued, a particular tradition and structure of perception of the Corinthia existed already by the Classical period which emphasized the region’s network of most famous places, reinforcing the city’s identity and role as a travelscape, the “promenade” and crossroads of Greece. The landscape was already linked in the Greek period to travel and transience, and Corinth was known as the place on the road. Individuals in the Roman period knew most of the significant places of the region because these places were already famous and important in the surviving traditions for the history of the Greek city. By the time that Pausanias came through in the second century AD, the Corinthian landscape was historicized and replete with ancient memories and associations from the Archaic-Hellenistic era, more than 600 years previous, augmented by the famous people of the first and second centuries who had themselves stepped into that narrative. His was a script of famous characters written centuries before and widely known in his day.

Taken together, these factors mean that the literary map of the Corinthian landscape was hardly an accurate one, at least in so far as it represented the range of places that existed in the territory. The famous places in the traveler’s landscape were only the larger nodes around which stories of the Corinthia centered in the Roman period and supported a traditional vision of the territory. By consequence, the land between the centers was largely un-placed, whose significance lay in the fact that it was space on the way to a place worthy of discussion. The world in-between was a corridor pointing elsewhere, a crossroads that led to Isthmia, Corinth, Kenchreai, Lechaion, and the seas beyond. To be sure, this ancient tradition of reading the landscape only in terms of its

114 An immediate piece of evidence for this is that the proverb, “It is not for every man to sail to Corinth,” dates back at least to the Classical period.
The most famous ancient places is not in any way unique to the Corinthia, and was common to other regions and in ancient travel literature generally. But for the Corinthia, especially, where travel figured so prominently in the canonical definitions of the city, and where the physical topography was so well-articulated, such conceptions further reinforced the associations of the territory with voyage and going. The Isthmus, in a more general sense, formed the broad scene for travel in a way that other places of the ancient world did not. Some additional examples can demonstrate this.

As discussed in the previous chapter, going or sailing to Corinth was a frequent literary motif in the Roman era, and there are even a few descriptions of actual and fictional travel within the Corinthia. Propertius, for instance, opines to Cynthia that he will leave her and Rome and sail off to Athens.

So be it, I leave for wise Athens, the great and long voyage will diminish the pangs of love... Farewell you towers of Rome... The Adriatic will take me; its waves will become familiar and I must implore the favour of its gods. Having traversed the Ionian Sea, the tired vessel will furl its sails in the calm waters of Lechaeum, and I shall continue on foot. In haste, despite my fatigue, I shall cross the Isthmus which separates the two seas. Once in Piraeus I shall go up by the route of Theseus between the arms of the Long Walls.

The proposed voyage would take him into the northern harbor, where he would tiredly walk across the Isthmus, presumably to Kenchreai, before going on to Piraeus. A similarly vague journey is suggested by Philo’s account of Flaccus’ humiliating travel to the little island of Gyara: “And crossing the Isthmus from Lechaeum to the opposite coast and coming down to Kenchreai, the port of Corinth,” he proceeded onward to Attica, not even stopping to rest. Galen records an actual itinerary of traveling with a friend.

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115 The stories of going to Corinth are frequent, but best summed up in the proverb “not for every man to sail to Corinth” recorded frequently throughout antiquity. See, for example, Aristophanes frag. 902 a K.; Strabo 8.6.20; Diogenianus Gramm. Paroemiae 7.16.1; Paus. Attic.; Zenobius Sophista [Paroem] Epitome collectionum Lucilli Tarrhaei et Didymi 5.37.1-2; Aulus Gellius Attic Nights 1.8.3-4; Ael. Arist., Or. 29.17; Horace Ep. 1.17.36; Lucian Herm 27-29, 45.

116 See J. Murphy-O’Connor pp. 76-77.

117 Philo, In Flaccum 151-56. J. Murphy O’Connor 83-84.
from Rome to Athens.\footnote{Galen, \textit{De propriorum animi} (“The Affections and Errors of the Soul”) 5.18-19.} When they arrived at Corinth [i.e., Lechaion], his friend sent his servants ahead with his luggage from Kenchreai \textit{via} ship while he and Galen traveled by hired carriage through Megara and Eleusis to Thriasion; there they reunited with his friend’s servants. The passage is no more specific about particular places on the Isthmus but reminds us that both land and sea travel to and from Corinth were common in antiquity; the anecdote cited above about Herodes Atticus traveling by carriage \textit{via} the coastal road is another case in point.\footnote{Flavius Philostratus, \textit{VS} 2.552.} Finally, Philostratus tells the story of Apollonius’ travel from Smyrna to Italy: landing at Corinth [i.e., Kenchreai], he worshipped the Sun [Acrocorinth] at midday, before embarking [from Lechaion] for Sicily and Italy in the evening.\footnote{Flav. Philostratus \textit{VA} 7.10. See J. Murphy O’Connor, pp. 131-32.}

There are a few other examples of individuals (real or mythical) traveling to and from Corinth, or across the Isthmus, but they are no more specific.\footnote{Cf., for instance, Xen. Scr. Erot. \textit{Ephesiaca} 5.1.8; Apul. \textit{Met.} 10.35; Polybius 16.16.} The passages above indicate that the placing of these episodes rarely occurs in specific space but simply between principal nodes in the eastern territory. Sometimes these nodes—Lechaeum, Kenchreai, and the Isthmus—are named, but just as often, the phrase “arriving at Corinth” was short-hand for “reaching the harbors”. The passing between nodes or across the Isthmus is described as quick and easy, but very tiring, and the journey between Athens and Corinth could and did occur via both ship and chariot, coastal road and sea.\footnote{See Apuleius \textit{Met.} 10.35, where Lucius runs with all his might from Corinth to the town of Kenchreai, reaching it in a short time. For another instance of traveling to Athens by the coastal road, see Dio Chrysostom \textit{Orationes} 10.1.} All of these examples, however, underscore the general insignificance of places in the landscape beyond the most significant nodes (Kenchreai, Lechaeum, Corinth town, and the Isthmus) and defined Corinth as the promenade and crossroad of the Mediterranean. Many travelers would know and experience Corinth
from a distance, in the harbors and in the bypass, as a simple stopover point to somewhere else.\textsuperscript{123} Pausanias was generous to provide so many useful details.

It is perhaps the liminal character of the territory outside of the nodes that contributed to several stories about phantoms and “vampires” appearing on the Isthmus. As we noted above, Nero’s excavations caused the Isthmus to gush blood, ghosts to appear, and strange groans and noises to be heard through the land. Philostratus tells a marvellous story about how Menippus of Lycia (a Cynic philosopher and student of Demetrias and Apollonius) was nearly devoured by a vampire (\textit{lamia}) in Corinth.\textsuperscript{124}

For as he walking all alone along the road towards Kenchreai, he met with an apparition, and it was a woman who clasped his hand and declared that she had been long in love with him, and that she was a Phoenician woman and lived in a suburb of Corinth.

The road towards Kenchreai is the one running from Craneion and the eastern gate onto the Isthmus.\textsuperscript{125} The vampire, disguised as a Phoenician woman, wines and dines Menippus at her home in the Craneion in order to fatten him up to devour him on their wedding night. Fortunately, Apollonius shows up at the wedding and forces the demon to admit to her connivances. Philostratus concludes the account by remarking that many people were aware of the story about Apollonius and Menippus and that it occurred in the

\textsuperscript{123} Modern scholars often assume that most ancient travelers crossing the Isthmus would have passed through Corinth town, but doing so would have added a couple of kilometers to their trip as well as time to walk through the town. For the hurried traveler, there were presumably quicker routes, including, for instance, traveling directly east-southeast from Lechaion to Kenchreai, via Kromna. The quickest route, of course, would have been to follow the ship-road and embark at the opposite shore, but there is no literary evidence for how Corinth’s smaller ports (such as those at the terminus of the ship-road) functioned. We can only guess that travelers might have embarked on ships at the \textit{dialklos}. We cannot assume that crossing the Isthmus normally involved a stop at the urban center.

\textsuperscript{124} Philostratus \textit{VA} 4.25.

\textsuperscript{125} Phil. \textit{VA} 4.25. Paus. 2.2.4 and Diog. Laertius \textit{Vit.} 6.77-79 state that Diogenes’ tomb was by the gate on the road leading to the Isthmus, not far from the area/district/neighborhood known as the Craneion; Pausanias adds that Lais’ grave was in Craneion. How the Craneion, cemetery, and wall relate is not clear from the texts—and indeed, our sources for Craneion suggest different things about the place—but these areas do appear to be on the outskirts of the built urban area, toward the edge of the city. When Philostratus places the scene of the first encounter with the vampire on “the road towards Kenchreai,” he presumably has in mind somewhere on the Isthmus. While it is certainly possible that he is referring to the area of Craneion and the cemeteries (which are beyond the built-up area of Corinth town but within the city wall), it probably makes more sense to read the scene as taking place outside the city walls on the Isthmus itself.
center of Hellas, but had a very vague idea of the details. The scene of the crime—the Isthmus and the road to Kenchreai—were just the kind of area where one might expect to run into vampires, ghosts, or random travelers.\textsuperscript{126} Although not mentioned in antiquity, certain physical features of the territory—the sanctuary of Poseidon, the numerous graves on the Isthmus, the limestone quarries and the hollows and crags, and the sacred crossroads—may even have contributed to these kinds of stories in the ancient imagination.\textsuperscript{127} And yet, it is also ironic that such a territory could become associated with ghosts, since habitation on the Isthmus was so consistent and the traffic throughout must have been frequent, constant, and substantial. All of these stories, nonetheless, reinforced the travel nodes and underscore the highly selective readings of the Corinthian landscape.

3.1.8. The Narrative of a Landscape

This section has discussed the major places of the eastern Corinthia that were famous during the early Roman period. It has examined the various meanings and histories associated with places and the parts of the landscape that lacked significance, or that gained significance only in respect to the more significant places. The narrative through which ancient travelers read the physical territory was powerful enough that it guided them past insignificant sites to the main attractions of the Isthmus. As suggested earlier, what I have argued above for the Corinthia might apply for ancient travel and pilgrimage

\textsuperscript{126} See M. Given, “From Density Counts to Ideational Landscapes: Intensive Survey, Phenomenology, and the Sydney Cyprus Survey Project,” in E.F. Athanassopoulos and L. Wandsnider (eds.), \textit{Mediterranean Archaeological Landscapes: Current Issues}, Philadelphia 2004, 179-80, for the discussion of the ‘wilderness’ zone in pre-modern landscapes. Of course, a more ordinary kind of encounter is the one that Dio Chrysostom relates about Diogenes running into an acquaintance on the road from Corinth to Athens. Dio Chrysostom \textit{Orations} 10.1-10.2: “Once when Diogenes was leaving Corinth for Athens, he met an acquaintance on the road and asked whither he was going; not, however, as most persons ask such questions and thereby make a show of interest in their friends’ affairs, yet have no sooner heart than off they go…And the latter replied, ‘I am on my way to Delphi, Diogenes, to make use of the oracle, but when I was about to pass through Boeotia, my slave, who was with me, ran away, and so I am now bound for Corinth, for perhaps I may find the boy there.’”

\textsuperscript{127} See also Lucian \textit{Philops} 30-31, who discusses another Corinthian ghost story in connection with the old uninhabited house of Eubatides near the Craneion.
generally and would certainly be relevant to most other regions of the Aegean. In the case of Corinth, however, the territory was geographically central to the currents of travel in the Roman era and consequently reinforced the myth and definition of the city as a maritime capital in a frequented travelscape. The physical structure of the territory, and the manner of reading the important places in the landscape, sharpened that mythology.

The tradition of reading the city through its landscape reinforced a definition of the city in its connection to travel, trade, and the broader world. Corinth was the kind of city where one could meet a vampire disguised as a Phoenician woman, a man turned into a donkey, an Assyrian fortune teller predicting the best time to travel, an Apostle making tents, a wandering Cynic (Diogenes) or a nameless sojourner abiding in the city. It was a city that one could stop at to enjoy its pleasures, or pass through or by on the way to some other place. As Favorinus says in The Corinthian Oration, Corinth was nothing less than the “promenade” (peripatos) of Hellas, the crossroads, where many put in each year as traders, pilgrims, envoys, and passersby. It was, “as the saying goes, both prow and stern of Hellas, having been called prosperous and wealthy and the like by poets and gods from olden days.” Corinth in its landscape was the prototype of a maritime city.

This particular narrative of Corinthian history was also embedded in physical places in the Isthmus itself, such as the ship-road, the canal trenches, the Isthmia, and the harbors. These places marked by physical remains reminded the visitor of the city’s pasts and identity as the crossroads of Greece and the world. The rich literary tradition guided

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128 E.g., Apuleius’ Metamorphosis 2.12; Apollonius Phil. Ep. 37: for “sojourners”
129 Athen. Deipn. 13.21.33 (567b-c).
130 Diod. Sic. 32.27.1: Following the city’s destruction, no traveler passed by without weeping. See also discussion above; Hegesippus Scr. Eccl. Fragmenta 217.2-4.
131 Favorinus, The Corinthian Oration 7-8, Jerome Murphy O’Connor, 101-102
132 Favorinus, The Corinthian Oration 36
and structured how travelers to Corinth understood and read them, but there were always a range of readings and multiple scripts in the Roman era. A well-read traveler like Pausanias might see the marks of gods, demi-gods, and famous personages like Theseus, Sciron and Periander in the city’s deep past, as well as the more recent figures like Julius Caesar, Nero, and Hadrian who had joined the historical narrative by sheer force of personality and will. An even better-informed student of ancient history might have seen in the landscape even more historical nuances, taking the effort and paying a local guide to go and look for the less impressive physical symbols of the Corinthian past. Even the numerous ordinary physical sites not mentioned in ancient literature, like farms, villas, and rural markets, could reinforce the conception of the city as a commercial center of the Mediterranean (see Chapters 4 and 5).

In the end, then, “Corinth on the Isthmus” denoted both the town and its connective eastern landscape. Town and countryside together were a fundamental part of the city’s identity and historical importance, forming a traveler’s crossroads and commercial cosmopolis. This story of ancient Corinth in its landscape, which had been created long before in the Classical era, received new life and imagery following the city’s refoundation, with the events of the Roman era; these new associations were to fit into a narrative hundreds of years old. The Roman Corinth that most travelers and visitors knew was articulated in the conceptual and material forms of its eastern landscape.

In Late Antiquity, this entire mythologized landscape—conceptually structured and differentiated according to the histories of the city—came to an end. The rich polysemic context, connected to the most significant people and events of local history, and bedecked with places and supporting the traditional image of the city, was gradually redefined between the fourth to seventh centuries AD.
3.2. The End of a Classical Landscape

To talk about the “end of a classical landscape” of Corinth is in some ways an unwieldy task. It requires that we wrestle with an elusive or at least slippery concept, the myth of a city, and attempt to measure its end. In the process it presents an interesting source problem: if the perception of the city in the early Roman period was embedded in a classicizing literary tradition, does our lack of knowledge about Corinth’s famous places in Late Antiquity mean that these places ceased to be important in the Late Antique imagination, or only that the written medium had disappeared?

These interpretive difficulties will leave us with some uncertainties, but should not create insurmountable problems for an analysis, especially if we are explicit about what we are attempting to measure. The imagined landscape was fundamentally intertwined in antiquity with the medium of classical literature creating and maintaining it, and the end of a conceptual landscape was tied closely to the end of the medium itself. Traditions of perceiving the landscape in a particular way survived wherever classical literature was important for social and cultural identity, and intellectual activity; and there are enough sources discussing the Corinthian landscape in Late Antiquity that we can make some meaningful observations about its end. This section will discuss both the fragmentation and end of the traditional image of the city in its landscape in light of the changing cultural milieu of the Mediterranean, the decline of classical culture, and the backdrop of physical discontinuity and redefinition of the sites of the Isthmus. It will make suggestions for how the imagined textual landscape outlined above became fragmented in Late Antiquity, continuing in some respects but forgotten in others, contested and redefined, and abandoned altogether for new conceptions.

The section offers three brief case studies illustrating the processes of Late Antique fragmentation: an examination of famous places generally (3.2.1), a narrower study of the site of Isthmia (3.2.2), and the traditions about Corinth as traveler’s city, situated on the Isthmus and at the world’s crossroads (3.2.3). The issues raised here will be discussed in
the remainder of this study, and my future research on Christianization. A brief concluding section (3.3) will discuss the implications for understanding LA Corinth.

3.2.1. What Became of the Famous Places?

To examine the perceptions of the Corinthian landscape in Late Antiquity is to step into a very different storyline than the one described in section 3.1 above. It is not simply that most of the sites that dot a typical map of the eastern Corinthia—Crommyon, the _diolkos_, canal, Isthmia, and the harbors—had very little literary life in Late Antiquity, but that even when these places are mentioned, they rarely possess the same power, substance, and content as they had in the early Roman period. Even the very image of Corinth, the famous traveler’s city at the center of Greece and the crossroads of the Mediterranean, grows dim in the literature of the later Roman empire. The Late Antique story of the Corinthian landscape is incomplete, fragmentary, and simply different.

There is, on the one hand, very little to say about most places of the Corinthian isthmus on the basis of the source tradition of the third to seventh centuries AD. The _diolkos_ has no later history save a phrase of Hesychius that names it as a place ( _topos_ ) from Lechaion to Kenchreai;\textsuperscript{133} even the later reference that the Byzantine general Nicetas Ooryphas dragged ships across the Isthmus in AD 886 refers to the process rather than a place _per se_.\textsuperscript{134} The digging of the canal has no later history beyond Philostratus’ _Nero_ in the third century AD, and one wonders whether it would have remained a local attraction much beyond this date. Hesychius names Oneion as a mountain in Corinth, but gives no other details; and the mention, in any case, is derived from Thucydides.\textsuperscript{135} The

\textsuperscript{133} Hesychius, s.v., _diolkos_.

\textsuperscript{134} Fowler and Stillwell 1932, 50 FN1; Wiseman 1978, 46, both citing Georgius Phrantzes i.33, _Corp. Script. Hist. Byz._ XX, ed. Bekker, pp. 96-97. Fowler and Stillwell rightly point out that the reference only alludes to the dragging of ships across the Isthmus. See the overly critical comments of Cook 1979, 152, FN7, about later Byzantine use of this road.

\textsuperscript{135} Hesychius, s.v., _Oneion_. “a mountain in Corinth” (Thuc. 4.44.4).
only extant discussion of Crommyon in Late Antiquity is Stephanus, who defines it as a village (*kome*) of Corinth connected with the story of the Crommyonian boar.  

Even Corinth’s famous harbors become conceptually cloudy in the literature of the post-antique world.  Chroniclers of the early and middle Byzantine periods preserve the name Lechaion and Kenchreai as Corinthian harbors (*epineion*), but provide few additional details and are regurgitating earlier sources.  Several sources do refer to the harbors as important places on the maps of their day.  Procopius notes that Lechaion on the Crisaeian Gulf marked the start of the Corinthian isthmus stretching forty stades across, a remark that must demonstrate an awareness of traditional literary descriptions of the Isthmus.  The northern harbor was also apparently rebuilt by the provincial governor Flavius Hermogenes in the mid-fourth century AD. The use of Kenchreai for preparing an imperial fleet is attested in an extant letter of the emperor Julian to Maximinus probably in the early 360s AD, and the poet Claudian has the exiled Palaemon return with his mother to that harbor after Stilicho’s late victory over the Goths in AD 397:

> Thou biddest Stilicho after restoring peace in Gaul save Greece from ruin. Vessels cover the Ionian sea; scarce can the wind fill out so many sails. Neptune with favouring currents attends the fleet that is to save Corinth, and young Palaemon, so long an exile from the shores of his isthmus, returns in safety with his mother to the harbour. The blood of barbarians washes their chariots; the ranks of skin-clad warriors are mowed down, some by disease, some by the sword...Let Ephyre

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137 Hesychius, s.v., *Lechaion*; s.v., *dikolos*; Photius, s.v., *Lechaion*; Suda, s.v., *Lechaion*. Hesychius adds curiously for Lechaion that household slaves run away to these places: ἡ κατοικία ἑπίνειον Κορινθίων ἅπαλα ἐκ τῶν τόπων τῶν ἱππείρων. Steph. Byz., s.v., *Kenchreai*, names Kenchreai as the city (*polis*) and harbor (*epineion*) of Corinth but appears to be deriving from earlier lexicons. Several centuries later, Photius knew of Kenchreai only as a place in Athens. Photius, s.v., *Kenchreai*.

138 Procopius *Bell. 5.15.17-18*. On the width of the Isthmus as forty stades, see Diod. Sic. 11.16.3 (in his discussion of the walling of the episode in 480 BC); Strabo 8.1.3; 8.2.1; Agathemerus *Geog. Info.* 24.6.

139 Kent, *Corinth VIII.i.iii*, #503. See Rothaus 1995, 303.

140 Julian *Ep. 73*, Letter to Maximinus.

141 Claudian, *Or. 8 (On the Fourth Consulship of the Emperor Honorius)* 459-73, dating to the late 390s. Loeb Translation. Conceivably, the harbor might also refer to Lechaion, although the eastern harbor has a more direct connection to the god. I thank Amelia Brown for this reference.
rise from her ashes while Spartan and Arcadian tread under foot the heaps of slain; let Greece’s sufferings be made good and her weary land be allowed to breath once more.

A century later, a young ascetic by the name of Cyriac is said to have gone to Kenchreai after hearing the Gospel read in church in Corinth, sailing away to the holy land where he became a famous anchorite. Moreover, the two harbors gain in Late Antiquity new Christian associations with St. Paul, Phoebe the deaconess, and other early Christian saints.

The scantiness of the literary testimony, however, does not of course mean that the actual facilities of roads and harbors ceased to be important in the Corinthian landscape. To be sure, the ship-road is not mentioned during this period, but nor is it mentioned in earlier periods, and it seems probable that the paved road was maintained with occasional episodes of refurbishing, as in earlier periods. Even if we speculate that the ship-road were abandoned sometime in the Roman period, it is difficult to imagine that the entire diolkos (by which I mean the narrowest part of the isthmus where ships were dragged across) ceased to be used as a connecting land bridge between twin gulfs. In light of Corinth’s continuing importance in Mediterranean trade networks into the sixth century, we can infer that the city’s inhabitants exploited the commercial potential of

142 Cyril Scythopolis, *Vita Cyriaci* 224.8. Cyril is writing about the monk in the mid-sixth century AD, presumably reflecting on the importance of Kenchreai in his own day as well.

143 The importance of Kenchreai in the texts of the New Testament (*Acts of the Apostles, Romans* 16) mean that references to this harbor are common in Late Antiquity. See, for example, John Chrysostom, *Comm. Acts of the Apostles* Hom. 40; *Comm. Romans* Hom. 30; Jerome *Ep.* 75, Ch. 9 (337); Augustine *Ep.* 82.8 (351-52); *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* Book 7, Ch. 46; Theodoret Scr. Eccl. *Commentary on St. Paul* 82.41. I will be developing these ideas in future research.

144 Wiseman 1978, 45-46, for discussion of evidence of earlier episodes of repair.

145 Cook 1979, 152, FN 7. What does an “abandoned” paved road look like, in any case?

146 Even without a paved road, earthen roads could still have provided an efficient means of transporting lighter cargo directly across the narrow isthmus. For discussion of such lower-quality roads, see Wiseman 1978, 45.

147 For evidence for trade in Corinth in Late Antiquity, see K. Slane, “East-West trade in fine wares and commodities. The view from Corinth,” in *Rei Cretariae Romanae Fautorum acta*. 36 (2000), 299-312; Slane and Sanders 2005. See Chapter 4 of this study.
their territory. As for the two harbors, although both possessed buildings that suffered earthquake damage in the late fourth century, there were also new constructions. Lavish and ornate Early Christian basilicas were built at both sites as late as the early sixth century AD, demonstrating an importance to those places despite the dearth of literary evidence. And although Lechaion remains mainly uninvestigated, recent archaeological investigations at Kenchreai have revealed the remains of villas, houses, and other buildings, confirming the continuity of habitation in the area.

Nonetheless, the picture of the Late Antique Corinthia that appears from the limited source tradition is significantly murkier than that of the early Roman era, and the places in the territory that were famous at an earlier period lost their conceptual clarity and energy in Late Antiquity and simply disappeared from the map—so far as we can measure it. This is of course partly a product of poorly extant literature, but even the

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149 For Kenchreai, Rothaus 2000, 76-79; for Lechaion, see recent discussions in Sanders 2005.

150 Wiseman 1978, 87-88, summarizing the excavation work to date, noted the early Christian basilica, Late Roman nymphaeum, some residential structures, Roman walls, and pottery of the early Roman period. Rothaus 1995, 295, noted extensive Late Roman and Byzantine coarseware pottery and suggested (299) that the presumably residential structures and bath south of the Lechaion basilica were of Late Roman date. Without survey or excavation in the area, it is difficult to determine the character of habitation at the harbor, but given the density of settlement elsewhere on the Isthmus, it is best not to conclude their absence on the basis of negative evidence.

151 Currently unpublished finds from the Eastern Korinthia Survey confirm broad areas of habitation and land use in the area west and northwest of the harbor. See Chapters 4 and 5 of this study. The Kenchreai Cemetery Project, directed by Joseph Rife and investigating the area north of the harbor, will potentially illuminate the later history of the town. For recent discussion of results, see J.L. Rife, A. Barbet, M.M. Morison, R. Dunn, and D. H. Ubelaker, “Life and death at a Roman port in Greece: the Kenchreai Cemetery Project 2002-2005.” Paper presented at the Archaeological Institute of America meetings, Montreal 2006.
sources that exist are usually vague and disinterested. The Isthmus, canal, Mt. Oneion, Crommyon, the diolkos, and Melicertes possessed a relatively smaller place in the literature of the period. The kind of fascinating narrative that existed in an earlier period, where pilgrims stepped into the landscape which they had read about in books, dims considerably in Late Antiquity. This is a point we will return to in the conclusion. A closer look at two important places, Isthmia and Corinth itself, can provide different insights into understanding certain facets in the end of the ancient landscape.

3.2.2. Isthmia

The Late Antique history of the religious and civic buildings at Isthmia is now familiar through several decades of archaeological investigation and recent attention to the later history of the site. The traditional use of the site for public games and the rites associated with them appear to have come to an end in the course of the third century AD, and the public buildings, including the theater, temple of Poseidon, and the sizable Roman bath, were derelict by AD 400. Within two decades, the famous trans-Isthmian (Hexamilion) wall was constructed which reused much of the building material in its meander across the Isthmus (see discussion below). A fortress was also built at Isthmia in the fifth century AD that incorporated the preexisting monumental archway. The site in the fifth and sixth centuries was a motley place, with mostly stripped areas (the Temple of Poseidon), abandoned but still-standing structures (the Roman Bath), new monumental constructions (the Isthmian wall and fortress), and numerous domestic structures.

These excavations establish a backdrop of the site’s material discontinuity as a sanctuary by the fourth century AD, and its new uses in the fifth and sixth centuries AD. It would be interesting to consider what the archaeological evidence, including the collapse of the sanctuary and baths, the construction of a new Byzantine fortress, the monumentalization of the gate, the distribution of graves, and the EKAS survey data, suggests about the continuity and redefinition of this place in Late Antiquity. This issue has been recently raised by the studies of T.E. Gregory, P.N. Kardulias, J. Rife, R. Rothaus, and J. Frey.153 This particular query is, in any case, beyond the scope of this current chapter. The narrower question that I want to focus on here is what became of the place of the Isthmus in Late Antique literature? How did the traditions of discussing Isthmia survive in contemporary conception?

The history of Isthmia in the literature of Late Antiquity is in some ways not particularly surprising, mirroring both the end of the sanctuary and cultural currents in the broader Roman world, entailing an increasing marginalization of Isthmia in its contemporary world, redefinition, and even outright hostility. And yet, despite the physical discontinuity of the site, Isthmia did have a strong “after-life” in classicizing literature of the fourth to seventh centuries.

There are few surviving “contemporary” statements about the status of Isthmia and its games in Late Antiquity and what does survive is ambiguous.154 Libanius relates that Aristophanes’ father Menander (early fourth century) had been an important citizen of Corinth and a friend of Poseidon, having participated in the mysteries at the Isthmus, and that Aristophanes (mid-fourth century) himself had fulfilled his obligations to Poseidon, presumably also at the Isthmus; these must have occurred in the first half of the fourth century.155 Themistius writes despairingly about the changing place of philosophers in

153 See above for these references. Jon Frey, Reading Spolia in Late Antique Greece, Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, 2006.
154 For discussion about the end of the games and the rites of Isthmia, see Rothaus 2000, 84-92; and Rife, Forthcoming.
155 Libanius Or. 14.5-7. See Rothaus 2000; and Rife, Forthcoming, for discussion.
public life, decrying their uninvolvement at the traditional crowd-gathering festivals such as Olympia, the Isthmus, Aegina, and Eleusis. His golden age was a time when philosophers impacted crowds, not hiding away in their secluded corners, as they did now; indeed, his cause of rueful reflection may be rooted in reading passages like Dio Chrysostom’s discussion of Diogenes the Cynic at the Isthmian games (quoted above). How these sources relate to the status of Isthmia in the fourth century is unclear but they do seem to provide limited support for a perceived decline in the traditional use of the site of Isthmia. What is more striking is that they form nearly the only statements about Isthmia between the third and seventh centuries that could be considered “contemporary” accounts. Isthmia, like the other famous sites of the Isthmus, is largely shrouded in darkness during this period—in great contrast to the earlier Roman period.

This is certainly related in part to the Christianization of the Roman Empire which would ultimately lead to imperial proscriptions against the rites of the games. But long before legal proscriptions, the Isthmian games, and by consequence, the very idea and place of Isthmia, became problematic in popular conception. Open hostility to the sacred rites of the games dates to the second century in accounts like Clement of Alexandria’s Exhortation Against the Greeks, but attacks undoubtedly became both more frequent and more vocalized in the course of the fourth century. Eusebius, for example, in his Praeparatio Evangelica directly quotes Clement’s invective:

156 Translation by Robert J. Penella, The Private Orations of Themistius, Berkeley 2000: Oration 28, The Disquisition on Speaking 342: Regarding philosophers, “in our day they have vanished and become nonentities—understandably and deservedly so. For they are fearful (I known not why) and wary of public assemblies, where the poet says men become famous, and they cannot bear to look away from their couches and secluded corners. They have completely forgotten that their forbears used to speak to crowds of people in workshops, porticoes, baths, and theaters. Consequently, these forebears not only used to win over and secure the allegiance of the people who came to their schools; they would also draw the cobbler away from his leather, the money lender away from his counter, and the fornicator away from his brothel. Urged on by the warm feelings they had for their fellow men, they would go to Olympia and the Isthmus, to Aegina and to Eleusis. They themselves, along with the gods [of those places], came to be reckoned among those most well known to the masses. But since that time the descendants of Socrates, as if they were thieves and robbers, have been avoiding hubs of activity.”

157 Clement of Alexandria, Exhortation Against the Greeks 180 (Ch. 2).

158 Eusebius Praep. Evangelica 2.6.10. The translation is the text in public domain.
Come then, let us also briefly make the round of your games, and put an end to these great sepulchral festivals, the Isthmian, Nemean, and Pythian, and besides these the Olympian. At Pytho the Pythian dragon is worshipped, and the festival of the serpent is proclaimed as the Pythia. At the Isthmus the sea cast up a miserable carcass, and the Isthmian games are a lamentation for Melicertes: at Nemea another child Archemorus is buried, and the boy's funeral games are called Nemea. Pisa is the tomb in your midst, O Panhellenes, of a Phrygian charioteer, and the Zeus of Phidias claims as his own the Olympian games, which are the funeral libations of Pelops.

The account is a negative reassessment of the traditional stories about the origins of the games, problematizing the place of Isthmia / the Isthmus on account of its association with myths, deities, and especially the lamenting rites.\textsuperscript{159} It is difficult to assess the impact of this kind of invective on common conceptions of famous Corinthian places, but we can probably assume that attacks of this sort must have been fairly common in the fourth century. In the final chapter of Epiphanius’ \textit{Panarion}, dedicated to an exposition of the orthodox faith, the heresy hunter ponders:\textsuperscript{160}

And how many mysteries and rites do the Greeks have? For example, the women who go to the megaras, and those who celebrate the Thesmophoria, are different from each other. And there are as many others: the Eleusinian mysteries of Demeter and Persephone at Eleusis, and the shocking goings-on in the sanctuaries there—the unclothing of women, to put it politely, drums and cakes, the bull-roarer and the basket, the worked wool, the cymbal, and the potion prepared in the beaker. And just as many others. The mysteries in Pythi and others on the Isthmus, those of Athamas and Melicertes the child of Ino. And all the men who turn the phallus over, and the women who celebrate the obscene acts, and the men who serve Rhea by castrating male children and living their lives without male organs, certainly unable to be men any longer, but without having become women….

The Isthmus with its rites of Athamas and Melicertes, is spiritually blacklisted with the other detestable rites of Greece (and all over the world). Early Christian sources commonly attacked the historical deities and demi-gods associated with the Corinthia, like Poseidon, Theseus, and Aphrodite, and cult itself formed a primary target of Christian rhetoric and action.\textsuperscript{161} Obviously not all early Christian literature referring to

\textsuperscript{159} Compare with Paus. 2.1.3, for instance.


\textsuperscript{161} The evidence is ubiquitous. To name a few: Clementine Homilies 5.15, 23 (260-261); Tertullian, \textit{Ad Nationes} Book 2, Ch. 14 (144); Athanasius \textit{Against the Heathen}. Or consider the opening of Epiphanius’
Isthmian games and figures of Corinthian history were necessarily negative, but the negative stories do form one dramatic break from an otherwise previously optimistic tradition about Isthmia.

All of this invective, however, appears to have been short-lived, occurring at a time when the religious buildings at Isthmia were still standing and when cult itself was both legal and active. The source tradition for Isthmia from the fourth century and afterwards indicates that the Isthmus, in its connection to Poseidon, also survived in the imagery and stories of a Late Antique classicism. References to Poseidon, the Isthmian deities, and the games, are plentiful in the fourth to sixth centuries, but they appear in the literary form of myths of the city rather than contemporary accounts of the place. The fifth-century *Dionysiaca* of Nonnus of Panopolis, for instance, refers to the Isthmian Corinth

(Pararion), *De Fide* 1.1: “We have discussed the various, multiform, and much divided teachings of the crooked counsels of our opponents, have distinguished them by species and genus, and, by God’s power have exposed them as stale and worthless. We have sailed across the shoreless sea of the blasphemies of each section, with great difficulty crossed the ocean of their shameful, repulsive mysteries, given the solutions to their hosts of problems, and passed their wickedness by. And we have approached the calm lands of the truth, after negotiating every rough place, enduring every squall, foaming, and tossing of billows, and, as it were, seeing the swell of the sea, and its whirlpools, its shallows none too small, and its places full of dangerous beasts, and experiencing them through words.” The translation is F. Williams (Trans.), *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis*, Two Volumes, Leiden 1987-1994.

162 See Clement *Stromata* 1.21 (331), who could also refer to the establishment of the games as a known point in an historical narrative. Mythical and historical characters associated with the Corinthia, such as Sisyphus, Theseus and others, could provide anecdotal and moralistic material for making arguments. *Clementine Homilies*, 1.4; 5.6, 22; Basil *Ep.* 134; Jerome, *Against Jovianus*, Book I, Ch. 41 (380).

163 E.g., Libanius, *Or.* 11.66-67, lambastes Corinth and Athens for their embarrassing foundation myths, pitting one god against another (e.g., Poseidon vs. Helios); the Antiochenes, by contrast, have no warfare of the gods, and if they did, they would not talk about it!: “Now, those who sing the praises of Athens and Corinth invent battles of the gods around the cities; for Corinth there was the battle of the Sun against the ruler of the sea, for Attica there was that of Athena against the same god. They almost dissolve the harmony of the universe in their impudent tales of battles of the gods with their irreligious praises of their cities. In thus insulting the divine, they do the favours of devotion, but they do not realize that by this one falsehood they destroy the credit of the rest of their eulogies. We [i.e., the Antiochenes] are the darlings of the gods, and without any warfare between them, either,—nor is it right to say so. Thus those cities of Greece and we both have our claims to fame, but in their case it would have been better left unsaid; here no one would have dared to say it.” Translation is A.F. Norman (Tr.), *Antioch as a Centre of Hellenic Culture as Observed by Libanius*, Translated Texts for Historians Vol. 34, Liverpool 2000: Liverpool University Press.
throughout his mythical narrative,\textsuperscript{164} even making Poseidon ring out at one point about the mythical battle for Corinth:\textsuperscript{165}

‘This is no contest with Lycurgos, no little Arabian fight, but your adversary is the sea so mighty. Heaven still trembles at my spear of the deep. Heaven knows what a battle with the sea is like. Champion Phaethon too in his celestial course felt the point of my trident, when the deep waged formidable war in that starry battle for Corinth. The sea rose to the sky, the thirsty wain bathed in the Ocean, Maira’s dog found salt water at hand to bathe in and cooled his hot chin; the deep bottom of the waters was uplifted in towering waves, the dolphin of the sea met the dolphin of the sky amid the lashing surges!’

As he spoke, he shook with his trident the secret places of the sea, roaring surf and swelling flood flogged the sky with booming torrents of water. The army of the brine took up their wet shields. Under the water beside the brinesoaked manger of Cronion, Melicertes shook the spear of the deep, and yoked the Isthmian team; he slung to the side of the seaborne car the spear of the seafaring king, and scored the back of the water with its triple prong—he yoked the Isthmian team, and the roar of the Indian lions resounded along with the neighing of the horses.

The Latin poet Claudian has Palaemon and Leucothea return home after their exile during Alaric’s invasion.\textsuperscript{166} Traditional imagery of Poseidon and the Corinthian isthmus is frequent in other high-status philosophical literature, speeches, and commentaries,\textsuperscript{167} and occurs concomitantly with a late use of a wide variety of other common themes and topoi from Corinthian history, including Diogenes the Cynic, the Corinthian hetaerae, Periander and Arion, and voyaging to Corinth. The nymphs take as great a delight in Daphne, writes Libanius, as does Apollo at Delphi, Zeus at Pisa, and Poseidon at the Isthmus; at Antioch (like these other places), the gods reigned like emperors.\textsuperscript{168} Libanius himself ties several of these themes together in a clever conclusion to his declamation, Against the Recall of Lais, an imaginary speech opposing (antiloga) the imagined recall of the prostitute Lais to the city in the fourth century BC.\textsuperscript{169}

\textsuperscript{164} E.g., Nonnus, Dionys. 37.131-153: “If he has grown up to live in sea-girdled Corinth, he knows the Isthmian contest of our Palaemon.” (Loeb)

\textsuperscript{165} Nonn. Dion. 43.172-202.

\textsuperscript{166} Claudian, Or. 8.459-85.

\textsuperscript{167} See, for instance, Himerius Or. 47.83; Lib. Or. 61.5; Steph. Byz., s.v., Isthmos; s.v., Korinthos.

\textsuperscript{168} Liban. Or. 11.240-241 (The Antiochikos). AD 356.

My final point is this. You have now to choose between immorality and honour. If you vote against me, you will be held to despite chastity. If you honour your ancestors and hold fast to their virtue, you will cut away the licence of those who dare to talk like this. Whichever way the vote goes, we shall not be unobserved. Many travelers come here by sea. This city is the common market-place of Greece. Many come here to share our religious observances, when we hold the Isthmian festival in honour of Poseidon. How can it be consistent with our piety towards the gods to honour with such distinction a woman who gladly prostitutes her body to any purchaser?

The imagined response to the recall of Lais was that the city was pristine and uncorrupted before the arrival of Lais, a city at the crossroads of the world, pious in its honor to Poseidon. The response, which reflects an awareness of classical sources, is a recasting of the more typical conception that tied Corinthian wealth directly to its numerous prostitutes; here Libanius, in the voice of the opponent to the recall, imagines a time before Lais and the *hetaerae* corrupted a good decent city. Throughout Late Antiquity, the myths of the city continued to provide an ample corpus for rhetorical and literary play.

By the sixth century AD, the god Poseidon, in his connection to the place of the Isthmus, had entered the body of imagery and myth of the ancient city. Stephanus of Byzantium connected the “isthmus” with Isthmian Poseidon. A century later, the festival for Melicertes at Isthmia is even mentioned as a point in a chronology of the ancient world. Poseidon at the Isthmus joined the famous anecdotes and associations of Corinthian history—Diogenes and Lais, the prostitutes, Sciron, Crommyon, Arion, even Corinthian vases—to form the mythology and ancient history of the city. They were remembered as they were embedded in literature that continued to be read in a post-antique world, but their future was tied to that medium.

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170 Steph. Byz., s.v., *isthmos*:

> Ἰσθμός, Ἡ Ἀλικαρνασσός, τῆς Καρίας πόλις. ὁ πολίτης Ἰσθμοῖς. ἔστι καὶ Κορίνθου Ἰσθμός, ἐν Ἡ Ἰσθμίας ὁ Ποσειδάν. καὶ νίκη Ἰσθμίας καὶ Ἰσθμιάδες σπονδαί.

171 Joannes Antiochenus *Frag.* 1.79

172 See, for instance, Olympiodorus’ *Commentary on Plato’s Gorgias*, relating about the existence of conflicting stories of Sciron: “And furthermore they say that Sciron was found on the Isthmus in rocky places, which the philosopher Ammonius said he had investigated, and ordered passers-by to wash his feet and trampled on them and killed them. But others say that he was most law-abiding and just, so that these matters are disputed, being myths, and we must not put our trust in those who dispute about them.” The
Two points stand out in this discussion. One is that the famous place called Isthmia, perhaps the principal symbol of the Isthmus, ended antiquity disembodied from its physical landscape, surviving only in an imagined literary conception of the Corinthia. The process by which physical and conceptual landscapes became segmented in Late Antiquity is the inverse of what occurred in the Christianization of the Corinthian landscape, where a literary landscape defined by early Christian texts gained a monumental and elaborate material expression that would match its literary fame. The classical landscape of famous places of the Roman period was quite the opposite: it began its life with a material counterpart and ended antiquity only in the stories of the ancient city, wherever they were still read and told. The second point is even more interesting. One of the principal myths of the city, which had wedded the city of Corinth to its sacred Isthmus is, for the first time in its history, openly problematized, attacked, and relegated to the cultural margins of the world. The Isthmus as a conceptual place would survive through the medium of Late Antique classicism, lexicography, and mythography, but its place of importance for the history of the city was lost as the image of the city itself was remade.

3.2.3. Corinth on the Isthmus

If the famous places of an ancient landscape were marginalized, forgotten, or redefined, what can be said about the principal myth of the city itself, Corinth on the Isthmus, and its associations with a broader world of commerce and travel? It is also one of the longest-lasting images in antiquity, which again became bound to the increasingly problematic medium of classical literature.

The image of Corinth on the Isthmus remained strong because it pervaded so many previous Greek and Roman accounts of the city that continued to be read in Late

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translation is from R. Jackson, K. Lycos, and H. Tarrant (tr.), Olympiodorus Commentary on Plato’s Gorgias.
Antiquity. The identity of Corinth as the maritime and traveler’s city passed on through stories and proverbs of the city. The proverb that it was not for every man to sail to Corinth survived in Late Antique literature, reinforcing both the city in a landscape and its connections to famous prostitutes like Lais.\textsuperscript{173} Hesychius, citing Aristophanes as the source of the proverb, suggested its meaning had to do with the Corinthian \textit{hetaerae} who cheated the sailors out of their money.\textsuperscript{174} But Themistius uses the phrase in a more positive sense to mean that not everyone has the resources to undertake every given situation; only the most dedicated steersman can weather the storm.\textsuperscript{175} Other stories associated with the commerce city, such as Herodotus’ story of Arion the lyre-player from Corinth, survived in this period.\textsuperscript{176}

Even Late Antique authors detailing Corinth’s contemporary history and affairs embed their accounts in a traditional landscape of Isthmus and two seas. Libanius concludes his plea for the return of Aristophanes by entreating that he be allowed to return to the land of Pelops, rejoicing:\textsuperscript{177} “In the heart of the Peloponnese let him glorify your virtues.” Claudian in the late fourth / early fifth century refers, poetically, to Alaric’s burning Corinth by alluding to the smoking twin seas.\textsuperscript{178}

Even more common are references to the trans-Isthmian wall, wall construction, and the defensive character of the Isthmus, reflecting the military uncertainty of the day but

\textsuperscript{173} E.g., Themist. \textit{Or.} 15.195, “To Theodosius”; Themistius, \textit{Oration} 21 [257], “The Examiner”; Olympiodorus Phil., \textit{Commentary on Plato’s Alcibiades} 166.9; Hesycius, s.v. \textit{ou pantos andros}.

\textsuperscript{174} Hesycius, s.v., \textit{ou pantos andros} citing Ar. Fr. 902a.

\textsuperscript{175} Themist. \textit{Or.} 15.195, “To Theodosius”; Themistius, \textit{Oration} 21 [257], “The Examiner.”

\textsuperscript{176} Lib. \textit{Prog.} 2.29.1-2; Severus Soph. \textit{Narrationes et ethopoeia} Di. 4.3; Choricus Rhet. et Soph. 27.1.4-6

\textsuperscript{177} Lib. \textit{Or.} 14.68-70, Loeb translation. This appears to be a reference to Corinth.

\textsuperscript{178} Claudian \textit{In Rufinum} 2.186-191: non mare fumasset geminum flagrante Corintho. See Amelia Brown’s discussion of the parallels of this account with early Latin silver-age literature. See also Jerome, \textit{Ep.} 55.16 (129-30) (Letter to Heliodorus), for a vague reference to the barbarians at Corinth, one of the great, famous, and historic cities of Greece, a sign that the Roman world was falling.
also referencing texts and traditions of perception of ancient historians like Herodotus. The poet Claudian, for example, laments the unblocked advance of Alaric and the Goths through the narrow gate of Thermopylae (which, he notes, had once withstood the Persians), the Scironian cliffs, and even the Isthmian wall stretching from sea to sea! The sixth-century historian Zosimus, probably following Eunapius, relates Alaric’s conquest of the Peloponnesian cities (including Corinth, Argos, and Sparta) to the abandonment of the defense at the Isthmus from which these cities had derived their security. Procopius names the Isthmus whenever he mentions Corinth, relating the emperor Justinian’s grand scheme to wall off the Peloponnes to defend the famous cities as a group. The historian Agathias similarly notes that the Cotrigurs in the mid-sixth century achieved little worthy of mention in Greece, neither attacking the Isthmus nor getting past Thermopylae. Beyond the fundamentally practical purpose of keeping the barbarians out of Greece, the walling of the Isthmus in Late Antiquity also positioned later emperors within both the long-term historical narrative of ancient Greece and a place traditionally understood as the very key to the Peloponnes. Late authors who structured their accounts in terms established by ancient historians like Herodotus displayed their knowledge of classical literature and simultaneously renewed the myth of


180 Claudian *Or.* 26.166-93.

181 Zosimus 5.6-7. Zosimus (1.29.3) has the Isthmus fortified in the time of Valerianus.

182 Procopius *Aed.* 4.2.1-12: “Beyond the whole of Epirus and Aetolia and Acarnania, as one skirts the coast, one comes to the Crisaean Gulf and the Isthmus and Corinth and the other parts of Greece. These regions made demands upon his very utmost wisdom.” (Loeb) And Procopius *Aed.* 4.2.23-28: “When the Emperor Justinian, after he had accomplished all this, learned that all the cities of the Peloponnesus were unwalled, he reasoned that obviously a long time would be consumed if he attended to them one by one, and so he walled the whole Isthmus securely, because much of the old wall had already fallen down. And he built fortresses there and established garrisons. In this manner he made all the towns in the Peloponnesus inaccessible to the enemy, even if somehow they should force the defences at Thermopylae.” (Loeb translation) Cf. also Procopius *Bell.* 5.15.17-18, for a definition of Corinth’s Isthmus.

183 Agathias, *Historiae* 5.23.5-6.
Corinth on the Isthmus. The continuity of both the physical and imagined walling of the Isthmus in Late Antique society is one way in which ancient conceptions of the Corinthian landscape lived on in Late Antiquity.

The classical image of Corinth was also reinforced by the numerous anecdotes and historical facts circulating about the ancient city—its travel, commerce, and wealth (e.g., Corinthian bronze); important events (Corinthian colonization; Roman refoundation); *hetaerae* (Lais; the Corinthian girls); historical role as a naval power (outbreak of the Peloponnesian War); famous but migrant philosophers (Diogenes); and historical and mythical personalities (Sciron, Arion, Poseidon, Adeimantus, Ameinocles, Aphrodite)\(^{184}\)—that remained themes in the intellectual culture of Late Antiquity, reinforcing the city’s identity as a maritime or commercial city, centered at a crossroads and oriented toward the world. Stories of Lais and the *hetaerae* were linked directly to the reputation of the city as a commerce and traveler’s city, which was in turn tied to its geographic position; Libanius’ clever subversion of these connections was noted above.\(^{185}\) The Thucydidean account of Corinth’s role in the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War was a most frequent


\(^{185}\) Libanius *Decl.* 25. See also the account by Oribasius Med., *Collectiones medicæ* 6.38.25-30, which in detailing the nature of sexual desire, relates a story about a young Milesian who had just arrived from Corinth having had a bad sexual experience (presumably with a prostitute).
theme in speech writing and reinforced the city’s place as an historic naval power; Libanius devoted an entire declamation to the affair.\textsuperscript{186} The emperor Julian relates that Diogenes the Cynic was sent by the gods to the Corinthians to offer a healthful remedy to their problem with wealth;\textsuperscript{187} certainly others like Themistius (discussed above) would have also connected Diogenes to the large crowds associated with the games.\textsuperscript{188} These stories reinforced a particular way of perceiving the city in this period that further consolidated the city in a landscape.

The historic image of \textit{Corinth on the Isthmus}, the traveler’s city at a major crossroads, was perhaps the most prominent image of the city in Late Antiquity that emerged in the Archaic period and lasted through Late Antiquity, despite the starts, stops, and pauses in the city’s long history. In the sixth century AD, Stephanus of Byzantium will begin his brief description of Corinth simply as “the city on the Isthmus of the Peloponnese.”\textsuperscript{189} Late anthologists, encyclopaedists, and lexicographers preserve in their accounts the classical depiction of the city, and points in Corinthian history and mythology (e.g., the kings of the Corinthians) would be absorbed into the frameworks of Medieval chronicles.\textsuperscript{190}

\textsuperscript{186} Libanius \textit{Dec. 13}. See 13.9.12: “Even if we have the Isthmus of the Peloponnese, they likewise have that of Pallene” See also scattered references in Syriani, Sopatri Et Marcell. \textit{Scholia ad Hermogenis librum}. Corinth as a naval power as also tied to Thucydides’ account of Ameinocles of Corinth, the first to build triremes. e.g., Themistius \textit{Oration 26 [315]}, “Consider the sea. Didn't raft-builders first prove to mankind that it is navigable? Then, when the builder Harmonides or someone before him came along, didn't merchant ships and trading vessels appear? Later still, the Corinthians built triremes at the Isthmus, and the Corinthian shipbuilder Ameinocles went to the Samians.” Translation by Penella 2000. Themistius is referring to Thucydides 1.13 who mentions Ameinocles.

\textsuperscript{187} Julian \textit{Oration 7, To the Cynic Heracleios}

\textsuperscript{188} Themistius, Oration 28, \textit{The Disquisition on Speaking} 342.

\textsuperscript{189} Steph. Byz., s.v., \textit{Kofingoj, polij e\= w tou=\$q mou=t h\$ Pet ournh\=\$ ou.}

\textsuperscript{190} E.g., Joannes Malalas \textit{Chron.} Book 4 (“The Time of the Empire in the Land of the Argives”): “After Eli, the prophet of the Jews, the first to reign over the Jews was Saul, the son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, who reigned for 20 years in the city of Gabaon. After the Lakedaimonains, Aletes reigned then over the Corinthians for 35 years, and 11 other emperors reigned for 277 years. Afterwards Automenes ruled for one year. The empire of the Corinthians lasted for 313 years” Translation by E. Jeffreys, M. Jeffreys, and R. Scott (translators), \textit{The chronicle of John Malalas}, Byzantina Australiensia 4, Melbourne 1986. Other examples include Cyril. Theol. \textit{Contra Julian} 1.13.16-21; Eustathius Scr. Eccl. \textit{Commentarius in hexaemeron} 708; John Antiochene \textit{Frag.} 1.79; Augustine, \textit{City of God}, 18.25 (374).
Two features stand out, however, in the Late Antique depictions of Corinth, the Isthmus, and the region’s famous places. There is no periegetic literature describing the material correlates of the famous ancient Corinthian places known from literature. This must relate in part to the poor survival of documents, but this can only be half the explanation. We can see, for example, in the renowned orator Libanius an interest in the city of Corinth that appears to us as conflicted. On the one hand, in his epistles, orations, and declamations, he alludes constantly to the ingredients of Corinthian history: Lais and the prostitutes; the city’s commerce and wealth; the famous land between Corinth and Sicyon; and the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War. He knows and writes letters to several Corinthians of his own day, and expresses awareness of contemporary affairs in their city.191 But in his own autobiography, he explicitly denies interest in the city of his day, associated as it was with the law courts of the governor, litigation, and the philosopher’s court case:192

But to return to my point—from all those disasters I was preserved by Fortune, and so I saw Corinth neither as defendant nor as plaintiff, but only once when I passed through on my way to attend the festival of the Whippings at Sparta, and again when I went to Argos to be initiated in the local mysteries.

In the several years that Libanius spent in Athens, he only claims to have visited Corinth twice, and that in passing to Sparta and Argos. This is as close as we come in Late Antiquity to a contemporary experience of the city, even if it is the perspective of a high-minded (and certainly not typical) rhetorician.193 The Corinth that had the most prominent place for this Late Antique author was the literary one known from reading past historical accounts, which possessed greater potency in the form of story than

191 Libanius Ep. 822 (to Parnasios); Ep. 1123; Ep. 1214.
193 In another story illustrating the degeneration of oratory in his day, Libanius tells about the character Heliodorus, a fish-pickle hawker, who went to Corinth for business and in the process picked up the skills of oratory at the law court. Lib. Or. 62.46.
physical place. What is limited in the literature of Late Antiquity (and especially the fifth and sixth centuries) is the kind of obsessive fascination with the famous places of the Corinthia that we see in the early empire, where the historical actor, whether Nero, Herodes Atticus, or Pausanias, step into the landscape they knew from literature and joined the narrative. This need not mean that Late Antique accounts are ‘derivative’ or unimportant but that many places in the previous landscape seem to disappear in this period. In addition to the harbors, the major exception to this pattern is the surviving importance of the trans-Isthmian wall (discussed above).

As importantly, the texts that preserve a traditional conception of the city of Corinth unsurprisingly belong to the Late Antique traditions of classical culture, learning and literature. Discussions of Corinth on the Isthmus in the fifth and sixth century are almost wholly preserved in Hellenic (i.e., “pagan”) anthologists, lexicographers, mythographers, historians, and philosophers like Joannes Stobaeus, Nonnus of Panopolis, Hermias (the disciple of Proclus), the Neoplatonist Syrianus, the historian Zosimus, Agathias, Hesychius of Alexandria, and Olympiodorus; or “Christian” rhetoricians, historians, and writers (e.g., Procopius of Caesarea, Choricius of Gaza) well-read in and sympathetic to the classical tradition. While Byzantine authors of the fifth to seventh centuries occasionally refer to the history of the city (for examples, see above), the most vibrant continuity in traditional conceptions of the city is among authors who spent their time reading Herodotus and Thucydides, Plato and Aristotle, the Greek philosophical tradition, and their counterparts in early Roman literature, carriers of the traditional myth of the city.

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194 This is not at all to say that Libanius regarded Corinth as an insignificant city. See Liban. Or. 14.27-28: In his appeal for Aristophanes, he claims that Aristophanes’ famous homeland, Corinth, should bring him some respect. The city’s most notable claim, he writes to Julian, is that the emperor had claimed the Corinthians were his benefactor, and that the city was the place where Julian’s father found repose. In making this point, however, he also alludes to the city’s historic reputation in a praeteritio: “Even if Aristophanes had been a Megarian, Melian or Lemnian, he would have had this considerable advantage: in fact, however, his city’s name inspires even more respect, for he is from Corinth. In my argument I shall make no appeal to legend, nor dilate upon the contest between Helios and Poseidon, nor upon the epitaphs of the dead buried there after naval battles, nor upon the city’s fair dealing and consistent support of the victims of aggression. This is not to imply that this has little bearing on the renown of its possessors, but that there is a more notable claim that can be adduced…” (Loeb translation)
We can end with a unique example that bridges a gap between classical and Christian culture of Late Antiquity. John Chrysostom, the famous fourth century preacher of Antioch and Constantinople, is alone among Christian authors in commenting extensively on Corinth’s historical reputation. His homilies on the text of 1 Corinthians begin by placing the text into its web of historical associations:

As Corinth is now the first city of Greece, so of old it prided itself on many temporal advantages, and more than all the rest, on excess of wealth. And on this account one of the heathen writers entitled the place ‘the rich.’ For it lies on the Isthmus of the Peloponnesus, and had great facilities for traffic. The city was also full of numerous orators, and philosophers, and one, I think, of the seven called wise men, was of this city. Now these things we have mentioned, not for ostentation’s sake, nor to make, a display of great learning: (for indeed what is there in knowing these things?) but they are of use to us in the argument of the Epistle….

…The devil, therefore, seeing that a great and populous city had laid hold of the truth, a city admired for wealth and wisdom, and the head of Greece; (for Athens and Lacedaemon were then and since in a miserable state, the dominion having long ago fallen away from them;) and seeing that with great readiness they had received the word of God; what doth he? He divides the men. For he knew that even the strongest kingdom of all, divided against itself, shall not stand. He had a vantage ground too, for this device in the wealth, the wisdom of the inhabitants.

In one of the few “historical introductions” to a New Testament text existing from antiquity, Chrysostom appropriates the traditional associations of the image of the city to set the scene for the problems that his homilies will address. The Corinthian community, he argues, had problems because of its philosophical leanings, glorification of learning, fame, and especially its wealth and pride, a product of the city’s favorable and historic position on the Isthmus and consequent traffic. Chrysostom even remarks that it was in Corinth that the magicians burned all their books and scrolls, misplacing (intentionally?) the episode of Ephesus reported in the Acts of the Apostles. But for all of this, Chrysostom shows no awareness of the sexual reputation of the city, which would have well advanced his later discussion of the Corinthian community’s sexual deviance, and he even refers to Homer as “one of the heathen writers” who entitled Corinth “the wealthy”!

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Chrysostom shows himself relatively well-learned about the image of this famous city, but also, in the display of his learning, denigrates the hypothetical erudite (or the process itself) that might name the knowledge “for ostentation’s sake”, even as “a display of great learning.” The preacher simultaneously sums up the essential image of ancient Corinth while dismissing the medium of literature and learning that carried that image—and all through a clever classical rhetorical technique (*praeteritio*).

In the end, however, this passage of John Chrysostom is exceptional among patristic commentators. Christian writers and Biblical commentators rarely refer to the traditional images and identity of the city (embedded in classical literature) when they spoke about the city. Indeed, they were reading entirely different texts with different points of reference. Images of “Corinth on the Isthmus” survived the end of antiquity, but they became, relatively speaking, less important than new conceptions formed through the Christianization of the empire, which instilled old places and city itself with different kinds of significance.
3.3. Conclusion

This chapter has been about the story and identity of ancient Corinth. It has suggested that stories formed a kind of narrative of the landscape that undergirded and reinforced the principal myth of the ancient city—Corinth on the Isthmus, centered at the travelers’ crossroads of land and sea, from which the city’s identity and reputations were derived. This image of the city was a consistent one, stretching from the Archaic age (8th-6th centuries BC) to the end of antiquity, and even surviving in part in Byzantine compilations and histories. The myths and anecdotes surrounding the city already existed in classical literature (Homer, Herodotus, Hesiod, Thucydides, and the tragic and comic writers) that circulated widely in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, while a variety of Greek and Latin authors of the Roman empire added to and reinforced these stories through creative retellings or new accounts of their own day. Stories were also passed on by simple word of mouth and oral accounts; one thinks of the local informants Pausanias met in his travels. And of course, the material world, including physical sites, images, and material culture, made concrete the places otherwise known only through the imagination. These different kinds of texts reinforced a “classical” or “ancient” landscape in so far that they reinforced traditional ways of perceiving a physical territory like the Isthmus, especially in its importance for the city Corinth.

This chapter, however, has specifically examined the stories preserved in literary testimony that circulated in the Roman and late Roman periods to show some of the range of meanings that became linked to Corinth’s eastern landscape, the Isthmus, by the second century of the common era. The chapter has focused on literary testimony not because they form the only kind of “textual” evidence—even material culture is textual in so far as it must be read and interpreted—but because they are a particularly potent kind of evidence that has overwhelming influenced many modern images of Corinth in the Roman period; and when that evidence becomes confusing, as it does in Late Antiquity, the modern historical depictions have likewise been severely muddled. Moreover, although physical sites in the territory of the Isthmus could incarnate the places known through the tales of literature, and literature could structure the paths of tourists, the
conceptual and physical landscapes did not stand in a directly dependent relationship. The landscape of famous places known through literature was firstly a conceptual and imagined one; and the physical locating of those places could and did vary considerably. Educated travelers like Pausanias remembered the landscape in a manner consistent with their interests and backgrounds and saw selectively; others no doubt imagined and read the physical landscape very differently, while still others, for whom fortune had not granted “to sail to Corinth,” imagined the Isthmus entirely severed from its physical territory. There are grounds, therefore, for discussing a conceptual landscape independently of a physical one.

The conceptual map of the eastern Corinthia, the “landscape of famous places”, was not a solid or unchanging one, but was intertextual, formed largely through reading earlier authors. Strabo read Thucydides; Diodorus Siculus read Herodotus; Libanius likely read all of them; Procopius knew the geographers; and others read summations, anthologies, and school textbooks. The kind of conception, then, that the elite of the Roman period had of the Corinthia was particular to their educational background, but the range of significant places did not vary significantly. It is not, for instance, the kind of landscape that we would know more about with more surviving literary documents; these would likely only reinforce the images and myths of the city already well known. The only kind of evidence that might help us unpack the myth is that qualitatively different kind—artifact scatters in the countryside, buildings excavated at extra-urban sites, inscriptions of a private nature, and papyri recording everyday life. We will discuss some of this evidence in later chapters.

For all the diversity in the accounts of the Corinthia from the Roman era, then, there were a “canon” of typical places that mattered, that were worth discussing and even visiting. Besides Acrocorinth and Corinth town, the most famous of these was the Isthmus itself, centered geographically at the _diolkos_ and the canal cuts, and conceptually married to the sites sacred to Poseidon, Palaemon, and their associates. The two harbors, Kenchreai and Lechaion had a weaker, but still relatively robust, literary and conceptual
life. The trans-Isthmian wall (and the episodes of walling) was also an important part of this imagined landscape. A variety of second-tier sites—for example, various graves of important individuals, a few scattered temples, and sites connected with the founding of the games or the feats of Theseus—was embedded in literature and consequently imaged in antiquity.

This ancient configuration of important places (and even non-placed space) undergirded the traditional storyline of the city developed from the Archaic period and maintained into Late Antiquity. That story of Corinth, which focused on the consequences of its geographic position and its identity as a traveler’s city, was powerfully reinforced by traditions of perception and also the physical structure of the territory that divided neatly into two intervisible poles, the acropolis (and city) and the Isthmus (and eastern territory). The storyline itself constituted a veritable structure of the ancient city, a defining tradition that was authoritative because it was ancient, and which had existed even at times when there was no material counterpart (as, for instance, Isthmia “existed” during the period of the city’s abandonment and after the sanctuary’s destruction in the fourth century). The story of ancient Corinth and the structure of the landscape were in other words joined closely to their intellectual medium.

The end of this ancient landscape entailed not simply discontinuity in the physical sites of the territory of the Isthmus (although that did occur at some sites, like Isthmia) but, more importantly, the fragmentation of a traditional paradigm for conceiving and imagining this landscape, that is, the decline of reading the landscape through the lenses of classical culture and literature. The late Roman history of the city has often been seen as a confused one, but this is mainly a product of the complexity of the source tradition. Late Antique philosophers, historians, rhetoricians, lexicographers, and mythographers who continued to read and write through the medium of classical literature preserved the old stories and conceptual map of the Corinthian landscape. But new cultural forces like the Christianization of the empire also made certain places (like the sanctuary at Isthmia) unacceptable in a new Christian geography, and Late Antiquity was the first period that
the significant ancient places of the Corinthia became inherently problematic. In the long run, though, the most detrimental force to this imagined landscape was the development of entirely different conceptual lenses (early Christian literature), which, with its different reference points, imagined the city apart from its territory. Christian literature of the fourth to seventh centuries hardly mentions the places of the ancient Corinthia (and sometimes explicitly denigrates them and the medium of classical literature!), even though it does constantly make mention of Corinth.

What about the daily reality behind the changing image in Late Antiquity – did Corinth cease to be a traveler’s city at the crossroads of land and sea? The following chapters will make specific cases against this conclusion and argue from the material record that the city and territory remained firmly linked to Mediterranean markets and were visited by numerous travelers and passersby. On the other hand, we can be sure that at least one principal facet of travel to Corinth, pilgrimage and tourism associated with the city’s important sites, must have dropped drastically in Late Antiquity. Even as early as the fourth century, Libanius claims that during his four years as a student in Athens, he had only been to Corinth twice, and that in passing on the way to Sparta and Argos; he seems to have had a low opinion of the city due to its connection with the law courts and trials of young philosophers. The Isthmian Games in their traditional public form ceased in the third century and the Roman Bath was derelict by AD 400. We can imagine the Games suffering, then, by the third and definitely the fourth century, and losing their former prestige.

The decline of Corinth’s principal tourist industry, the athletic contests at the Isthmus, also corresponded with a shift in cultural interest to the eastern provinces of the Byzantine Empire, politically centered in Constantinople, intellectually focused in Alexandria, Antioch, and Constantinople, and religiously directed to the sacred places of Palestine. In the long term, the centrality of the east marginalized (relatively speaking) a city like Corinth to the cultural peripheries of Byzantium; and Corinth was an important, but distant, satellite of the west, under the jurisdiction of the Roman church. If western
pilgrims passed through Corinth on the way to Palestine, the territory was no longer the primary cultural scene that it had been at an earlier date. A later study will show how Corinth nonetheless sprouted new Christian sacred places, which were less important than Rome or the Holy Land but nonetheless had attractive force.

For most cities of the ancient Mediterranean, literary testimony almost always represent the perspectives of outsiders; it is perhaps this observation that has discouraged many from pursuing “local history” using primarily literary sources. If the stories about Corinth dried up in Late Antiquity, it is not, I would argue, because individuals stopped going there but rather, that travelers of a certain type, the pilgrims and tourists and those interested enough to write up an account, became less frequent. Traditional historical depictions of Corinth in Late Antiquity are far too dramatic: the landscape of famous places did not end dramatically and permanently in the late fourth century, at the hands of earthquake, Goths, or Christianizing emperor (e.g., Theodosius I), but rather faded in cultural significance. Material discontinuity of the important sites of the Isthmus contributed to such a process but also important was the cultural downgrading of the cosmopolis to metropolitan status.

We can end by summing up the principal source problems for understanding the history of the Corinthia in both the Roman and Late Roman periods. First, our sources for Corinth in the Roman period largely present an image of the city and territory already highly mythologized, enlivened by stories, anecdotes, and associations that conflate different points in Corinth’s past; the conceptual map of the Corinthia even in the Roman period was consequently never very precise or accurate and focused on several important places that were tied to the city’s identity. And second, the Late Antique image is especially confounding because the literary medium that had previously preserved the myth of the city fragmented in this period. Our knowledge of the city is consequently

\[\text{197 For a strongly negative (and perhaps overly critical) assessment of the decline of pilgrimage to Late Antique and Byzantine Greece, see R. Eisner, Travelers to an Antique Land. The History and Literature of Travel to Greece. Ann Arbor 1991: University of Michigan Press, 33-34.}\]
less clear in the later Roman period. Understanding the city’s history in both periods must consequently turn to sources of a qualitatively different kind than literature.

The following three chapters present the material evidence for extra-urban habitation and structures on the Isthmus in the Roman and late Roman periods. I will argue that while the city and landscape lost much of its accompanying reputation, fame, and image in Late Antiquity, the material structures of the territory (the villas and agricultural installations, the crossroads, marketplaces and harbors) remained steady, constant, and important for the local and regional economy. In the end, this contrast will demonstrate the complexities of Late Antique local history: how a landscape became partially demythologized while simultaneously remaining economically and materially vital to both the life of the city and broader regional and Mediterranean networks. A later study (post-dissertation) will show how new conceptions of the city were formed that eventually came to be embedded in physical locations on the Isthmus, narrating Corinth’s new identity and image.
CHAPTER 4
A Busy Countryside

“It is generally agreed that there was a decline in agriculture in the later Roman empire.” (A.H.M. Jones)

“From c. AD 300 onwards, and especially during the 5th-6th centuries AD, there are plentiful signs throughout the east Mediterranean of a flourishing urban and rural life, even of expansion of land under cultivation” (J. Bintliff)

Contrary to the “landscape of famous places” discussed in the previous chapter, the physical character of settlement on the Corinthian isthmus throughout the Roman era was nothing short of “busy.” Against modern authors who have imagined a territory largely devoid of “places” with the exception of the harbors, Isthmia, the canal, and major towns, the artifactual material on the Isthmus is continuous (albeit fluctuating) and confirms a vibrant material character. The Isthmus of Corinth had a material life quite independent of that suggested simply by literary sources. And yet, interpreting the evidence for rural settlement in the Corinthia (or anywhere in Greece) is hardly straightforward and is tied to larger historiographic debates as well as more specific archaeological interpretive problems.

In conventional narratives of the later Roman empire, Corinth, like the entire province of Achaia, shared in the run of afflictions known to Late Antique historians and chroniclers of the third to sixth centuries AD—the earthquakes, plagues, barbarians, abandoned lands, and oppressive taxation, among other unpleasant disruptive forces (cf. Chapter 1). Over the last twenty years, however, these old-school Late Antique terrors have been interrogated, diminished, marginalized, and contextualized against a growing corpus of archaeological research indicating that the social and economic life of the province was anything but depressed. The evidentiary impetus for the new position has been especially the series of archaeological survey projects conducted across mainland
Greece and the Aegean that have demonstrated a vibrant material signature and settlement explosion for this period across entire countrysides of Greece. The question becomes, by consequence, if the rural worlds of Late Roman Achaia appear to be thriving, how then could the province be in a state of general decline?

The new consensus among those who study ancient countrysides is that the proliferation of scattered farmsteads and country estates across the province of Achaia indicates a “recovery” or “revival” of the social and economic life of the province after an earlier Roman rural settlement depression. From the fourth century AD, the province is said to have experienced a final phase of agricultural intensification and prosperity—perhaps tied to population growth, production of olive oil for export, or even imperial policy of promoting smallholding farmers. Whatever the historical cause behind such abundance, the Late Roman countryside in the Greek world is highly visible on the ground and this should be indicative of a healthy, not depressed, economy. A similar pattern of proliferated settlement in the Eastern Mediterranean has led one scholar to speak of the “busy countryside” of Late Antique Cyprus,¹ a fitting description also for the rural world of Greece and the Aegean at this time.

Beyond preliminary conclusions, however, there has been remarkably little effort to deal with the interpretive problems introduced by survey ceramic data. Although some scholars have attempted to synthesize the regional patterns, there has been little effort to explain regional diversity: why settlement proliferation occurs earlier in some regions than it does in others; why some regions witness no great upturn from the earlier to later Roman periods; and why some regions show no evidence at all for settlement proliferation. More problematic for synthetic narratives, however, is that there has been essentially no “source criticism” of the ceramic data—the basis for all archaeological and historical conclusions—with the result that previous interpretations of survey data may be susceptible to substantive revision. Archaeologists, for instance, have often noted that the material culture of the later Roman period is more visible and diagnostic than other

periods: To what extent does greater ceramic visibility and abundance affect our
detection of sites and our picture of the period? What is the nature of the change between
earlier and later Roman periods in light of different ceramic visibilities between periods?
How ‘busy’ really was the busy countryside of Late Antiquity relative to earlier periods?
Such are among the most important questions to address if we wish to understand the
Late Antique countryside.

This chapter attempts to understand broadly Late Antique ceramic abundance relative
to earlier Roman material absence by an intensive look at one Greek countryside, the
Eastern Corinthia, from the data collected by the Eastern Korinthia Archaeological
Survey (EKAS). In the Corinthia, the Late Antique pottery is ubiquitous and abundant,
while the Early Roman pottery is not; because the pottery data was collected in a
representative manner, it is particularly suitable for ‘source criticism.’ This chapter
begins with a broader exposition (4.1) of the pattern and problematic of the Late Antique
countryside and how Greece and the Corinthia fit into that pattern specifically; it then
presents (4.2) the ceramic pattern and data for EKAS in the Roman period, and then
questions and problematizes (4.3) that data, along with Late Roman data from other
published surveys, introducing quantified studies of excavated assemblages to
contextualize the survey data; a long subsequent section (4.4) reinterprets the EKAS data
in light of the earlier discussion, and a final section (4.5) draws historical conclusions
about the continuing importance of the eastern landscape for the Corinthian economy in
the Late Roman period.

In brief, this chapter argues that “abundance” of Late Antique ceramics is a
phenomenon that is closely tied to both survey methodology and the nature of the Late
Antique economy, and that when properly contextualized, reveals a fundamentally
different phenomenon than would emerge from a simple ‘literal’ reading of the evidence.
Specifically, this chapter critically analyzes pottery data to argue that Late Antique
ceramic abundance needs to be substantially deflated and pared down to size in relation
to the much less visible earlier Roman period; suggests that much of the settlement for
the earlier Roman period may lie at a threshold not easily detectable with the typical coarse collection strategies employed by regional survey projects; and argues that the perceived Late Antique settlement “explosion” relative to early Roman settlement absence is ultimately not supported by the material evidence. In the end, however, this chapter reinforces rather than detracts from a picture of a vibrant Late Antique economy in the eastern Corinthia: the structure of Corinthian trade connections developed in an earlier Roman period continue onward into the sixth and early seventh century, despite the radically changing world around.
4.1. The General Pattern: Late Antique Countrysides in Greece

It is no overstatement to say that the last two decades of scholarship have completely rewritten the history of the Late Roman countryside for the Eastern Mediterranean. For every book in the Jonesian and Rostovtzeffian school that characterized the Late Antique countryside in terms of abandoned lands, serf-bound *coloni*, autarchic estates, and general economic decline, there are now tenfold articles suggesting quite the opposite.2 Recent history has, in fact, totally restructured modern thinking on these questions, and the historiographic reviews of scholarship are now so frequent that we need not marshal the issues all over again here. It is enough to say that the new consensus is a healthy and vibrant countryside for the eastern provinces in Late Antiquity: prolific medium-sized farms, strong village centers, a healthy and well-connected economy, and a level of prosperity not seen since the late Classical period. Such vibrant rural worlds last well into the end of the sixth century, and there is now growing evidence that we can push that vibrancy for many regions of the Byzantine empire into the seventh and eighth centuries.3

The basis for the recent revision has originated in a variety of bodies of evidence. On the one hand, a careful reconsideration of the relevant textual sources, especially papyri, has shown that pictures of a coercive government extracting wages from poor rural laborers may not represent accurately the Late Antique world and need not indicate a

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2 E.g., A.H.M. Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, Norman, Oklahoma, 1964, 812: “It is generally agreed that there was a decline in agriculture in the later Roman empire.”

depressed economy. More importantly, a flood of archaeological research has revolutionized our understanding of the material well-being of Late Antiquity. These archaeological investigations in both the eastern and western provinces are finally achieving syntheses and making their way into general monographs on the period. Of greatest methodological importance are the regional archaeological surveys that have occurred across the western and eastern Mediterranean, which would seem to afford glimpses of change at the widest phenomenological level—the rural settlements of ordinary peasants.4

Judging by recent historical monographs on the period, Greece and the Aegean have assumed a remarkably important role for how we understand the rural world of the eastern Byzantine provinces generally. Certainly in part this has to do with the general amount of archaeological work there, including the rescue excavations that constantly reveal an abundance of Late Antique material, filling every issue of *Archaeological Reports* and *Archaiologikon Deltion*. More important is the large number of regional survey projects there, and the degree to which these projects have ‘filled out’ the Late Antique countrysides of Greece, dotting our maps with more Late Antique sites than one can shake a stick at, important especially since the Roman province of Achaia in Late Antiquity is so poorly known textually. Hence, Greece ranks alongside Israel and Syria as provinces of the Eastern Roman Empire well-known and researched archaeologically; these territories are also singled out as supporting revisionist views of the Late Antique economy.5

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4.1.1. The Regional Pattern in Greece: Late Roman Explosion

The Late Antique pattern of rural settlement is remarkably consistent across Greece and the Aegean. Figure 4.1 shows intensive regional surveys that have commented specifically on the settlement patterns between the Late Hellenistic and Early Medieval periods, as well as how these projects have defined the different facets of the Roman period. From central Greece to southwest Greece, to the Aegean islands, the Late Antique period shows every sign of settlement expansion and recovery. Moreover, as this table indicates, the pattern of abundance is relative to a pattern of dearth of sites from periods before and after—material abundance is sandwiched between periods of material absence and it is that pattern that gives the Late Antique period well-defined boundaries and clear definition. With the exception perhaps of the Patras Survey, the regions listed below show an approximately similar pattern of high settlement activity in respect to an Early Roman and Early Byzantine settlement dearth. Hence, the typical Late Antique settlement pattern in Greece is 1) an abundance of ceramic material; 2) in relation to the preceding and following periods.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Definition of Roman Period</th>
<th>Late HE</th>
<th>Early Roman</th>
<th>Middle Roman</th>
<th>Late Roman</th>
<th>Early Byzantine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>South. Argolid</strong></td>
<td>Early Roman (50 BC-AD 200), Middle Roman (200-400 AD), Late Roman (400-650 AD)</td>
<td>Decline</td>
<td>Low Level</td>
<td>Low Level</td>
<td>Recovery and expansion, gradually at first, peaking from late 4C to 6C. About 2-1/2 times as many sites in LR period than in earlier Roman (n = 40 → 98)</td>
<td>Rapid Decline from late 6C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methana</strong></td>
<td>Roman = Early Roman (100 BC-AD 100) &amp; Middle Roman (100-300 AD); Late Roman (300-700)</td>
<td>Decline</td>
<td>Low Level, but increase from late HE</td>
<td>Low Level, but increase from ER</td>
<td>Gradual increase of sites through 4C and 5C. About 60% more sites (n = 36 → 58) from earlier Roman to Late Roman</td>
<td>Contraction by late 6C but at least some sites continuing into 7C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N. Keos</strong></td>
<td>Early Roman (1 AD to 300 AD); Late Roman (300 AD to 700 AD)</td>
<td>Decline</td>
<td>Low Level</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>Significant Increase. Approximately 288% (n = 9 → 26) more sites with Late Roman material than earlier Roman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oropos Survey Project</strong></td>
<td>Early Roman (1AD to 200 AD); Middle Roman (200-400 AD); Late Roman (400-700 AD)</td>
<td>Decline</td>
<td>Low Level</td>
<td>Low Level, but slight increase</td>
<td>Expansion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Boeotia Survey</strong></td>
<td>Late Hellenistic / Early Roman (200 BC to 300 AD) and Late Roman (300-650 AD)</td>
<td>Decline</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>Significant Increase from 4C, and especially 5C and 6C</td>
<td>Decline in 7C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Patras Survey</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Decline</td>
<td>Increase</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>Decline</td>
<td>Marked Decline (Dark Age)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>South. Euboea Exploration Project</strong></td>
<td>ER (100 BC to AD 200), MR (200-400), LR (400-600 AD)</td>
<td>Decline</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>Dramatic Increase</td>
<td>Marked Decline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NVAP</td>
<td>ER (30 BC to AD 250); LR (AD 250-650)</td>
<td>Decline</td>
<td>Low Level</td>
<td>Slight Increase</td>
<td>Marked Decline</td>
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<tr>
<td>Berbati Valley</td>
<td>ER (30 BC to AD 150); MR (150-300 AD); LR (300-700 AD)</td>
<td>Decline from CL-HE to ROM</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Slight Increase</td>
<td>Increase</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Megalopolis Survey</td>
<td>ER: to third century AD; Late Roman: from third century AD</td>
<td>Decline</td>
<td>Low Level</td>
<td>Increase: new sites</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanford Skourta Plain Survey</td>
<td>Decline</td>
<td>Low Level</td>
<td>Increase</td>
<td>Decline after mid-6C</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
as Figure 4.2 below indicates, some survey archaeologists have at least commented on the pattern cursorily, noting the “explosion” of rural settlement, especially relative to the general dearth of settlements in the earlier Roman period, and positing a period of “recovery”, “revival”, and “expansion” of settlement and agriculture in respect to a previously, sparsely inhabited countryside. At the very least, more pottery seems to indicate a healthier and more prosperous Late Antique countryside than both the preceding Early Roman and successive Early Medieval periods, and this is the most common and basic interpretation.

There has been some limited discussion about the causes for the pattern as indicated by regional survey. John Bintliff and his colleagues in Boeotia, for instance, have tied the pattern to population growth and the return of a healthy regional ancient economy and settlement structure. Investigators of the Argolid Exploration Project have seen Late Antique settlement explosion in the Southern Argolid as one of several ‘boom’ periods where agricultural intensification (olives as cash crop) and dispersed rural settlement at the regional level resulted from a more prosperous Mediterranean economy. In their view, the linking of the regional economy of the Southern Argolid to external pan-Mediterranean trade markets in Late Antiquity led to intensive agriculture, population growth, and settlement expansion. The specific impetus for a more prosperous, populous, healthy economy was the overall recovery and reorganization of the Eastern Roman Empire from the fourth century onward. Timothy Gregory’s archaeological work in many local areas of the Corinthia has helped to put this period on the map in that region. Gregory and his colleagues have seen Late Antique settlement in the Corinthia in terms

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10 Gregory 2000, calls the E. MED period an “apparently violent reversal of fortune.”

11 Bintliff and Snodgrass 1988; Bintliff 1991, 126-27: a “dramatic recovery of population.” As Bintliff argues (128): “From c. AD 300 onwards, and especially during the 5th-6th centuries AD, there are plentiful signs throughout the east Mediterranean of a flourishing urban and rural life, even of expansion of land under cultivation.” The Early Byzantine period, by contrast, represents a shift to a very different, nucleated settlement pattern

of an expansive economy in the final phase of antiquity; the presence of Late Roman pottery in marginal territories and even small islands indicate extensive exploitation, settlement expansion, population growth and material prosperity.13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Interpretation of Roman Pattern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Southern Argolid</td>
<td>Economic Recovery. The fragmentation of the Roman empire resulted in development of new regional markets and new trading networks from the late 4th century AD, which created more opportunities for local produce. The region's connection to markets and demand for olive oil stimulated population growth and settlement expansion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methana</td>
<td>Initial depopulation and predominance of larger estates in earlier Roman period was followed by increased intensification of agriculture in the Late Roman period. Methana was prosperous and flourishing in 5th and 6th centuries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. Keos</td>
<td>Causes not entirely clear. Possibly a result of the restructuring of the rural world and depopulation in late Hellenistic period, followed by more extensive cultivation in the Early Roman period, before a shift back to more intensive cultivation in the later Roman period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oropos Survey Project</td>
<td>More human activity in the Late Roman countryside; return of small-scale agriculture which replaces large estates; greater overall prosperity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boeotia Survey</td>
<td>Early Roman economic recession followed by Late Roman economic revival. This region in Late Antiquity was prosperous, with expanding population, agriculture, and settlement. The local economy was faring well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berbati Valley</td>
<td>The return of population and prosperity to the valley in Late Antiquity. The Early Roman pattern was perhaps indicative of nucleated settlement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Megalopolis Field Survey</td>
<td>The rural economy declined in the Early Roman period, perhaps as a result of redistributed wealth and population; there was economic recovery in the Late Roman period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanford Skourta Plain Survey</td>
<td>Prosperity in Late Antiquity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.2. Regional surveys, late Roman patterns, and interpretation14

A Late Antique pattern of abundance has also been discussed in the context of scholarship focusing on the preceding Early Roman or subsequent Early Byzantine periods. As noted above, a specifically Late Antique signature from surface scatters of pottery only receives definition relative to the lack of rural settlement before the fourth century and after the sixth, with the result that scholars cannot focus on one of these periods without making at least cursory reference to one of the other. At one end of the spectrum, the early Romans are implicated in this Late Antique affair because the absence of the former defines the abundance of the latter. A case in point is Susan Alcock’s *Graecia Capta*, which argues (1993) that Roman imperialism dramatically restructured the Late Hellenistic / Early Roman landscape, leading to entirely new patterns of land distribution and nucleated settlement before a reversal in the later Roman period led again to a dispersed settlement pattern. The Late Roman period is implicated because it forms the contrast to ER absence, and we might ask at what point an earlier Roman settlement phase ends and a later Roman phase begins. The Early Roman period, after all, is sometimes defined as a 400 year-long period: should we imagine constancy in settlement systems across this entire period that changed in the fourth century?

At the other end of the spectrum, Late Antique Achaia has been tied to broader discussions about the end of the Roman world and the creation of a new Byzantine society. Because Late Roman abundance is followed by an Early Medieval rural dark age, some scholarship has focused on the reasons for this radical “reversal of fortune.” Was settlement proliferation somehow responsible for environmental degradation and the collapse of Roman society? For instance, did expansion onto marginal lands lead to soil erosion on slopes that weakened the more fertile sediments on agricultural plains? As importantly, some recent scholarship has shown that some pottery sequences in city and

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14 Cf. footnote above for references.


16 Gregory 2000.
country run into the seventh century if not beyond. Should we see this continued
deposition as a final extension of the ancient world or the beginnings of a new Medieval
one? Whatever is decided about this, Late Antiquity figures prominently for its stark
difference to the period which follows.

The only person to generate a synthetic picture of Late Antique rural settlement for
Achaia during this period is Cynthia Kosso, whose dissertation on Late Roman settlement
patterns in Achaia was recently published as a BAR Supplement volume. Kosso’s work
argues that the ubiquity of rural sites in Late Antique Achaia indicates the arm of the
imperial government in encouraging economic development in the region, as farmers
were granted tax breaks for intensifying cultivation. She introduces a variety of
epigraphic sources for taxation and laws, mainly from areas outside Achaia, to show that
the imperial government of Late Antiquity was concerned and conscious to encourage
smallholders, and then posits a correlation between a known imperial policy and the
dispersed settlement patterns of Late Antique Achaia. Whether or not we accept this
observed correlation as a principal explanation, Kosso’s work provides an important
synthesis of the regional surveys for this period which well demonstrates that the
economy of Late Antique Achaia was a healthy, not declining, one.

Despite the importance of synthetic work of this kind, there are a number of
“wrinkles” in the general tapestry of Late Antique change that make synthesis and
historical interpretation somewhat problematic. Although the exceptions to the pattern
are few, there are a few cases where the pattern is completely absent or very different.
Hence, the Perachora Peninsula survey showed no great upturn from the Early Roman to
Late Roman periods, but continuity, and a couple of regions even show settlement
downturn! More frequent are the more minute differences in the pattern: in certain

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17 Cynthia K. Kosso, *Public Policy and agricultural practice: An archaeological and literary study of Late

18 Admittedly, this survey was extensive, not intensive, in nature.

19 This is the pattern for Laconia (Shipley 2002), and for W. Achaia (Petropoulos and Rizakis 1994, 201)
regions, settlement expansion begins to occur in the second to fourth centuries,\textsuperscript{20} while in other regions does not seem to begin until the later fourth or fifth centuries;\textsuperscript{21} in some regions,\textsuperscript{22} settlement upturn and expansion is ‘dramatic’ and ‘explosive’ with doubling or tripling of the number of sites, while in other areas,\textsuperscript{23} the increase is definite but far less impressive and dramatic; and the degree of “rehabitation” of earlier sites, or the presence of earlier material at Late Roman sites, can vary from one region to another. If nothing else, the general pattern comes in different forms, indicating a local complexity that might discourage oversimplistic or monocausal explanations for changes in the Roman countryside, and raising questions about the ceramic data behind these patterns.

Despite a clear need for “source criticism” of survey data, regional surveys continue marching forward, producing more dots on the map that would seem to support the same general robust pattern, without leading to more refined understanding of the state of the countryside or the nature of the transition between early Roman and Late Antique Greece. There has been little critical reflection about the interpretive problems of survey data, and how these relate to historical conclusions. At the very least, these weaknesses beckon us to move beyond superficial observations of the Late Roman pattern and look much more carefully at our data. What does abundance mean, and, when we answer that, how ought we to understand \textit{change} between early and later Roman periods?

\textbf{4.1.2. Source Criticism and the Problem of Pottery Studies}

“Source criticism” is a way of understanding and correcting for the biases and interpretive problems of survey data by questioning the representativeness and reliability of the artifactual material.\textsuperscript{24} It centers on a closer critical examination of the data in the

\textsuperscript{20} For example, in the regions of Megalopolis, Berbati Valley, Methana, Oropos, N. Keos.

\textsuperscript{21} The best example is the S. Argolid.

\textsuperscript{22} E.g., Boeotia, S. Argolid, N. Keos.

\textsuperscript{23} E.g., Oropos, Methana, Berbati, Nemea Valley.

same way that we might question a literary source for the past before using that source to
draw historical conclusions. Despite empiricist attitudes that survive in modern-day
survey archaeology, survey data does not generally speak for itself, but must be
interpreted, understood, and contextualized before generating historical conclusions.

On the one hand, factors that create and distort the makeup and appearance of artifact
scatters are familiar subject matter in archaeological literature: varying visibility,
geomorphological processes, cultural formation processes, taphonomic processes,
plowing and smearing, manuring, and non-habitation rural activities are all well-known
and discussed. Because these factors influence the manner in which artifacts enter or
survive in the ground, artifact scatters do not speak for themselves but must be
interpreted in light of these factors. In recent years, survey investigators have made
significant progress in correcting for these factors either during the process of survey or
in the interpretation of the data. Correcting for visibility and geomorphological processes
especially has received a significant amount of discussion and attention.

Surprisingly, however, the basis for all interpretation of archaeological survey data—
the pottery itself, including its visibility, diagnosticity, and representativeness, in and
between periods—has received hardly any discussion relative to its importance in
interpreting data and in light of scholarship that suggests that it might severely distort
historical conclusions. To be sure, surveyors long ago recognized that the relative
visibility and invisibility of pottery from different periods can distort our picture of
transition between periods,25 but admitting the problem is very different than attempting
to deal with it or correct for it. Although it is commonly acknowledged that different
periods are differently diagnostic on the ground, until recently there has been almost no
attempt to understand or correct for this.26

25 E.g., Rutter 1983.
There are some positive signs that this is beginning to change, as evident by the recent flurry of scholarship over certain ‘invisible’ or ‘hidden’ landscapes.27 Archaeologists have come to recognize that cultural or natural processes have sometimes significantly altered or diminished the amount of artifacts for certain periods with the result that those periods are poorly represented as a result of those processes. The most well-cited scholarship on invisible landscapes is the work of John Bintliff and his colleagues from the Boeotia Survey data who argue that the poorly-fired, friable pottery of Neolithic and Bronze Age date has survive poorly in the archaeological record and that prehistoric sites may be represented by only a few cruddy potsherds or obsidian bladelets. Bintliff and his colleagues have argued that archaeologists need to recalibrate sites from low-density scatters in order to generate an accurate map of all prehistoric settlements. The prehistoric invisible landscapes debate centers on a hypothetical vanished pottery population, although Bintliff and his colleagues have also pointed out that fieldwalkers trained to recognize pottery tend not to “see” obsidian blades in the field.

Similar “invisible” landscape studies have emerged over Medieval countrysides in the Mediterranean. There is now wide recognition that regional survey projects may be missing Medieval sites because the pottery is much coarser, friable, and less diagnostic. The new consensus that has emerged for Italy in the Early Middle Ages is that the invisible material culture is more likely a result of the weaker material signatures (e.g., poorly fired pottery, a ‘lighter’ material culture, use of non-ceramic storage containers) than total lack of population.28 Schofield has argued from excavated sites in Britain that a handful of Early Medieval potsherds may represent vanished settlements, totally unlike earlier periods where robust artifact scatters are common.29 For Corinth, Guy Sanders


has rightly questioned how the practice of glazing, which increases dramatically in the 12\textsuperscript{th} and 13\textsuperscript{th} centuries, might create a more diagnostic signature that would distort our understanding of the countryside during these centuries relative to the much less diagnostic 10\textsuperscript{th} and 11\textsuperscript{th} centuries.\textsuperscript{30} Similar studies have attempted to reveal other hidden post-Roman landscapes.\textsuperscript{31}

In this context, an invaluable facet of recent archaeological literature has been the effort to create more nuanced ceramic typologies and chronologies at the regional level based on excavated assemblages that can then be used for understanding ceramic data generated by survey. Such is the work of Melissa Moore, who examines Hellenistic to Late Antique utilitarian pottery from Southern Epirus to examine the social consequences of Roman domination in the territory of the colony of Nikopolis.\textsuperscript{32} Moore establishes regional ‘ware groups’ for survey pottery based on petrographic analysis and dated with a knowledge of locally-excavated pottery. Using these ware groups, her study measures the level of importation of extra-regional wares vs. the level of local production of wares over the broad Hellenistic-Late Antique period. In a similar vein, but using a slightly different method, Joanita Vroom has recently employed the concept of “horizontal stratigraphy” for post-Roman ceramic surface assemblages observed by the Boeotia Survey.\textsuperscript{33} Vroom diagnoses pottery found at sites in surface survey (i.e., ‘horizontal

\textsuperscript{30} Sanders 2003, 395: “Furthermore, one wonders whether the increase in Middle Byzantine sites identified by survey is related to the greater quantity and visibility of glazed pottery and not to the growth in rural population and to the number of sites, as is so often assumed.”

\textsuperscript{31} Caraher \textit{et al.} in Process; Vroom 2003.


\textsuperscript{33} Vroom, Joanita, “Medieval and post-Medieval Pottery from a Site in Boeotia: a Case Study Example of Post- Classical Archaeology in Greece,” in \textit{ABSA} 93 (1998), 513-46; J. Vroom, \textit{After Antiquity: Ceramics and Society in the Aegean from the 7\textsuperscript{th} to the 20\textsuperscript{th} Century A.C. A Case Study from Boeotia, Central Greece}, Archaeological Studies Leiden University 10. Leiden 2003; J. Vroom, “Late Antique Pottery, Settlement and Trade in the Eastern Mediterranean: A Preliminary Comparison of Ceramics from Limyra (Lycia) and Boeotia,” in Bowden \textit{et al.} 2004, 281-331.
stratigraphy’) to create local ceramic typologies which in turn make it possible fill out the settlement history of Boeotia. Vroom argues that in order to escape the “chronological quagmire” which is the state of our knowledge of post-Roman ceramics in the Aegean, archaeologists must develop their knowledge of the production and distribution of wares at the local level. A number of other recent (KIP) or planned surveys (Aegina) have made or plan to make the knowledge of local fabrics an essential component of the survey. These kinds of ceramic-centered studies will most likely become indispensable for further survey work.

Despite the promise and potential of this kind of intensive scholarship for prehistoric and post-Roman ceramics, source criticism of survey data for the Roman period in Greece and the Aegean is exceptional. In part this is the result of an assumption that the entire Roman period is so well-represented on the ground compared, for example, to the

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34 Scholars dealing with the Roman period have sometimes noted problems of sources. Generally, cf. Alcock 1993, 49-53, who notes (49-50) that differential access to and supply of pottery might distort our impressions of pottery in a region: “Conversely, Keos and the Southern Argolid….demonstrate patterns of more widespread distribution of imported wares….Clearly, location, and access to trade networks, directly affected the quantities of the readily datable and highly visible wares entering a region, just as the function and status of individual sites would affect the types of ceramics required or affordable. Identifying sites on the basis of imports alone obviously presents the danger of taking only a partial sample of activity in the countryside and, in particular, of missing sites at the base of the social hierarchy.” Other examples include, Bintliff and Snodgrass 1988, 69-70, who ask whether the “missing” periods (i.e., late HE / ER) at small sites in Boeotia reflect actual discontinuity or a failure to recognize non-imported local wares. Bowden and Gill 1997, note, p. 77, that earlier Roman pottery in Methana tends to be poorly diagnostic—only three sites have more than four earlier Roman sherds—while, by contrast (p. 84), Late Roman pottery is very distinctive and diagnostic (only 13% of Late Roman ware was categorized as ‘uncertain’ in identification, compared to 32% of earlier Roman), and that this higher diagnosticity may partially distort our impression of the later period. Mee and Forbes 1997, 39, also note this problem of relative diagnosticity for the LR combed wares. Similarly, for Kea, Cherry et al. 1991, 331, note that the Late Roman period has many more ‘definite’ highly diagnostic wares, especially due to well-known Late Roman tablewares. Scholars have usually concluded that such factors are unlikely to distort conclusions altogether, as, for instance, with Alcock 1993, 53: “ ‘Source criticism’ of the archaeological data for early imperial Greece, therefore, goes some way toward establishing the relative reliability of currently available survey results, while at the same time warning us not to take the evidence of absolute site numbers entirely at face value. Some refinement of the patterns may well occur as further period-specific ceramic analysis is completed. On present evidence, however, nothing suggest that the overall observed trends in rural activity will be reversed, nor that they are the simple by-product of archaeological ignorance.” Bintliff 2000b, 6-7, notes the problem of different diagnosticity among periods and the problem of defining sites of the ‘lesser historic periods’, and notes the combed ware specifically for LR period, and the problem of source criticism: ‘Future ‘source-criticism’ of these findings will certainly need to provide a richer set of scenarios beyond ‘site’ and ‘not a site’, in which a wider range of behaviours is modelled in surface artefact terms. It is far from inconceivable that the central hypothesis may be overturned, that is, that ‘major phases’ are an artefact of the way we have collected and interpreted the material” (p. 6)
Early Medieval period, that efforts to question our data are not likely to affect greatly our picture of the period. There is good reason to be skeptical of this assumption. As is widely acknowledged at least in passing, the Late Roman pottery is highly visible and identifiable on the ground and more likely to be picked up in surface survey as ‘diagnostic’; and consequently, the period is probably exaggerated relative to earlier and later periods. But the degree to which the period might be exaggerated has never been addressed, the assumption being that it cannot be too severe. As this section argues, the relative degree of difference in period visibility can be so significant that failing to consider it might completely change a perception of the period on the ground.

Until a degree of source criticism is introduced and applied to survey data, we might still question whether the paucity of Early Roman material, and the abundance of Late Roman material, is more a product of our ability to recognize the material at each of these periods than a demographic phenomenon per se. This is an important question, indeed, for it determines essentially how we characterize the relationship between the periods, and ultimately the state of the countryside in either. Synthetic studies of the sort conducted by Cynthia Kosso for the provinces of Achaia provide a well-needed step toward a comprehensive treatment of the province for Late Antiquity and offer a good picture of the abundant material culture of the province during this period, but can only be tentative since they use data at face value. Without a proper understanding of how problems like ceramic visibility affect interpretation of survey data, it is relatively difficult to understand the Late Antique countryside generally, and it is for this reason that the slow move toward historical synthesis for the province of Achaia may have its advantages. Hence, before scholarship presses outward to begin to synthesize, it must go deeper in and investigate the nature of our data and the nature of change, since both are important for understanding the general pattern for the province.

This is hardly an insignificant issue, for as mentioned above, Greece and the Aegean, as the heartland of survey work in the Eastern Mediterranean, have come to play a distinctive role in creating the picture of the entire eastern empire in the fourth to seventh
centuries AD. The new generation of anti-Jonesians and anti-Rostovtzeffinans have been firmly committed to using such survey data sets because they seem to evince social and economic patterns, the surest proof for their more positive revision of the countryside in Late Antiquity. But we must ask again whether these conclusions really follow from a critical reading of the data.

As only one example, if we think of models of change between Early and Late Roman periods, should we see Late Antique settlement exploding out of an earlier Roman void (i.e., a re-habitation of the land) or does Late Antique settlement occur as a final greater investment in the countryside within previously invested settlement structures (i.e., continuity and investment)? These models of change are entirely different, for one sees Late Antiquity as something very different than its preceding earlier Roman period and presumably indicative of broader demographic or economic change, while the other minimizes the difference in settlement between the two halves of the Roman period and emphasizes only the difference in overall material terms (more pottery). In one model, the data indicates actual change in social and economic structures, and in another, continuity of social and economic structures. Lying not too deeply beneath the surface, of course, is the debate about the nature of the Roman economy. This is the kind of question that is intimately connected to the data and the question of ceramic abundance; and this is the kind of question that can be addressed with a closer view of the evidence and a degree of source criticism.

4.1.3. Questions, Problems, and the Directions of this Chapter

The rest of this chapter examines a specific set of data, that collected by the Eastern Korinthia Survey, to discuss the well-known phenomenon of abundance and its implications for the history of the countryside. We could pick any territory to address questions of Roman pottery, but the Eastern Corinthia is particularly appropriate for a number of reasons. On the one hand, the land was especially suited for agriculture, and consequently inhabited and farmed throughout antiquity. Historically, this was the countryside of perhaps the most important and well-connected city of Roman Greece,
which throughout antiquity, acted as a central trading hub between east and west. As I will discuss in the next chapter, the EKAS survey area lay directly in the middle of a main travel corridor from Corinth to Isthmia (and then to Athens) and Corinth to Kenchreai (and then further to the East), and covered the most important crossroads of the Corinthia, at a ridge where roads from east, south, west, and north converged and met. The territory of EKAS, then, was a region of significant rural activity throughout the ancient city’s occupation, with direct access to harbors and external markets. In this territory, we can expect a highly visible Roman landscape due to 1) substantial ceramic deposition (a product of lots of activity on good agricultural lands) and 2) a large number of imports (a product of its position at a trading crossroads).

Secondly, this is the territory of one of the longest-running and most extensively excavated Roman cities in the eastern Mediterranean, which can provide a wealth of excavated ceramic comparanda. Recent work on Corinth’s Roman and Late Roman ceramic sequences and typologies can offer much-needed points of comparison, and quantified studies can provide a means of measuring survey assemblages (see below). In addition to work at Corinth proper, a long history of excavation and survey in the near vicinity of the Corinthia allow some useful comparanda.

And finally, the recent completion of the Eastern Korinthia Archaeological Survey offers a workable set of quantifiable data. The Korinthia Survey was a ‘siteless’ survey, which chose the artifact as the basic unit of analysis. We were a survey that counted pottery, and in a very intense, representative way, via the Chronotype system. Although this data will not allow us to quantify actual amounts of material on the ground, it does allow us to understand the relative frequencies behind the spikes in our data and to point

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35 cf., Williams and Bookides 2003.

36 Slane 2000, 2003; Sanders 2003; Sanders and Slane, Forthcoming.

37 Major nearby surveys include Nemea Valley Archaeological Project; Argolid Exploration Project; Methana Survey; Sicyonia project. Major excavations have occurred at Kenchreai, Isthmia, Argos, and Stymphalia. There are innumerable archaeological reports of work conducted by the Greek Ministry of Culture.
some fingers at the pottery types responsible for our patterns. Since we collected artifacts in a generally representative manner of what we saw on the ground, we can potentially analyze our data in far more precise and sophisticated ways than previous surveys. Doing this allows us to understand abundance of the latter Roman period relative to the earlier, and to generate conclusions far different than we might expect on the basis of that understanding.

The remainder of the chapter assesses Late Antique abundance as indicated by intensive survey data, especially as the pattern of ordinary potsherds contributes to a general picture of the Corinthian countryside. The chapter uses the Corinthia as a case study to show how a seemingly Late Antique abundance can become immediately deflated when the data is rightly understood. In the end, I will argue that “abundance” is largely exaggerated by the nature of our data and that Late Antique habitation and land use in the Corinthia should not be understood in terms of an explosion, but a final phase in a long ancient history of investing in places in the countryside.
4.2. Roman Pottery in the Eastern Corinthia

The Eastern Korinthia Archaeological Survey was carried out in the summers of 1999, 2000, and 2001, with study seasons following in 2002 and 2003. The main area of research was the area between Ancient Corinth and Isthmia, directly east of Hexamilia and Xylokeriza, and presumably cutting across the main E-W route between the sanctuary at Isthmia and the urban center at Corinth. Those familiar with this area know that this is the location of the well-known sites of Gonia, Yiriza, and Perdhikaria, several Roman tombs, and an area of ancient quarrying activities. Our survey investigations also occurred elsewhere, in the area directly north of Kenchreai, south of Kenchreai along the coast (Vayia and Vigla), and inland in the area of Sophiko at a location known as Lakka Skoutara. Most of the units, however, occurred in the area directly west of the modern village of Kyras Vrysi.

The survey methods of EKAS followed the standard procedures established by the Nemea Valley Project, Pylos Regional Project, and the Sydney Cyprus Survey Project, where surveyors walk transects across small survey units, at ten meter intervals, counting and noting all cultural remains, especially pottery and tile, but also glass, coins, and the like. The survey units in EKAS were called “Discovery Units” (DUs) and corresponded to geomorphic boundaries (sometimes modern field boundaries); these Discovery Units were quite small, on average only about 3,000 square meters, smaller than is typical for surveys in Greece.

In each Discovery Unit, we collected essentially two kinds of artifactual data: 1) the total number of artifacts (pottery, tile, lithics, and other); and 2) the total number of unique pottery types. As for total artifact counts, fieldwalkers counted with clicker counters every piece of pottery, tile, stone tools / debris in their swath, as well as other artifacts not fitting into these classes. Because these artifacts were counted consistently, we can quantify artifacts of different classes as spatially distributed across the Corinthia.

38 The data from this survey has been discussed in a variety of individual conference papers and published studies (see W. Caraher and T.E. Gregory, Forthcoming). A preliminary report has been accepted by Hesperia and is in final stages of revision. See T. Tartaron et al., Forthcoming.
As for the second kind of artifact data (unique artifact types), EKAS employed an artifact sampling strategy called the Chronotype system to characterize the finds in each of the Discovery Units. The Chronotype is a unique artifact type with specific physical and chronological characteristics. Often these corresponded to well-known pottery types (e.g., ARS Form 50, Micaceous Water Jars) but we also accounted for material that many surveys pass over—less diagnostic medium coarse ware pottery dated sometime between antiquity and the Medieval period; or Corinthian tiles dated to antiquity—with the thought that these artifacts also relate some specific information about the use of the land, although without the precision of an artifact like ARS Form 104A. We were, of course, sensitive to the fact that fieldwalkers might have problems recognizing the fine physical characteristics that distinguish one type of coarse pottery from another, and therefore instructed walkers to collect artifacts if there were any doubt about the uniqueness of the pottery. The artifacts were then processed and analyzed in the field by ceramic analysts.39

Beyond standardizing and facilitating collection strategies and processing in the field, the Chronotype system is also designed to provide a systematic sample of the kinds of artifacts and periods encountered in the process of surface survey. Obviously the number of potential examples of a single Chronotype in a Discovery Unit will vary according to the size and shape of the unit, and the number of fieldwalkers needed to survey the unit. In principle, four or five fieldwalkers in a unit could produce four or five times as many examples of a single Chronotype as one fieldwalker. Moreover, since the Chronotype system is designed to eliminate duplicates, there is no way of knowing the absolute number of examples of a Chronotype seen (and discarded) in any given walker swath, let alone the number of examples of that Chronotype in any specific DU. Although these factors make precise quantification of artifact types in the Corinthia impossible, the Chronotype sampling system does provide a rough approximation of the

39 The frequent occurrence of generally undiagnostic medium-coarse wares in each Discovery Unit suggests that fieldworkers overcollected rather than under-collected. See the discussion of this in Tartaron et al., Forthcoming.
relative ubiquity of artifact types encountered in the Eastern Corinthia. Since the principal alternatives in Greek survey archaeology—random grab collection, or sampling only the diagnostic artifacts at a site—have often been, by their very nature, non-systematic, we feel that the Chronotype system is a significant improvement in artifact sampling strategies that can provide a more nuanced understanding of diversity of cultural material in a region.

The value of the kind of siteless survey data we have collected is the potential for a variety of ways of analyzing it. Because artifacts were collected in a representative and consistent manner, and because this data was keyed into a Microsoft Access database,\textsuperscript{40} it is possible to query and quantify the project’s finds data in whatever way we like.\textsuperscript{41} With siteless data, one can make the \textit{artifact} the basic unit of analysis and ask questions about the distribution of particular kinds of material across the landscape. Or we can turn around and make the \textit{survey unit} the basic object of analysis. What did units generally contain on average? So, with the question of Late Roman “explosion”, we could query our data for the nature of overall artifacts (what kind and how many?), or the typical survey unit (what kinds of LR artifacts were contained). All of the following analysis of the LR period in the EKAS area is based on queries of this data.

On the surface, the Late Roman countryside in the Eastern Corinthia is a very busy one.\textsuperscript{42} This can be measured in several ways: 1) the relative proportion of total LR

\textsuperscript{40} The analysis information from these artifacts was entered into Microsoft Access and exist in a large database that we can query for a variety of information. All of the following analysis is based on queries of the data. The advantage of data of this sort is the degree of control one has over the data. The value of the kind of siteless survey data we have collected is the potential for a variety of ways of analyzing it. With siteless data, one can make the \textit{artifact} the basic unit of analysis and ask questions about the distribution of particular kinds of material across the landscape. Or we can turn around and make the \textit{survey unit} the basic object of analysis. What did units generally contain on average? So, with the question of Late Roman “explosion”, we could query our data for the composition of overall artifacts (what kind and how many?), or the typical survey unit (what kinds of LR artifacts were contained).

\textsuperscript{41} The query that I ran in 2003 showed that 1,372 of 1,463 units (93.8%) yielded some artifacts—this unit total does not include units that were keyed but unsurveyed due to fences or 0% visibility.

\textsuperscript{42} The following statistics are based only the normal discovery survey units and exclude any artifacts recovered in ‘non-systematic’ ways, such as from grab sampling. Hence, if a unit was identified to the
material to that of other periods; 2) the overall spatial frequency of LR pottery compared to other periods; 3) the average artifact densities / period; and 4) the ubiquity of LR material throughout the Corinthia.

If we look simply at the finds data, regardless of the spatial location of the finds, there is simply more Late Roman pottery than that of periods immediately preceding or following (Figure 4.3). Late Roman pottery constitutes 4.5% of all pottery analyzed by EKAS, the best represented of the chronological periods in EKAS. By stark contrast, the Early Roman period produced less than one percent of the total artifacts recovered through normal Discovery Unit survey, whereas the total count for Early Medieval artifacts found through normal intensive survey was nineteen, less than a bare fraction of a percent in terms of overall artifact counts. The only periods really to compare to the Late Roman were the Archaic-Hellenistic and the Early Modern-Modern periods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th># Artifacts</th>
<th>% of Total Artifacts Read</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Roman</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>0.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late Roman</td>
<td>1,707</td>
<td>4.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Medieval</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0.05%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_Figure 4.3. Number of late Roman artifacts analyzed_

Second, material that can be securely tied to the Late Roman period is found in more discovery units in the EKAS area than any other period. Figure 4.4 shows the relative spatial frequency of the period as revealed through standard survey. Late Roman ceramic

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43 Over the course of three full seasons, fieldwalkers counted some 146,599 artifacts in the process of surveying 1,336 Discovery Units. Most of the artifacts counted were pottery (74.5%) and tile (24.4%) fragments, with lithics and other types of artifacts (e.g., marble revetment, glass, metal) comprising a bare 1% of all artifacts counted. Of this enormous body of counted artifacts, 38,337 (or, 26.2% of the artifacts seen) were collected by fieldwalkers using the Chronotype system and subsequently analyzed by the processing team, and have now entered the Finds database, and it is this ‘analyzed’ figure of 38,337 that forms the total artifact count from which the figures in this chapter are generated. This count is based on standard Chronotype collection procedures and in order to establish fair comparison between units, it excludes other types of non-systematic forms of collection, such as grab samples, that were commonly made when in the field. It also is based on only the discovery units surveyed in standard ways and excludes experimental, extensive, and LOCA units.
fragments are found in 43% of all survey units, compared to a meager 14.5% of units
with early Roman pottery, and a nearly negligible 1.1% of units with Medieval pottery. A good visual representation of this pattern can be seen in Figure 4.5 which depicts the presence / absence of Late Roman material in the main transect of survey units; it is very near impossible to step foot in this main corridor of the Eastern Corinthia without encountering Late Roman wares.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th># Units</th>
<th>% of Overall Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Roman (31 BC-250 AD)</td>
<td>193 Units</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late Roman (AD 250-700)</td>
<td>577 Units</td>
<td>43.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Medieval (AD 700-1200)</td>
<td>14 Units</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.4. Late Roman Units (compared to periods preceding and following)

Third, when Late Roman pottery appears in a unit, it appears at higher average
densities than when other periods appear in a unit. So, for instance, the average LR
density is approximately double that of Early Roman and Early Medieval average
densities; the average LR density is about 68 Late Roman artifacts per hectare,
compared with significantly lower Early Roman (33 artifacts / ha) and Early Medieval
(30 artifacts / ha) average densities.

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44 The total unit count for normal intensive “discovery unit” survey was 1,336. This total includes only
units surveyed in a standard way, i.e., 10 meter spacing, and it does not include experimental, extensive,
LOCA units, and other units sampled in non-standard ways.

45 As noted below, the Chronotype system is designed to eliminate duplicates, and therefore likely
underrepresents actual Late Roman density, since multiple examples of certain Late Roman Chronotypes
(e.g., combed ware) commonly appear in a walker’s swath.

46 For the EKAS area generally, the average artifact density overall was .189 artifacts / sq. meter walked, or
nearly 20 artifacts for every 10 x 10 meter space walked. With an average discovery unit size of 2906
square meters, we can estimate on average 550 artifacts were present on the surface in the typical unit in
EKAS territory, which must represent only a fraction of the material found in the plowzone. This average
density is substantially lower than the typical average density for artifacts found on sites: cf., for instance,
figures in Kardulias et al. 1995, 9.
Figure 4.5. The Ubiquity of Late Roman Artifacts in main transect area surveyed by EKAS. Red dot indicates presence of Late Roman pottery.

And finally, LR pottery is found throughout the entire Corinthia (Figure 4.6). Although we unfortunately did not survey significant area in the southern Corinthia, our limited survey at Ayia Katerini, northwest of Korphos, and at the coastal rises of Vigla and Vayia, indicates the presence of LR pottery in those ‘marginal’ locations. While LR material is not as thick in this more peripheral Corinthia, it does nonetheless appear in limited quantities.
In the main corridor that forms the Eastern Corinthia, on the other hand, the abundance of Late Roman pottery is so thick that it is difficult to pattern the artifactual data into recognizable “sites,” especially given the frequency of multiple period components in most survey units. The more general pattern is a near continuous carpet of Late Antique artifacts of fluctuating density. As Appendix I argues, however, it is possible to pattern this continuous distribution of LR pottery into coherent spatial groupings by ranking the varying density of LR pottery across space. These we call LOCAs, an acronym for “Localized Cultural Anomalies,” which is the category EKAS used to define sites in the survey territory. Figures 4.7 and 4.8 below, for instance, show the distribution of LR pottery by the total count of LR artifacts found in each survey unit. As one can see, many LR units produce only one to three LR potsherds, and only a few units yield more than 7 LR potsherds. The densest LR units, after accounting for differences in the areas of the unit, form the basis for defining the Late Roman LOCAs,
which we will return to at a later point in this chapter (See Appendix I for further discussion of patterning the continuous carpet into LR sites).

Figure 4.7. Late Roman material in western part of transect, as indicated by total count of Late Roman artifacts

Figure 4.8. Late Roman material in area near Isthmia and Kenchreai, as indicated by total count of Late Roman artifacts
Furthermore, the presence of Late Roman material is often found in association with earlier periods. When we compare the Late Roman with the Early Roman period, the appearance of explosion seems to stand out, and EKAS indicates a very strong pattern between earlier and later phases. About 148 of 193 units (76.8%) with Early Roman pottery also had Late Roman pottery. Figures 4.9-4.14 below indicate this pattern in spatial terms by showing the count of Early Roman (red dots) and Late Roman (blue dots) artifacts in the main Isthmian transect. The larger the dot, the more specimens found.\textsuperscript{47} By all appearances, the Late Roman presence is far brighter than the Early Roman, and appears to represent veritable explosion of material.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure49.png}
\caption{Frequency of Early Roman (Red dots) and Late Roman (Blue dots) pottery in main survey area}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{47} This figure does not average by area of unit and does not account for visibility, so this is only an approximation based on total number of artifacts identified to each period. The sizes for the dots for Early Roman and Late Roman total counts range at increments of 3.5. There were ten maximum artifacts of Early Roman date in a unit, whereas for the Late Roman period there were as many as 35 artifacts or more in a unit; this explains the differences in size.
Figure 4.10. Frequency of Early Roman (red dots) and Late Roman (blue dots) pottery between Kromna and Perdhikaria

Figure 4.11. Frequency of Early Roman (red dots) and Late Roman (blue dots) pottery west of Isthmia
Figure 4.12. Frequency of Early Roman (red dots) and Late Roman (blue dots) pottery south of Isthmia

Figure 4.13. Frequency of Early Roman (red dots) and Late Roman (blue dots) pottery north and west of Kenchreai
However we measure, the Late Roman period is far more visible than the periods immediately preceding or following. Late Roman pottery is denser, more ubiquitous and extensive, and simply more abundant overall. Taken at face value, this pattern would seem to support an interpretation for settlement expansion, population explosion, or more intensive agriculture in the final phase of the Roman period, an interpretation consistent with other regions of Greece and the Aegean. As the following section will show, however, ceramic abundance cannot be taken at face value but must be deconstructed and interpreted at a number of levels before drawing historical conclusions. When we do this, we see that the later Roman period in the Eastern Corinthia is an outgrowth of the earlier Roman period rather than something qualitatively different.
4.3. Source Criticism: Deflating Late Antique Abundance

How should we understand the relationship of the earlier and later Roman periods in the EKAS survey territory, as well the other areas of Greece where regional survey has been done, in light of the data generated from archaeological survey? In part, any assessment of the relationship of the two periods from survey data must begin by taking a close look at the pottery finds themselves, critically discussing the differential visibility of periods based on those finds, and thinking about what kind of historical conclusions are possible given these differences.

4.3.1. Source Criticism of the Eastern Korinthia Survey Data

Although Late Roman material may be thick on the ground in the Eastern Corinthia relative to the preceding and following periods, there is every indication that this is mainly a product of the period’s greater recognizability and diagnosticity. Because we meticulously counted the types of pottery for each period found in each unit in a manner representative of what we saw, we can easily generate a list of the most common Chronotypes either for each unit or for all the units altogether. Figures 4.15 and 4.16 provide such a list, the former of the fifteen most abundant Chronotypes in the Eastern Corinthia, and the latter of the ten most common Late Roman Chronotypes. What is clear in both of these charts is the dominance of two major Late Roman Chronotypes—

48 Although ceramic quantification studies usually occur on the basis of excavated data, it is possible to quantify the grosser kind of data generated by surface survey so long as the researcher makes clear what it is that is being quantified. The EKAS data does not allow us to quantify the total artifact counts encountered during survey, but rather the total number of artifacts sampled during surface survey by use of our sampling system (the Chronotype system), which is designed to eliminate duplicates and substantially reduce the number of pieces of the common Chronotypes collected by fieldwalkers. This sampling strategy, then, is likely to underestimate significantly the total number of pieces of very common Chronotypes where a walker is likely to encounter duplicates in his swath. Hence, we should expect that the biases discussed below are actually *worse* than these numbers imply.

49 These top fifteen Chronotypes constitute a total of 61.2% of all artifacts analyzed by EKAS field teams. That is, 61% of all artifacts analyzed by EKAS pottery teams belonged to one of these fifteen most common Chronotypes. Late Roman Spirally Grooved Ware and Combed Ware formed 3% of all analyzed artifacts. While this may seem insubstantial compared to the top three Chronotypes (e.g., Medium Coarse Ware, Ancient), the two Late Roman Chronotypes make the Late Roman period far more visible than any other “narrow” period, i.e., a period denoting a time span of less than about 500 years.
spirally grooved ware and combed ware—in terms of both the overall artifact counts for the survey and the overall Late Roman wares. These two Chronotypes alone form a substantial portion (2.8%) of the overall number of artifacts analyzed from intensive survey units and constitute the majority (n = 1073; 62.8%) of the 1,707 total pieces of Late Roman pottery identified in the survey, even though some thirty other Chronotypes dating to the Late Roman period were recorded during surface survey.

The use of the surface treatments “spiral grooving” and “combing” as the basis for Late Roman Chronotypes derives from the terminology and chronologies for Roman pottery in excavations from the Athenian Agora, established by Henry S. Robinson and still the chief authority for Roman-period coarse ware chronologies in the Aegean. The terms are often mentioned in archaeological literature for Greece and the Aegean because the surface treatments appear on vessels that are so frequent in this region, and, because the publication of the Athenian Agora volumes tied the surface treatments to the late Roman period. For the Athenian Agora, Robinson dated “spiral grooving” to the fourth, and especially fifth and sixth centuries, and dated the “combing” to the sixth and seventh centuries AD. Recent work on Roman commerce and trade has shown the frequency of spiral grooving and combing on amphorae and closed transport vessels of the E. Mediterranean, especially the LR amphora series, although such surface treatment is also known to occur on other shapes and forms, as well as other periods.

50 Wheel-Ridged Ware also forms a substantial portion of the overall counts. Although wheel ridging is often linked to the Late Roman period, it is not uncommon in the first and second centuries and has therefore been grouped with the broader “Roman” period rather than the more specific “Late Roman” period.


52 The publications of the Roman pottery from Sarachane and other Mediterranean deposits have demonstrated that wavy narrow combing can be dated as late as the mid-7th century. Cf. Hayes 1992.


54 For the Late Roman period, this surface treatment is frequent especially on other closed utilitarian vessels such as pitchers and jugs. Cf. Hjohlman 2002, 94-95.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chronotype</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>As a Percentage of Total Number of Artifacts Analyzed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Medium Coarse Ware, Ancient</td>
<td>Ancient</td>
<td>5,360</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Medium Coarse Ware</td>
<td>Ceramic Age</td>
<td>4,909</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Medium Coarse Ware, Ancient Historic</td>
<td>Ancient Historic</td>
<td>3,785</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Tile, Ancient Historic</td>
<td>Ancient Historic</td>
<td>1,830</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Amphora, Ancient Historic</td>
<td>Ancient Historic</td>
<td>1,236</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Kitchen Ware, Ancient</td>
<td>Ancient</td>
<td>1,149</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Tile, Lakonian, Ancient Historic</td>
<td>Ancient Historic</td>
<td>830</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Tile</td>
<td>Post-Prehistoric</td>
<td>829</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Kitchen Ware, Ancient Historic</td>
<td>Ancient Historic</td>
<td>719</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Spirally Grooved Ware</td>
<td>Roman, Late</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Wheel-Ridged Ware</td>
<td>Roman</td>
<td>568</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Kitchen Ware</td>
<td>Ceramic Age</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Pithos, Orange and Blue Core</td>
<td>Archaic-Classical</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Tile, Lakonian</td>
<td>Post-Prehistoric</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Combed Ware</td>
<td>Roman, Late</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>23,480</td>
<td>61.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.15. The 15 most abundant chronotypes represented in finds (in order of frequency)\(^{56}\)

\(^{55}\) “Grooving” and “combing”, of course, occur on vessels of later periods, especially various Byzantine coarse and plain wares. For instance, grooving and ridging occur on amphorae (as well as other vessels) between Late Roman and Byzantine times at Sarac'han (for amphorae, Cf. Hayes 1992, 61-79); grooving, ridging, and combing are known for Byzantine plain wares, cooking wares, and amphorae at Sparta (Cf. Sanders 1993, 268-83) and Byzantine unglazed vessels from Corinth (Cf. McKay 1967, 272-300); grooving and combing also occurs in late Medieval contexts, such as the late medieval village published by Gerstel et al. 2003, examples at pp. 162-63, #18, fig. 10 and p. 184: #52, fig. 37. Hence, the presence of surface treatment alone does not indicate a specifically Late Antique date, but identification must occur in conjunction with studies of clay, color, fabric, and form.

\(^{56}\) This and the following tables consider only those Chronotypes recovered using typical Discovery Unit survey methods and exclude grab samples, resurveyed units, LOCAs, and experimental units.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chronotype</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>As a Percentage of Total Number of LR Chronotypes Analyzed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spirally Grooved Ware</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>41.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combed Ware</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amphora, Late Roman 2</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen Ware, Roman Late</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amphora, Palestinian</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phocaean Ware</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium Coarse Ware, Roman Late</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phocaean Ware 3</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amphora, Late Roman 1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amphora, Roman Late</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1707</strong></td>
<td><strong>92.2%</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 4.16. Ten most abundant Late Roman chronotypes**

Although *body sherds* with “combed” or “grooved” surface treatments cannot usually be linked to specific amphora types, even in excavation, they are suggestive of vessel types from the fourth to early seventh centuries AD and can usually be connected with closed forms. In EKAS, the likely source for these predominantly coarseware *body sherds* are the most frequent medium coarseware Late Roman types identified on the basis of specific feature sherds such as rims and handles. Figure 4.17, for instance, indicates the counts for the most common Late Roman amphora types in our survey, based only on ‘feature sherds’ such as rims, bases, and handles that are usually indicative of specific pottery types (excluding body sherds from the counts). If these feature sherds are an approximate indication of relative proportions of Late Roman amphoras in the survey area, the best candidates for many of the grooved and combed wares would probably be the Late Roman 2 Amphoras, which occur so commonly at nearby sites in

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57 In this discussion, it is important to keep in mind that there is some overlap in the Chronotypes listed in Figure 4.15 above. The “Spirally Grooved Ware” and “Combed Ware” Chronotypes, for instance, primarily refer to Chronotypes of a specific fabric and surface treatment, and are almost exclusively body sherds. The recovery of feature sherds usually allows an assignment to a more specific Chronotype like “LR 1 Amphora.”
Greece and the Aegean,\textsuperscript{58} and are the most abundant type (n=107) in our survey area.\textsuperscript{59} Although other surveys have linked combed and grooved decoration to Byzantine amphora types,\textsuperscript{60} feature sherds from Byzantine amphora are so poorly represented in our survey area that this possibility can be at least minimized.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Chronotype</th>
<th>Count (excluding body sherds)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Late Roman</td>
<td>Amphora, Late Roman 2</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late Roman</td>
<td>Amphora, Palestinian</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late Roman</td>
<td>Amphora, Late Roman 1</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late Roman</td>
<td>Amphora, Aegean Red 1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late Roman</td>
<td>Amphora, Late Roman</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late Roman</td>
<td>Amphora, Aegean Red 2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.17. Counts of most common Late Roman amphora types based on feature sherds only

Such is the general nature of our counts for the Late Roman period in EKAS: predominance of amphora sherds and medium coarse wares with grooving and combing for surface treatment. While the predominance of coarse ware and amphora sherds for Late Roman wares in EKAS should be little surprise to those familiar with survey pottery, its interpretive implications are most significant, especially when compared with, for example, the Early Roman period (Cf. Figure 4.18, below). While certain classes of objects like lamps and kitchenwares do not differ radically between the two periods, the relative percentages of fine ware and coarse ware sherds are substantially different. The

\textsuperscript{58} Karagiorgou 2001.

\textsuperscript{59} The only other real possible sources for these combed and grooved sherds, as indicated by LR rims and feature sherds, are Palestinian and LR1 amphoras, as well as other kinds of medium coarse ware LR vessels (n=43), which occur with some frequency.

\textsuperscript{60} See the observation by Cherry \textit{et al.}, 1991, 49-51, that although the off-site “combed ware” counted in the N. Keos Survey may range from Late Roman to Byzantine in date, most were likely to be from Middle Byzantine Saracha\c{s}ane Type 61 Amphoras rather than Late Roman amphoras, based on the frequency of Type 61 Amphoras identified from feature sherds discovered on sites. The Saracha\c{s}ane Type 61 amphora is, indeed, very common in Boeotia as well: cf. Vroom 2004, 87-134.
The great majority (83.0%) of Late Roman wares analyzed by EKAS represent ordinary coarse wares and amphora fragments, with fine wares (9.7%) and kitchenwares (5.6%) following, but at much lower relative percentages. The pottery of the Early Roman period, by contrast, is more evenly divided between medium coarse / amphora wares (36.2%), finewares (38.0%), and, to a lesser extent, kitchen wares (24.9%). The main factor responsible for the difference in relative proportion of fabric groups for the two periods is the dramatically different count of coarse wares / amphorae. In the Eastern Corinthia, utilitarian vessel fragments were simply much more important signatures of the Late Roman period than they were for the Early Roman period: the number of Late Roman coarseware sherds (n = 1,417) outnumbers the number of Early Roman coarseware sherds (n = 119) by a factor of 12 to 1.\(^{61}\) Consequently, for the Early Roman period, fine wares and kitchenwares were proportionally far more important signatures in signaling Early Roman presence. The vast amount—83.0%—of Late Roman artifacts were coarse wares, mainly amphorae, whereas the majority (38%) of Early Roman artifacts were finewares. Although for both periods, the number of identified fineware sherds (165 vs. 125) and kitchen ware sherds (96 vs. 82) were similar, for the Late Roman period, these wares were proportionally much less important than coarseware sherds in filling out the landscape.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fabric Group</th>
<th>Late Roman Pottery Count</th>
<th>% LR Pottery</th>
<th>Early Roman Pottery Count</th>
<th>% ER Pottery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coarse Wares &amp; Amphora</td>
<td>1417</td>
<td>83.0%</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>36.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Wares</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen Wares</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamp</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1707</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
<td><strong>329</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.18 – Breakdown of late Roman and early Roman fabric groups

\(^{61}\) It must be remembered, too, that the figure of 1,417 is likely to be a significant underrepresentation of the number of Late Roman coarseware sherds actually seen during survey since the Chronotype system is designed to eliminate duplicates. Cf. note 48 above. The disparity between the actual counts of coarse wares and the finewares is even greater than what is implied by these figures representing sampled quantity.
What is the meaning of such difference? Although there may be historical factors at work, the immediate cause appears to be entirely methodological, lying in our differing ability to recognize amphora and coarse wares from the two periods. Simply put, Late Roman coarsewares are highly recognizable in the process of surface survey due to the surface treatment that became increasingly common from the third century AD: grooving and combing of the external surface of the vessel. The degree to which this surface treatment spikes overall period numbers is substantial. The Early Roman coarseware group is represented by 119 fragments of pottery, mainly from Koan-type amphorae, and all but one of these pieces were feature sherds, such as rims, bases, shoulders, and handles. Only one Early Roman medium coarseware sherd was recognized from its surface treatment or fabric and fewer than 2% of identified Early Roman coarsewares were body sherds. By contrast, some 83.5% (n = 1,183) of our Late Roman coarseware and amphora fragments were body sherds, identified on the basis of their surface treatment and fabric; only 16.5% (n = 234) of Late Roman coarsewares were “feature sherds” (Cf. Figure 4.19 below). In other words, while the Early Roman presence is known almost entirely from finewares (like Eastern Sigillata), the rims and handles of amphorae, and to a lesser extent, kitchen-ware fabrics, the Late Roman period has the added advantage of having highly recognizable medium-coarse body sherds derived from utilitarian vessels. Since utilitarian vessels occur much more frequently in the countryside than do fineware vessels, and since body sherds greatly outnumber rims, handles, and bases, we can see how and why the Late Roman period is abundantly more visible than the Early Roman period.62

62 We should also recognize here and in the following section that surface treatment like combing and grooving do not always extend over the whole body of an amphora or vessel, but sometimes are restricted to shoulders and necks. This means that even though the Late Roman period is highly visible due to recognizable coarsewares, even this period is yet underrepresented in the landscape and would become more visible in the course of more precise identification of the plain coarsewares. Even still, this does not greatly undermine the following argument since LR coarsewares are still substantially more visible than ER coarsewares.
In sum, then, the Late Roman explosion in the Eastern Corinthia is made far more visible by the ubiquity of very identifiable body sherds, while the Early Roman period, by contrast, depends more on a typically less common kind of pottery in survey, fine ware rims, handles, and bases. While admitting this is to suggest nothing new—the fact of differential visibility for different periods has been pointed out numerous times before—it does indicate that the relative difference can be far more significant than anyone has posited, so great, in fact, that failing to account for relative differences would entirely distort the historical conclusions drawn from the data.

In the remainder of section 4.3, I will attempt to show how the problem of relative ceramic visibility for these periods is a general problem for many survey projects, not simply for EKAS, which stems from our artifact collection strategies and the way we chronologize our artifacts. Following this, the following sections will explore ways of comparing two very uneven ceramic periods in order to understand the nature of change between periods.

4.3.2. Assessing Other Busy Late Antique Countrysides

The ‘new wave’ of intensive surveys of the last generation are continuing to yield final publications. Many of the surveys (e.g., Methana, Laconia, N. Keos, Oropos, Sydney-Cyprus Survey) have published their finds in a manner complete enough that it is
possible to use the data critically in reflective evaluation of changes between periods. Other projects (e.g., S. Argolid) promise forthcoming publications of the finds, and have published enough of the data to allow some impressions of the different periods, with occasional glances of the ceramic underbelly underlying their conclusions. Given the range of thresholds of completeness of publication, any critical review of the data from these surveys will be incomplete and fragmentary by default. Nonetheless, there is enough published data to demonstrate that problems of differential ceramic visibility for the Roman period are general problems for projects in the Aegean, and not specific problems for EKAS. If there is a general pattern of Late Roman explosion in regional projects across Greece, there is also a general pattern of highly diagnostic pottery for this period which is at least partially responsible for the settlement pattern we typically see.

The following analysis reexamines previously published survey ceramic data. In doing this, it does not at all challenge the actual identification of the pottery, but accepts outright that the pottery was identified correctly. Nor is the discussion intended to impugn: the precise analysis that follows, after all, is only possible due to the responsible and complete publication and tabulation of the finds. Rather, the following analysis attempts to demonstrate the degree to which all regional surveys are affected by the kinds of ceramic source problems discussed above; in doing so, it moves from a known (the identified pottery in different regional surveys in Greece) to an unknown (the pottery that was not identified). One hope of this chapter is that it will encourage survey projects to publish the finds data from the projects in a manner complete enough to allow such reevaluation and reflection. Indeed, it is absolutely essential for surveys to publish not only their interpretation but also the evidence from which they build those interpretations since, as will be shown below, final conclusions are not necessarily final.63

63 The following analysis focuses on those surveys in Greece which are best published. It should be obvious that no comparison will be direct as different surveys have defined their periods and ceramic categories differently.
The Methana Survey

The most fully published catalogue of finds belongs to the Methana survey. Because this survey annotated its finds in such a complete and systematic manner, it has the greatest potential for comparison with EKAS data. The peninsula’s location on the Saronic coastline in the Argolid is close enough to the Corinthia that we might also expect there to be distributive trade currents that would produce comparable ceramic assemblages. The Methana survey divided the entire Roman period into three sub-periods: the “Early Roman” (100 BC – AD 100), the “Middle Roman” (AD 100-300), and the “Late Roman” (AD 300-700), but the Early Roman and Middle Roman periods can be combined into a broader “Early Roman” period (100 BC-AD 300) in order to facilitate comparison with EKAS data. The collection strategy for the Methana Survey was the collection of diagnostic and feature sherds from sites.

A comparison of raw counts between Early and Late Roman in both the Korinthia Survey and the Methana Survey shows the degree to which Late Roman pottery dominates the overall count in its number. In the Methana Survey, Early Roman forms a larger overall proportion of the pottery than it does in EKAS, but this is only a matter of degree, and in both surveys Early and Late Roman form similar proportions (Figure 4.20).

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64 Gill et al. 1997, Appendix IV. The following figures were obtained by tediously counting the pottery as printed in the finds catalogue. This analysis does not include pottery that represents ‘bridging’ periods: e.g., HE-ER or LC-ER or MR-LR, but it does include periods where uncertainty was a factor.

65 Bowden and Gill 1997, 77, 84-90. Note that what the Methana Survey called “Roman” corresponds generally to the “Early Roman” Period for EKAS. To avoid and compound confusion here and throughout this section, when I refer to “Roman,” I mean the entire Roman period as defined by EKAS (1st C. BC through 7th C. AD); when I refer to “Early Roman”, I refer to the EKAS period between the 1st C. BC and the 3rd century AD; and when I refer to “Late Roman”, I mean the EKAS period from the middle or end of the third century through the 7th century. Some projects use the term “Middle Roman” for the period of the second to early fourth centuries AD. Because this Middle Roman period falls before the fourth century AD, it can be subsumed within the slightly broader “Early Roman” period. Where projects differ significantly with this terminology, it will be noted. Cf. Figure 4.1 for different definitions and breakdowns of the Roman period.
Figure 4.20. Early Roman to late Roman pottery for the EKAS, Methana and N. Keos Surveys

More interesting, though, for our purposes is the degree to which the constituent parts of the vessel generally correspond for the two periods (see Figures 4.21-4.23 below). For Methana in the Late Roman period, ordinary body fragments constitute the vast majority (71.4%) of wares that signal the Late Roman period, and this compares nicely with 71.1% body sherds for EKAS. For both surveys in the Early Roman period, body sherds constitute a lower percentage of the overall Early Roman pottery, and rims and handles and even bases play a far more important role in signaling the Early Roman period than they do for their later Roman counterpart. For both surveys, body and feature sherds constitute radically different proportions of the overall assemblage between the Early and Late Roman periods (Figure 4.23); feature sherds form more than 60% of Early Roman sherd counts and less than 30% of Late Roman sherd counts!

Figure 4.21. Early Roman pottery counts in the Methana and the Eastern Korinthia Survey
The ‘culprit’ for spiking Methana’s Late Roman presence seems also to be the Late Roman “combed” and “grooved” body sherds, which constitute an enormous percentage of the overall Late Roman pottery: 43.1% (n = 345), and 12.4% (n = 99), respectively.66 Removing such body sherds from the Late Roman mix would deflate the overall count of Late Roman artifacts in Methana by more than 50%! As one might imagine, such sherds also have a tremendous affect on overall site numbers. There were 58 sites with Late Roman pottery and 36 sites with Early Roman pottery. Dismissing body sherds as an identifying category—whether fine or coarse fabric and whether plain or surface treated—would eliminate 26% of the Late Roman sites (58 → 43),67 but only 5.5% of the

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66 Bowden and Gill 1997, 87-88. The 345 combed LR sherds listed in the artifact catalogue are almost entirely unpainted and said to represent amphorae or closed forms, and are linked by the investigators to Berenice LR1 and LR 2 amphoras.

67 Sites that would disappear include MS4; MS11; MS12; MS15; MS55B; MS102; MS104; MS108; MS109; MS113; MS116; MS124; MS205; MS214; MS220. Ten of these sites yielded only combed or grooved LR body sherds.
Early Roman sites (36 → 34). With such calibration, the number of Late Roman sites, which the investigators had concluded increased by 60% from the Early Roman period (Bowden and Gill 1997, 77), increases by a much gentler 26.5%. Such is the effect of highly diagnostic Late Roman body sherds on Methana artifact and site populations. This higher diagnosticity is, in fact, a point that the investigators mention in their conclusions.

Although no other survey has published its results with such conscientiousness as has the Methana Survey, there is little doubt that the same biases affect other surveys’ recognition of periods on the landscape. Moreover, it is difficult to quantify from published finds, because the reports are not always thorough in listing out the parts of the vessels, the kind of fabric, or the basis for identifying a period at a site, but there is certainly enough qualitative data to give strong impressions that confirm the quantified data above.

N. Keos Survey

In the survey of N. Keos, 31 sites were found with some kind of Roman pottery, either Early Roman (1st to 3rd centuries AD), Late Roman (4th to early 7th centuries AD), or Roman (1st to early 7th century AD). Nine of these 31 sites could be dated specifically (but not exclusively) to the Early Roman period, and 26 of the 31 sites had a specifically Late Roman phase. Hence, there were 288% more Late Roman sites than Early Roman, and the count of Late Roman pottery was approximately 6 times the

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68 Early Roman sites that would be eliminated would be MS60 and MS213.

69 Bowden and Gill 1997, 84.

70 The artifact collection strategy in this survey was to grab sample potentially diagnostic artifacts, usually feature sherds, found on sites (Cherry et al., 1991, 13-35). For Chronology, Cf. Cherry et al 1991, p. 481. The figures given below derive from Sutton et al. 1991, Chapter 5. Gazetteer of Archaeological Sites, but cf. also Cherry et al. 1991, 327-47, for a discussion of the Greek and Roman periods. These counts do include sites where fewer than three artifacts of a given date were found, but do not include “off-site” finds. And, as with the Methana data, they do not tabulate pottery dated to broader bridging periods such as “C-LR.”
amount of Early Roman pottery.\textsuperscript{71} For both the Early Roman and Late Roman periods, fine ware appears to have been found on 2/3 of all sites with those periods represented. The really surprising difference, however, comes when we examine relative ratios of body sherds on sites of different periods. Early Roman body sherds were reported found on only four of nine Early Roman sites, i.e., less than half; and no site was dated to the Early Roman period only on the basis of body sherds.\textsuperscript{72} By contrast, some 22 of 26 Late Roman sites (84.6\%) produced “combed”, “grooved”, or “ridged” body sherds datable to the Late Roman period.\textsuperscript{73} For approximately a third of the sites (n= 8), the Late Roman component appears to have been identified only on the basis of body sherds, usually with combed, ridged, or grooved surface treatment. The Late Roman sites have, as it were, quite an advantage in being recognized. As with Methana and the Korinthia Survey, eliminating body sherds from the counts would diminish the number of LR sites significantly, in this case from 26 to 18. This would reduce the increase between periods from nearly 300\% to 200\%. Such represents still a significant increase, but substantially less than before.

\textbf{Oropos Survey}

In the recently published Oropos Survey on the borders of Attica, the Roman period was divided between Early Roman (1\textsuperscript{st} to 2\textsuperscript{nd} century AD); Middle Roman (3\textsuperscript{rd} to 4\textsuperscript{th} c. AD), and Late Roman (5\textsuperscript{th} to 7\textsuperscript{th} c. AD).\textsuperscript{74} There were 30 certain or possible find spots that could be dated to some part of the Roman period and 5 ‘tentative’ find spots. Of these 30 certain sites, 9 had an Early Roman phase, 14 had a Middle Roman phase, and 21 had a Late Roman phase. The investigators treat this raw increase in the number of LR

\textsuperscript{71} Figure based on approximate counts from artifacts listed in site catalogue.

\textsuperscript{72} Body sherds included mainly fine ware sigillata; one ridged ware body sherd was noted.

\textsuperscript{73} If one counts all sites with LR body sherds, regardless of their surface treatment, the number of sites is actually higher: 24 of 26 sites produced body sherds that could be tied to this period.

\textsuperscript{74} Cosmopoulos 2001, 60-64, and Catalogue of Findspots, pp. 84-122. Only diagnostic artifacts were collected (Cosmopoulos et al. 2001, 26-31).
sites as indication of possible expansion or prosperity, but another possible read is to see the spike in the Middle and Late Roman periods as a product of differential visibility between periods, which is clearly evident from the data.

The nine Early Roman find spots, for instance, were identified almost entirely on the basis of feature sherds (rims, handles, amphora toes, and bases); only one site yielded plain Early Roman body sherds that dated the site by their presence. By contrast, the Middle Roman and Late Roman periods were mainly identified on the basis of body sherds and surface treatments. Although approximately half of the Middle Roman find spots yielded feature sherds, the predominant artifact type was the wheel-ridged (mainly body) sherds that essentially constituted the Middle Roman presence in both overall quantity and frequency on site. Similarly, although about half of the 21 sites produced Late Roman feature sherds (rims, bases, toes, and the like), the predominant find, and the main basis for being confident in assigning a Late Roman date was the presence of “combed” body sherds dated to the fifth to seventh centuries AD. Again, if the catalogue of sites is to be trusted and we were to remove body sherds as an identifying period index, the number of sites between Early, Middle, and Late Roman would change from 9:14:21 to 8:7:10, producing a very different picture of the Roman period. Both the Middle Roman and Late Roman upturns would be severely deflated without those common utilitarian sherds. It seems that the Oropos finds data indicates that the progressive increase in sites from Early Roman to Late Roman is not a product of population, or more bodies on the ground, but a product of the fact that a particular kind of pottery was found in this area.

Boeotia Survey

The Boeotia Survey employed a collection strategy that selected potentially diagnostic artifacts. In a sample of 30 sites studied by Joanita Vroom in her analysis of

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75 Cosmopoulos 2001, 60-64, 78-79.

76 Findspot 91/22, p. 113. One other site was dated on the basis of an early Roman lamp.

77 Vroom 2004, 308.
post-antique sites in the region, some 19 rural sites yielded 2,800 Late Antique sherds. Fineware constituted 6% of these finds, while the overwhelming amount of material from this period were amphorae (29%), especially LR2, and Late Roman beehive fragments (62% of all finds). The Boeotia Survey was fortunate to recognize even this many Late Antique sites since almost all the finds (perhaps even the LR2 amphorae) were locally produced. It is not clear whether the LR2 and beehive sherds are feature sherds or body sherds, but their large number indicate a frequency that would seem to imply body sherds. Without the identification of a single type of pottery—the LR beehive fragments—this period would be severely thinned out on the ground.

Sydney Cyprus Survey Project

The Sydney-Cyprus Survey Project, which focused on the territory of the northern Troodos mountains in western Cyprus, moreover, would seem to indicate the same basic pattern. For the Early Roman period, finewares constitute some 108 of the 478 total wares (22.3%), while for the Late Roman period, finewares, while they have indeed increased to 386, constitute a much lower proportion of overall total artifacts of 2,111 (18.3%); in the LR period, it is the coarse ware and amphora sherds that dominate, especially the LR 1 amphora.

Pyla-Koutsopetria Archaeological Project

Preliminary analysis of ceramic finds collected from an intensive gridded survey at a 30 hectare Late Roman harbor site by the Pyla-Koutsopetria project, outside of Larnaca in southeast Cyprus, would seem to indicate a similarly high visibility for the Late Roman period from ordinary body sherds. About 2,390 total pieces of pottery have been

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78 Cf. Scott Moore, “6.3. Hellenistic to Roman Landscapes,” pp. 277-82, and Table 6.1, p. 277. SCSP pottery finds are valuable for comparison in that they were collected using an early version of the Chronotype system.

79 Cf. p. 279, however, where a higher figure of “nearly one-third” is given.

80 Moore 2003, p. 280.

81 cf. Caraher et al. in Preparation. The PKAP project also sampled artifacts using the Chronotype system.
analyzed thus far from 34 of the 185 forty-by-forty meter grid squares that were surveyed in the 2004 field season. The ceramic data so far suggests a predominantly Late Roman phase for the site, although the great majority of Late Roman Chronotypes are tiles (n = 1434, 80.1%), which can be tied specifically to the Late Roman period due to good stratigraphic excavations at our site and other Late Roman sites in the area. If we consider only the pottery (19.9%, n = 337) in our analysis, amphoras, coarse, and medium coarse wares constitute the majority 82.9% (n = 277), while fine wares (7.7%, n = 26) and kitchen/cooking wares (10.1%, n = 34) make up the remainder. Moreover, as with the EKAS data (and the others listed above), the great majority of medium coarse and amphora sherds were body sherds (78%, n = 216 of 277), identified on the basis of spiral grooving and combing; feature sherds (22%, n = 61) count for less than a quarter of the total sherds of this class. Similarly, body sherds of kitchen/cooking fabric dated specifically to the Late Roman period count for the majority (85.3%, 29 of 34) of that fabric. By contrast, of the finewares (generally Cypriot Redslip and LRC), body sherds only count for a minority (26.9%, n = 7) of the overall fineware counts; rims and bases were together more important. Although this breakdown is based on a very small body of artifacts, and will only be confirmed when the pottery from the rest of the units are surveyed, it again confirms our understanding of the Late Roman survey pottery as discussed so far in this chapter.

Other Surveys

The above analysis could be multiplied again and again in extensive and intensive surveys in Greece, although rarely have the finds been recorded in enough detail to

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82 Pottery specifically Late Roman in date accounts for 74.1% (n = 1,771) of the entire Chronotyped assemblage, whereas most of the remaining pottery could only be dated broadly to the “Ancient Historic” period (20.2%, n = 483). Other specific chronological periods are represented in negligible amounts and include Bronze Age (.04%, n = 1), Geometric (.04%, n = 1), Classical (.13%, n = 3), Hellenistic (.13%, n = 3), Early Roman (.63%, n = 15), Roman (.59%, n = 14), Early Medieval (.13%, n = 3), Late Medieval (.25%, n = 6), Ottoman/Venetian (.04%, n = 1), Medieval-Modern (.75%, n = 18), Modern (.50%, n = 12).

83 Cf. excavations of Maroni-Petrera and Kalavasos-Kopetra.

84 The number of early Roman pieces found are too small (n = 15) to compare statistically, but it is worth noting that only one potsherd belongs to a coarse fabric class; the remaining 14 pieces are all fineware sherds.
pattern the coarse and fine wares, and the parts of the vessel, and usually it is only possible to get an impression of the finds. Hence, with the S. Argolid Project, although the survey documented the Roman period in an early (50 BC-AD 200), middle (200-400 AD), and late phase (400-650 AD), the catalogue of sites allows us to say little more than that Early and Middle Roman pottery is occasional and scant and rarely identified with much confidence, while the Late Roman wares occur frequently, with numerous amphora sherds and domestic coarse wares, as well as red-slipped fine wares, and the occasional coin, lamp, roof tile, and cooking vessel. Moreover, there are many topographic surveys and small-scale intensive surveys in Greece and the Mediterranean where a Late Roman component has been identified only or mainly on the basis of combed, ridged, or grooved treatment on body sherds.

The pattern of differential visibility is so consistent that it is surprising that it has been so poorly discussed in the landscape archaeology literature for this period. Time and again, ridging, combing, and grooving signals a “diagnostic” sherd to the fieldwalker, distinguishing that piece of pottery from the ordinary plain, undecorated sherd; in most surveys, the one remains on the ground, the other is picked up. The same surface treatment also bolsters the confidence of the ceramic analyst in firmly designating a piece of pottery as specifically “Late Roman” rather than assigning that piece to a less specific broader period grouping, whether “non-diagnostic” or “Roman” or “Ancient.” To be sure, there are surveys in Greece that have identified earlier Roman period coarse wares on the basis of fabric and color alone, but these designations are not frequent, and when they occur, the typical bracketed question marks that follow (e.g., “R (?)”) suggests the lower level of confidence in the designation.

85 Runnels 1994, 419, with catalogue of sites 415-538.

86 We await the full publication of the post-prehistoric finds from this survey to analyze them. Mark H. Munn, Artifact and Assemblage: Finds from a Regional Survey of the Southern Argolid, volume 2, In Preparation for Stanford University Press.

87 Examples can be found in Gregory 1985; Kosso 1996, 217-23; Gregory and Kardulias; Wiseman 1979.
The analysis above suggests that above all, particular surface treatments can provide confidence and refine diagnosticity for the later Roman period, which in turn contributes to the relative abundance of this period on the ground. As argued above, the Early Roman period is identified almost entirely on the basis of feature sherds, whereas the Late Roman period has the added advantage of having highly diagnostic body sherds, especially the common utilitarian kind of body sherds, in addition to an abundance of well-known Late Roman fine ware types. Indeed, the predominant tendency in survey projects in sampling only feature sherds and “potentially diagnostic” pottery reinforces, rather than corrects for, these period biases. A methodology that favors body sherds with particular surface treatments and decoration is likely to exaggerate the relative differences between periods. We have seen how removing body sherds as an identifying class altogether can significantly (if not entirely) deflate Late Roman abundance in some regions.

This is not to argue that Late Roman abundance is simply a product of methodological factors—I will explore some other facets of the phenomenon below—but that the effects of relatively different recognized assemblages between earlier and later phases of the Roman period are so great that they must be considered a primary reason for the abundance of Late Antique material in both artifact and site catalogues. One anticipated hope of this chapter is that it will lead to a better understanding of the problems of identifying chronological periods in surface survey and will demonstrate the value of publishing not only the types of pottery found, but also an index of relative quantities of pottery that can give the reader of a published survey a sense of how the archaeologists arrived at their conclusions about chronologies present on a site. I am also hopeful that this chapter will generate some debate about how to understand the Roman-Late Roman transition in Achaia based on survey data.

Before we move on to the implications and a general discussion of the relationship between the two periods in the context of settlement in the Eastern Corinthia, it is useful to think further about how the typical ceramic surface assemblages for the Early and Late
Roman periods correspond to Roman ceramic assemblages known from excavated contexts. After all, perhaps the relatively different proportions of fabric groups and forms between periods means, for example, that amphoras were simply more abundant in Late Antiquity than they were at an earlier period? Or perhaps fineware were simply more important in the earlier rather than later Roman periods? While the reader can surmise that the answer to these questions will be negative, introducing quantitative data from excavated Roman contexts can inform our present discussion in interesting ways and allow some reliable bases for comparing later and earlier material.

4.3.3. Quantitative Comparisons with Excavated Sites

The quantification of pottery from excavated and survey contexts in the Mediterranean has occurred only over the last twenty-five years, and especially over the last decade. The value of quantification for our understanding of the society and especially economy of the Roman Empire has been well-discussed, although quantification studies have been much fewer than we might expect, even in some of the most famous and well-excavated cities of the Roman Empire; such studies have also been more common in the western Mediterranean (e.g., Carthage and Ostia) than the eastern Mediterranean, although recent work at quantifying assemblages in Greece and the Aegean give us hope that this is changing. Indeed, efforts at quantification have even spread to excavated small Late Medieval villages, and Late Roman churches and villages. And indeed, “counting” artifacts has long had a role in survey data, although


90 Of particular importance is the work done to quantify Roman and Byzantine pottery at Corinth: cf. Slane 2000 and 2003; Sanders 1987; 2003; Papadopoulos 1989; Hayes 1992.

mainly for generating density charts; studies quantifying the types of artifacts found in intensive survey and understanding survey data in light of counted sherds are a more recent development.  

While these studies indicate that excavated assemblages vary greatly in relative proportions of fabric and ceramic types, corresponding to different excavated contexts (domestic, industrial, religious, urban and rural), there are nonetheless enough consistencies between data sets that it is possible to compare excavated assemblages with survey assemblages. And when we compare these two kinds of assemblages, we see that the typical Roman-period surface assemblage is very different from the Roman assemblage typically excavated in urban contexts. The following discussion assumes that there should be similarities between the composition of excavated deposits and surface assemblages, that the relative proportions of feature sherds to body sherds, and coarsewares to finewares, should not differ greatly between urban and rural contexts. Before we initiate these comparisons, though, we must deal with the fact that there may be real differences between excavated and rural assemblages that might stifle comparison.

First, we might expect that pottery from urban contexts would be more representative of the diversity of vessels available in Roman Greece, as towns were typically economic nodes in the Roman period where ceramic commodities were purchased and distributed. By consequence, utilitarian pottery might be proportionally more dominant in the Roman countryside than in the city due to differential access to the full array of finewares. If we accept that this might be the case, then the typical survey ceramic assemblage should produce a far greater proportion of utilitarian coarsewares to finewares than the typical excavated urban ceramic assemblage. By contrast, what we find is that finewares in Roman surface assemblages almost always assume greater relative proportions than they do in excavated deposits. Ultimately, this means that we need not worry that this variable

(i.e., more monolithic surface rural assemblages) will be a distorting factor in our comparison (cf. discussion below) of surface assemblages from town and country.

And second, surface pottery is more subject than excavated ceramics to post-depositional processes that may continually erode assemblages. Plowing, for instance, not only continually fragments ceramics, creating more pottery overall, but erodes smaller, more fragile material at more rapid rates than it does larger robust material; and plowing tends to bring larger artifacts to the surface more so than smaller artifacts. A variety of cultural and natural formation processes (e.g., bioturbation, reclamation processes, trampling effects) also entail larger artifacts suffering less vertical displacement over time than smaller artifacts. As seeding experiments have indicated, archaeological survey methods themselves reinforce biases toward larger artifacts: fieldwalkers simply do not notice smaller artifacts as consistently as they do larger artifacts, although the relationship between artifact size and recovery is not a simple, linear one.

How would this affect the relative proportions of different artifact classes? While it is difficult to imagine these processes affecting the proportion of bodysherds to feature sherds, we can conjecture that they would affect the proportion of (typically) thicker coarsewares to (typically) more fragile finewares. If smaller thinner artifacts are subject to erosion, wear, and downward vertical displacement at greater rates than larger more robust artifacts, then this should produce survey assemblages where finewares are relatively underrepresented compared to excavated assemblages. But once again, for the

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95 Rob Schon (personal communication) has also made similar arguments based on seeding experiments but has shown that the relationship between artifact recovery is not a linear one, recovery leveling off for sherds larger than about half a centimeter in size.
typical Roman surface assemblage, the opposite tends to be the case—finewares assume
greater proportion in surface assemblages than they do in excavated assemblages. In
light of these objections and qualifications, we can be confident in a comparison between
survey assemblages and excavated assemblages because any actual difference between
the two only underscores the problem of the discrepancy.

The following discussion deals with a number of studies that treat their pottery in
different ways, using different terminology. For the sake of tabulation, I will use the
terms given by the investigators, but for the sake of comparison, will attempt to relate
them to the terms used by EKAS. The questions that I want to explore are related to the
methodological issues raised above: 1) What is the range of the different functional-fabric
groupings (e.g., finewares, coarsewares, amphoras, kitchenwares, etc…) that we find in
quantified, excavated assemblages?; and 2) What is the general proportional breakdown
of the different parts of vessels (body sherds, rims, handles, bases) found in excavated
contexts? The following discussion proceeds site by site, summarizing the quantified
data for each site; sherd count, rather than weight, is the unit of quantification employed
here since it facilitates comparison with archaeological survey data. The reader who
wishes to avoid this detail may skip directly to section 4.3.4, for discussion and
conclusions.

**Corinth**

The most immediate relevant work is also the most important for this study. This is
Kathleen Slane’s quantitative studies from the excavations east of the theater, conducted
in four buildings over the decade of the 1980s. The excavations generated nearly 12
tons of Roman pottery and she has studied 127,370 pieces of pottery specifically (p. 322).
In date, the material is principally between the first and fourth centuries, with far fewer
pieces for the fifth to seventh centuries AD. Slane has studied the pottery principally
with an eye toward relative shifts in imports and local production over time, especially as

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96 Slane 2000 and 2003. The former article is based mainly on finewares, which are more sensitive to
imports, and does not calculate for the amphoras and coarsewares. Hence, we will use the latter article for
our discussion here.
Corinth lies between eastern and western markets, and she has provided tabulations of relative percentages of fabrics and types in the assemblage over time.\footnote{Cf. Slane 2003, p. 333, Fig. 19.11 and 19.12.} Amphoras generally constitute between 35 and 50\% of the overall pottery (average of 47\%), with greatest amounts in the first and second century and in the fifth century, approaching half of all the pottery. Finewares show the same general pattern, with the highest amounts in the late first to early second century (10-12\%) and then again in the fourth to fifth centuries (12-14\%), with a low point only in the later second and third centuries when they drop to 5-7\%.\footnote{Lamps did not fluctuate above 2-3\% across the entire period.} Cooking fabrics, by contrast, and plain wares (the type reserved for everything else) vary the most: on average they constitute together a little more than 40\% of the pottery, but in the third century that number reaches as much as 60\% of all wares, while the numbers of amphorae and finewares are falling.\footnote{On average, cooking ware forms 17\% of the overall assemblage, and plain ware forms 25\%.}

Although Slane argues that the changes in the assemblages over time should be seen not in terms of a third century economic crisis but as a shift in the functions of the buildings in this area from domestic to industrial activities,\footnote{Slane 2003, 333-334.} there are still some conclusions that relate to the discussion here. For our purposes, her study demonstrates that although the proportions in overall amounts can fluctuate significantly, there is some consistency in assemblages, regardless of context: finewares, even in domestic contexts, varies only by 10 percentage points, not reaching above 14\%, by count, of the overall assemblage over time, and lamps vary little at all above 3\%. Amphorae constitute a little less than half of the overall assemblage, although this might drop to as low as 35\% in certain periods. And even though cooking and plain wares can rise substantially, they still each represent little more than 30\% of the ceramic population. For the sake of
comparison, if we combine the amphora type with Slane’s plain wares, this generic “coarse ware” category would form perhaps 65-75% of the overall ceramic population.¹⁰¹

Istanbul

The excavations at the church of St. Polyeuktos at Saracakane in Istanbul in the 1960s by Dumbarton Oaks and the Archaeological Museum of Istanbul generated some 350,000 to 400,000 sherds dating from the Late Roman to Early Modern period (AD 400-1900), and have received some quantitative analysis (to say nothing of entirely new typologies).¹⁰² Transport amphorae make up 85% of the Late Antique (4th to 8th century) wares, although Hayes notes that this figure is probably no different than it was for the Early Roman and Classical deposits as well; only at a much later Middle Byzantine date do amphorae form a substantially lower proportion of the overall ceramics.¹⁰³ Fine wares and kitchen/cooking wares are generally consistent in Late Antique and Byzantine periods, each forming about 10% of all finds. Only in the Middle and later Byzantine periods, as amphorae become less important, do finewares and kitchen wares come to represent a greater overall proportion.¹⁰⁴ The church of St. Polyeuktos was constructed in the 6th century AD and remained in use into the 10th century, where after it served for squatter occupation in the 11th century and a cemetery in the 12th century.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ For another quantification study for the Corinthia in the Roman period, see the chapter from the dissertation of Scott Moore, which examined the remains of an enormous pottery dump from three years of excavation at the Sanctuary of Poseidon at Isthmia. Moore’s analysis shows the predominance of amphorae (66.2%), with lesser amounts of cooking / kitchen wares (28.1%) and very few finewares (1.7%) and miscellaneous (4%). Unfortunately, although all of this material probably represents finds from the Loukos and East Field residential areas associated with the sanctuary, the pottery has no specific provenience. Nonetheless, the overwhelming proportion of pottery belongs to the coarseware class, followed by cooking / kitchenwares. Robert S. Moore, *Trade in the Eastern Mediterranean, 100-700 AD: The Ceramic Evidence*, Unpublished PhD Dissertation, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio 2000, Chapter 6.


¹⁰³ Hayes 1992, 3, 61, and 423n.3.


¹⁰⁵ Harrison 1986, xii.
**Torone**

At Torone, excavations between 1976 and 1978 in the lower city and isthmus do not allow for a breakdown of different functional-fabric groupings, but do allow an assessment of the second question above.\(^{106}\) Some 5,241 pieces of pottery could be tied to six types of Late Roman amphora. Overall, 87.3% (n = 4,577) of these sherds were body fragments, while only 12.7% (n = 664) were “feature” sherds (rims, bases, handles). Moreover, these tabulations are based only on sherds that could be linked to a specific Late Roman amphora type, and there was a larger group of 5,598 body that probably represented Type 3 amphoras but could not by designated to that class with certainty and were therefore excluded from the analysis. If we were to group these additional body sherds into the total count, body sherds would come to represent 93.5% of the total sherd count; feature sherds, falling to only 6.5%.

**Berenice**

From the excavation of the mainly residential quarters of the ancient city of Berenice in Cyrenaica that occurred in the early 1970s, J.A. Riley analyzed a great corpus of Hellenistic and Roman coarse ware pottery, originating from buildings of both public and private context.\(^{107}\) The relative proportion of the counts of coarse wares varies considerably over the Roman period. Cooking wares generally run at about 14% of the coarse pottery, although that figure spikes to 33% in the late second and early third century AD.\(^{108}\) Amphoras rise from the first and second centuries AD (20-25%), drop in the third century (less than 20%), and then climb in the fifth and sixth centuries (35%); by the fifth century, most of those amphorae are imports from the eastern

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\(^{106}\) Papadopoulos 1989, 81-82; calculations based on figures on page 82.

\(^{107}\) Cf. J.A. Riley, “Coarse Pottery,” in J.A. Lloyd (ed.), *Excavations at Sidi Khrebish Benghazi (Berenice), Volume II*. Tripoli 1979, 91-467. For general intro to the excavations, cf. Lloyd 1978. Riley’s “coarse pottery” are utilitarian wares of four types: plain wares, amphorae, cooking vessels, and jugs. Hence, it would include various kinds of plain table wares, but not slipped or glazed finewares (Riley 1979, 92, 97).

\(^{108}\) Riley 1979, p. 109, fig. 8; 237-39.
Mediterranean. Jugs are generally at about 10-15% with higher proportions in the third and early sixth centuries; plain wares are more frequent (50%) in the Early Roman period than they are in the later Roman period (30-40%). Overall, imported coarse wares rise from 15% in the first century BC to 30% by the second century, dropping to 20% in the third century AD, before spiking at 45% by the late sixth century AD.

Appendices 1 and 2 show that the proportions of feature sherds (rims:bases:handles) do fluctuate over time relative to one another, within limits. Rims make up between about 45 and 60% of the feature sherds, while handles (21-31%) are slightly more common than bases (13-27%). Riley’s tabulation of similar figures from first to third century deposits at Ostia for comparative purposes suggests less importance there for rims: in Ostia, handles (40-51%) are more common than rims (37-46%), and bases are less significant (6-14%).

Carthage, U. of Michigan Excavations

In Roman-period deposits from the University of Michigan excavations at Carthage at a Late Roman peristyle house in 1975, amphoras formed some 50-60% of the finds in the first century, as well as in the fifth and sixth centuries AD, with significantly lower amounts in the second and third centuries. ARS alone forms 8-10% of the Roman period ceramic material after the 2nd century.

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109 Riley 1979, 109-110, Fig. 8 & 9; 113-15.
110 Riley 1979, 109-110, Fig. 8 & 9; 277-78, 373-74.
111 Riley 1979, p. 108, fig. 5 & 6, 373-74.
112 Percentages based on figures given in Riley 1977, 419-49.
113 Humphrey 1976.
114 Hayes 1976, 114.
115 Hayes 1976, 84.
One can a sense of relative frequencies of parts of vessels by examining Tables 1 to 15, which lists counts and weights of pottery types by 13 stratigraphic layers, including parts of vessel (rims, bases, handles, and bodies). Body sherds typically make up 80-95% of each deposit; rims between 4% and 10%; bases 1-4%; and handles 1-3%. However, the tables listing the breakdown of finewares (3a, 5a, 5b, 7a, 8a, 11a, 11b, 12a, 13a, 13b) indicate that rims (20-40%) and bases (generally, 9-25%) constitute a far greater proportion of the overall fineware counts, and body sherds a much lower percentage (as low as 45%, but typically 50-65%). Handles constitute a consistently low proportion of the overall assemblage, regardless of whether they are fine or coarse wares. These relative proportions of vessel parts appear to remain consistent between the first century AD and sixth century AD.

Carthage, British Academy Excavations

Excavations of a mainly domestic buildings on the outskirts of Late Antique and Byzantine Carthage by the British Academy between 1975 and 1978 produced ceramic data which was quantified by weight. The Avenue Habib Bourguiba assemblage showed little change over time between proportions of amphorae, coarse, and finewares. Amphorae and coarse wares together form more than 90% of the material; fineware constitutes the minority, usually 6-10% of assemblage, although occasionally lower and higher.

116 Riley 1976. The following percentages were tabulated based on the figures given in Tables 1-15.
117 Proportion of Overall Pottery Count: 87%; n = 35639.
118 Overall: 8.2%.
119 Overall: 3.7%.
120 Overall 1.6%.
121 For intro, cf. Hurst and Roskams 1984; Pottery discussed: Fulford, in Fulford and Peacock 1984, 253-54. The following statistics are based on Fulford’s figures in Appendix 3, pp. 273-75.
Kalavasos-Kopetra

At Kalavasos-Kopetra, a small Late Antique village in the Vasilikos Valley in Cyprus, investigated by Marcus Rautman, excavations and survey yielded 31,362 pieces of pottery. Figure 4.24 below is based on Rautman’s Table 5.2, which summarizes all Roman ceramic finds recovered through either excavation or survey. As is typical, fineware numbered only about 8% of overall pottery. Amphorae formed the majority 65% of all pottery, with cooking wares (13.1%), pithoi (8.7%), and plain wares (5.6%) constituting significant minorities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amphora</td>
<td>17338</td>
<td>64.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooking</td>
<td>3516</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pithos</td>
<td>2347</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fineware</td>
<td>2174</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plain</td>
<td>1504</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>26879</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.24. Roman Pottery at Kopetra

Maroni Petrera

Another site in Cyprus was investigated through survey and salvage excavations between 1990 and 1997; this is Maroni Petrera, an early Christian basilica, investigated by Sturt Manning and his colleagues. Limited excavations there produced 4,202 potsherds (85.5 kg), although most of this was found in the plow zone, and excavations produced only two closed ceramic groups, the first dating to the early second century AD (n = 559), and the second dating from the late fourth to earlier fifth century AD and

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122 I have excluded from the counts the “Other” category, which includes Roman bricks, rooftiles, and water pipes.

123 Plain wares here refer to “unslipped vessels and basins of evident domestic use” (Rautman 2003, p. 167).

124 Figures based on Rautman 2003, 162, Table 5.2.

125 Manning et al., 2002, with pottery discussed pp. 41-57.
representing the fill from a well (n = 128). The following count breakdowns are based on Manning et al. 2002, Tables 6.1 and 6.2, on pp. 44-47.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rim</th>
<th>Handle</th>
<th>Base</th>
<th>Body</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finewares</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amphorae</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>33.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pithoi</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooking Wares</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table Wares</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Coarse Wares</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamps</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual Wares</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>559</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2%  4.3%  3.2%  87.3%  100.0%

Figure 4.25. Roman Pottery from Maroni Petrera, showing early second century occupation debris

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rim</th>
<th>Handle</th>
<th>Base</th>
<th>Body</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finewares</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amphorae</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>66.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pithoi</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooking Wares</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Coarse Wares</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual Wares</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.6%  5.5%  6.3%  79.7%  100.0%

Figure 4.26. Later Roman (late fourth / early fifth century) pottery from fill from well at Maroni Petrera

There is considerable variety between the two deposits, although the greatest proportion of the ceramic groups goes to the amphorae, which form 33% at an Early Roman date, and 66% at a later Roman date; in both groups, finewares assume less than 13% of the overall finds. Table wares are coarse fabric and include flagons, jars, bowls, and basins. Table wares and kitchen/cooking wares are much more important for an


127 Figures quantified by fabric and vessel portion, based on Manning et al. 2002, 44-45, Table 6.1.

Early Roman date. Lamps, when they appear, as they do for the Early Roman deposit, are insignificant overall. Pithoi are more important, numbering 5-11% of the overall proportion. If we examine the breakdown of vessel parts, regardless of fabric group, in both cases, body sherds make up the bulk of the pottery by count (80-87%); feature sherds form the remaining 13-20%, with rims being more important than handles and bases. It is also interesting to note again, that combing the counts for the fabric groups / wares of amphorae, cooking, and finewares and tabulating the vessel parts for each group also show the same pattern we saw earlier: body sherds are far more important for cooking wares and amphorae, where they form 82 and 93% (respectively) of the overall counts for those groups, than they are for finewares, where they form only 57% of the total fineware counts. For finewares, feature sherds are a much greater proportion of overall fineware counts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fabric Group</th>
<th>% Fabric Group</th>
<th>Handle</th>
<th>% Fabric Group</th>
<th>Base</th>
<th>% Fabric Group</th>
<th>Body</th>
<th>% Fabric Group</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% Fabric Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amphora</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>92.6%</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fineware</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>56.9%</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooking Ware</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>82.3%</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.27. Pottery at Maroni Petrera, by fabric group and extant portion

Pyrgouthi, a Late Antique Farmstead

Finally, excavation by the Swedish school at the Late Antique farmstead at the tower of Pyrgouthi near Berbati offers some relative measure of quantification. As Hjohlman notes, a total of 8,500 sherds were recovered from the site, of which 12% (n = 1000) were feature sherds. The count of pottery of different classes are not tabulated, but one gets the impression from the description that the fineware fragments are limited to a mere

129 Hjohlman 2002.

130 Hjohlman 2003, 89. There were also 30 restored pots recovered, but these are not included in the tabulations here.
handful of ARS and Phocaean Ware sherds. Full quantification of the site will appear only in the final publication (in process), but should contribute to our understanding of rural surface assemblages.

4.3.4. Conclusions: Understanding Survey Data

The above discussion could quickly become tedious, if it has not become so already, and the examples of quantified studies could be multiplied. More important is a synthesis of the observations above and relating them to our analysis of survey data.

First is the obvious observation that the relative proportions of specific fabric-function groups or “wares”, such as amphorae, cooking vessels, pithoi, and finewares, may vary significantly across chronological periods at any particular site and from one site to another. Hence, at the sites where all of these classes were measured, we find amphora forming as little as 33% (Maroni Petrera in the ER) to as high as 85% (Saraçhane in Istanbul) or more; fineware from 5-6% (Corinth, Carthage, Maroni Petrera) to 14% (Corinth); cooking wares from 1% (Late Roman fill at Maroni Petrera) to ca. 30% or more (Corinth); and other coarse and plainwares and pithoi vary from none at all to a substantial minority. As the investigators of these sites often note, certainly much of the relative proportions has to do with the function of the site and the particular nature of the deposit. If we added more examples of quantified assemblages, we would surely find greater variety corresponding in part to variety of sites excavated.

And yet, despite this variety, a look at the forest rather than the trees indicates strong consistent patterns between periods and sites that are directly applicable to survey data (Figure 4.28). At most sites, amphorae form a major component of the overall site, typically 35% to 65%, and sometimes much more. Kitchen / cooking wares frequently make up 10-30% of the ceramic population. Plain wares and utilitarian coarse wares (depending on how one defines these categories) often make up the remaining 20-50%, more important as amphorae become less frequent. At none of the sites does fineware count for more than 15% of the overall ceramic population, and the figure for finewares
more typically hovers between 6 and 10%, occasionally higher. Lamps, too, when they are present, occur in consistently low frequencies (less than 3%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Amphorae</th>
<th>Fine wares</th>
<th>Kitchen / cooking</th>
<th>Plain Wares / Coarse Wares</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saraçhane (Late Antique - Byzantine)</td>
<td>c. 85%</td>
<td>ca. 10%</td>
<td>ca. 10%</td>
<td>Limited Amount</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corinth</td>
<td>35-50%</td>
<td>5-14%</td>
<td>17-30%??</td>
<td>25-35%??</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carthage (Avenue Bourguiba Assemblage)</td>
<td>40-50%</td>
<td>6-10%</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>40-50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kopetra</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maroni Petrera</td>
<td>33-66%</td>
<td>6-13%</td>
<td>1-17%</td>
<td>6-14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.28. Breakdown of wares by functional category at different Roman Sites

From the few cases above where pottery was quantified for the entire Roman period (e.g., Corinth, Berenice, and Carthage), we might wonder whether relative proportions of amphora, fineware, plain, and cooking ware shift over time, with the amphorae and fineware less proportionally abundant in the late second and third centuries AD than in the 1st-2nd or 5th-6th centuries; plain and cooking wares appear to rise as amphorae and fineware fall. It is unclear how the disruptive forces of the late second and third centuries contributed to this pattern, as the cutting of trade networks entailed a decline in imports and greater dependency on locally produced wares (cf. below). Also telling is that although there may be major functional differences in the use of a site over time, utilitarian wares tend to dominate and finewares never assume anything more than a substantial minority of the overall assemblage.

Moreover, the limited evidence discussed above for the relative proportions of extant parts of ceramic vessels also indicate some consistent patterns. As we would expect, body sherds make up the great majority of sherds (80-95%) counted at Early and Late
Roman sites, and on average usually above 85% of the total assemblage. Of the “feature sherds”, rims are usually more common than handles and bases, and handles and bases usually appear in equal amounts. For finewares, body sherds make up a much less significant proportion (ca. 50%) of the overall population of pottery, feature sherds coming to assume a much more important role, a product of the relatively smaller size of the original fineware vessels. Again, these relative breakdowns by vessel part do not appear to change across the Roman period.

The above analysis is not intended to be and cannot be exhaustive but it can allow us to form impressions of relative proportions of urban and rural ceramic assemblages when the pottery is completely collected, recorded, counted, and catalogued, and it can relate to the issues of differential ceramic visibility in survey data that we raised earlier. There is nothing in the above discussion of excavated assemblages to suggest that Early and Late Roman relative percentages should be remarkably different enough to give the Late Roman period in the countryside such a great boost. And although the different fabrics and wares may form different relative percentages, there are enough consistencies to establish a relative measuring stick against which Early and Late Roman surface assemblages can be measured.

The breakdown of EKAS ceramics by fabric group and period can again be seen in Figure 4.29 below, and this can be measured against the anticipated breakdown of wares discussed above. Of the three periods, the Late Roman period has a pattern that undoubtedly conforms most closely to an expected assemblage based on quantified excavated data: overwhelming predominance of coarse wares and amphora fragments (83%), with a suitable amount of finewares discovered (9.7%), and lamps less than 1%; the kitchenwares, at 5.6%, is a lower figure than we would expect and may be proportionally underrepresented. Early Roman and the broad Roman period ceramics are proportionally overrepresented by finewares (38% and 19.4%), certainly at the expense of coarseware and amphora fragments (ER: 36.2% and ROM: 57.5%), probably suggesting that many Roman and Early Roman coarsewares were assigned to even larger
chronological groupings like “Roman-Medieval” or “Ancient”; in other surveys, these are the kinds of ‘non-diagnostic’ wares that might be ignored altogether. Kitchenwares and lamps correspond to typical levels for the Early Roman and Roman periods. The greater significance of the “other” category in the Roman period is mainly a product of ceramic rooftiles that could be grouped to the broader Roman category.\textsuperscript{131}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fabric Group</th>
<th>Late Roman Pottery Count</th>
<th>% LR Pottery</th>
<th>Early Roman Pottery Count</th>
<th>% ER Pottery</th>
<th>Roman Period Pottery Count</th>
<th>% Roman Pottery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coarse Wares &amp; Amphora</td>
<td>1417</td>
<td>83.0%</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>38.2%</td>
<td>1305</td>
<td>57.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Wares</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen Wares</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamp</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1707</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
<td><strong>329</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>2275</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 4.29. Breakdown of EKAS Roman period artifacts by functional groups*

Moreover, if we again compare the breakdown of bodysherds of Early and Late Roman periods in Methana and EKAS (Cf. Figures 4.22 and 4.23 above), neither corresponds to the typical excavated assemblage (i.e., 80-90% bodysherds; 10-20% feature sherds), but the Late Roman assemblages for each of the surveys is much closer to an expected assemblage than the Early Roman. For the Late Roman period, bodysherds constitute 71.4% of overall pottery in Methana and 71.1% of pottery in EKAS—not far from an expected proportion of ca. 80-90%—whereas Early Roman bodysherds in both surveys (Methana: 36.2%; EKAS: 40.7%) form significantly lower overall proportions than would be expected.

The best interpretation of these different patterns is that EKAS, like most other regional surveys, could not link body sherds to “Early” and “Middle” Roman periods to

\textsuperscript{131} Additionally, 48 other non-ceramic artifacts were included in this “Other” count, including glass, architectural fragments, groundstone, tesserae, and plaster, but these do not affect overall counts enough to worry about. Excluding the entire “Other” category would increase coarseware, fineware, and kitchenware proportions by only several percent.
the same degree that they could link those body sherds to the Late Roman period; the Late Roman period was vastly more ‘diagnostic’ and visible by nature of the incidental surface treatment and decoration. How severely does this difference affect our understanding of settlement patterns? Every indication suggests that the differences can totally distort our understanding of the two periods; as discussed above, Late Roman settlement explosion is seriously deflated or disappears altogether in a number of regions when fair comparisons between the periods are introduced. As an alternative to ‘deflating’ the Late Roman period, we might say instead that it is the Early Roman period that needs to be upgraded. For instance, based on the number of Early Roman feature sherds (n = 195) found by EKAS, and an expected feature sherd:bodysherd percentage ratio of 10:90, we might estimate 1,755 bodysherds, a factor 13 times the number of actual sherds found (n = 134); if the feature sherd to body sherd ratio were slightly higher (e.g., 20:80), we can estimate 784 bodysherds, a factor of 6 times the actual number of bodysherds found. Similarly, based on a 10% expected percentage of finewares, we can estimate from the 125 Early Roman fineware sherds an expected Early Roman ceramic population of 1,250, a factor 4 times larger than the number (n = 329) of total Early Roman potsherds found. Using such relative indexes then, we can surmise that the Early Roman pottery counts in EKAS are underrepresented by a factor of at least 4 and possibly as much as 13.

Whatever the actual figure is, all of this analysis indicates that frequent comparisons of the earlier and later halves of the Roman period in survey literature simply on the basis of total amount of Early and Late Roman pottery recognized is akin to comparing apples and oranges, the earlier period represented generally by fineware and feature sherds that usually constitute less than 10% of overall ceramic assemblages, and the other recognized by finewares plus coarseware body sherds that typically form a majority of an expected Late Antique ceramic assemblage. Drawing archaeological and historical

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132 It goes without saying that fineware sherds may constitute a bare fraction of even this. In survey work at the Late Roman fortification and early Christian basilica at Louloudies, south of Thessaloniki, in the total collection of pottery from portions of the site, Late Roman fineware amounted to less than 1% by weight of the total amount of pottery found. Cf. Poulter 1998, 464-75; and Beckmann 1998, 503-511.
conclusions from such data, without compensating and correcting for these enormous differences in recognizability between periods, will exaggerate the later period relative to the earlier depending, of course, on the degree to which survey projects could identify Early Roman body sherds. Hence, an interpretation that simply more pottery in the later period equals settlement expansion, population growth, or intensive agriculture is not conclusive without knowledge of the ceramic ingredients responsible for the periods visible relative to one another.\textsuperscript{133} As such, we might expect that many regions in Greece showing the basic pattern of Early Roman dearth to later Roman abundance could be significantly equalized if the ceramic bases for the pattern were better published and understood. This chapter has discussed what would become of the Late Antique period in relation to the Early Roman period in many surveys if body sherds were removed as identifiers.

This, again, is not to deny that there is something distinct about later Roman countrysides that is different than before—we will conclude with this later in section 4.5 and in the following two chapters—but only to argue that conclusions about population and expansion usually drawn from the ceramic data between periods are simply not justified on the abundance of pottery for each period; fuller discussion of the evidence for both periods is needed to substantiate these conclusions. A cursory examination of a handful of regional surveys would imply that survey projects of the first wave ‘jumped the gun’ in drawing conclusions without understanding the ceramic bases for their conclusions.

The discussion above, then, suggests that a degree of source criticism is imperative when broad changes in the rural world are under consideration. Survey projects have a responsibility of highlighting the nature of their ceramic data, how that data derives from particular methods, and how historical conclusions derive from that data. Despite a growing (and justified) murmur against uncritical quantification (e.g., Fentress 2000),

\textsuperscript{133} Cf. Sanders 2003, 394-395, who makes a similar observation for the Middle Byzantine period based on highly diagnostic glazed pottery.
this chapter has shown how counting pottery can be indispensable for archaeological interpretations, and the value of a method (the Chronotype system) for doing so. As quantitative studies are becoming more important for the Late Roman Empire generally, especially in excavation contexts, so too do they need to become more important for survey data. Although this adds a degree of intensity that may ‘bog down’ the survey crew which wants to trek efficiently through the countryside looking for sites, it is nonetheless essential to have some control over the data and the degree to which the data contributes to historical conclusion. Uncritical reading of pottery data from surface survey leads in the end to faulty conclusions.

The following section 4.4 uses the EKAS data set to explore ways of understanding changes in the rural Corinthia across the Roman period from changes in ceramic surface scatters. The focus of the next section centers on the relationship between surface pottery and ancient settlement. A final section relates these reinterpretations to historical issues in the Eastern Corinthia.
4.4. Measuring Time in the Roman Corinthia

If by an analysis of Early and Late Roman pottery recovered in intensive surface surveys in Greece we have done the dirty deed of bursting the balloon of prosperity and good cheer in Late Roman countrysides in Greece, how ought we to interpret our data to understand change in the landscapes outside of Ancient Corinth during a period of great transformation in the political, cultural, and religious spheres? Beyond the conclusion offered above that “explosion” is largely exaggerated by recognizable coarse wares, what more can we say about the non-urban world of the Roman period based on the data? Is it possible to compare early and later halves of the Roman period on a more equal basis? And is it possible to break down the broad Roman period and watch it unfold?

This section explores approaches to understanding, leveling, and unfolding the broad Roman period in the Corinthia based on ceramic data. It begins (4.4.1) with attempts to provide valid comparisons for the earlier and later Roman periods on the basis of overall abundance of pottery; it then examines the Roman pottery data more closely to highlight particular centuries of high ceramic deposition (4.4.2) and suggest archaeological and historical factors responsible for different ceramic levels; and then ends (4.4.3) by examining specific places in terms of their change and development across the Roman period. The next section (4.5) discusses historical conclusions that follow from these different understandings of the data.

4.4.1. Leveling the Playing Field

There is no simple computation by which we can correct for Late Roman overrepresentation, or, rather, Early Roman under-representation. As noted above, we can estimate that Early Roman pottery in EKAS is underrepresented in total counts by a factor of at least 4 and perhaps as much as 13. We can also get a better understanding of the relative differences between the two periods by creating comparisons based on reasonable principles.
One way to do this is to compare artifact types where the identification biases discussed above are likely to be less severe. Hence, if want to compare the entire corpus of Early Roman pottery with that of Late Roman pottery, a better approach than comparing total counts between the two periods might be to eliminate body sherds from the counts altogether since these are so differently represented between the periods. If we eliminate the body sherds from the counts given in Figures 4.22 and 4.23 above, this has the striking effect of significantly leveling the periods in both EKAS and Methana. The results can be seen in Figures 4.30 and 4.31 below, the former showing the increase between Early and Late Roman based on raw total counts, the latter showing increase based only on feature sherds. Under such comparisons, the dramatic increases shown in Figure 4.30 are greatly deflated and any indication of “explosion” disappears altogether. In terms of adjusted total counts (Figure 4.31), there is hardly any upturn at all in Methana, and much less substantial increase (a factor of 2.5) in the Eastern Corinthia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Early Roman Count</th>
<th>Late Roman Count</th>
<th>Factor Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Methana</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>801</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Corinthia</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>1707</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 4.30. Raw total counts of pottery for EKAS and Methana**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Early Roman Count</th>
<th>Late Roman Count</th>
<th>Factor Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Methana</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Corinthia</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>492</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 4.31. Total counts of pottery for EKAS and Methana, excluding body sherds**
Moreover, if we focus on changes in the extant portion of the vessel between periods (Cf. Figures 4.22 and 4.23 above), we also get a sense that the two periods are fairly equal (excluding body sherds). For the Eastern Corinthia, the number of bases (33 → 37) and handles (111 → 110) remains constant between periods, and only rims increase significantly (49 → 322). For Methana between periods, the number of rims almost doubles (76 → 130), but handles remain at essentially the same level (74 → 75) and bases decrease by 50% (51 → 24). Removing the body sherds, then, shows mixed results: the number of rims increases through the Roman period, while bases and handles remain the same, if not decrease.

We can also get a sense of relative differences between periods by comparing pottery classes, fabrics, and wares that might be less susceptible to differences in relative visibility and identification (Cf. Figure 4.32). For EKAS, comparing finewares, kitchenwares, and lamps between periods show variable increase, but nothing like the change shown in Figure 4.32 based on raw counts. To retain amphora and coarse wares as a category, we could simply exclude body sherds from our queries of medium coarse and amphora wares and make feature sherds the proper object of analysis for this category; doing this would reduce the number of Late Roman coarseware fragments to 235, a figure comparable to the 118 Early Roman coarseware sherds (also excluding body sherds). If comparing these fabric-function groups are any indication, the amount of Late Roman material is greater than the amount of Early Roman material by a factor of 120-200%, depending on which artifact one assumes to be standard.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Early Roman</th>
<th>Late Roman</th>
<th>Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amphora / Coarse Wares</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(excluding body sherds)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Wares</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen Wares</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamps</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.32. EKAS. Comparison of ER and LR based on wares
Spatially, Figure 4.33a and 4.33b below shows the differences in artifact densities between the two periods in the land east of Corinth, the former for total counts for the period (inclusive of body sherds), the latter for feature sherds for each period (excluding body sherds). The periods are instantly equalized on this basis, although in excluding all of body sherds for the sake of comparison, we knowingly impoverish our Late Roman ceramics by eliminating a known positive value (the number of Late Roman sherds). The same happens when we exclude all material in our comparisons except for fine wares, which should be more immediately comparable. The Early and Late Roman periods become instantly equalized, but we’ve knowingly ignored all that Late Antique pottery we know lies scattered about the fields of the Corinthia, and in that sense, Figure 4.33b below greatly distorts actual material presence. Best is to recognize that in Figure 4.33a the Late Roman period is approximately represented, and the Early Roman greatly underrepresented.

Figure 4.33.a and b, comparing Early Roman (red dots) and Late Roman (blue dots) pottery by a) total counts in area between Gonia and Kromna; and b) feature sherds
Such analysis is useful in establishing reasonable means of comparing periods and again showing that ‘explosion’ is not the most appropriate descriptor for the Late Roman Corinthia, despite greater overall abundance. This analysis, however, does not help us understand ceramic deposition across the entire Roman period.

4.4.2. Reading Ceramic Deposition

A more detailed approach to understanding the Roman period is to measure fluctuations in those most time-sensitive potsherds, especially the finewares, over the course of the entire Roman period. Unfortunately, because this approach emphasizes change in the shorter term, in the order of centuries, it must necessarily exclude amphorae, fineware, and kitchen ware sherds that can only be dated to a broad period. Excluding these sherds leaves us with a much smaller class of imported amphorae and fineware sherds that are specifically diagnostic to a period of two hundred years or less. This approach has an advantage over the previous approach in that it does not take for granted a strict division between “earlier” and “later” Roman but divides the Roman period into narrower spans of two hundred year periods: 31 BC-AD 200, AD 200-400, and AD 400-600. Consequently, it does not assume historiographic divisions of the period that may be superficially supported by conventional ceramic groupings. The results can be seen in Figures 4.34 and 4.35 below.

134 Cf. Cherry et al, 327-47, for such sophisticated approach to survey data based on the relative deposition of wares between the Archaic and Roman period, attempting to break down the long Roman period. They analyze the region by distribution of artifacts and the likely archaeological and historical causes behind those patterns. Even still, this is very difficult to do because of poor diagnosticity. For example, these scholars note (p. 329) that fewer than 10% of Archaic-Roman sherds can be dated to a specific century (p. 329). A lack of highly diagnostic pottery forces ‘lumping’ into broader periods, which can easily distort any impression of chronological trends at the order of centuries.

135 n = 517, ca. 20% of total “Early Roman” and “Late Roman” sherd count.

136 We still cannot escape “ceramic time” and are forced to bump our pottery counts up and down into period groupings (e.g., ESB to the first bracket) although surely the reality is far more complicated. Cf., for instance, Slane’s comments (2000) that some of the ESB ware at Corinth can probably be extended through the third century. Dividing our periods by other dates, such as 100 BC to 100 AD, 100-300, and 300-500 might produce slightly different curves, but our ceramic data pose some limits on us here.
The dates for the pottery types below are generally taken from Hayes 1972, as well as work on Roman pottery from Corinth. Slane has suggested, for instance (1990, 47-48), that Eastern Sigillata A, is uncommon in both urban and sanctuary contexts much after the middle of the first century AD; ESB can date to early first century AD, but it usually occurs in second century deposits (Slane 1990, pp. 48-51) and might even be pushed into the early third century (Slane 2000, 331); Çandarlı Ware is used as early as the late first century, but its heyday is late second to early third century (Slane 1990, pp. 52-54).
Comparing the pottery in this way shows a number of interesting patterns. On the one hand, the general trend for both finewares and amphoras is the same: lots of pottery in first and second centuries, less in the third and fourth, with maximum in the fifth to early seventh centuries. As Figure 4.34 indicates, using raw counts vs. feature counts for finewares gives very different pictures of the $1^{\text{st}}$-$2^{\text{nd}}$ vs. the $5^{\text{th}}$-early $7^{\text{th}}$ centuries; with raw counts, the earlier period is more abundant, and with feature sherds, the latter period is more common.\textsuperscript{138} Note also that introducing amphorae in Figure 4.35 suggests that the third and fourth centuries are not as weak as might be implied by a tabulation of the finewares.

Because pottery types are recognized in survey by different parts of the vessel (e.g., Koan-type amphoras by their handles), and because some vessel parts (i.e., body sherds) are much more common than others, we might want to adjust for this by excluding the body sherds from our total counts, as shown above in Figure 4.33b, and in the final columns (“Count of Feature Sherds”) in Figures 4.34 and 4.35 above. Although the picture of periods is generally still the same, it certainly evens out the amphora counts, cutting the fifth to seventh century wares by 40%. For the finewares, by contrast, it deflates the first and second century count, and makes the fifth to seventh century fineware count again more prominent, thereby accentuating the difference between first-second centuries and fifth-seventh centuries.

In all cases, however, subpatterning the broad Roman period in this manner differentiates ceramic deposition on the basis of narrower spans of time and allows us to highlight fluctuations in the levels of imported pottery in the Eastern Corinthia. In this analysis, it is not the relative difference between Early and Late Roman that stands out but two high points in ceramic deposition ($1^{\text{st}}$-$2^{\text{nd}}$ c., $5^{\text{th}}$-e. $7^{\text{th}}$ c.), divided by a weak middle ($3^{\text{rd}}$-$4^{\text{th}}$ century). The obvious point of comparison here is the broader archaeological pattern noted for much of the Roman Empire: a healthy first and second

\textsuperscript{138} The Late Roman fineware count, however, excludes 68 pieces of broadly dated Phocaean ware ($4^{\text{th}}$ to $7^{\text{th}}$ c.) of unknown type because dated too broadly; if included, these would certainly give the Late Roman period a slightly greater advantage.
century, followed by a third century crisis, before recovery in the late fourth to fifth
centuries AD. This pattern provides an interesting segway into some major problems in
survey archaeology in interpreting ceramic distributions.

First, how should we interpret the weakness of the middle Roman material in EKAS?
Generally the state of economy and settlement in the third century has proven very
difficult to understand.\textsuperscript{139} Traditionally, interpretations of the weak or absent material
culture in this period derived from and reinforced historiographic narratives of “decline”
and “discontinuity” in habitation and population in the late Roman countryside. Recent
scholarship, on the other hand, has underscored the problems of drawing historical
conclusions about decline from weak material signatures. Discontinuity in settlement
need not follow from lack of material evidence, for the general economic instability of
the period, including the interruption of exchange systems, may have contributed to a less
recognizable and robust material culture. In a careful scrutiny of some 200 late Roman
sites in the western provinces, for instance, Lewit found no evidence for overall decline
in agriculture or settlement abandonment in the third century, despite weaker material
signatures and occasional “destruction layers.”\textsuperscript{140} That settlements continue despite a less
visible (or even totally invisible) material culture is now widely acknowledged for the
third century,\textsuperscript{141} as well as the post-Roman period.\textsuperscript{142} Fewer recognizable pots do not
necessarily mean fewer people or settlements.


\textsuperscript{140} Lewit 1991, esp. pp. 27-36. She posits that the so-called destruction layers may be a product of reading the material evidence in terms of traditional narratives.

If the weakness of ceramic material in the third and early fourth century does not necessarily indicate rural settlement ‘decline’ and ‘discontinuity’, what it does suggest is that the flow of trade in finewares and imported amphoras can be both spatially and chronologically irregular depending on changing Mediterranean-wide exchange systems. Although it is difficult to measure changes in the absolute amount of pottery between periods, quantitative studies for both town and countryside have shown how relative proportions of imported or finewares fluctuate through this period. Fentress and Perkins, for instance, examined survey data from three regions in Italy, Sicily, and Africa to show how the abundance of ARS peaked in the second century, dropped radically in the third, and peaked again in the fourth / early fifth century AD. At Berenice, Riley showed that imported amphoras and coarsewares were highest in the first and second centuries AD and then again in the fifth to sixth, with a drop in the third century AD. Kathleen Slane’s study of the Roman pottery at Corinth has shown a similar drop in fineware later centuries are either hidden beneath more recent settlements, or are ‘archaeologically invisible’, due to the Late Antique use of more ephemeral building styles and ceramics which were not accurately dated at the time of survey.”


145 Riley 1977, 107-108; 402-3 and Fig. 67.
imports in the third century, although much less substantial, before a spike again from the fourth century. The pattern is quite common in regions of the Mediterranean.

In contrast to the third century, the fifth and sixth centuries stand out as a period of resurgence in regional connections to exchange systems. Imported finewares and amphoras are ubiquitous in this period, a pattern that has been explained in terms of the development of either state-driven or free market forces. Those favoring the former have argued that pottery was widely distributed during this period through systems of exchange developed to meet increasing bureaucratic and military needs, ceramic vessels traveling with more important commodified goods like grain and olive oil. Those favoring market and demand explanations, on the other hand, point to the monetization of the late Roman economy and the wider-spread wealth and purchasing power in the period; a broader segment of the population had the resources to buy commodities and semi-luxuries like fineware pots. There is presumably a middle course between these explanations favoring the role of the state as the principal force behind Late Antique distribution and market systems, cf. For those giving primacy to state-driven forces in the distribution of goods: C.R. Whittaker, “Late Roman trade and traders,” in P. Garnsey, K. Hopkins, and C.R. Whittaker (eds.), *Trade in the Ancient Economy*, London 1983, 163-80; C. Wickham, “Marx, Sherlock Holmes, and Late Roman Commerce,” in *JRS* 78 (1988), 183-93; C. Abadie-Reynal, “Les Amphores Protobyzantines d’Argos (IVe-VI siecles),” in V. Déroce and J.-M. Spieser (eds.), *Recherches sur la Céramique Byzantine*, Paris 1989, 47-56; M. Fulford, “Economic hotspots and provincial backwaters: Modelling the late Roman economy,” in C.E. King and D.G. Wigg (eds.), *Coin Finds and Coin Use in the Roman World. The Thirteenth Oxford Symposium on Coinage and Monetary History*, 25.-27.3.1993, Berlin 1996, 153-77; J. Durliat, “Les Conditions du Commerce au Vle Siècle,” in R. Hodges and William Bowden (eds.), *The Sixth Century: Production, Distribution and Demand*, Leiden 1998, 89-117; C. Wickham, “Overview: Production, Distribution and Demand,” in R. Hodges and William Bowden (eds.), *The Sixth Century: Production, Distribution and Demand*, Leiden 1998, 279-92.

For explanations favoring free markets and independent commerce in Late Antiquity, see overview in S. Kingsley, and Michael Decker, “New Rome, New Theories on Inter-Regional Exchange. An Introduction 227
two extremes where the mechanisms created to meet the economic needs of the state stimulated local economies generally, encouraging some degree of private commerce independent of state needs.  

Whatever the cause be in the end, historians of the Roman economy have rightly argued that commodities like finewares and imported amphoras were very widely distributed and available in Late Antiquity, certainly more so than in the third century and possibly more so than even the early imperial period. Although LR trade and access to distribution networks continued to be geographically irregular depending on coastal or urban locations, the distribution of both ARS and amphorae in some areas of the eastern Mediterranean extends even to inland villages; the ubiquity of such vessels on small sites in the Late Antique countryside of Greece point to a deep permeation of


Such wide distribution has suggested to historians that ceramic vessels were a cheap commodity that a broad segment of the Late Antique population could afford.\textsuperscript{153} Despite a considerable corpus of scholarship showing the widespread distribution of finewares in Late Antiquity, there has been little effort by survey archaeologists to think of how these observations affect our picture of rural settlement in Roman Greece. Although we may never be certain about the threshold of circulation of finewares and imported amphoras in Late Antiquity when compared to an earlier Roman period, is it not still reasonable to infer that one of the chief ‘causes’ for different regional settlement patterns in Roman Greece is the differential connection of the regions to Mediterranean exchange systems? One might argue that ceramic visibility in the countryside is lowest when regional economies are isolated from broader economic currents, and when those broader currents are themselves impaired; and greatest and most precise when vibrant exchange systems are in place. Whether settlement at the local level is ‘impoverished’ or ‘flourishing’ because of a lack or abundance of recognizable wares is a subsequent question to ask, not a conclusion that must follow.\textsuperscript{154}

One telling confirmation that the abundance of identifiable pottery for the Late Roman period is firstly a product of patterns of distribution of identifiable wares rather than settlement and population \textit{per se} is indicated, ironically, by a comparison of Roman-


\textsuperscript{154} Archaeologists would like to make inferences about settlement from survey data, but the relationship between amount of pottery on the ground and the original settlement that existed on the spot is hardly straightforward. Pettegrew 2001, 2002, with discussion. Millett 1991, 178: “Thus, when presenting finds from surveys, one ought not to assume automatically that rises and falls in the density of find spots of pottery relate directly to changes in the density or distribution of human populations.” (178)
period ‘settlement patterns’ reported for different regions of Greece. The prototypical pattern of late Roman settlement explosion is most striking in areas with the readiest access to coastal sites and exchange systems. The island of Kea,\textsuperscript{155} the southern Argolid,\textsuperscript{156} and Methana,\textsuperscript{157} are all situated toward the sea, and are positioned along major trade and distribution routes, and show the most abundant evidence for late Roman settlement explosion. By contrast, Roman settlement in inland regions like the Nemea Valley,\textsuperscript{158} the Berbati Valley,\textsuperscript{159} the area of Megalopolis,\textsuperscript{160} Asea Valley,\textsuperscript{161} and Laconia, is far more cloudy and unclear. Even the Boeotia survey, which might seem to be the exception because it produces the typical pattern of settlement explosion, and yet is not commercially advantaged like the other regions, turns out to prove the rule, for although this region was ‘rich in finds’ it was also weak in imports.\textsuperscript{162} The ceramic evidence for the revival of Late Antique settlement in Boeotia in fact is based mainly on locally-

\textsuperscript{155} Sutton 1991, 253, argues that Kea had an ‘outward looking economy’, well-connected with plenty of imports.

\textsuperscript{156} Van Andel and Runnels 1987, 116-17, link the return of LR prosperity in the S. Argolid to region’s proximity to the sea.

\textsuperscript{157} One wonders how the distribution of imported wares in Methana would have appeared had not the harbor of Vathy been refurbished in the fifth century AD. Bowden and Gill, 89-90, observe that the disuse of Vathy until this date may have effected the amount of imported wares.

\textsuperscript{158} Sutton 1990, 657-59, suggests that the exception of imports for most periods in the Nemea Valley should be interpreted as the isolation of the region rather than veritable depopulation per se, and questions whether the greater frequency of Middle Byzantine Wares in the Nemea Valley might simply be a result of greater local production (i.e., kilns are known in the area).

\textsuperscript{159} The Berbati valley survey, which surveyed approximately the same amount of territory as EKAS counted only a few pieces of Italian sigillata, and only 58 fragments of redslipped ware total (Forsell 1996, 330-331), a bare fraction of the EKAS total.

\textsuperscript{160} Roy et al. 1989, 149-50: there the picture for settlement recovery seems clear, but not explosive; Lloyd 1991, notes, p. 188, the problem of recognizing Roman diagnostics in that survey; imported tablewares reach the countryside in small quantities.

\textsuperscript{161} Forsén, Jeannette, Björn Forsén, and Mika Lavento 1996, 92-94: the picture of LR settlement appears much less certain; they also note that Italian sigillata wares are rare.

\textsuperscript{162} Hayes 2000, 106-7
produced imitations of LR amphora forms and diagnostic LR beehives; if these latter had not been recognized, our picture of LR settlement would not be nearly so convincing. \(^{163}\)

In light of these observations, we can understand the Roman ceramic data from the Eastern Korinthia Survey. Although a much smaller overall area (ca. 4 sq. km) was intensively surveyed than in other regional surveys, the amount of fineware and imported amphorae for both the early Roman and Late Antique periods exceeds most other regions. One may argue that this greater deposition is to be explained in terms of settlement but is it not obvious that much of the Roman ‘noise’ in the territory of the eastern Corinthia is to be explained by the region’s role in Mediterranean crossroads with immediate and frequent access to goods distributed in the early and late Roman periods? If so, we can posit that the greater frequency of pottery does not simply measure the amount of activity in the countryside of the Corinthia in the Roman period so much as the relative circulation of certain kinds of highly diagnostic pottery (imports, finewares) that were identified in surface survey. Rather than seeing the third century as a period of population downturn, settlement discontinuity, or economic impoverishment, and the fifth century as a period of population growth, settlement explosion, and economic prosperity, a more straightforward interpretation would be to see relative differences in the quantity of imported and fineware pottery as a measure of the degree to which the countryside had ready access to imported (highly diagnostic) wares. Interpreted in this light, much of the cause for the abundance of Late Roman pottery in the Corinthian countryside could be related to this broader pattern of exchange, essentially independent of settlement intensity. \(^{164}\)

\(^{163}\) Vroom 2004, 308-324 provides a breakdown of 19 sites with LA sherds: finewares (locally produced Askra ware especially): 6% of all LA finds; LR amphoras (probably locally produced imitations of LR2): 29%; coarsewares: 3%; locally-produced beehives: 62%.

\(^{164}\) For a different kind of argument against economic decline in the rural Corinthia throughout the Roman period, see chapter 5.
There is always a possibility that population or settlement did decline or did increase at different points in the Roman period, but regardless, there is no necessary or direct relationship between the amount of pottery in circulation at any particular time and habitation and human activity in the countryside. The economic argument made by the members of the Southern Argolid Survey relating together settlement, population, economic growth, and access to Mediterranean markets, is a fascinating one but difficult to evaluate; the obvious test would be comparison with late Roman settlement patterns in an inland region in Greece, but there settlement is essentially invisible because lacking the diagnostic artifacts distributed through commercial networks.\textsuperscript{165} We also ought not to assume a relationship between more pottery and higher population or economic growth for it is conceivable that imported fineware could be more abundant in the countryside during periods of lower overall settlement or population!\textsuperscript{166} In the end, it is simply very difficult to decipher demographic change from survey ceramic data, for the abundance or dearth of identifiable ceramic evidence means very little for interpreting population.\textsuperscript{167} A better understanding of local ceramics will certainly help to understand regional patterns in Late Antique landscapes.

Summing up, then, our interpretation of EKAS data is as follows: the first and second centuries are well-represented, especially due to the presence of ESB and Koan-type amphorae; the third century ‘decline’ presumably indicates less distribution of imported finewares in the countryside; and the fifth and sixth century spike is consistent with the overall predominance of imports among finewares noted at Corinth. None of this need indicate change in settlement itself. Interpreting the amount of pottery on the

\textsuperscript{165} E.g., van Andel and Runnels 1987, 113-17. For another argument linking the development of Late Antique settlements to the growth of markets, see P. Sarris, “Rehabilitating the Great Estate: Aristocratic Property and Economic Growth in the Late Antique East,” in Bowden et al., Recent Research on the Late Antique Countryside, Leiden 2004, 55-71.

\textsuperscript{166} G. Sanders has played with this idea for Late Antique countrysides: would not something like a sixth century plague actually serve to increase purchasing power among survivors?

\textsuperscript{167} See G. Sanders, “Problems in Interpreting Rural and Urban Settlement in S. Greece, AD 365-700,” in N. Christie and S. Scott (eds.), Landscapes of Change: the Evolution of the Countryside from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages, Aldershot 2004, for a similar critique of ‘boom and bust’ cycles in the countryside on the basis of ceramic evidence alone.
ground independent of the nature of settlement has the effect of leveling the Roman period in the EKAS territory, in the same way that comparing periods by feature sherds or fabric and wares above had a similar effect. Interpreted in this light, the Late Antique Corinthia would provide evidence not for a sudden boom of settlement and population growth, but a final ‘bright phase’ in the long use of ancient countryside, as the region once again became tied to broader exchange systems. Let us now turn to some rural places in the eastern Corinthia and examine the relationship between habitation and pottery across the broad Roman period.

4.4.3. Passing Time and Place

If the discussion above allows us to understand better the overall ceramic data that form our impression of the Roman period in the land East of Corinth, what can we say about the continuity of settlement and land use at specific places in the countryside? Specifically, what is the nature of the relationship between the kinds and amounts of pottery found on the ground and the kind of habitation or activity that was originally located in that place? In later chapters (5 and 6), we will discuss at length the rural lifecycles of specific places in the Corinthia, but for now, we can address chronological questions to the most diverse and abundant Late Roman LOCA “hotspots” in the survey area (See 4.2 above and Appendix I for definition). Examining these 24 Late Roman LOCAs suggests a strong relationship to an earlier Roman period (E.g., Figure 4.36). Although some of the LR LOCAs seem to lack an Early Roman phase altogether (e.g., #s 21, 22), LR LOCA overlay of units with ER material is generally very common (cf. Figure 4.37).
Examining the most diagnostic imported amphora and fineware pottery for these LOCAs (Figures 4.37 & 4.38) allow us to describe the history of use of these areas in great precision, especially if we relate it to recent work on Roman-period ceramic chronologies at Corinth.\footnote{Slane 2000; 2003.}
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LR LOCA</th>
<th>Early Roman (of any kind)</th>
<th>Amphora, Koan-type or Rhodian</th>
<th>Eastern Sigillata A</th>
<th>Eastern Sigillata B1</th>
<th>Eastern Sigillata B2</th>
<th>Çandarlı Ware</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31 BC-AD 250</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>X</td>
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Figure 4.37. Late Roman LOCAs, showing presence / absence of most diagnostic artifacts dating to Early Roman period (31 BC-AD 250)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LR LOCA</th>
<th>Amphora, Aegean Red</th>
<th>ARS, Form 50</th>
<th>Amphora, Late Roman</th>
<th>Phocaean Ware 3</th>
<th>African Red Slip 99</th>
<th>African Red Slip 104-106</th>
<th>Phocaean Ware 9 or 10</th>
<th>Combed Ware, narrow</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AD 200 - 400</td>
<td>AD 400 - 600+</td>
<td>c. 450-550</td>
<td>c. 500 - 620</td>
<td>c. 500 - 650</td>
<td>c. 520 - 660</td>
<td>AD 600-800</td>
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Figure 4.38. Late Roman LOCAs, showing presence / absence of most diagnostic artifacts dating to middle and later Roman periods
Most of the LOCAs (n=16, ca. 67%) yielded pottery datable to the Early Roman period, spanning the late first century BC to mid-third century AD.\textsuperscript{169} Twelve LOCAs yielded Koan-type or Rhodian-type amphorae, dated by excavated contexts to the first and second centuries AD. A few of the hotspots (n = 3) yielded Eastern Sigillata A, dated by excavated contexts at Corinth to the late first century BC and early first century AD; a few (n = 4) yielded examples of ESB, the latter form especially common in Corinth in the later first and second centuries AD, possibly even into the third century. Together, more than half the areas (14 of 24) yielded pottery that can be dated squarely to the first two centuries AD.

Likewise, the fifth to early seventh centuries are well-represented. All of the areas yielded examples of fifth and sixth century Late Roman amphora sherds, many of which can be linked to specific LR amphora shapes, especially LR2. The later fifth to early sixth centuries are well-represented by examples of Phocaean Form 3, which shows up in about half of the LOCAs. And sixth to early seventh century finewares show up here and there—almost a third (n =7) of the LOCAs yielding later forms of African Red Slip or Phocaean Ware. Late narrow and wavy combed / grooved ware, the kind dated into the late sixth or seventh century and beyond, was noted at nine of the LOCAs. Although the appearance of any single particular type of artifact at each of the areas is splotchy, the artifacts together indicate a strong presence in these centuries, with fifth and sixth century sherds appearing on all of these sites; half (n = 12) of the LOCAs yield sherds from the 6\textsuperscript{th} to 7\textsuperscript{th} century.

It is only that middle period—the third and fourth centuries—that cause us problems, for only about half (n=11) of the areas produced material dated specifically to these centuries, and only 2 LOCAs yielded any kind of fineware for this period. How should we understand this overall pattern? Did activity end in these areas during this period until they were reoccupied in the fifth century? Unfortunately, this is not a question that

\textsuperscript{169} Even those LOCAs that did not yield ER material are usually adjacent to units that did. This will be discussed more at length in the following chapter.
can be addressed absolutely without more intensive methods. But as with the EKAS Roman pottery generally, the most basic interpretation of the evidence is that the frequency of pottery that could be dated to these centuries specifically drops at this time. But beyond this observation, does the lack of pottery from these centuries indicate veritable discontinuity in habitation or simply a lack of highly diagnostic pottery (i.e., imports)?

Beyond the general arguments made earlier against reading ‘discontinuity’ from the weakness of ceramic signatures, there are good reasons for thinking that in the Corinthia, specifically, the absence of pottery identified to these middle Roman centuries simply indicates a weaker ceramic signature that was not detected in the process of surface survey. On the one hand, the presence of other kinds of pottery at these LOCAs, such as the Aegean Red amphora, would caution against an argument for discontinuity on the basis of the absence of finewares alone. As importantly, at all of these places, the most diagnostic class of pottery (as in Figures 4.37 & 4.38 above) represents only a very small proportion of overall finewares, coarsewares, and kitchenwares. For every diagnostic fineware sherd that could be dated to a specific century in the Roman period, there were two dozen sherds that fall into broader period groupings such as “Early Roman,” “Roman”, or “Ancient.”

We can see the interpretive factors involved by examining Diversity LOCA 11 (for its location, see Figure 4.36 above), the largest of the LR LOCAs in the area of Kromna, just south of the Hexamilia quarries and very close to the modern road. This area lay at the Isthmian crossroads in antiquity and was thick with rural buildings and settlements. Wiseman identified the area as a Classical-period town and the location of numerous Archaic-Classical graves, and even if there is reason for rejecting this (see Ch. 5), the EKAS data suggests that settlement in the area was widespread in the Roman period. The LR LOCA 11 covers an extensive area of about 7 ha and incorporates 27 Discovery Units (2218, 2220-2222, 2275), and is only one part of a much broader carpet of artifacts in the area that must represent a variety of buildings. Due to the concentration of
material, and the variety of activity in the area, we can surmise that this area should have exceptionally high quantities of fineware and significant diversity of artifact classes.

Fieldwalking at 10-meter intervals produced a total combined count of 2,758 artifacts for the 27 DUs included within Div LOCA 11.\textsuperscript{170} Artifact sampling via the Chronotype system reduced the number of artifacts actually collected and analyzed to 981 artifacts (960 pottery and tile), approximately 1/3 of the total number of artifacts seen. The Early Roman signature over this broad area is limited to 6 Koan-Type amphora handles, 6 Eastern Sigillata bodysherds, a kitchenware handle, and 2 medium coarse handles, while the Late Roman period is better represented by a greater amount of LR1, LR2, and Palestinian Amphora fragments; combed and spirally-grooved body sherds, kitchenwares, and Phocaean fine ware. The middle Roman period is represented by only a single Aegean Red Amphora rim. Other periods, especially Classical-Hellenistic, were also present throughout the area.

Despite the amount of diagnostic pottery present, it is very difficult to diagnose the LOCA due to the overall grossness of the ceramic material recovered. A breakdown of pottery totals by three timespan groupings (Figure 4.39)—“Narrow” (500 years or less), “Broad” (500-1,300 years), and “Gross” (more than 1,300 years)—indicates that three quarters of the pottery cannot be dated within a time span of a millennium! Much of this has to do with the fact that finewares account for only 15% of the overall assemblage and kitchenwares for only 8% of overall counts, and that coarse or medium coarse wares form the great majority of artefacts recovered (Figure 4.40). This relative breakdown of fabric-function groups is generally along the lines of what we might expect from a surface assemblage (cf. discussion above).

\textsuperscript{170} The breakdown of the 2,758 artifacts counted in these units was 1,795 potsherds (65.1%), 936 tiles (33.9%), 5 lithic (.20%), and 22 ‘other’ (.80%). With a visual coverage of two meter-wide swaths / fieldwalker, the sample of each Discovery Unit is 20%. Hence, we might expect at least 13,790 artifacts on the surface of this LOCA.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
<th>End Date</th>
<th>Time Span (years)</th>
<th>Artifact Count</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Narrow Periods</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Late Helladic</td>
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<td>1050 BC</td>
<td>500</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geometric</td>
<td>800 BC</td>
<td>700 BC</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geometric-Archaic</td>
<td>800 BC</td>
<td>500 BC</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
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<td>500 BC</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
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<td>323 BC</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
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<td>Classical</td>
<td>500 BC</td>
<td>323 BC</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classical-Hellenistic</td>
<td>500 BC</td>
<td>31 BC</td>
<td>469</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hellenistic</td>
<td>323 BC</td>
<td>31 BC</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman, Early</td>
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<td>250 AD</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman, Late</td>
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<td>700 AD</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>47</td>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>Broad Periods</strong></td>
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<td>Early Bronze Age</td>
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<td><strong>Gross Periods</strong></td>
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<td>Ceramic Age / Unknown</td>
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<td>Ancient-Medieval</td>
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<td>7400</td>
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<td>Post-Prehistoric</td>
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<td>2000 AD</td>
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<td>700 AD</td>
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<td>306</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman-Medieval</td>
<td>31 BC</td>
<td>1800 AD</td>
<td>1831</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td>644</td>
<td>67.1%</td>
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Figure 4.39. Diversity LOCA 11, showing breakdown of analyzed pottery by period
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<tr>
<th>Fabric-Function Group</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coarse Ware &amp; Amphoras</td>
<td>598</td>
<td>62.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fineware</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen/Cooking</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tile</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>960</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.40. Diversity LOCA 11, showing breakdown of analyzed pottery by Fabric-Function group

This breakdown of LOCA 11 indicate the potential problems in concluding discontinuity in the Middle Roman period on the basis of negative evidence. There is simply far too much uncertainty in what specific periods might lie beneath those broad dates. If, for instance, we are dealing with periods where fine fabrics and imported wares are lower than usual, there is even greater need for caution.

And finally, if these reasons are not enough, the broader context of Corinthian history make discontinuity in that middle period a less plausible interpretation than a period whose materiality appears more dimly on the landscape. Although the evidence is not abundant, excavation of Roman rural buildings in the area of the Corinthia and Argolid have shown evidence for continued habitation and use during these centuries at relatively small rural buildings such as the Pyrgouthi Tower in the Berbati Valley (Cf. next two chapters). The LR LOCAs discussed above must represent much more substantial levels of investment in the land than the Pyrgouthi Tower, as evident by the variety of both 1st-2nd century and 5th-6th century pottery, along with artifacts such as millstones, architectural blocks, water pipes, and marble tesserae; if a small tower like Pyrgouthi was used at least intermittently during these centuries, we should expect more

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171 We must also remember that the methods of surface survey produce a very small sample of all the pottery on and below the surface. If for a period like the Middle Roman, pottery circulated at lower thresholds than periods preceding and following, we can expect the signature of that middle period to lie beneath the radar of the methods of surface survey; more Chronotypes and more periods would likely be revealed through more intensive methods beyond survey.
substantial complexes not to have gone out of business during this middle period. On the basis of all of these factors, we may conclude that habitation and activity in the rural Corinthia did not die during this period but has produced a material signature that is simply less abundant and diagnostic than either the preceding or following periods, and one lying below the threshold of the sampling intensity of archaeological survey.\textsuperscript{172}

Although we cannot interrogate coarse surface assemblages to make them speak, we can see clearly enough to say that the overall structure of rural habitation and land use in the Eastern Corinthia at the end of antiquity does not surface out of a void, but forms in the context of areas used from the first and second centuries AD. In many of our most diverse Late Roman units, we can catch glimpses of continued use of the same rural places in the countryside over the entire Roman period—even into the seventh century and beyond. When our vision fails us greatly, as it does for the third and fourth centuries, it must indicate the limitations of our analytical tools rather than actual absence of material \textit{per se}. In the end, all of this suggests a vibrant rural world that marched onward in the structures established from a previous day, made more vibrant by those structures, although undoubtedly redefined with new meanings and contexts. This theme will be picked up again in the next two chapters.

\textsuperscript{172} There are, of course, other complicated factors. As Slane argues elsewhere (2000), some of the ESB may be pushed into a third century context. Cf. also Slane 1994, pp. 162-64.
4.5. Busyness in the Eastern Corinthia

The territory of the Eastern Corinthia, lying as it did between Corinth and its eastern harbor, Kenchreai, and the site of Isthmia, was quite clearly one of the busiest countrysides throughout the Roman period, as evident in the abundance and distribution of artifacts throughout this area. Numerous houses, farmsteads, villas, shrines, and agricultural installations speckled the land in the shadow of Corinth, greeting the visitor to the ‘principal city’ of Roman Greece. Moreover, the territory’s place as a crossroads in the Mediterranean economy and its proximity to Corinth meant that the pottery deposited in this area would make Roman land use highly visible and measurable. The ubiquity of imported amphorae and fine ware pottery in this area east of Corinth indicates the strong degree of interaction between urban center and its immediate hinterland, as well as the vitality of exchange currents on the Isthmus across a six or seven hundred year period. By nature of its important role as a social and economic crossroads, then, the eastern Corinthia was in the Roman period truly a busy, well-connected, and wealthy countryside.

This chapter has argued that relative shifts in ceramic abundance in the eastern Corinthia indicate the sensitivity of the region to broader patterns of supra-regional exchange, as well as the countryside’s access to fine wares and imports. As discussed above, this is especially true for Late Antiquity when a flourishing exchange system reemerged in the eastern Mediterranean from the late fourth century. That the eastern Corinthia produces evidence for so many imported late Roman fine wares and amphorae point especially to the region’s continued importance as a crossroads to the end of antiquity and the circulation of commodities in the local economy during a period of wide economic exchange.173 This much is confirmed by ceramic data from Corinth itself.174

174 E.g., Slane 2000; Slane and Sanders 2005.
There may be other historical factors related to the ubiquity and abundance of Late Antique pottery in the eastern Corinthia. For instance, how did the fifth century construction of the early Byzantine Hexamilion fortress and the imposition of a garrison play into the local economy and itself affect the distribution of vessels? Recent scholarship has suggested that the militarization of society could actually stimulate the local economy.\textsuperscript{175} Karagiorgou has posited that the wide distribution patterns of LR2 amphora in the Aegean and the Balkans should be understood in terms of military involvement in these areas; LR2 amphora contained olive oil for provisioning border troops.\textsuperscript{176} The Corinthia was busy in Late Antiquity in other ways as well. We might wonder how the flurry of church construction activity stimulated or affected the regional economy. At the very least we can point to many potential cultural factors behind the Corinthia’s general busyness in this period.

If ceramic abundance speaks more directly to the countryside’s place in changing distribution networks, what of the picture of settlement and human activity in this rich and well-traversed countryside east of Corinth? As I have argued in this chapter, there is little evidence for an “explosion” of late Roman settlement or human activity relative to an earlier Roman settlement absence, despite superficial impressions of such an explosion. When we consider how we read and count pottery differently for the two periods, and historical factors that may lie beyond our control (e.g., the amount of imports and finewares in distribution in these different periods), ceramic abundance for the later period is flattened, and the evidence for population change and settlement explosion is seriously weakened. There may in fact have been population growth, or denser settlement at the end of antiquity, but this is not a conclusion that follows from the ceramic data. On the other hand, when survey data is calibrated to correct for differential


visibility, we can see only constancy in the deposition of pottery in the countryside. If the correlates to ceramic deposition are settlements or buildings on the land, then daily life, human use of the land, building activity, and rural habitation in the eastern Corinthia appear to be more continuous, constant, and ordinary, than ‘booming and busting.’ We should certainly expect that there was variation in settlement and buildings on the land, as well as short-term functional shifts in settlement and human activity, but in the busy Corinthia where centuries of artifact deposition overlap and overlay, these changes often lie below the threshold of analysis of archaeological survey methods. In the following two chapters, I will shift attention to the ‘trees’ of the Corinthia that made up the dense forest discussed in this chapter.

A flattening of the transition between earlier and later halves of the Roman period should not detract from the observation that the Late Antique Eastern Corinthia, like the early Roman one, really was ‘busy.’ The vestiges of this period so thickly clutter the landscape that it is difficult even to pattern the material into coherent groupings we can call ‘sites.’ This ubiquity of late Roman pottery, especially in the main corridor east of Corinth, indicate certainly that the territory continued to function as a crossroads throughout the Roman colony’s history, and that the rural structures established in an earlier phase of the colony’s history lasted to the end of antiquity. In some cases, Late Antique rural habitation and activity seem to actually continue the investments of a previous period and emerge out of an early Roman structure of land use, despite a weakness of the pottery signature for the third and fourth centuries. In these cases, habitation and buildings develop within the context of an earlier built environment (see Chapter 6).

In this respect, the analysis presented above creates a compelling and strong argument against the vision of the countryside usually suggested by a literal reading of the documentary sources for Corinth in this period. Rather than imagining the Isthmus devoid of settlement and largely empty except for a handful of famous places (Ch. 3), the Isthmus of Corinth, or at least a major part of it, was teeming with material culture and
extra-urban buildings throughout the Roman period. The material culture and literature
together confirm the image of the Roman and late Roman city tied to its eastern
landscape, benefiting from its connections to its seas. When the literary testimony grows
silent, as it does in the fourth century (Ch. 3), the material evidence provides direct
evidence for continuity of the structures of the landscape.

Even as recent scholarship on the city of Corinth has begun to rewrite a dramatically
pessimistic picture of the Late Antique city, so the history of the use of the countryside
in the territory east of Corinth needs to be read in a positive light. Every indication
suggests that this territory, the busy countryside, continued to function and flourish
throughout the entire Roman period. Even if we cannot easily pattern change in the use
of the land, the constancy is perhaps more important, especially in light of those famous
disasters of plague, earthquake, and invaders that have figured so significantly for
conventional narratives of the late Roman Corinthia. If the third century empire-wide
crisis did greatly affect the Corinthia, discontinuity in rural settlement and building
activity seems unlikely. If an earthquake of AD 365/375 shook Corinth and its harbors,
there is no evidence that its long-term effects on the countryside were crippling. If the
Heruls or the Visigoths really did damage to buildings in the region in AD 267 and 395,
the countryside recovered. If the abundance pottery is in fact an indication of health,
the Late Antique countryside flourishes into the sixth, if not seventh, century.

The only plausible disruptive forces in the Corinthia consistent with the data
examined above occur in the late sixth century. But even in the wake of the sixth century

177 Caraher 2003; Gregory 1985; Gregory and Kardulias 1988; Ivison 1996; Rothaus 2000; Slane and
Sanders 2005.

178 Amelia Brown has argued recently that the literary evidence for these two invasions is in fact weak and
should not be used to interpret the material remains. Cf. A.R. Brown, “Waiting for the Barbarian
Invasions: Reconciling Archaeological and Historical Evidence for Barbarians at Corinth in Late
Antiquity,” Paper presented at the 106th Annual Meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America, Boston
2005; and A.R. Brown, “‘The Overthrow of the Temples and the Ruin of the Whole of Greece’: Rhetoric
and Archaeology in Barbarian Invasions of Late Roman Greece,” Paper presented at the Conference for
Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity VI: Romans, Barbarians, and the Transformation of the Roman
plague and at the time of the alleged Slavic invasions, we still find evidence that imported pottery is being used and deposited at some of the major sites in the countryside. What the ceramic data speaks most directly to—even beyond settlement patterns—is the continuity of the place of the Corinthian landscape in Mediterranean trade. Whether or not the Isthmus is still the cultural and economic crossroads and heartland of trade that it once was, it does appear to be integrated into the interregional networks of the wider world. The distribution of ceramic wares in both city and country indicates the continuity of the Corinthia’s role in Mediterranean networks even into the late sixth and early seventh centuries. Only then, when our evidence fails us, do the lights of the Corinthian crossroads flicker, dim, and go black.\textsuperscript{179}

\textsuperscript{179} See Ward-Perkins 2000b, 390-91, for a discussion of the end of antiquity in terms of the ‘simplification’ of structures of production, commerce, and exchange.
CHAPTER 5
The Crossroads

An ancient traveler journeying to Corinth along the coastal road from Athens via Isthmia, or the road from Kenchreai, would have walked westward below the steep Ayios Dimitrios Ridge to the point where the ridge terminates and the principal roads meet near a series of limestone quarries (Figure 5.1). This place is the first point of convergence of the major roads from the east (Isthmia), southeast (Kenchreai), west (Corinth), and north (Lechaion Gulf). While the entire isthmus was a travel corridor of intersecting roads, the crossroads below the Ayios Dimitrios ridge is one of only several places on the Isthmus where so many roads from different directions intersect in the same location. As such, it was one of the most important structures of the Corinthian Isthmus.¹

At the crossroads developed an important settlement of the Corinthia that has come to be known as “Kromna.” As James Wiseman argued in his overview of the site, Kromna emerged in the Archaic period but developed by the fifth/fourth century BC into an important town which, following the refoundation of Corinth as a colony, also had a significant Roman component. The Eastern Korinthia Archaeological Survey documented an extensive carpet of Archaic-Late Roman artifacts and features in the area that indicate buildings at the crossroads were even more extensive than Wiseman had estimated. For a traveler of the eastern Corinthia, the crossroads would have constituted one of the major nodes marking a passage to or from Corinth; and for the city itself, the area lay at the heart of its territory.

¹ For full discussion of the roads on the Isthmus, see Chapter 2, section 1.2.
This chapter presents new evidence for the place of the crossroads in the life of the city of Corinth, and also discusses the broader character of Late Antique settlement on the Isthmus. Section 5.1 reevaluates the literary evidence and argues that there is little evidence for a Corinthian *town* called “Kromna”; the Corinthian “Kromna” rather was a place sacred to Poseidon and could indicate Kenchreai itself. The area of the crossroads that Wiseman called “Kromna” was nonetheless an important node in Corinth’s eastern territory. Section 5.2 details the development of the area as suggested by the data from the Eastern Korinthia Archaeological Survey. It argues that artifactual material at the crossroads site is far more extensive than previously estimated and suggests an important structure of ancient Corinth from the Archaic period through Late Antiquity. The third section of this chapter (5.3) contextualizes the crossroads in terms of the broader pattern of settlement and land use in the eastern Corinthia, underscoring the continuity of the region’s sites through Late Antiquity. A final section (5.4) draws conclusions about settlement in the Corinthia in the Roman and Late Roman periods based on the preceding
discussion: settlement on the Isthmus was more dense and continuous than usually imagined, but also concentrated at nodes like the Kromnian crossroads, lacking in place-fame but vital to the city’s economy through the sixth century. The continuity of settlement and activity at the crossroads demonstrates the late health of the city on the Isthmus and the continuing place of the territory in regional and Mediterranean travelspheres.

5.1. Corinthian “Kromna”

In 1960 James Wiseman documented an extensive settlement south of the modern Corinth-Isthmia road at about the mid-point between the villages of Hexamilia and Kyras Vrysi (Isthmia), in the area of the Hexamilia Quarries. Previous brief excavations in the area, and Wiseman’s new investigations, recorded remains spanning the Archaic period to Late Antiquity, but with the most significant and distinct material dating to the fifth and fourth centuries BC. Large quantities of Archaic-Classical period finewares, miniature terracotta vessels, figurines, and even a terracotta altar suggested to Wiseman both domestic and religious activities. Cemeteries on the western edge of the town and sarcophagi throughout indicated significant mortuary elements. By a stroke of luck, in his investigation of the nearby third century BC trans-Isthmian wall, Wiseman found an inscription (in reuse) with the name of a man, Agathon the Kromnite. With a little research, he further discovered that “Kromna” was known by the Byzantine scholiast Tzetzes and the Hellenistic writer Callimachus as an important place on the Isthmus of Corinth, and to other ancient writers as an important town of the Peloponnese. Wiseman put together the cultural material, the inscription, and all the literary evidence, and claimed that the site at the crossroads was the important Corinthian town of Kromna.3

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2 See Wiseman 1963, 249, 257, and 258 (Fig. 4); and Wiseman 1978, 66-68, and end note 120. The inscription was inventoried as IS 484. See SEG XXII (1967), no. 219.

While Wiseman’s Classical-period “Kromna” is now embedded in every archaeological map of the Corinthia, his identification is not convincing in light of the evidence. Before turning to an analysis of the material remains at the crossroads, this section will offer a reinterpretation of the place called Kromna as it is known from literary sources. It will argue that Kromna cannot be an inland Corinthian town but must instead be a Corinthian place sacred to the deity Poseidon, perhaps the harbor Kenchreai.

5.1.1. Corinthian Kromna in Ancient Literature

G. Shipley has recently linked the inscription recording the ethnic, Agathon the Kromnite, to Kromnos, a polis in Arcadia that was absorbed into Megalopolis in the fourth century BC. We will return to Shipley’s suggestion in 5.1.2 after we deal with what seems to be the more immediately convincing explanation for its presence: Wiseman posited that the inscription refers to a man named Agathon from the Corinthian town of Kromna located (reused in a later wall) only a few hundred meters south of the inscription’s find spot. What is the literary evidence for this identification?

As Wiseman pointed out in discussing the sources, there were several places in the eastern Mediterranean named according to some variant of the Kromn- root. The two important ones were the Paphlagonian Kromna and the Peloponnesian Kromnos, both of which numbered among the famous places of antiquity. The former was the great city listed by Homer’s Iliad in the marshalling of the Paphlagonian ships and was frequently cited by poets, commentators, and scholiasts in antiquity and Byzantium because of its honored place in the famous epic; this Paphlagonian Kromna was later absorbed into the


6 For original discussion, see Wiseman 1978, 66-68, with endnotes. The following reanalysis is based on a fuller TLG search for the root Kromn-.
city Amastris. The second famous Kromna was the \textit{polis} in Arcadia near Megalopolis, also referred to as \textit{Kromi, Kromos} and \textit{Kromnos}. This place was absorbed in the late Classical period by the foundation of nearby Megalopolis and was still visible, albeit in ruins in the second century AD. This latter Peloponnesian Kromna was particularly memorable because of the role that it played in the narrative of the wars of the fourth century, especially the campaigns of Epaminondas; Xenophon recorded a battle between the Arcadians and Spartans for the city in 365 BC. Hesychius does mention a third city named \textit{Kromna} in Thessaly about which there is no other information.

The literary evidence for a town called Kromna in the Corinthia is itself not very strong. On the one hand, Byzantine commentators and scholiasts who mention a Peloponnesian city called Kromna had in mind the more famous Arcadian city embedded in discussions of the Greek wars of the 360s. Because there was a more famous Arcadian Kromna that was mentioned frequently in ancient literature, general references to “Kromna, a city of the Peloponnese” cannot be used as evidence in favor of a Corinthian city of the same name. Hence, Wiseman’s suggestion that the Kromna mentioned by Stephanus of Byzantium could refer to the one in Corinth is not likely, and in any case, Stephanus’ source appears to be Pausanias’ description of Arcadian

\footnotesize

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{7} Homer \textit{Il.} 2.855; cited frequently, for example: Strabo 12.3.5, 12.3.10; Apoll. Rhod. \textit{Arg.} 2.942; Pomp. Mela \textit{Chor.} 1.104.4; Plin. \textit{Nat.} 6.5.3; Val. Flacc. \textit{Arg.} 5.105; Constantine VII Porphy. \textit{De Thematibus Asia} 7.9; Ael. Her. \textit{De prosodia catholica} 3.1.101.14, 1.160.4-5, 1.256.7-9; Steph. Byz. 40.17-18, 84.3-4, 388.3-4; Eust. \textit{Commentarii ad Homeri Iliadem} 1.566.12, 1.568.24, 1.570.8-12; Hesychius s.v., \textit{Kromna}; Scholia in Apollonium Rhodi 195.18 and 196.1.
\item \textsuperscript{8} Paus. 8.27, 8.34. See Roy, Lloyd, and Owens 1992.
\item \textsuperscript{9} See J. Roy, \textit{et al.}, “Two Sites,” in J.M. Sanders (ed.), \textit{Philolakon} 1992, 190-94; G. Shipley, “The Extent of Spartan Territory in the Late Classical and Hellenistic Periods,” in \textit{The Annual of the British School at Athens} 95 (2000), 371-72. The ancient evidence includes Xenophon \textit{Hell.} 7.4.20-28 and Callisthenes’ \textit{History of Greece} (fragment preserved in Athenaeus). Later authors of the Roman period who refer to this Kromnos include Athenaeus 10.75.19, 33 (452B) and Pausanias 8.3.4; 8.27.4; 8.34.1-6.
\item \textsuperscript{10} Hesych., s.v., \textit{Kromna}. See Wiseman’s skepticism about the existence of this one, 1978, 66.
\item \textsuperscript{11} See Wiseman 1978, 66-68, with endnotes, for a basic outline of the evidence.
\item \textsuperscript{12} Ael. Her. \textit{De prosodia catholica} 3.1.174.20; Steph. Byz. 388.3-7; Eustathius \textit{Comm. ad Homeri Iliadem} 156.18-19
\end{itemize}

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Kromos;\textsuperscript{13} furthermore, Wiseman’s rendition of the Stephanus passage as “it is also a city of many men, women, and children, and flourishing” is a mistranslation.\textsuperscript{14} Moreover, the absence of specific references to a major Corinthian settlement of this name by Thucydides, Xenophon, Strabo, Pausanias, or any other ancient geographers or historians further erodes the likelihood that a large town of the name \textit{Kromna} existed in the Corinthia. There is, in the end, no specific evidence for a sizable settlement (whether \textit{polis}, \textit{polisma}, \textit{astu}, or \textit{kome}) in the Corinthia by the name of Kromna.

On the other hand, there are sources that do confirm that there was a \textit{place} known as Kromna in the Corinthia. The evidence includes a passage of the fourth century BC poet Callimachus with scholiast; a Byzantine commentator’s note on a passage of Lycophron; and a Byzantine scholion on a line from Aristophanes’ \textit{Knights}. The most important evidence, and the only direct evidence from antiquity, is the Callimachus passage, for the other two scholiasts’ remarks appear to derive from that passage. A brief reconsideration of the passages can be instructive.

The passage of Callimachus, the poet of the third century BC, is the only direct evidence from antiquity for a place known as \textit{Kromna} in the Corinthia. The relevant passage comes from a surviving fragment of an elegy in praise of Sosibios, the chief of

\textsuperscript{13} Hence, Stephanus notes that Kromoi is named after Kromos, son of Lycaon, a comment that must be derived from Pausanias’ description (8.1-8.3) of the cities of Arcadia, relating the origin and name of Arcadian Kromoi (8.3.4) to Kromos, one of the sons of Lycaon, son of Pelasgus, the first inhabitant of Arcadia.

\textsuperscript{14} Wiseman, \textit{ibid.} The passage that Wiseman translates as “many men, women, children, and flourishing” is a grammatical note about the gender and plurality of the word. In respect to \textit{ethnics}, Stephanus commonly refers to the gender and number of the word. Steph. Byz. 388.4-6: \textit{Krwmna}, \textit{polij} Pafagonia, h(num )\ma strij, w’ eiahtai. tinej de/fas i xriign \ma stridoj. to\e
 e\niko\b Krwmni\hj kaiikRwmnaibj kaiikRwmnaiej. e\ati kaiiP el oponnhojou polij a\j senikwj\ka iiqh\uku\j\ka iie\ikw\j\ka iipl hjuntikw\j\apo\i Krwmnoj tou= Luka\anoj.
staff at the court of Ptolemy IV. The work begins with an allusion to Corinth, the Isthmus, and a celebration of the victory of Sosibios at the Isthmian games:

A scholion on this passage adds only that Kromni and Lechaion are places of Corinth and somehow connected with libations (to Kromnos?). The text of Callimachus itself firmly roots Kromniti in the discussion of the territory of the sacred isthmus of Poseidon and the rites of the victor at the Isthmian games. As Wiseman’s discussion suggests, the use of the men...de construction places Kromniti and Lechaion in apposition and parallel, as though the Kromniti land marked the end on the Saronic Gulf in the same way as Lechaion terminated at the Corinthian Gulf. Certainly the structure of the text itself would support an interpretation of this sort, for immediately above in lines 9-10, the god is described as sitting sea-girt at both (sides) of the narrow land. Wiseman suggests that Kromniti and Lechaion refer to the land, but it is possible that the assumed feminine objects are the seas themselves that wash the narrows of the Isthmus from both sides. It

15 Pfeiffer, Frag. 384, The Victory of Sosibios.

16 The translation is from the Loeb, C.A. Tyrpanis, Callimachus. Aetia, Iambi, Hecale and Other Fragments. See also the Trypans introduction for why this dating and this Sosibios is preferred.

17 οὗτοι τόποι τῆς Κορίνθου...καὶ σπονδῆσιν Κρομνητί [I] Ἀλέχαιον καλεῖται.
is also probable that in this passage, *Kromnitin* substitutes for the more common and standard *Kenchreai* that forms the clear parallel to the harbor at Lechaion (see discussion below). It is as though *Kromna* is an alternate name for *Kenchreai* or that the Saronic side of the Isthmus is implied by the term *Kromnitin*. What is most clear from the passage is that *Kromnitin* does not refer to a city or town but to a place at the end of the sacred isthmus opposite Lechaion. We will return to this observation briefly.

The second relevant passage is from Lycophron’s *Alexander*. The ancient text is seemingly inconsequential and is only valuable for the present discussion because of the scholiast’s interpretation of it.18

“Nor those, more doughty than these lions bold,
In valour unapproached, whom Ares loves,
Enjo and the Thrice-born goddess too,
Yoker, Sicilian, Theban, Mighty One.
For what pair of craftsmen labouring,
Apollo and Poseidon, Kromna’s Lord,
Built for the perjured king would not endure
One single day against those sacking wolves
To stem their grievous devastating charge”

The twelfth-century commentary of Isaac and John Tzetzes, in explaining the phrase in Line 522, ὁ Κρώμνης ἄναξ state “*Kromna* is a city of Paphlagonia, in which there is a temple of Poseidon. It is also a place of Corinth as Callimachus relates in *The Victory of Sosibios*”;19 additional scholia in other manuscripts call it a *chora* or *chorion* of Corinth.20 But as Wiseman remarks,21 these scholia seem to be based on the Callimachus passage

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19 Κρώμνης πόλις Παφλαγονίας, ἐν Ἡ Ποσείδωνος ἱερόν ἐστιν. ἔστι δὲ καὶ Κορίνθου τόπος ὡς καὶ Καλλίμαχος ἐν Σωσίβιον νικη ὑπὲρ μὲν Κρομνίτην

20 See Leone 2002, 104.

21 Wiseman 1978, 78, note 121.
already discussed. Consequently, the second piece of evidence for a Corinthian Kromna is insubstantial except in so far that other Byzantine commentators were aware of the Callimachus passage and multiple Kromna’s. The implied connection of Poseidon to Kromna will be discussed below.

The final passage comes from Aristophanes’ Knights 551-564, where the chorus addresses Poseidon with the following words:

Ippi anac Poseidon, w
xal kokrotwn ippwn ktupoj
kai xremetis moj and anei
kai kuanemboi qoai
mis qoforal trihreij,
meirakiwn q’amilla lam-
prunomenwen en armasin
kai barudaimonountwn,
deur”el q’ei xoron, w
xrusotriai,w
del fionw medewn Souniarate,
w Geraistie pai Kronou,
Formiwi te filtat*ek
twn allwn te gewn Aqh-
naioj proj to parestoj.

“Poseidon, Lord of Horses,
thrilling to the ring of horses’ hooves
clashing like bronze, and their neighing,
and to the swift triremes
with their blue rams and their payloads,
and to the contest of youths
in their chariots, heading for the heights of glory
or the depths of ill fortune,
come join our dance, god of the golden trident,
master of dolphins at Sunium,
son of Cronus at Geraestus,
dearest of gods to Phormio
and the Athenians
in time of war!”

Again the ancient text itself provides no direct evidence for a Corinthian Kromna. However, line 561 refers to Poseidon as the son of Cronus at Geraestus. A scholion explains that Geraestus is “a cape of Euboea, having on the one hand Kromnitin, and on the other hand Lechaion. For these are holy places of Poseidon.” It is clear that the Byzantine commentator is reading Aristophanes through the Callimachus passage, which is copied nearly word for word, although here he wrongly situates these places on the promontory sacred to Poseidon in Euboea. It appears that the point of connection in the

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22 The translation is from the Loeb. The Greek of line 561 is: w Geraistie pai Kronou

23 Γεραιστις άκρωτηριον Εύβοιας, τη μεν Κρομνίτην ξην, τη δε το Λέχαιον ιερά δε είσι του Ποσειδώνος. Ένθα ο Εύρυτος. VEGΘ
scholiast’s mind between the Geraestus promontory and the Corinthian places is that both of these areas were sacred to Poseidon:24 ἵερὰ δὲ εἰςὶ τοῦ Ποσειδῶνος.

What these passages together confirm is that although there may have been a place at Corinth in the Classical and early Hellenistic periods known as Kromna, there is little indication that this place ever had the size, status, fame, or organization of a town or city. On the contrary, in Callimachus, the only ancient evidence for the existence of a Corinthian Kromna, the phrase simply notes τῇ μὲν Κρομνίτῃν τῇ δὲ Λέχαιον, ἡχὼν but does not explain its meaning. It is clear that none of the scholiasts or commentators had additional information at hand, nor were they aware of a town or city by that name in the Corinthia; they note only that Kromna was a “place” with the vague and open-ended terms τόποι and χωρίον. They had little more information than the modern scholar. If Kromnitin did not refer to a town called Kromna, what kind of place did Callimachus have in mind?

5.1.2. Other Explanations for a Corinthian “Kromna”

Although Wiseman linked the derivation of the name Kromnitin to the cult of Cronus, the passage of Callimachus is referring to the deity Poseidon.25 The poet does not name Poseidon specifically in the passage, but he is certainly the one described by lines 9-12 who is seated on both sides of the sea-girt sacred isthmus, possessing the Lechaion and Kromnitin land. This is the meaning understood by several Byzantine scholiasts noted above, who associated the term with the god Poseidon with whom the Isthmus was closely associated in ancient mythology and topoi. The scholiast on the Callimachus passage does not make this connection, but the commentator on Aristophanes clearly does (ἵερὰ δὲ εἰςὶ τοῦ Ποσειδῶνος), even if he wrongly places the sites in Euboea. Tzetzes’ commentary on Lycophron’s Alexandra links the Paphlagonian city Kromna to the god Poseidon, as do other Byzantine scholiasts. Kromnitin, then,

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25 See C.A. Trypanis (Loeb), 235-237, for this interpretation and translation as well.
brought to mind associations with Poseidon, either because the Paphlagonian Kromna was connected to the deity or because the scholiasts understood Callimachus’ description as referring to the god of the Isthmus.

One possible interpretation of the apposition is that Callimachus is referring to what he imagines are the boundaries of the Isthmus—the western border marked by the harbor at Lechaion and the eastern boundary marked by the significant Corinthian town of Krommyon (also spelled Kromyon, Kremyon). Although Wiseman has argued that Krommyon was definitely outside the Isthmus, we have seen (3.1.1) that the “boundaries” of the Isthmus, especially the eastern boundaries, were hardly fixed in antiquity. As Krommyon is one of the cities associated with the borders of the Peloponnese/Ionia and the Corinthia/Megaria, and was a sizable and important Corinthian town during the Classical period, it is possible to see in the Callimachus passage a reference to this city as an eastern terminus of the Isthmus. There is certainly no reason to think a poet like Callimachus would have been bound to exact territorial definitions, whatever these were at the time. Might Callimachus have simply substituted (for sake of meter?) the word Kromnitin for the town of Kromyon.

An even better interpretation of the parallel structure, however, is to read it as referring to the twin gulfs and harbors of the Isthmus, the western/northern end terminating at the Corinthian Gulf and the harbor Lechaion and the eastern/southern end terminating at the Saronic Gulf and presumably Kenchreai. Another passage of

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26 For discussion of Crommyon, see Wiseman 1978, 17-19.

27 Thucydides 4.45 says that it is in Corinthian territory in 425 BC; but Xenophon Hell. 4.4.13 calls it a stronghold in Megarian territory in 392 BC. Strabo notes (8.6.22) that it is a village (kome) of the Corinthia that previously belonged to Megara, and that it was near (9.1.6) the mythical stele set up on the Isthmus marking the border between the Peloponnese and Ionia.

28 Wiseman 1978, 19.

29 Steph. Byz. states that the ethnic of Kromna was Kromnitis, Kromnaios, and Kromnaius; while the ethnic of Kromyon was Kremmyonios, Krommyonios, and Krommywnia.

30 The Loeb translator A.W. Mair also links (p. 106 note a) Kerchnis to the harbor at Kenchreai.
Callimachus, *Hymn* 4 (“Hymn to Delos”), lends support to this interpretation and helps us see why Byzantine scholiasts interpreted Corinthian *Kromna* as a place associated with Poseidon. In this passage, Delos describes the greatest love that the god Apollo shows to her:

\[\text{"I am as thou see’s—hard of tillage; yet from me shall Apollo be called ‘of Delos,’ and none other among all lands shall be so beloved by any other god: not Cerchnis so loved by Poseidon, Lord of Lechaeum, not Cyllene’s hill by Hermes, not Crete by Zeus, as I by Apollo; and I shall no more be a wandering isle.‘}"\]

The excerpt is important because it again emphasizes the link in Callimachus’ mind between the deity Poseidon and two places, this time, *Lechaion* and *Kerxnis*. The latter *Kerxnis* is an otherwise unknown place-name in ancient literature and is best read as a variant form of Corinth’s eastern harbor *Kenchreai*, a place name linked in mythology with *Kenchrias*, one of the two children of Poseidon and Peirene, the other being *Leches*.\(^{32}\) Although the entire isthmus was sacred to Poseidon, Callimachus’ reference to *Lechaion* and *Kromnitin / Kerxnis* may well refer to specific sanctuaries or sacred precincts.\(^{33}\) At a much later point, in Pausanias’ day, Lechaion possessed a sanctuary of Poseidon as well as a bronze image of the god, and at the tip of the mole at Kenchreai stood a bronze image of Poseidon.\(^{34}\) It is also possible that in referring to Kenchreai, Callimachus has in mind the sanctuary of Poseidon at Isthmia, as both sites were on the eastern Saronic end of the Isthmus and relatively near one another. In this interpretation, Callimachus would be referring to two sacred termini: 1) the land sacred to Poseidon on the Corinthian Gulf, perhaps centered at a sanctuary at Lechaion, and 2) the eastern end of the Isthmus associated with the Saronic Sea, the harbor of Kenchreai, and the site of

\(^{31}\) Translation is the Loeb volume by A.W. Mair, *Callimachus and Lycophron*, London 1921.

\(^{32}\) Cf. discussion in *PW*, s.v., *Kenchreai*, no. 1 and 2, which note that both *Kerchneia* (cf. Aischylos *Prom. 676*) and *Kerchnis* were alternate forms for *Kenchreai*, the former for the place in the Argolid, the latter for the harbor of Corinth.

\(^{33}\) This was the interpretation given by the scholiast on Aristophanes’ *Knights*, noted above.

\(^{34}\) *Paus*. 2.2.3.
Isthmia. All of these places—Lechaion harbor, Kenchreai harbor, Isthmia, and the two gulfs—were mythically or ritually associated with Poseidon and might constitute conceptual termini of the “sacred Isthmus”. The Byzantine scholiasts were wise not to read more into the ancient poem than the vague descriptors “places.”

In conclusion, although the interpretation of Callimachus’ *Kromnitin* is open to debate, there is little evidence to support Wiseman’s argument that it refers to a town or sizable settlement. On the other hand, the Callimachus passages do provide good early examples of the kind of Corinthian landscape metaphors that would become common in the Roman imperial age: the structure of the Isthmus linked to its seas, the god Poseidon (lord of the Isthmus), and the famous games of celebration at the Isthmus. The best surviving and most thorough example in this genre is Aelius Aristides’ *Isthmian Oration* (Or. 46.20) of the mid-second century AD, whose long praise describes the land of the Isthmus as it connects to the seas as Poseidon’s “chancellery,” “palace,” “court,” and “headquarters.” Indeed, by an early Roman date, the perception of the Isthmus sacred to Poseidon, pointing to two seas and two harbors, was well-ensconced in literature and topoi, so that even Strabo structures his account accordingly: “The beginning of the seaboard on the two sides is, on the one side, Lechaeum, and on the other, Kenchreai, a village and a harbour distant about 70 stadia from Corinth.” Corinthian mythology firmly linked Poseidon with the two harbors, for the two children of Poseidon and Peirene in Corinthian mythology were Leches and Cenchrias.

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35 A counter-argument might state that if one were to interpret the crossroads as sacred to Poseidon, it would fit as the parallel of Callimachus’ *Lechaion…Kromnitin*. It is hard to imagine, however, that Callimachus had in mind the crossroads as the parallel to Lechaion. If Callimachus had in mind famous precincts sacred to Poseidon, the temple at Isthmia is the obvious counterpart to Lechaion; if he had in mind promontories or harbors, Kenchreai or the Saronic coast at the Isthmus would be the intended meaning of *Kromnitin*.

36 The Greek words are: *arxeia...basileia...aulhn...ormhthrion*.

37 Strabo 8.6.22. Such structure sounds indeed very similar to the passages discussed above. The Greek is: *Arxh\dε\lth\j paral\i\j ekater\faj th\j me\h to\lEk\a\l\on th\j de\k Eg\x\rei\ikw\m\h kai\i\lim\h a\p\ek\w\n th\j pol\ew\j o\h on ebdom\h\konta stadi\guj*

38 Paus. 2.2.3.
Although the memory of the *Kromnitin* epithet did not even survive the Hellenistic period, the conceptual linkage of the Isthmus to the god Poseidon and his two harbors and seas became more firmly embedded in the popular mind.

If the deconstruction suggested above is along the right lines, what do we make of the inscription, *Agathon Kromnitin*, dated to the late fourth to early third century BC, and found (reused) in the third century trans-Isthmian wall. First, we are left with the possibility that *Kromnitin* refers to a district or deme of Corinth connected to the sizable town Kenchreai. If the inscription, reused as it was in a third century BC wall, should be associated with the cemeteries at the nearby crossroads, it is plausible that the crossroads in the Classical-Hellenistic period formed not the center of a great town, but rather, the boundary of the district of Kenchreai and other districts extending toward Corinth. In such a reading, if *Kromna* were another name for Kenchreai, the inscription *Agathon Kromnitin* could denote the demotic of a person Agathon of the nearby district of Kenchreai—although why Agathon would choose to identify himself as an inhabitant of Kenchreai rather than Corinth is unclear. Second, as discussed above, it is always possible that *Kromnitin* might refer to someone from the important eastern Corinthian town of *Kromyon*, who happened to be buried on the Isthmus. And finally, is it not possible that *Kromnitin* might refer to someone from the important eastern Corinthian town of *Kromyon*, who happened to be buried on the Isthmus? Other mythical and historical notables, like Palaemon, Sisyphus, and Neleus were allegedly buried on the Isthmus, and certainly there were numerous actual graves at the crossroads. It does not seem improbable that Agathon was a foreigner staying in Corinth who died in the city in the fourth century BC and was buried at one of the most visible places in the eastern

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39 Wiseman 1963, 257; 1978, 66. Wiseman was not explicit about why that date was assigned but only notes (1963, 257, footnote 6) that the date (later than 325 BC, earlier than third century BC) was assigned by Professor Jameson. Wiseman suggested the inscription originally marked a grave or was part of a dedication.

40 Paus. 2.1.3; 2.2.2.
territory, a crossroads of the Greek world; in such a case, his ethnic *Kromnitin* and Callimachus’ Corinthian *Kromnitin* would be a mere random coincidence.\(^4\)

Wiseman may be correct in linking the inscription to the nearby area of significant cultural features but his argument for the presence of a large and flourishing Classical or early Hellenistic town are not supported by the evidence. In fact, as the discussion below suggests, the distribution of material culture and settlement at the juncture of roads to Kenchreai, Isthmia, and the Lechaion Gulf is far more continuous, more diverse, and less bounded than might be implied by the settlement category “town,” with settlements, buildings, and graves spread throughout the area. Arguably, the numerous activities that occurred where the roads of the Isthmus met were tied to the broader structure of Corinthian economy and culture. Rather than simply a large, well-bounded Classical-Hellenistic period town on the Isthmus, the crossroads represented one of the most essential extra-urban *structures* of the city of Corinth. It is understandable that settlement in the Roman period redeveloped strongly in an area so important for its economic and cultural life: a busy crossroads of the Isthmus, Greece, and the broader world.

5.2. The Patterns of a Crossroad\(^4\)

Wiseman documented the crossroads as an Archaic-early Hellenistic town bounded by cemeteries on the northwest, south, and east. It is not possible to determine the exact location of the cemeteries from his description, but approximate locations are suggested

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\(^4\) The only potential problem with this interpretation is that Wiseman dated the inscription to the late fourth / early third century BC (although, as noted above, he is not explicit about his criteria), and Pausanias notes (8.27) that the Arcadian city of Kromoi ended with the creation of Megalopolis initiated by Epaminondas in the 360s BC. It is doubtful, however, that the “end” of the city of Kromoi was as immediate as Pausanias suggests, and a survey of a site identified with Arcadian Kromoi has found pottery of the fifth and fourth centuries (although no later than this date): see J. Roy, J.A. Lloyd, and E.J. Owens, “Two Sites in the Megalopolis Basin: suggested locations for Haemoniae and Cromnus,” in J.M. Sanders (ed.), *Philolakon* 1992, 185-94. In any case, in Pausanias’ own day (2\(^{nd}\) century AD), parts of Megapolitan territory were still referred to as “Kromitian” (Paus. 8.34). There is no good reason, then, for rejecting this interpretation (that Agathon of Kromna was from Arcadia) on the basis of chronological evidence.

\(^4\) This chapter will retain the place-name “Kromna” to denote the broad settlement of the crossroads area below the Ayios Dimitrios Ridge since it is now firmly embedded in maps and discussion of the Corinthia.
Wiseman did not proffer an estimate of site size but the cemetery boundaries that he recorded suggest a size of about 700 meters east-west and 400 meters north-south, or about 28 hectares total. Moreover, Wiseman’s analysis highlighted the abundance of Archaic and especially the Classical-period material and only noted the presence of Roman and Late Roman material. His reconstruction of the evidence suggested a Classical town in the quarries, with some evidence for cult, which went out of use by the third century BC; the site’s later history was unclear.

Figure 5.2. Wiseman’s Kromna against the gray backdrop of surveyed EKAS units, with LOCA numbers. Triangles represent Wiseman’s suggested boundaries for the three cemeteries demarcating the site.

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The short description of the site is limited to Wiseman 1963, 271-73, and Wiseman 1978, 66. In the former, Wiseman noted that: “Cemeteries near the cart road on the southwest side of the low ridge at Section 9 (Fig. 1, D), at the southeast edge of the ridge which slopes up sharply to the Haghios Demetrios crest, and a few hundred meters south of the first quarry west of Section 9 mark the extent of the settlement. Eleven wells and two cisterns are located in this area, and great quantities of cut poros blocks, roof tiles and other habitation debris are scattered about the fields.” In the latter, Wiseman noted that the rock-cut tomb at the crossroads was at the northwestern border of the site. This allows us to approximate the general locations of his borders.
Not far south of the place identified as Kromna, on a bluff above the corridor from Kenchreai to Corinth is another important site of the Isthmus, that known by its local toponym Perdhikaria (also called “Rachi Boska”). Since Blegen’s work in the area in the early twentieth century, Perdhikaria had long been known for its Cyclopean wall of Late Helladic date, as well as prehistoric pottery spanning EH to LH III B periods. Wiseman noted scattered Classical to Late Roman material in the area that suggested a small settlement during these periods as well. Since the publication of The Land of the Ancient Corinthians (1978), both Kromna and Perdhikaria have frequently appeared as distinct dots on maps of the central Isthmus and the eastern Corinthia, along with the sites Yiriza, Gonia, Arapiza Ridge, and Voukiana.

During the summers of 2000 and 2001, the Eastern Korinthia Archaeological Survey systematically surveyed the land north and west of the Ayios Dimitrios Ridge and documented the carpet of artifacts strewn across both Kromna proper and Perdhikaria. Now that the data has been collected, it is possible to evaluate systematically the extensiveness of cultural material and periods represented. The following analysis, based on distributional / siteless density data (see below), suggests that cultural material was far more extensive in the area than previously estimated. It offers a reinterpretation of the area in the Greek and (especially) Roman periods and argues that Late Antique habitation and land use in the area marked a culmination of the use of an area (the crossroads) that had been vital to the city of Corinth since its refoundation in the early Principate.

5.2.1. Sites and Siteless Methods at Kromna

It is a well known fact that broken pottery and tile constitute the main type of surface material encountered in the countrysides of the Mediterranean; features like walls, agricultural installations, mosaic floors, and architectural members form only minor components. Although archaeologists encounter many methodological and analytical

44 Carl W. Blegen, “Corinth in Prehistoric Times,” AJA 24 (1920), 1-13, Site 9, p. 7 and fig. 7; Sakalleriou and Faraklas 1971, Appendix II, p. 17; Wiseman 1978, 64-66.

45 Wiseman 1963, 273.
problems in trying to record, define, and interpret sites based on artifact scatters, the most fundamental problems in defining sites are ontological: What is the rationale for establishing boundaries to artifact scatters, especially as these scatters correspond so indirectly to past cultural phenomena? What is the ancient categorical equivalent (e.g., farmstead? villa?) to a scatter of pottery observed on the soil surface? What, in other words, do pottery scatters mean in terms of ancient society and culture?46 Although landscape archaeologists freely use a standard vocabulary to describe the artifact patterns they see in the surface—as for example, “sites”, “villages”, “villas”, “farmsteads”, “field houses”, and “activity areas”—these are only convenient and simplifying categories useful for dealing with a messy and complex reality: most ‘sites’ represent material deposited through a variety of human behaviors (e.g., deposition and abandonment) and natural formation processes (e.g., taphonomy, plowing) over long periods of time.47 Consequently, defining sites in artifactual carpets requires wrestling with a variety of theoretical, methodological, and interpretive complexities.

In Aegean survey, there have been two main approaches to measuring artifact scatters across archaeological space. Traditionally archaeologists have studied the landscape in terms of “sites” (and its variants ‘villas’, ‘farmsteads’, etc…), defined either as the most significant, densest, and extensive artifact scatters, or as exceptional features (e.g., an olive press bed) encountered in the field. In site-based approaches, site definition can occur according to quantitative criteria (e.g., the densest artifact scatters) or, more commonly, according to subjective assessments of which material seems the most “significant” and “interesting”. The Pylos Regional Archaeological Project, for example, used the term POSI (“Places of Special Interest”) as their name for sites they considered interesting; the Eastern Korinthia Survey reserved the term LOCA (“Localized Cultural Anomalies”) to denote similar high-density scatters or unique material.48 Site-

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48 See Tartaron et al., forthcoming, for discussion. See also Chapter 4.2 above, and Appendix I below.
based approaches produce maps showing the distribution of sites across a region (i.e., the so-called “dots on a map”), but these sites are usually defined according to admittedly subjective criteria.

The other approach to measuring artifact scatters, which has become common in Mediterranean survey, is known as ‘siteless,’ ‘non-site’, ‘distributional’, or ‘off-site’ survey. Siteless survey makes the artifact (rather than the site) the basic unit of analysis and attempts to quantify the distribution of artifacts across a region, usually through the use of tally-counters in documenting the landscape. Artifact counts can be converted into density figures by dividing the total number of artifacts counted by the area of space sampled. Since the basic unit of analysis is the artifact rather than the site, the typical end product of siteless survey approaches is a map showing artifact density distributions across space, plotted usually according to their unit of collection (i.e., ‘tracts’). Although methodological paradigms are actually more complex than suggested by this brief outline—for example, site-based projects have sometimes counted (‘off-site’) pottery across the landscape and some siteless projects may use their data to define “sites”49—the discussion does highlight two distinct trajectories in Mediterranean survey.

While neither approach to documenting cultural material is ‘right’ per se, the latter method of counting artifacts does promote systematization, consistency, and comparability in recording artifact patterns in a way not possible using simple impressionistic assessments of what constitutes a ‘site’. It is chiefly because of the introduction of ‘siteless’ methods and quantitative techniques into Aegean survey that surveyors today can systematically pattern artifact scatters and compare the artifact structure of one region to another. Arguably, the full potential of quantitative approaches has not been realized as there is still significant skepticism about the value of counting artifacts and patterning the landscape by density.50 The following discussion will show

49 For example, Caraher, Nakassis, and Pettegrew 2006.

how and why the second approach to measuring artifact scatters—distributional / siteless methods—can contribute to new ways of understanding the crossroads of Corinth.  

5.2.2. A Continuous Carpet of Artifacts  

If the literary evidence for a Classical-period town named Kromna is weak and insubstantial, the archaeological evidence (from EKAS) is neither neat nor tidy. In the course of survey near the sites Kromna and Perdhikaria, field teams noted that artifact patterns were more continuous and complex than suggested by previous site-based assessments of the area. Overall artifact density was high throughout the Kromna-Perdhikaria region although there were also numerous fluctuations between individual fields. It also became clear that two broad periods, Archaic-Hellenistic and Roman, constituted the vast majority of artifacts noted in the area, but the complex overlay of artifacts of different periods made artifact patterning very confusing. In short, the high densities and extensiveness of the artifacts in the area made it difficult to define sites according to traditional means, such as simple impressions of boundaries, or walking out the site to the point that artifacts diminish. Quantitative approaches can help significantly.

The most basic way to pattern the EKAS data is to map the (total) artifact density distribution in the area of Perdhikaria and Kromna. To take a case in point, most ‘sites’ defined in regional survey in the Aegean have average densities typically above 3,000

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51 The following discussion is an elaboration on ideas that have been previously presented and published in collaboration with William Caraher and Dimitri Nakassis. This section has been greatly influenced by their input and ideas. See W.R. Caraher, D. Nakassis, and D.K. Pettegrew, “Siteless Survey and Intensive Data Collection in an Artifact-rich Environment: Case Studies from the Eastern Corinthia, Greece,” Paper delivered at the 70th Annual Meeting for the Society of American Archaeology, Salt Lake City, Utah, April 2005; and W.R. Caraher, D. Nakassis, and D.K. Pettegrew, “Siteless Survey and Intensive Data Collection in an Artifact-rich Environment: Case Studies from the Eastern Corinthia, Greece,” Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology, 2006.

52 See my Appendix I for additional discussion of artifact patterns in the area.

53 The following analysis is based on the EKAS data (artifact densities, chronotypes, etc…), which was entered into a Microsoft Access database and now exists in various tables, and can be queried according to any possible criteria. This quantitative data is also linked to Geographic Information Systems (ArcGIS), which preserve a digital map of the survey units. Linking the data to these units in the GIS allows a researcher to visually represent the distribution of artifacts, chronotypes, and periods across space.
artifacts / hectare,\textsuperscript{54} and artifact densities typically diminish dramatically (fewer than 1,000 artifacts / ha) away from sites. We can begin with this admittedly arbitrary measuring stick: how much of the Kromna-Perdhikaria area possessed artifact density thresholds which, if encountered in other regions of the Aegean, would be defined as “sites”? The answer to the question is illustrated in Figures 5.3a and 5.3b below. The image on the left (5.3a) shows all the units surveyed on the Isthmus, with the Kromna-Perdhikaria crossroads visible in the center of the picture; the image on the right (5.3b) is a higher resolution view of the crossroads. In both images, units with densities at “site” status (greater than 3,000 artifacts / hectare) are represented by purple dots; in Figure 5.3b, mid-sized and small-sized blue dots have been added to denote artifact density thresholds of 2,000-3,000 and 1,000-2,000 artifacts / hectare, respectively. The range of dots gives a sense of artifact patterning in the area.

\textsuperscript{54} This figure is from Alcock, Cherry, and Davis 1994, 138. See discussion of artifact density at Kromna in Caraher, Nakassis, and Pettegrew 2006.
Figures 5.4. Visibility of Units at the Crossroads

What do these images represent? On the one hand, these images generally confirm the impressionistic assessments of field teams that artifact densities were high and continuous. If we use typical density thresholds (>3,000 artifacts/ha) for defining sites in the Aegean as our measuring stick, most of the EKAS survey area is an extensive and continuous site! This only confirms that the Isthmus was not a typical countryside and necessitates more precise methods of patterning the data (see 5.2.3 below).55

With respect to the Kromna-Perdhikaria crossroads, Figure 5.3b shows that densities are consistently high, and that no units surveyed in this area were more than 100 or 200 meters away from units with “site” status. The highest “site”-status densities are not found everywhere but do taper off to the north (north of the Hexamilia-Isthmia road) and east (immediately below the Ay. Dimitrios Ridge). High-density site-level scatters, however, are more continuous to the south, stretching even onto the bluffs of Perdhikaria.

55 For a discussion of the densities of the Isthmus compared with more remote parts of the Eastern Corinthia, see Appendix I.
and beyond. In part, the continuousness of high density areas must be related to the visibility of the surface (Figure 5.4 above). In comparing Figures 5.3b and 5.4, for example, one can see that some of the “blank spots” at the crossroads correlate well with low visibility units—such is the case with the block of units in the heart of Kromna proper and at the western end, the units to the north of the crossroads, and units at the northeast corner of Perdhikaria—and we must consequently recognize that artifact densities are in fact more continuous than Fig. 5.3b implies. Nonetheless, there are enough high visibility units throughout to recognize a general pattern. These analyses suggest that with the exception of the northern and eastern borders, the boundaries of cultural material at the crossroads are less well-defined than previous analyses have implied; on the contrary, the debris of material from the Archaic-Late Roman period spreads continuously to the south. Using the simple criterion of total artifact density, we can estimate that site-level densities extended nearly continuously over a distance of 1,300 meters north from the Ayios Dimitrios Ridge to the Isthmia Road, and at least 700 meters east to west; this conservative estimate of the high-density area of the crossroads is 91 hectares, approximately three times the size of Wiseman’s site (see above).

Apart from highlighting the exceptionally high-density character of the Isthmus generally, and the problem with bounding the crossroads area, patterning by total artifact density is not a particularly meaningful way to understand the data. After all, artifact scatters, by their nature, represent overlays of cultural material and aggregates of debris deposited over periods of time through different kinds of activities. A more meaningful analysis, then, is to analyze the period groupings that make up the assemblages in the area, as well as the functional characteristics for each period. Is it not possible that the area is more bounded when considered in its respective chronological groupings? The following analysis will discuss the crossroads at three broad points in time—the Archaic-Hellenistic, Early Roman, and Late Roman—and show how despite real changes in the use of the area, there are also significant elements of continuity.
5.2.3. The Chronological Pattern

There are presumably a range of possible approaches to patterning a continuous carpet of artifacts. This section adopts three different approaches to analyzing density data that highlight chronological patterns.

1. **Thresholds and Phases**: First, it uses an arbitrary threshold of minimum artifact counts to highlight survey units that have substantial quantities of material of particular periods. In dealing with the ceramic material found at sites, survey archaeologists have often used a minimum threshold of five or more artifacts of a specific period as evidence for a significant component or occupational phase for that period at the site.\(^{56}\) There are problems with this method of measurement in that it favors periods (such as Late Roman or Classical-Hellenistic) that are highly visible on the ground and consequently more abundant (Ch. 4). It nonetheless offers one way of assessing the distributional character of an area through time.

2. **Ranking**: Second, it assesses the degree to which the most diverse/densest units for each period concentrate in the area of the crossroads. It discusses the Top 50 Densest/Most Diverse units per period (see Appendix I) to provide a sense for how relatively important the crossroads was for each of the broad periods.

3. **Sites / LOCAs**: And finally, related to the second approach, it discusses the presence of LOCAs / “sites” in the area of the crossroads for each period. Since the LOCAs were defined on the basis of the most diverse / densest units (Appendix I), this approach overlaps with the second approach above, but it may still offer some insight into artifact patterning.

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Together these approaches highlight the general character of long-term settlement at the crossroads and demonstrate that the area was an important node in the Corinthia from the Archaic age through Late Antiquity, although arguably, there were also real changes in the use of the area through time (See 5.2.4 below).

First, if we use the arbitrary threshold of at least five artifacts / unit to define the distribution of significant phases, the area of the crossroads has substantial phase signatures for both the Archaic-Hellenistic and Late Roman periods. The distribution of phase-significant units of Archaic-Hellenistic and Late Roman dates is shown in Figures 5.5 and 5.6 below. Units with five or more artifacts for each period are indicated by blue dots; smaller dots and yellow background indicate units with one to four artifacts from the period. Using this approach to patterning the artifact data, we can conclude that significant concentrations of Archaic-Hellenistic and Late Roman material spread continuously between the slopes of Perdhikaria northward. Examining the individual period distributions in this way (Fig. 5.5 and 5.6) shows significant thresholds of both Archaic-Hellenistic and Late Roman material to the north of the Isthmia-Corinth road—a pattern that is lost when examining only the overall artifact density (see Fig. 5.3b). For the Archaic-Hellenistic period, units focus in an area some 850 m x 850 m north of the ridge of Perdhikaria, covering an area of 72 hectares, some two-and-a-half times larger than the site estimated by Wiseman for this period. The phase-significant units of the late Roman period, on the other hand, are as consistent but less continuous, concentrating in smaller groupings across the entire area, but spread over a kilometer north-south and east-west, covering an area nearly five times the extent suggested by Wiseman’s site. The yellow background for both periods indicates that the artifactual carpet is continuous, even when phase-significant units are not.

The main problem with this arbitrary method for analyzing significant period phases is that it favors those periods that are highly visible on the ground. If we look at the Early Roman period (Figure 5.7), by contrast, it would initially appear relatively unimportant as there are no units in this area with five or more artifacts of Early Roman date. On the other hand, the early Roman period does in fact have a distinct, but diffuse, pattern in the
area, spread over the much of the ridge of Perdhikaria, and the area immediately to the northwest. The lower-density character of the spread is to be explained by the source problems discussed at length in the previous chapter—relatively lower ceramic visibility when compared with either Archaic-Hellenistic or Late Roman. The early Roman period, then, appears as a significant component at Kromna spreading south from the quarry area onto and over the Perdhikaria ridge.57 Taken altogether, this analysis of minimum thresholds (>five artifacts) suggests that each of the three broad periods has extensive (albeit not necessarily high-density) signatures at the site of the crossroads.

Figure 5.5. Distribution of Significant Archaic-Hellenistic units. Blue dot indicates at least five artifacts of AR-HE date; yellow background indicates units with one to four artifacts; black triangles here and elsewhere represent Wiseman’s cemeteries.

57 For further discussion about low-density periods, see below. Also, W.R. Caraher, D. Nakassis, and D.K. Pettegrew, “Siteless Survey in an Artifact-rich Environment: Case Studies from the Eastern Corinthia, Greece,” in JMA 2006, have made a similar argument for the relatively diffuse distribution of the Archaic period (when compared with the Classical period).
Figure 5.6. Distribution of Significant late Roman units. Tan background indicates units with 1-4 artifacts.

Figure 5.7. Distribution of significant early Roman units. Blue dot indicates at least five artifacts of ER date; red background indicates units with one to four artifacts.
The second way of assessing the chronological character of the crossroads is to determine how many of the densest and most diverse units of each period concentrate in the area of the crossroads. The basis for thinking about units in this way is discussed at length in Appendix I, which presents the “Top 50” most diverse and dense units of the Corinthia for the Archaic-Hellenistic, Early Roman, and Late Roman periods. The advantage of using this approach is that it ranks units for each period by their relative diversity/density, irregardless of how the density/diversity of the unit compares to other periods or some arbitrary standard; it thereby highlights the real concentrations for each period, the “hot spots.” For the Early Roman period, which is less visible and identifiable in the field (than, for instance, the Late Roman), ranking allows the densest units to stand out even though the units are relatively lower density compared to more visible periods.

By using this method of analysis, we can again see the constancy of the crossroads for the history of the region (Figures 5.8-5.11). Although the broad area of the crossroads constitutes less than a quarter of all the territory surveyed by EKAS, it produced a significant proportion of the finds: about 60% (n=30) of the fifty most diverse Archaic-Hellenistic units lie in this area, 32% of the densest early Roman units (n=16), and 42% of the most diverse Late Roman units (n=21). Again, the pattern for each of the periods indicates an extensive area of occupation. Although the material signature for these three periods assumes different shapes—the Early Roman period (Fig. 5.9), for instance, has a greater signature on the Perdhikaria Ridge and the area south of the quarries—there is still significant continuity in the use of the area as a whole. It is important to remember, of course, that the fifty densest units of each period occur against a background carpet of units with lower densities; each figure below shows the top fifty of the period against this background of material of the same period (represented by yellow and tan shade).

58 See Appendix I for a discussion of the terms “density” and “diversity-density”. In brief, simple period density refers to the amount of material of each period in a unit divided by the area of the unit. Diversity-density represents the diversity count of unique chronotypes of the period divided by the area of the unit. The latter is designed to eliminate redundant data for especially visible periods like the AR-HE or LR. For example, eight bodysherd fragments of Combed Ware collected from a unit are counted as 1 fragment on the diversity scale.
Figure 5.8. The fifty most diverse units of Archaic-Hellenistic date (green dots), against backdrop of all units with Archaic-Hellenistic pottery

Figure 5.9. The fifty most diverse units of ER date, against backdrop of all units with ER pottery
Figure 5.10. The fifty most diverse units of late Roman date, against backdrop of all units with late Roman pottery

Figure 5.11. The fifty densest / most diverse units of Archaic-Hellenistic (green), Early Roman (red), and Late Roman (blue) date
The drawback to this approach, however, is that it is susceptible to the biases produced by surveying differently sized survey units. EKAS teams defined survey units on the basis of geomorphic boundaries, and consequently, survey unit size ranged between 100 sq. meters and more than 10,000 sq. meters, although typically units fell within a narrower range of 800-3,000 sq. meters. Because artifact densities can fluctuate significantly across space, the use of different unit sizes complicates the measurement of period density. For periods where high artifact density is consistently extensive across broad spaces, for example, the approach is suitable for patterning the data; but for periods where artifact density varies substantially over small spaces, this method is likely to highlight the smallest units as the densest, since at lower spatial resolution (i.e., larger units), higher densities are ‘washed out’. For example, if in our consideration of period density, we examine units of all size:

- 34 of the top 50 Archaic-Hellenistic units have areas less than 800 square meters and these fifty units have an average area of 632 sq. meters.
- 27 of the top 50 Late Roman units have areas less than 800 square meters, and the fifty units together have an average area of 828 square meters.
- only 12 of the top 50 Early Roman units have areas less than 800 square meters, and the fifty units together have a much high average area of 2,229 square meters.

For the Archaic-Hellenistic and the Late Roman periods, sample size of the unit matters tremendously, with significant fluctuations in density across small spaces. Comparing the density of small units with larger units for these periods is unlikely to be meaningful since high period densities become washed out with lower spatial resolution. A better solution is to eliminate the 20% (n =284) of EKAS survey units that have areas smaller than 800 sq. meters; while this threshold (<800 sq. meters) is an admittedly arbitrary breaking point, it does effectively eliminate the effects caused by the smallest units on period density. Figures 5.8-5.11 only show Top 50 units with areas greater than 800 sq. meters.
An example of the effects of small unit size on ranking can be seen in Figure 5.12 below, which shows the Top 50 Archaic-Hellenistic units based on all unit sizes (5.12a) and units with areas greater than 800 square meters (5.12b). While the general picture of the Archaic-Hellenistic periods that emerges from both analyses is similar—concentrations at the crossroads, with occasional high-diversity units elsewhere in the same general locations—there are some notable differences. Figure 5.12a, based on analysis of units of all sizes, highlights the crossroads especially (where survey units tended to be smaller), with an emphasis on the northern half in the area known as Kromna. On the other hand, Figure 5.12b, which excludes smallest-sized units, shows a more even distribution of the highest diversity-density across the entire area of the crossroads and also emphasizes the area immediately west of Kyras Vrysi as one of the most concentrated densities of Archaic-Hellenistic material in the survey area. These differences confirm a need to look at the data in different ways in order to draw meaningful comparisons and interpretations. Section 5.2.4 below will discuss some of the implications of this discussion for interpreting the Archaic-Hellenistic period material at the crossroads.

Figure 5.12a and 5.12b. The fifty most diverse units of Archaic-Hellenistic date (green dots), against backdrop of all units with AR-HE pottery. Figure on left show highest density units of all sizes; while figure on the right excludes units smaller than 800 square meters.
A final approach to measuring the longevity of land use in the area is to examine the relationship of Late Roman sites to earlier Roman and Archaic-Hellenistic material. These sites, or LOCAs, are defined and discussed in the Appendix I that follows the dissertation. Figures 5.13-5.14 below show the overlay of Later Roman sites to earlier high-density areas in respectively, the northern and southern parts of the crossroads area.

Figures 5.13a. & 5.13b., Kromna, LR Sites 8-12, 21-23, against AR-HE Diversity (left) and ER density (right). Tombs are indicated by crosses, Top 50 AR-HE units by green dots, and early Roman sites by red outline and hatch marks.

Figures 5.14a & 5.14b., Perdhikaria, late Roman sites (blue outline) # 5-11, against Archaic-Hellenistic diversity (left) and early Roman density (right).
The figures again illustrate the differences in the use of the crossroads over time: the Archaic-Hellenistic period clusters in the broad area immediately south and east of the crossroads; the Early Roman period (red outline and hatches) focuses on the ridge of Perdhikaria and several areas immediately to the north; and the late Roman sites (blue outline) are distributed at intervals of 100-200 meters across the crossroads. But the figures also show some remarkable patterns of continuity and reuse of specific places in the late Roman period. Late Roman sites like numbers 8, 9, and 11 appear to overlay the densest locations of preceding periods. It is difficult to see this overlay as random, and this pattern will be discussed at greater length in the following sections and chapter. The important point to make here is that the crossroads area was used between the Archaic and Late Roman periods and, in some cases, later occupation appears to have a close spatial relationship to earlier Roman and Archaic-Hellenistic.

Despite the problems in interpreting complex data, there is a clear and consistent pattern between the Archaic and Late Roman periods in the use of area of the crossroads. The Archaic-Hellenistic and Late Roman are densest due to greater diagnosticity but even the Early Roman has a significant signature in the area, albeit at lower density thresholds and in different parts. A significant proportion of the most diverse and densest units for each period also concentrate in this area, confirming the relative importance of the area compared to others in the Corinthia.

5.2.4. A Brief History of the Crossroads

If the discussion above highlights the material significance of the crossroads across the chronological span of the ancient world, what can we say specifically about the changes in the use of this area through time? The following discussion aims to highlight the character of long-term continuity at the crossroads and address how the area was important in the Corinthian landscape at different points in time.
Archaic-Hellenistic Period

At the outset, we must clarify the chronology of the use of the crossroads during the Archaic-Hellenistic period. Figure 5.5 above suggests a continuous pattern of Archaic-Hellenistic material from Perdhikaria to the Isthmia Road, but a recent analysis has shown a more nuanced reading of the history of the settlement in this broad period.59 While pottery from this period does in fact spread from Perdhikaria to the Corinth-Isthmia road, the Archaic period material is restricted to the area outside of the quarries, extending north-westward from the base of the Perdhikaria ridge (Fig. 5.15a). And although Classical-period material is spread from Perdhikaria to the Corinth-Isthmia Road (and beyond), it concentrates in the area of the quarries that Wiseman referred to as Kromna (Fig. 5.15b). The extensive AR-HE scatter, in other words, is an aggregate of material from two narrower periods that has a more subtle history.60 Caraher, Nakassis, and Pettegrew have argued that the low-density Archaic scatter immediately below and to the northwest of the Perdhikaria ridge was the ephemeral predecessor to the Kromna that would emerge in the early Classical Age.61 The following discussion attempts to build on their observations with a more nuanced analysis of the functional character of the site.

61 Wiseman seems to have recognized this, in part, by noting the presence of earlier material in the graves excavated on the (south?)western end of the site: Wiseman 1978, 66.
How are we to understand the general use of the area during these periods based on the character, density, and distribution of material? Wiseman referred to Kromna as a “town” bordered by cemeteries, but his principal basis for this interpretation was literary evidence, which can now be dismissed (Section 5.1 above). The archaeological data must be examined on its own terms and doing this reveals that during the Archaic and Classical periods, much of the area referred to as Kromna (cf. Fig. 5.13: the area between LR LOCAs 11 and 23) was not used firstly as a “town” or “settlement” but as an extensive group of cemeteries, along with some cultic features. The two predominant signatures for the site are “mortuary” features such as graves and tombs, and to a lesser extent, possibly “religious” artifacts and features like figurines, votive jars, altars, and sanctuaries. The best evidence for specifically “settlement” debris occurs beyond the group of graves and cemeteries that coalesce at the crossroads.

The best evidence for a predominantly “mortuary” character of the site are, of course, the distribution of physical cemeteries and graves documented by Wiseman, and more recently, by Rife. Wiseman defined three separate Archaic-Hellenistic cemeteries at Kromna on the basis of sarcophagi and high-quality finewares: 1) near the ‘cart-road’ below a low ridge; 2) at the southwestern edge of the rise to the Ayios Dimitrios Ridge;
and 3) an area a few hundred meters south of the first quarry west of the crossroads.\textsuperscript{62} The first cemetery is probably to be associated with LOCA 9005, a dense cluster of high-quality AR-HE finewares, and Mortuary LOCA (=ML) 10, a line of graves carved into the soft limestone ridge (Fig. 5.16); it is impossible to plot the exact location of the other two cemeteries but (based on Wiseman’s description) the southeastern one should be in the vicinity of ML 37 and LOCA 9003 and the western one not far from LOCAs 9163 and 9164, although it may also be located slightly further west. Rife’s recent study identified an unfinished sarcophagus of AR-CL date (ML 16) in the quarry on the northeastern edge of the site (ML 16, near LOCA 9133); an early-middle Roman chamber tomb group at the crossroads at the place Wiseman had labeled a “cave”,\textsuperscript{63} and another AR-CL sarcophagus (ML 37) to the east, in an area reportedly rich in sarcophagus fragments (according to a local resident).\textsuperscript{64} He also noted LR tombs in the ridge of Perdhikaria. Finally, in the autumn of 2005, the Greek Archaeological Service excavated sixteen graves of Archaic-Classical date immediately to the northeast of LOCA 9132, at the northern end of the quarry area; this area had been identified by EKAS as a place of exceptionally high diversity of artifacts. These features are represented with crosses and triangles in Figures 5.16 and 5.17 below.

\textsuperscript{62} Wiseman 1963, 271, with reference to Fig. 1 on p. 251: “Cemeteries near the cart road on the southwest side of the low ridge at Section 9 (Fig. 1, D), at the southeast edge of the ridge which slopes up sharply to the Haghios Demetrios crest, and a few hundred meters south of the first quarry west of Section 9 mark the extent of settlement”. See also Wiseman 1978, 66.

\textsuperscript{63} Wiseman 1978, 66, and 65, Fig. 74.

\textsuperscript{64} Tartaron et al., Forthcoming.
Figures 5.16. Kromna in the Archaic-Hellenistic period, showing the cemeteries defining Wiseman’s site (black triangle), Mortuary LOCAs (red crosses), and LOCAs.

Figures 5.17. Kromna in the Archaic-Hellenistic period, showing the period’s most diverse units (green dots), Wiseman’s cemeteries (black triangle), additional known graves (crosses), and LOCAs.
Additional cemeteries can also be located, albeit with less certainty, on the basis of the distribution of AR-HE artifacts. It is difficult, of course, to distinguish “mortuary”, “cultic”, and “domestic” contexts from pottery scatters and in general, there has been only limited scholarly discussion about the “signatures” of different kinds of sites in Mediterranean landscapes. In a discussion of signatures of sanctuaries and shrines, Alcock noted that most surveys have used inscriptions and architecture as the predominant criteria, along with the presence of votives and figurines, greater quantities of high-quality finewares (black-glazed, red-figure, but especially open shapes), and the location of the site. Assemblages of this sort, however, could be easily confused with “mortuary” areas like cemeteries, which would have many of the same kinds of artifacts. In their catalogue of sites, for example, the AEP project noted Archaic-Classical “sanctuaries” with fineware, black-glazed miniature cups and kraters, figurines, tiles, and lamps and “cemeteries” and graves with drinking cups, miniatures vessels, black-glazed fineware, rooftiles, pithoi and coarse and plainwares. Such overlaps in signature are an unfortunate element in working with surface assemblages and must be considered on a case by case basis.

In respect to pottery sherds, mortuary space can be more easily distinguished from “domestic” and “agricultural” space by the higher densities and variety of finewares. Scholarship on the cemeteries of the Corinthia between Geometric and Hellenistic times


67 See, for example, Runnels 1994, Sites A5, A15, A16, A21, B77, and C41.

68 I thank Joseph Rife for discussing this issue with me and look forward to his further work on the topic for Kromna.
has highlighted the significant quantities of ceramic finewares deposited either within or immediately outside graves, as grave goods or libations. In Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic times, grave assemblages include, first and foremost, small cups (especially skyphoi) and pitchers (especially oinochoai) or kylikes; and, with slightly less consistency, unguentaria, kantharoi, bowls, aryballoi, red-figure vases, pyxides, lekythoi, miniature vessels, amphoriskoi, and lamps; occasionally, other ceramic artifacts like figurines, phialai, and loomweights are present. Although such a range of ceramics is also found in rural houses and domestic contexts of the Classical and Hellenistic periods, in mortuary contexts finewares exist in abundance and form the predominant signature of the assemblage. Moreover, tile graves are not uncommon in the Classical period, and even various coarsewares, like amphorae and pithoi, are used for burials in the Corinthia, although they become less common after the sixth century. At the North Cemetery, for instance, several large urns (kraters and large amphorae) of Archaic date were used for infant or child burials, and the investigators suggested that a few large


70 See Palmer’s section (especially pp. 78-81) in Blegen, Palmer, and Young 1964, with discussion and catalogue of artifacts from Archaic-early Roman graves of the North Cemetery. In Roman graves, Palmer 1964, 82, noted fewer offerings; typical offerings included unguentaria, lamps, and objects of a more domestic nature (casseroles and deep bowls).


72 At the North Cemetery, tile graves were common from the fifth century BC, and again in the early Roman period: see Blegen, Palmer and Young 1964, 73-75. A few tiled graves were noted at the Lechaion cemetery (Eliot and Eliot 1968). Tile graves are also not an uncommon form of burial in Hellenistic: see note by Pemberton 1985, 272-73, for the Hellenistic period.

73 For discussion and examples in a Corinthian context, see K. Dickey, Corinthian Burial Customs, ca. 1100 to 550 BC, PhD Dissertation, Bryn Mawr College, 1992, 36-43, 71, 95, and Appendix II. Dickey cites early examples of transport amphorae, coarse kraters, and pithoi used for pot burials.
cooking vessels may also have been used for similar ends.\textsuperscript{74} To summarize this discussion, cemeteries of Archaic and Classical date should be evident in surface assemblages especially by the high quality and diversity of finewares, and to a lesser extent by tiles and large storage vessels; the abundance of certain classes of fineware, especially skypophoi, phialai, oinochoai, miniature vessels, and lekythoi, provide the best evidence for graves and cemeteries.

There are a number of areas at the crossroads that are, by the character and diversity of their assemblages, better interpreted as additional cemeteries of the Archaic-Classical period than the debris left by former settlement (5.18-5.21 below). Certainly the high-diversity Classical period units immediately east/southeast of the crossroads contain a wide array of quality finewares (oinochoe, kraters, lekythoi, pyxides, and skyphoi) and probably represent cemeteries (Figure 5.11, 5.18-5.20); the excavation of graves at the eastern end of this area in 2005 (see above) would corroborate this hypothesis. The Archaic material immediately south-southwest of the crossroads and the quarries probably also represent graves, since skyphoi and high-quality finewares (pyxides, miniatures, oinochoai, Attic pottery, loomweights, lamps) are widely distributed throughout this area (Figures 5.18-5.20); in fact, it is easy to imagine that the area between the three black triangles on the western side of the site (Fig. 5.18a) are cemeteries or scattered graves. That the distribution of amphorae and pithoi (Fig. 5.21) also correlates with these areas should not surprise us given the facts considered above—that large storage vessels are commonly used for pot burials to the end of the Archaic period; while these kinds of artifacts might also indicate “habitation” and “industrial” debris in other contexts, here, in the midst of areas identified as cemeteries, they can more easily be understood as mortuary. Hence, the concentration of diverse units (Fig. 5.18) on both sides of the road from Kenchreai probably suggests mortuary spaces;

\textsuperscript{74} Blegen, Palmer, and Young 1964, 73, 102, 113. The use of large coarse wares for “pot burials” is common in Greece, especially in the Archaic period and becoming less common in later periods. For discussion, see Dickey 1992, 36-43; A. Foley, \textit{The Argolid 800-600 B.C.: An Archaeological Survey}, SIMA Vol. 80, London 1985, 34-55, for eighth and seventh century examples from the Argolid; and D.M. Robinson, \textit{Necrolynthia. A Study in Greek Burial Customs and Anthropology}, Olynthus Part XII, Baltimore 1942, 166-73. Robinson surveys (168-70) the evidence (as known then), noting examples of fifth and fourth century BC pot burials from Athens.
additional scattered skyphoi, lekythoi, and fineware to the east and southeast could also represent additional scattered roadside graves, although we cannot rule out habitation.

Figures 5.18a & 5.18b., Fineware at the crossroads in the AR-HE period. Image on left shows overall count of fineware; image on right shows overall count of skyphoi. Black triangles indicate Wiseman’s cemeteries.

Figure 5.19a & 5.19b. Image on left shows units with lekythoi (green dot), pyxides (blue), and oinochoai (red) against background of units with skyphoi (peach). Image on right shows miniature vessels (bright green).
Wiseman and Tartaron et al. also suggested that the “cultic” elements of Kromna, such as miniature “votive” vessels, figurines, several perirhanterion rims, and a miniature altar, indicated a nearby sanctuary or shrine, but these are features also common to mortuary contexts and it is difficult in any case to isolate one kind of activity from another without very specific functional indicators (like inscriptions). In only one case (Fig. 5.16: LOCA 9003), on the edge of a low ridge to the southeast of the quarries, is the evidence specific enough to suggest a shrine or sanctuary: monumental architecture, figurines, miniature vessels, and perirhanteria rims. There are also, of course, the two dining rooms (LOCAs 9131 and 9132) situated immediately west of the graves in-between quarried zones, but how these relate to the mortuary features is unclear. It is possible, of course, that there were other shrines at the crossroads, but with artifact signatures similar to those of cemeteries, it is hardly easy to define them. The forthcoming preliminary report by T. Tartaron et al. details these features at significant length.

75 Tartaron et al., Forthcoming; Wiseman 1963, 272; 1978, 66.

76 T. Tartaron et al. forthcoming.
What stands out, nonetheless, in the mapping of artifact types is how little evidence there is for what we might call a “town”. In light of the high density of black-glazed finewares, including skyphoi, miniatures, and votive cups, as well as the various areas definitely identified as cemeteries or graves, it is difficult to see Kromna proper as essentially a nucleated “settlement”. Wiseman noted habitation debris in the area but was not specific about its location. Tartaron *et al.* also suggested “habitation” and “industrial” debris in the area such as storage and cooking vessels at LOCAs 9005 and 9007, but how these kinds of activities could have occurred in areas associated with burials is hard to imagine. Storage vessels like pithoi and amphorae, in any case, are not incompatible with a mortuary landscape, and there is nothing necessarily “domestic” or “industrial” about the assemblages found at Kromna in the Archaic and Classical periods.\(^77\)

**Figures 5.21a & 5.21b.** Presence of amphorae (left) and pithoi (right) at the Crossroads in the AR-HE period. Black triangles indicate estimated cemetery locations for Wiseman’s site.

If Archaic-Classical habitation is not found at Kromna proper, there is evidence for settlement east, northeast, and southeast of the main quarry area. Tartaron *et al.* mention some good candidates for AR-CL habitation in this area (Fig. 5.17), including LOCA

\(^{77}\) There may, of course, have been houses and ordinary buildings in the area, but the most significant signature is the cultic and mortuary one, discussed below.
9126 to the northeast of the site, and two “farmsteads” (LOCAs 9154 and 9163) several hundred meters to the south, although these farms appear close to the probable location of Wiseman’s western cemetery. Indeed, there are abundant remains on and immediately north of the Perdhikaria ridge as well as east/northeast of the cemeteries that could represent habitation. We should also not rule out the possibility that the lower-density distribution of amphorae, pithoi, fineware, kitchenware, and coarsewares to the north, south, and east of the crossroads area represent scattered farmsteads in a more dispersed pattern of settlement. The cluster of units with kitchenware sherds (Fig. 5.22a) to the northeast of the quarries and northwest of Perdhikaria may be fair indicators of domestic or industrial contexts during this period. And where finewares do not indicate graves, coarsewares could signal habitation (5.22b below).

**Figures 5.22a & 5.22b.** Presence of kitchenwares (left) and coarsewares (right) at the crossroads in the AR-HE period. Black triangles indicate cemetery locations for Wiseman’s site.

Finally, the restriction of Archaic pottery to the area outside of (south of) the quarries (Fig. 5.15a above) provides additional clues about the history of the crossroads in the Greek period. The use of the quarry at the crossroads for mortuary purposes dates from

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78 Tartaron *et al.* forthcoming, note, for example, that LOCA 9163 included fineware, roof tiles, storage jars, amphorae, loom weights, millstones, lamps. See Pettegrew 2001 and 2002 for the problems of identifying habitation from survey data.
the Classical period, and certainly by the fifth century BC.79 Burying the dead in the quarries could, of course, have occurred in conjunction with their exploitation,80 but the presence of Classical-period graves is perhaps better explained as post-dating an already quarried industrial area than being contemporary with it. One possible explanation for the shift of the cemetery northward into the quarries in the early Classical period is that it corresponded to a concomitant shift of quarrying activity elsewhere, perhaps to the line of Hexamilia quarries to the west.81

In sum, the site of the crossroads in the Archaic and Classical period is a complex one, with thick overlapping layers of coarse and finewares, storage jars and pithoi, finewares, and even votives. Arguably, however, the concentrated thickness and diversity of Archaic and Classical material is not the waste of an important town, but higher quality debris associated with the use of quarry area as a crossroads, with a range of graves, cultic buildings, and commemorative features. In the Archaic era, the cemetery centered to the southeast of the quarries, and in the Classical period, it incorporated the quarries. “Habitation” existed not as a concentrated aggregate within this zone of cemeteries, but outside and beyond it, scattered in lower densities across the landscape.

The presence of cemeteries and sanctuaries where the roads of Corinth came together would have made this area highly visible to travelers, visitors, and passersby. The existence of farmsteads nearby attest to habitation to the south and east, and the broad scatter of high-density Classical-period artifacts on the ridge of Perdhikaria and immediately to the north (Fig. 5.5) attests to a variety of rural buildings related to the exploitation and use of the area in the Classical period. But the most distinct feature of


80 Consider the close relationship between quarrying and cemeteries in the area. Tartaron et al., forthcoming, have noted, for instance, the recovery of an unfinished sarcophagus (ML 16) from the quarry. Unfortunately, it cannot be dated more precisely than the late Archaic-late Classical period. Tartaron et al., Forthcoming, suggest that quarrying occurs at Kromna during the late Classical period.

81 Wiseman 1978, 68.
the material record at Kromna proper is that this Classical “town” was, in most respects, a group of cemeteries situated at a significant node on the road to or around Corinth.

**Early Roman Period**

The Hellenistic period for Kromna is poorly represented at the crossroads, but the installation of a substantial olive press in the quarries occurred probably during Corinth’s abandonment, or at least in the earliest phases of Roman colonization.\(^82\) In the early Roman period (Figures 5.7, 5.9, 5.13b, 5.14b, and 5.23-5.27 below), the crossroads revived and again became an important structure on the Corinthian Isthmus. The sites that developed in this period include especially an extensive area immediately southwest of the site of Kromna and the bluff and lower slopes of the Perdhikaria ridge. These areas were presumably covered with building and habitation, since early Roman amphorae, fineware, and kitchen/cooking ware were all found in the area (Fig. 5.23-5.24), especially immediately below (north-northwest of) the ridge of Perdhikaria.

The broad distribution of ER amphorae south of Perdhikaria is interesting in light of the relatively lighter signature of ER fineware and kitchenware in the same area. This pattern could indicate the weaker identification of ER finewares and kitchenwares; in any case, it highlights the significance of transport amphora over the broader area of the crossroads. Various types of ER amphorae are represented, including Rhodian and especially Koan-type, suggesting connections to both eastern and western markets. Finewares consist of Eastern Sigillata A and B, pointing to contact with Asia Minor and Syria. Both amphorae and fineware indicate a significant first century and early second century use of the crossroads, probably as an extensive area of settlement, directed toward both agriculture and a system of redistribution between the largest nodes of the Isthmus: Corinth town, Isthmia, Kenchreai, and the northern Corinthian Gulf.

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\(^82\) Cf. Sarah James 2005.
Figures 5.23a & 5.23b. The crossroads in the early Roman period, showing presence of early Roman amphorae (purple) and early Roman fineware (green). Black triangles are Wiseman’s cemeteries and red crosses represent additional graves.

Figures 5.24. The crossroads in the early Roman period, showing distribution of units with early Roman kitchen/cooking wares (red). Black triangles represent Wiseman’s cemeteries, and red crosses represent graves.
Figure 5.25. Distribution of units with Ancient and Roman Glass

The place of the crossroads within regional and extra-regional markets is further suggested by the presence of a sizable olive press on the edge of the quarries. S. James’ study of this feature has shown that the press bed is substantial enough that it could have accommodated significant local crop demands; she has estimated that the press could have handled processing the fruit from some 2,000 trees of some 100 stremmata (10 ha) in a two month season. This would be consistent with a period of intensive olioculture, which would well describe the early Roman era. In the high empire, oil processed at this location may have been transported into the city center, shipped off to Kenchreae, or to the festival at Isthmia. The principal value of processing oil at the crossroads was that the location was mid-point between the numerous travel and settlement nodes of the Isthmus; agricultural produce could easily be redistributed from here toward any of these destinations. Concentrations of ancient millstone and groundstone equipment in the

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84 James’ forthcoming study of olioculture in the Corinthia economy should highlight how a place like Kromna functioned within a regional economy.
area are visible in Figure 5.26 below and, if dating to the early Roman period, might confirm James’ suggestions about the nucleated character of olive pressing.

There are two other significant features of the early Roman crossroads. First, the ER pattern bears a similar, but not exact, resemblance to the preceding Archaic-Hellenistic (Fig. 5.27). Like the preceding period, the densities trail off rather quickly to the north of the Corinth-Isthmia road; on the other hand, the ER material is generally located south of the densest AR-HE material, covering the Perdhikaria Ridge. Nonetheless, several of the ER sites (Cf. Appendix I for definition), indicated by the hatch lines in Fig. 5.27, do in fact center over and are adjacent to high-density AR-HE units. The correlation is particularly strong for the site immediately north of Perdhikaria where the Early Roman LOCAs occur over some of the densest patches of AR-HE units. It is difficult to know what this represents, but it is possible that settlement in the ER period refurbished abandoned buildings from the preceding era. Certainly, the excavation of the urban center and private houses in the Corinthia has demonstrated that rehabilitation often occurred in terms of the structured landscape of the preceding period (see Ch. 6).
On the other hand, there is one significant area of the crossroads lacking Early Roman material: Kromna proper, the site of the Classical cemetery. Even if we recognize in the Early Roman pattern a significant underestimation of the actual amount of pottery on the landscape (Ch. 4), there is still remarkably little Early Roman pottery found in the quarries when compared, for instance, to the concentration of Early Roman material in the area to the southwest. Does the weak evidence for early Roman presence in the quarries proper suggest a respect for the use of the area as a cemetery? While the founding Roman colonizers could and did pillage and reuse tombs and graves when they wanted to,\(^{85}\) there is no evidence in this case that they simply desecrated the area by, for example, converting it into domestic or industrial space. On the contrary, the cemetery

\(^{85}\) The Romans reused Archaic and Classical graves in Corinth: see Blegen, Palmer, and Young 1964, 65, 70, and 78; and Shear 1930, 426-28.
would have been highly visible to Roman colonizers and in fact there are several early Roman graves in the area. J. Rife, for instance, has documented the constructing of Roman chamber-tomb groups in the vicinity of the quarries (Figure 5.16: near the Late Roman sites #12 and 21, and LOCA 9005), demonstrating the continuity of the mortuary structure of the crossroads. One chamber tomb group was forged out of a limestone plateau at the probable crossroads of the Corinth-Isthmia road and the road to the north (Fig. 5.16: LOCA 9006), with steps leading down to several chamber tombs.86

Late Roman Period

The Late Roman period at the Kromnian Crossroads is more visible than the early Roman period because its material culture is diagnostic and is consequently easier to identify. We should keep in mind, then, that what we say about the crossroads in this later period may sometimes also apply for the area in the earlier Roman period—although certainly this is difficult to measure.

One of the most distinct features of the late Roman landscape at Kromna and elsewhere is the strong pattern of overlap with earlier periods, especially the early Roman (see Fig. 5.13-5.14, 5.28). As with the earlier Roman period, there is evidence for continuity in the use of the area in this period for burial. An early Byzantine shaft grave, for instance, is found among the ER chamber tomb group in the area of Late Roman Site #12 (5.28a), and graves of this date were noted in the northern and northwestern bluff faces of Perdhikaria (5.28b).87 As for habitation and buildings, there is clear overlap of late Roman site #’s 7, 8, 9, and 11 with the Early Roman sites (Fig. 5.13-5.14, 5.28), which presumably highlights the continuity of activity in the area over the course of the Roman period. The limestone plateau overlooking the crossroads, into which was built the early Roman chamber tomb noted above, became in the Late Roman period a dense

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86 Cf. Wiseman 1978, Fig. 74.

87 See Tartaron et al. Forthcoming; and J. Rife “Death, ritual and memory in Greek society during the early and middle Roman Empire.” PhD. Dissertation, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor 1999; and Rife, personal communication.
area of occupation (Fig. 5.28a: Late Roman LOCA 21) and the large olive press equipment found in this area could date to this period, which would confirm again the continued use of the area as an agricultural center for processing the harvest of the olives.

Figure 5.28a & 5.28b. Kromna and Perdhikaria, showing late Roman sites / LOCAs #s 6, 8-12, and 21-23 (blue outlines), against a backdrop of the major features in the area, tombs (crosses), highest diversity AR-HE units (green dots), and ER LOCAs (red outline and hatch mark).

The Late Roman material is more extensive than the preceding period, but this can be expected from a more diagnostic period. Nonetheless, there does appear to be a material expansion back into the northern part of the crossroads area, a part that had previously been used for cemeteries. This does not appear to represent simply additional Late Roman graves, for transport amphorae form the most consistent signature throughout the quarry area, albeit in fluctuating amounts (Fig. 5.29). LR finewares (Fig. 5.30a), and to a lesser extent kitchenwares (Fig. 5.30b), also form a consistent material in the crossroads generally, although the latter is not well represented in the quarry specifically. Nonetheless, the evidence together does suggest a Late Roman inhabitation and use of the quarries, constituting a veritable departure from the previous period and perhaps relating to more relaxed attitudes toward the dead at least from the fifth and sixth centuries, the period to which most of this pottery dates. This interpretation might also
help to explain the high diversity Late Roman site (Fig. 5.28a: LOCA 23) with LR cooking ware, fineware, and transport amphoras at the northeastern corner of the crossroads area, occupying the former location of what must have been a Classical-period sanctuary (evidenced by perirhanterion rims).

Figures 5.29. The crossroads in the LR period, showing count of LR amphorae (blue) / unit at increments of 1-2, 3-5, 6-11, 12-22 sherds. Black triangles are Wiseman’s cemeteries, while red crosses represent additional graves.

Figures 5.30a & 5.30b. The crossroads in the late Roman period, showing units with late Roman fineware (green) and kitchenware (red). Black triangles are Wiseman’s site borders, while red crosses represent graves.
A good glimpse of the complexities of the continuous use of localities at the crossroads in antiquity can be seen in the dense and diverse concentrations of late Roman material at the southern end of the Kromnian crossroads area (Fig. 5.28b: LR Site #s 6, 8, 9), directly below the ridge of Perdhikaria. In the spring of 2001, two fallow fields lying just below the ridge were deeply plowed, and bulldozed on their edges, exposing significant quantities of well-preserved artifacts and architecture, including tiles, fineware, medium-coarse and coarse ware, amphorae, kitchenware, pithoi, glass, marble revetment, obsidian flakes, marble architectural moldings, stone blocks, and small column fragments. The Late Roman period material was especially diverse, producing an array of coarse wares, finewares, cooking wares, and basins, including vessel types like LR Amphoras, Phocaean Ware forms 3 and 10, and even LR lamps. The densities were significant enough that this area was declared a LOCA (9221, = LR Div LOCA #9) at the time of investigation and given the generic title, “The Plowed Field Site”, which has, remarkably, stuck to this day. Bulldozing in the same year below the northwest point of Perdhikaria cut into more Late Roman deposits, uncovering significant quantities of LR amphoras, cooking wares, and finewares, as well as ancient pithoi, tile, and glass fragments. This area was designated LOCA 9070 (= LR Div LOCA #6), and was designated as a villa of Late Roman date. And finally, regular intensive survey revealed an additional high diversity area of LR material at the northeastern end of the Perdhikaria bluff (LR LOCA 8).

In each of these Late Roman sites but especially #9, it is possible to get a sense for the flow of use of the area across the entire Roman period. The early and middle Roman periods are well represented, with examples of amphoras, cooking wares, Eastern Sigillata, Çandarli Ware, and ARS Form 50; the latter artifacts of the late 2nd-late 3rd centuries AD were exceptional in our survey. The Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic periods are impressively represented by a rich variety of artifacts. The presence of ancient building material on the site, and evidence for associated architecture—scattered cut stone blocks, large tiles, column fragments, marble revetment and architectural
moldings—indicate again that prestige buildings, substantial in size and ornately dressed, once stood on the spot. In 2002, this area was investigated through geophysical prospection, after deep plowing pulled up a clear line of cut stone blocks. The geophysical work confirmed that a complex of walls perhaps 30 meters long existed in the area, related to an ashlar-constructed rectangular building (on a roughly east-west orientation) in the southern part of the site. We might guess that a substantial complex, such as a villa or church, marked this area in a late phase in the use of the area.

Figure 5.31. Kromna and Perdhikaria, showing Late Roman sites (blue outlines), against a backdrop of the major features in the area, including tombs (crosses), highest diversity AR-HE units (green dots), and early Roman sites (red outline).

The proximity of the other Late Roman sites #’s 6 and 8 are difficult to explain except as part of a broader complex of buildings situated on the lower slopes of the ridge.
of Perdhikaria at the southern end of the major area of the Kromnian crossroads. Beyond the prehistoric use of Perdhikaria, the ridge and the slopes below it were used again from the Archaic period and remained in use through Late Antiquity. The early Roman signature is particularly strong, and extends southward onto the plateau itself. The most diverse units of the Late Roman period appear to lie at the end of a long-term development of the early Roman use of the area, although now concentrating on the slopes below the ridge.

Late Roman Site #9 (Cf. Figure 5.13b) provides the best evidence for a continuing pattern of reinhabiting a specific space along the road from Kenchreai. Its ideal location along this road, overlooking the entire Kromnian crossroads, and the building investments of an earlier Roman date, must have been factors that contributed to the site’s strong late phase of occupation. We should note again that LR site #9 does not occur in isolation, but, like other areas in the traveled land of the Eastern Corinthia, was part of a mosaic of rural structures marking the countryside. These patterns show that significant settlement during the Classical and late Roman periods was not limited to the area of the plowed field but extended to the north, east, and west. In light of this, the LOCA described here should not be interpreted as an isolated rural farmstead /villa but as a well-preserved, denser cluster of buildings in an otherwise high-density area, perhaps in some relationship to the other buildings spread between Rachi Boska and Kromna. A confirmation of this is indicated by the proximity of the other LR sites within only half a kilometer of Site #9.

How do we explain the late Roman cluster of settlement within a general carpet of late Roman material? Taking a slightly broader view of the entire Isthmus, by analyzing the most abundant class of LR artifacts identified in the EKAS survey—amphoras—highlights the character of LR intensive land use in the territory (Fig. 5.32). Although LR amphorae are distributed across the entire eastern Corinthia, they cluster and thicken in two main locations: along the ancient road running west from Isthmia and across the broad area of Kromna-Perdhikaria. The probable interpretation of this pattern is that a
variety of buildings developed at important locations at the network of roads on the Isthmus—buildings and cultural debris thicken where roads come together and cross.

Figure 5.32. The Isthmus in the late Roman period, showing count of late Roman amphorae (blue) / unit at increments of 1-3, 4-10, and 11-21 sherds. Black triangles are Wiseman’s cemeteries, and red crosses represent graves. Roads follow probable ancient courses.

5.2.5. The Character of a Crossroads

As modern scholars and archaeologists, we desire to name our subjects by terms that will make them understandable to us: farmsteads, villas, hamlets, and towns, for example. Placing the material world is an important part of creating our own landscapes and images of the past for a local region or city. But for landscape archaeologists, naming is also a process that simplifies the material record, flattening complex spatial and temporal patterns into digestible categorical terms.

This, I would posit, is the problem we encounter when we try to understand and categorize the pattern of settlement and land use on the Isthmus: what, exactly, do we call...
How should we understand the territory in the area between Kromna and Perdhikaria? The area was not a town, at least not in the sense that it was known as a *polis* or *astu* in antiquity. And yet, it was thick with rural buildings and habitations, and consequently, not the setting for a typical villa. There were cemeteries at the northern end in the quarry, and the area certainly had cultic features in the Classical period. In the broad Roman period, Kromna served a mixture of agricultural, mortuary, industrial, domestic, and religious functions. The significant amounts of Roman fineware and storage vessels point to markets, and the pressing of olive oil on location lends support for an inland emporium. The settlement itself is characteristic of an extensive village or town, but the intersection of so many roads in the area made it a significant traveler’s node. This chapter, in its examining of one particular area, has simply referred to such a busy place as the crossroads.

More important for my purposes were the variety of activities and phenomena that occurred in a single area in the course of antiquity: cemeteries, industry, mining, habitation, cult, and agriculture. Although it is difficult to distinguish habitation debris from other kinds of activities, especially at a diachronic level, it seems altogether probable that this area, situated at the convergence of roads, formed a market and exchange center just shy of the big city itself, where merchants and craftsmen from different parts of the Mediterranean gathered to sell their goods, saving themselves the trip of traveling to Corinth itself. The high frequency of late Roman ceramic wares, which we discussed at length in the previous chapter, presumably relates to the importance of this area as a trading center in Late Antiquity.

The discussion above has also highlighted the general pattern and flow of the use of the crossroads through Late Antiquity. It has suggested that late Roman habitation and land use at Kromna were embedded in both a general structure of place and in particular localities in the landscape. The general sense of continuity of the use of the overall area is evident in the importance of the crossroads over the course of three periods. In the Archaic and Classical periods, the area immediately north of Perdhikaria appears to have
been settled, while the quarry and an area to its south/southwest was used as a cemetry and for cult, possibly after quarrying in this area had come to an end. Early Roman settlement and buildings spread over several extensive areas on the ridge of Perdhikaria and southwest of the quarry, while in the Late Roman period, buildings were dispersed across the entire area, reoccupying the Classical-Hellenistic cemeteries to the north. Although such subtle shifts in pattern do point to major cultural differences over time, the crossroads nonetheless remained one of the most important structures in the territory of the city, a point of junction where travelers met market facilities, many private houses and ornate villas, religious sanctuaries, numerous graves, and agricultural and industrial structures—before passing on to Corinth town, Kenchreai, Isthmia, or the Corinthian Gulf. The longevity of use of such an important extra-urban structure in antiquity points to the continuing material vitality of the city in the world through the sixth century, even despite the disruptive forces of invasion, earthquake, and plague.

5.3. Embedded Structures of the Eastern Corinthia

While this current study has focused on the crossroads as a case study for the later antique history of the Isthmus, it ultimately underscores the more general pattern of continuity of settlement in the Corinthia. The “embedded” countryside that has been the subject of discussion above was more extensive than even the crossroads, as material continuity is common to late Roman settlement in the region generally.

5.3.1. Continuity and Reuse in the Corinthia

Beyond the area of Kromna (discussed above), a Late Antique “embeddedness” is also evident in the well-known sites of the Corinthia recorded by topographers of the twentieth century: H. Fowler, R. Hope Simpson, Faraklas and Sakellariou, and especially James Wiseman who wandered across the Corinthia in the 1960s, revisiting older sites
and recording new ones. If we examine all of the sites listed on Wiseman’s map (Figure 5.33) that lie west of the canal as far west as the Longopotomos River, and north of an imagined line running between Mt. Phoukas (Apesas) and Mt. Oneion, there is a notable pattern of late Roman to earlier periods (Figure 5.34). At least 12 of these 19 sites (63%) showed evidence for the LR period, and almost all of the sites (n = 18; 95%) produced material that could be dated to some time in the broader Roman period. The late Roman component always occurs in conjunction with earlier Archaic-Early Roman phases: 11 of the 12 LR sites (92%) have an Early Roman phase, and all 13 (100%) of the sites have a Classical and/or Hellenistic phase. Put in different terms, 92% (n = 11 of 12) of the early Roman sites have a late Roman phase, and 68% of Classical sites produced late Roman material. Most of these sites have occupational histories spanning the Classical to Late Roman period.


89 This includes all the major sites from Wiseman’s Chapter 3 (The Isthmus) and 5 (The Western Corinthia) that were noted on his Figure 39. Hence, it includes Vigla, Kato Almyri, and Galataki (Solygia), even though these are south of Mt. Onium. Cf. Wiseman 1978, 44: Fig. 39. The sites with asterisks indicate that these areas were reinvestigated as part of the Eastern Korinthia Survey and that new chronological information has been added.

90 For a basic list of late Roman sites of the Corinthia, which is mainly based on Wiseman 1978 but generally lists the main sites, cf. Rothaus 2000, 151-55. The appendix to this dissertation adds additional late Roman “sites” from the eastern Corinthia, but the point of my study is to go beyond the site!
We can expect, however, that these figures significantly underestimate the correlation between the periods as they are based mainly on non-systematic casual surveys of the sites. More intensive methods would provide finer chronological nuance, as they did, for instance, in the EKAS survey of the land adjacent to the sites of Gonia and Yiriza. These sites had previously been identified only as prehistoric sites but, following intensive survey, also gained CL-LR phases as well. The chronological components for these sites, as well as Kromna and Perdhikaria, in Figure 5.34 below (indicated by asterisk) are based on the results of the EKAS survey. Other sites of the Corinthia would show similar chronological diversity if surveyed intensively. It is important to remember too that the sites in Figure 5.16 are at the upper end of the settlement threshold, and are not representative of the typical smaller late Roman site of the Corinthia.
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Figure 5.34. Sites of the Corinthia, north of the Oneion Range and west of the Isthmus

5.3.2. Continuity and Reuse in the Eastern Korinthia Survey Area

Another telling signature of Late Roman continuity in the Corinthia, evident in the EKAS data, is the correlation and relationship or LR material to earlier periods. On the one hand, the general pattern of EKAS survey units indicates a strong relationship between earlier and later parts of the Roman period. For instance, 148 of 193 survey units (76.8%) with early Roman pottery also yielded late Roman material. There were many more units with late Roman pottery without an earlier component, but given the general problems in recognizing early Roman pottery (Cf. Ch. 4), there are presumably also many more units where the earlier material was there but was identified to a broader period like “Roman.” In any case, a very strong pattern exists between earlier and later Roman periods. And second, survey units with late Roman components also bear a
stronger relationship to units from the preceding Greek period, as 60% of units with Archaic-Hellenistic material (n = 447 of 745) also had late Roman material. Given the relative abundance of both AR-HE and LR material in the area, this second pattern of overlay may in part be random.

The Late Roman Sites / LOCAs on the Isthmus tell a similar story. Although Late Roman pottery spreads continuously throughout the area surveyed by EKAS, there is, as argued above (and in Appendix I), both a chronological and spatial configuration to the most diverse Late Roman material. Spatially, the most diverse concentrations of Late Roman artifacts occur in two places (Fig. 5.35), immediately south and west of the site of Isthmia proper (LOCAs 13-19) and in the area near Kromna and Perdhikaria (7-12, 21-23). Most of the Top 50 diverse Late Roman units (37 of 50) and two thirds of the LR LOCAs focus in those two areas. The remaining LR densest units and LOCAs are located east of the village of Xylokeriza (3-5, 20, 24) and in the area of Kenchreai (1 and 2). No concentrations occur in the area of Yiriza-Gonia, Ayios Dimitrios ridge, or in the coastal areas of the southeastern Corinthia, although LR pottery was found in all these places. In spatial terms, then, the LR artifactual landscape of the eastern Corinthia can be described as continuous, with dispersed but uneven concentrations, especially centered in the vicinity of Isthmia and Kromna-Perdhikaria.

Chronologically, most of the LR LOCAs provide evidence for earlier uses. Two thirds of the LR LOCAs yielded pottery datable to the early Roman period, spanning the late first century BC to mid-third century AD, and every site yielded Archaic-Classical and Classical-Hellenistic pottery, usually in plentiful amounts, and including varieties of amphorae and storage vessels, kitchen wares, black-glazed finewares, skyphoi, oenochoe, kraters, and painted roof tiles. Again, because the Late Roman material is so abundant, we should expect random overlay, which would not be meaningful at the historical or

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91 Even LOCA #21 is directly adjacent to units with Early Roman material, and LOCA #10 is situated on a bluff with an associated tomb of Early Roman date and thereby has an earlier phase of use.
cultural level. On the other hand, in some cases, the data of the two periods patterns too closely to be entirely random: the LR units probably represent continued use.

Fig. 5.35a and 5.35b. LR concentrations in the eastern Corinthia against backdrop of LR artifactual carpet (in yellow). Fifty most diverse LR units (blue dots), and the image on the right shows the LR LOCAs.

The Early Roman densest units and LOCAs (Figures 5.36), for instance, share a pattern very similar to the most diverse Late Roman units and LOCAs. As with the Late Roman period, the densest Early Roman units and sites are dispersed throughout the main corridor, but focus again in the area immediately to the south and west of Isthmia and in the area of Kromna-Perdhikaria. Again, two thirds (ER LOCA #s 6-11, 13-19) of the Early Roman LOCAs and the densest ER units (n=34 of 50) concentrate in these two areas, with the remaining ones in the areas of Kenchreai especially but also east of the village of Xylokeriza; one high density ER unit and LOCA is located in the area of Yiriza-Gonia. The background carpet of ER artifacts is not nearly as continuous as the Late Roman or Archaic-Hellenistic (see below), but as the previous chapter argued, this is mainly a result of poor recognition of the pottery in the area. A more complete identification of the ER pottery would fill out the artifactual carpet for this period rather well.
Fig. 5.36a and 5.36b. Early Roman concentrations in the Eastern Corinthia against backdrop of ER artifactual carpet (in yellow). The image on the left shows the fifty densest ER units (red dots), and the image on the right shows the ER LOCAs.

For the Archaic-Hellenistic period (Fig. 5.37), the fifty most diverse units show even greater nucleation, but again concentrate in the same two areas, immediately west of Isthmia (n=6 units) and especially in the area of Kromna-Perdhikaria (n=30 of 50 units); these two areas claim over two-thirds of the AR-HE highest diversity units and may indicate cemeteries. The other two main concentrations are immediately east of the village of Xylokeriza (n=six units), in the areas of LR LOCA 4, 20, and 24, and at the coastal site of Vigla in the southeastern Corinthia (n =6; see Figures 5.37a). One high diversity AR-HE unit occurred immediately below the heights of Rachi and is probably associated with the rubbish from the settlement there. One other high diversity AR-HE unit occurred between Yiriza and Gonia. As with the LR period, the high visibility of AR-HE black glaze pottery facilitate the documenting of the continuous carpet for the AR-HE period. Although AR-HE pottery is found near Kenchreai, Ayios Dimitrios

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92 The analysis has been conducted for the broad “Archaic-Hellenistic” period in order to ‘include’ the greatest amount of overlapping broad period data, such as “Archaic-Classical,” “Classical-Hellenistic”, and “Archaic-Hellenistic.” The fact that this analysis patterns so well justifies the grouping, but one could conduct a finer-scale analysis of, for instance, simply “Archaic” and “Classical” period material. See Caraher, Nakassis, and Pettegrew 2005 & 2006.
ridge, in the southern Corinthia (in the hidden valley of Lakka Skoutara), and near Yiriza-Gonia, it is most diverse near Isthmia and the crossroads, arguably suggesting cemeteries.

Examining these three temporal landscapes in terms of diversity (and for the ER period, in terms of density: see Appendix I), then, demonstrates the concentrating of the material from these periods in the EKAS territory in two main locations—the area south and west of Isthmia and the area of Kromna-Perdhikaria—with less extensive and consistent concentrations in the vicinity of Kenchreai, east of Xylokeriza, the vicinity of Yiriza-Gonia, and Vigla (for the AR-HE periods). The results of all this are shown below in Figures 5.38 and 5.39, which displays Late Roman LOCAs against the background artifactual carpets and fifty densest units of AR-HE and ER periods.

Figure 5.37a and 5.37b. AR-HE Concentrations in the Eastern Corinthia against backdrop of AR-HE artifactual carpet (in yellow). The image on the left shows most diverse AR-HE units (green dots) in total survey area, while image on the right focuses on concentrations in areas north of Oneion.
Figure 5.38a and 5.38b. LR LOCAs against background carpet (yellow-red scale) and densest units of two periods. Image on the left shows LR against AR-HE period, with green dots indicating unit is among the fifty most diverse AR-HE units. Image on the right shows LR against ER period, with red dots indicating unit is among the fifty densest ER units. In both images, the artifactual carpet for the period is indicated by the yellow-red scale.

Figure 5.39. LR LOCAs (blue outline) against Top 50 AR-HE units (green) and Top 50 Early Roman units (red)
How do we explain this patterning? First, as the figures above appear to suggest, there is a striking degree of continuity in the intensity of uses of broad areas of the Eastern Corinthian landscape between the AR-CL period and Late Antiquity. Although material from each of these three periods was found in all surveyed areas of the Eastern Corinthia, including the valley of Lakka Skoutara in the S. Corinthia, the densest and most diverse areas concentrate in the locations discussed above, especially in the stretch of land extending from the site of Isthmia for about two kilometers, and the extensive areas framed by Perdhikaria on the south and Kromna on the north. The importance of these areas through antiquity is suggested by the patterns of repeated habitation and confirm the settlement patterns discussed in section 5.2: generally dispersed and continuous Roman settlement, concentrating in part at nodes like Isthmia and Kromna. This, as I will discuss again below, may in part be explained by the travel networks in the Corinthia and the cemeteries, settlements, and markets that existed at those locations.

Second, there is a striking degree of long-term continuity and longevity in the intensity of use of specific localities in the landscape. Hence, not only is there a long-term continuity in the intensity of inhabiting general areas of the landscape, but also arguably even in spaces no larger than several hectares and often much smaller than this. Such, for instance, is the case where thirteen of the LR LOCAs (#s 1-5, 7-9, 11, 14, 15, 17, and 18) overlay or are directly adjacent to ER LOCAs. As I will conclude below, this pattern of overlap is probably culturally and historically meaningful, and is to be connected with long-term use of the areas through Late Antiquity and the embeddedness of the place.93

5.4. The Crossroads of Greece
This chapter (along with Ch. 4) has made several interrelated arguments about settlement and land use on the Isthmus in the Roman period. Contrary to what might be suggested by the literary sources (Ch. 3), it has argued that the Isthmus in the Roman / Late Roman period was replete with structures and buildings. The physical material on

93 Ch. 6 picks up this theme through a discussion of the reuse of the same buildings over time.
the Isthmus was denser and more continuous than that suggested by ancient literary sources and modern scholarship, and busier than the typical countryside studied by archaeological survey. The chapter has argued that the use of the countryside from the third to seventh centuries occurred in terms of a structure of place hundreds of years old. Continuity and reuse of places over the *longue durée* was related to a configuration of places that developed in the early Roman period, if not before. The rural *structures* of ancient Corinth were, in other words, stable and long lasting, contributing to and sustaining the social and economic life of the city through the sixth century AD. And finally, while this particular territory was variously used and functioned in different ways, there can be little doubt that one of the most important factors structuring land use, habitation, and building activity in the area was the significant volume of travel to and from the urban center and harbors, and across the Isthmus. Although there were significant redefinitions of the structures of the territory during Late Antiquity, the Isthmian land of the eastern Corinthia never permanently suffered in its fundamental role as a crossroads.

In sum, the countryside that ancient travelers never named was teeming with activity, and these unnamed rural buildings formed structures that related to the role of the city in a landscape. The longevity in use of this area as well as specific localities in the area challenge overtly negative visions of the city in Late Antiquity by showing that a basic structure of place in the city that had emerged at a deeper point in the city’s history remained important to the end of antiquity. We can end by reexamining several major questions that have frequently surfaced in discussions of the Roman and late Roman Corinthia.

**5.4.1. Town, Countryside, and Patterns of Settlement**

How should we understand the relationship between Corinth town and its territory, and especially the city and its eastern landscape? This question has surfaced in many discussions of the city because of the overwhelming weight of the literary testimony,
which have focused only on Corinth’s commercial character. In rejecting the appeal of these sources, J.B. Salmon stressed (1984) that the economy of the Greek *polis* was principally derived from its rich agricultural territory (including both the coastal plain and the Isthmus) and that commerce was a significant but secondary resource; the urban center was embedded in its rural world. D. Engels, on the other hand, in his discussion (1990) of the wealth of the Roman city and in an explicit attack on the economic models proposed by Weber and Finley, argued that Roman Corinth could never have had the economic status of an “agro-town” (to borrow Weber’s term) and must have depended fundamentally on alternate resources. Taking a cue from the literary testimony, he suggested that “service” to the numerous travelers that came to the city was the major basis of the city’s economy. His discussion downplayed the significance of agriculture for the Roman economy, even suggesting that extra-urban rural settlement was generally “nucleated”, focused in villages that would have absorbed any and all economic surpluses. Through a series of statistical acrobatics about hypothetical urban and rural population, property ownership, and rents and surpluses, Engels’ alternate model cut away the countryside altogether, essentially dismissing its place for the life of the city. These two main monographs of Corinthian history in the Greek period and Roman period have presented essentially different images of the relationship between Corinth town and territory.

Archaeological fieldwork has largely disproved Engels’ picture of a nucleated settlement system. Salvage excavations by the Greek Archaeological Service and archaeological surface survey, have populated the countryside with Roman suburban and rural villas in both the eastern and southern Corinthia. Even twenty years ago, Gregory and Kardulias, in their studies of extra-urban settlements in the Corinthia, had argued that the existence of Late Antique habitations like the garrison at Isthmia, the villa at Akra Sophia, and settlements of marginal lands (e.g., Evraionisos) did not exist in isolation and indicated the vitality and continuity of the city of Corinth.94 They conjectured a network

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94 T.E. Gregory and P.N. Kardulias, “Geophysical and Surface Surveys in the Byzantine Fortress at Isthmia,” in *Hesperia* 59 (1990), 467-511; P.N. Kardulias, *The Byzantine Fortress at Isthmia, Greece and the transition from Late Antiquity to the Medieval Period in the Aegean*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Ohio State
of rural villas that interacted with the Byzantine fortress at Isthmia, the urban center, and the wider world. In a similar vein, Richard Rothaus has recently highlighted the agricultural and suburban character of the handful of villas known from the Corinthia, suggesting that most of these villas were Late Antique in date and culturally oriented toward the urban center as though villa owners wished to remain active in civic life. For Rothaus, the landowners did not abandon the towns for the countryside but continued to derive their identity from it.

All of these assessments were made prior to a major archaeological survey and, in fact, laid the groundwork for such a survey. The Eastern Korinthia Archaeological Survey did not cover an extensive amount of territory but the scale of the intensive survey was much greater than that of previous surveys in the Corinthia, and consequently allow us to address questions of town and country. On the basis of the EKAS data, this chapter (coupled with Ch. 4 and 6) has presented a very different vision of the Roman countryside than those suggested by both ancient and modern authors. While ancient geographers, historians, and travelers conceptualized and talked about the Corinthian landscape only in terms of its famous places, surface survey has shown that the areas between these places were replete with rural farmsteads, buildings, and installations. Contrary to the position of some modern scholars (who have perhaps read the ancient testimony too positivistically), the material evidence confirms a thick and continuous habitation of the Isthmus in the Roman / Late Roman period.


95 Gregory and Kardulias 1990, 506.
96 Rothaus 2000, 26-29.
97 This should caution against relying on literary testimony to build up a model of rural land use. Even for a city as famous as Corinth, the literary sources simply do not speak about forms and patterns of settlement; we must rely on the methods of archaeological survey if we want to understand the kinds of buildings and places found between the major nodes.
If survey has shown that the eastern territory was replete with farmsteads, villas, and extra-urban installations, it was not in any sense a “typical” Greek countryside, relatively isolated and dotted with country houses evenly spaced across the landscape. The Isthmus, rather, was thick with houses, buildings, and structures that concentrated (unevenly) in areas like the crossroads, and was busy with the traffic that poured over land and sea to, from, and around Corinth. While there is evidence for Roman-period settlement throughout the EKAS region, it is the travel nodes of Corinthian territory, where roads come together and intersect, that material debris concentrates and thickens. A comparison of artifact densities at these nodes with, for example, the densities of more isolated areas in the southeast Corinthia (or even with the plateaus and ridges on the Isthmus) demonstrate a major difference in the continuousness and thickness of Roman debris. Moreover, buildings on the Isthmus were highly visible along the transportation routes in the region and could never have formed the kind of isolated rustic scenery that we might imagine for an ancient Greek countryside; only in parts of the southeast Corinthia do we find such out-of-the-way places.

In light of this broad pattern, it is better to see the eastern countryside in the Roman period not as a counterpart or even complement to the urban center, but an extension of the city to the harbors. The Isthmus was, so to speak, the front yard of the city for it was territory that most travelers passed through on the way to, from, and around Corinth. The city’s markets and emporia that modern scholars often associate only with the urban center were found also in the city’s eastern territory, including most notably the two harbors Lechaion and Kenchreai, but as importantly, at major crossroads like Isthmia and Kromna. This chapter used Kromna as an example of the kind of area that was significant to the Roman city of Corinth. At the major crossroads of the Isthmus west of Isthmia, it was a point of convergence for travelers coming from or going to Isthmia, Kenchreai, the Corinthian Gulf, Corinth town, or the Argolid (via Corinth). In the Roman period, a variety of sites dotted the area of the crossroads, including private houses and villas, numerous tombs, (presumably) installations related to markets and
exchange, quarries, and agricultural installations. This chapter has focused on the crossroads, but there were also numerous scattered villas and residences.

What was the relationship between territory, agriculture, and commerce? Contra Engels, there is no need to pit the city’s agricultural resources against its commercial resources, as though either were insignificant to the ancient economy. Our examining of Kromna has shown how the two might function together in the same location to support the local economy. The installation of large-scale olive presses at the crossroads facilitated the processing of the olives harvested in the area; the oil could then be shipped to respective destinations, whether Corinth town, Kenchrea, Isthmia, or supra-regional markets. Quarrying activity in the limestone ridges near Kromna (presumably) continued in the Roman era, and limestone blocks were transported from here to their respective destinations. We can probably also imagine that a variety of other local products, such as Corinthian ceramics and honey, were sold and traded here at the crossroads to travelers on their way. The abundance of both eastern and western goods—amphorae from Palestine and the Aegean and finewares from Africa and Asia Minor—point to a variety of Mediterranean products that were either being imported to the city of Corinth or were redistributed to those passing across the Isthmus. Some of the most important connective nodes of the Isthmus—Kenchrea, Isthmia, the ship-road at the diolkos, and the Corinthian Gulf—lay within a four kilometer radius of the crossroads. Kromna, then, fed into an integrated local and regional economy that united its commercial, agricultural, and other resources into a single location. It formed an extension of the city onto to the Isthmus and connected Corinth town with its larger nodes, Isthmia and Kenchreai.

In the second century AD, the orator Aelius Aristides was called to give an oration for the cycle of the Isthmian games. His speech of praise names many anecdotes and aspects of Corinthian history worthy of praise, but his panegyric centers on the place of Poseidon’s isthmus in connecting the metropolis of Corinth to the wider world.98

98 Or. 46.22-27.
This is the strangest and at the same time most pleasant of all spectacles on the earth—people on each side sail in and sail out at the same instant with favorable breezes and men put out to sea and into port with the same winds in this land and sea alone of all, and everything from everywhere comes here both by land and sea, and this is the reason why the land even from earliest times was praised as ‘rich’ by the poets, both because of the multitude of the advantages which are at hand and the felicity which is embodied in it. For it is, as it were, a kind of market place, and at that common to all the Greeks, and a national festival, not like this present one which the Greek race celebrates here every two years, but one which is celebrated every year and daily….What more evidence would one offer of its greatness than that it has been extended to all the seas and has been settled beside and along them, not just the one but not the other, but all of them equally….Indeed, you would see it everywhere full of wealth and an abundance of goods, as much as is likely, since the earth on every side and the sea on every side flood it with these, as if it dwelled in the midst of its goods and was washed all around by them, like a merchant ship.

Aelius Aristides highlights a central motif of Corinth’s identity—the city and the Isthmus as a market place—also mentioned by authors before him (such as Livy 33.32) and after him (Libanius Decl. 25.46). Although Livy would highlight the place of Isthmia as a market in the Hellenistic period, Aelius Aristides gives the entire eastern landscape, extending to its seas, the character of a broad emporium surrounding Corinth town. While panegyric cannot translate into a settlement pattern equivalent, it would also be a mistake not to recognize an essential truth in this speech of praise: that the Isthmus really did feed into the city’s cultural identity (as a commercial town) and its economic resources. In the end, there can be little doubt that one of the most important factors structuring habitation and building activity in the eastern territory was the significant volume of travel to and from the urban center and across the Isthmus. The Corinthian Oration of the second century AD was right to call the city the “promenade” (peripatos) and the “prow and stern” of Greece. This chapter has offered some suggestions for the material correlates to these otherwise vague descriptions.

5.4.2. The Continuity of the Rural World

How did the character of extra-urban habitation change between the early and late Roman periods? What was the nature of the difference, for example, between rural settlement at the beginning and end of the Roman period?

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99 Favorinus, The Corinthian Oration 7-8, 36.
As noted above, many scholars who have discussed settlement patterns for the Roman Corinthia have underscored the later Roman character of extra-urban settlement. Hence, archaeological research by T.E. Gregory and P.N. Kardulias demonstrated the frequency of Late Antique habitation of both coastal regions of the Corinthia (Akra Sophia) and marginal lands like the island of Evraionisos in the Saronic Gulf and argued that such habitation might be a LR phenomenon. R. Rothaus likewise focused on the Late Antique settlement in the Corinthia and suggested, ultimately, that extra-urban villa owners were still tied to the city center. Scholars of Corinthian settlement have focused on the later Roman period because it is so highly visible in the countryside.

This study, on the other hand, has identified some of the source problems in reading ceramic deposition for the early and later Roman periods. It has consequently argued that for the city’s principal connective eastern territory (the Isthmus), there is greater evidence for material similarity than difference between early and late Roman periods. The pattern of land use confirms a Late Antique continuity of regional structures developed by the late first or second centuries AD, and in some cases, the use of the same locations and buildings over time (Ch. 6). Continuity and reuse of places on the Isthmus in Late Antiquity, in other words, were related to a configuration of places that had developed hundreds of years previously. If we seek difference in the overall pattern of Corinthian settlement across the Roman era, we may need to continue to look elsewhere, in the less traversed regions of the Corinthia.

In the vision of habitation proposed above, the real material change for the Isthmus came not in the late 4th century, but in the late sixth, when the evidence for the region’s participation in trade networks declined and the signature of habitation went with it. The rural structures of ancient Corinth were stable and long lasting, contributing to and sustaining the social and economic life of the city through the sixth century AD. Although there were certainly significant redefinitions in the territory during Late Antiquity, the land of the eastern Corinthia never permanently suffered in its fundamental role as either a crossroads or an agricultural territory. And despite the decline and
fragmentation of the image of the city (as a traveler’s cosmopolis) in Late Antiquity (Ch. 3), the physical landscape remained vital to the city’s economy. The longevity in use of the Isthmian challenges overtly negative visions of the city in Late Antiquity based on a fragmentary literary tradition.

5.4.3. The Question of the Late Antique Countryside

We can conclude by returning to the broader historiography of rural settlement in the eastern Mediterranean between the fourth and sixth centuries AD. Against the old Jonesian consensus that agriculture was certainly in decline during this period, there is now an overwhelming wave of historical scholarship, a new consensus, in fact, that sees Late Antiquity as a period flourishing in rural buildings and activity, large-scale investments for profit, as well as overall settlement and population. Even the Theodosian and Justinianic law codes, which constituted the historical basis for the old consensus, have been reread in a more positive light as indication of the government’s promotion of landholding and investment. A variety of archaeological excavation and survey has only added fuel to the fire of former views of an impoverished Late Antique countryside.

In an Aegean context, extensive and intensive surveys have played into this revisionism by producing evidence for the ‘rehabitation’ of the countryside with dispersed farmstead sites after an Early Roman pattern of nucleated settlement. Arguably, however, such a boom-and-bust vision of the Greek countryside is based in part on a misreading of the archaeological abundance of Late Antique material relative to

100 E.g., Jones 1964, 812; “It is generally agreed that there was a decline in agriculture in the later Roman empire.” Mango 1980 (44): “It is an undeniable fact that from the fourth century onwards more and more land was going out of cultivation, and it is highly likely that the main cause of this was taxation”


102 This is discussed most fully in Cynthia Kosso’s, The Archaeology of Public Policy, 2003, 13-30, especially pp. 15-18

103 See Banaji’s introductory chapter, 1-22; or Hirschfeld 1999, for discussion of the archaeology.
a perceived early Roman absence. Reading ceramic survey data without taking into account relative differences in diagnosticity between periods has served to highlight settlement difference, rather than continuity, between the Early Roman period and Late Antiquity. Whether such differences are real or perceived for other regions of Greece must be measured using some of the methods outlined in the fourth chapter of this dissertation.

This chapter has shown that Late Antique habitation in the Eastern Corinthia lay at the end of a constant pattern of land use and occupation stretching, arguably, back to the Archaic-Classical period. The results of the EKAS survey highlight these patterns of continuity and reuse of the same places over long periods of time. The close correlation of later Roman pottery in terms of earlier material in the whole corpus of survey units confirm such an interpretation, and the specific patterning of artifacts in the most diverse of these units only strengthen this interpretation. There was, in other words, a long-term continuity of both the broader structures (i.e., important areas like Kromna) in Corinthian territory and the more specific use of particular places in the land (i.e., the very same fields).

This chapter has argued that the correlation of late Roman scatters and previous periods may be explained by the general stability of the process of investing in areas in the land that signified and effected stability and continuity in land use, embedding both a structure and sense of place in the landscape. The ancient placing of the land interacted with both topographic features of the Eastern Corinthia—the natural transportation routes are arguably the most important factor but even the cavernous rocky crags of the marine terraces were significant factors—and the inhabiting of the landscape through material investments. The constructing of rural buildings, towers, and villas, the modification of the land in the form of terracing and movement of earth and stone, the installation of agricultural features like enormous pressing weights, the building of tombs and religious architecture, the development of roads in the area all stabilized and structured the use of places in antiquity and consolidated a landscape at the crossroads of the world. The
clustering of the densest and most diverse units in two main locations, south and west of Isthmia and the crossroads known as Kromna, indicate the important communities that developed at key nodes in the Corinthian landscape and that lasted through antiquity. Although these settlements were hardly mentioned in the accounts of ancient historians and writers, they nonetheless formed a constant part of the material structure of place that was the Corinthia in antiquity.

In an important work on the Byzantine fortress at Isthmia, P.N. Kardulias argued that examining the transformation of the site from sanctuary to fortress in the terms of ecological adaptation could show a strong sense of continuity of social complexity between antiquity and Byzantium.\(^{104}\) Seen from the perspective of energy expenditure, there is greater evidence for continuity at the site of Isthmia than change, and this encourages a healthier view of the continuity of the city of Corinth itself to which the fate of Isthmia was linked closely in the Roman period. This chapter has argued from surface assemblages for an even broader degree of continuity in the use of important places in the landscape into the sixth century at least. An ancient structure of place—with Corinth as a crossroads, best seen in settlements such as Kromna—and the longevity of investing in particular localities in the landscape provide broad evidence for the continuity of the structures of the physical territory through Late Antiquity. If other regions seem to indicate change in the Late Antique landscape, the busy countryside of the land west of Isthmia shows material stability in tune with an embedded structure of place.

If this is correct, we can see in the Corinthia a deeply structured rural world already in place in the third century AD. Investments made in rural places in the early days of the Roman colony—in the form of buildings, field houses, terracing, walls, agricultural installations, roads, and wells and cisterns—structured later use of those places in Late Antiquity. To be sure, as in the city, this was not a mechanistic or an even process, but occurred in conjunction with the new needs of each successive period and the rebuilding

that followed periodic disruptive events like major earthquakes and invasions. There were areas in the countryside that emerged in both the early and later Roman periods that did not exist at an earlier date, but the degree of continuity in particular places is nonetheless compelling, especially in respect to the city’s role as a crossroads corridor in the Mediterranean. As chapter six will suggest, ordinary structures like villas and houses commonly (re)occupied the same places over very long periods of time, a process that renewed the ancient world in new forms.

If the history of the Corinthia in Late Antiquity has long been explained through a discourse of decline, this is a result of focusing too myopically on the remains of large-scale public architecture excavated in the city of Corinth, the site of Isthmia, Kenchreai, and Lechaion. If we look at the broader Corinthian landscape, we gain a picture not only of a stability of places in the land, but even the longevity of a structure of place, Corinth at the crossroads. When examining the Corinthia at this coarser chronological and spatial scale, the traditional historiographic bad-guys of Late Antiquity—whether Germanic invaders, earthquakes, plagues, or Christianity—appear not to have permanently disrupted the momentum of habitation in the fourth to sixth centuries AD. Even the decline of the imagined landscape of famous Corinthian places (Ch. 3) and the source tradition for the city in this period says very little about the overall structure of the rural world in Late Antiquity. At this broader scale, regardless of redefinitions of public space and the radical revision of the image of the city, the Corinthian landscape retained its traditional physical shape and configurations of place until the early seventh century. Corinth on the Isthmus, embedded in traveler’s nodes like the crossroads, had a late vitality and health. This is essentially the paradox and contradiction inherent to a landscape study in Late Antiquity: despite dramatic redefinitions in this period, there are also remarkable continuities.

CHAPTER 6
Inhabiting Time

“By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man’s work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames” (St. Paul, First Letter to the Corinthians 3.10-15)

“Of things subject to change we take abundant care, as if they were permanent: but that which is to endure for ever we neglect, as if it were soon to pass away. … Life is a dream, and a scene; and as on the stage when the scene is shifted the various pageants disappear, and as dreams flit away when the sunbeams rise, so here when the end comes, whether the universal or that of each one, all is dissolved and vanishes away. The tree that you have planted remains, and the house that you have built, it too stands on. But the planter and the builder go away, and perish. Yet these things happen without our regarding it, and we live on in luxury and pleasure, and are ever furnishing ourselves with such things, as if we were immortal.” (John Chrysostom)

“Romanness was not given but constructed: built and rebuilt over the years in the tangle of superimposed structures whose sequences are not so hard to disentangle. The houses of Pompeii and Herculaneum everywhere bear evidence of change; changing property boundaries, changing uses of space, changing fashions in house decoration and self-presentation” (A. Wallace-Hadrill)

The history of the Roman Corinthia has often been written from the archaeology of the famous public monuments and religious architecture of the urban center of Corinth, the harbor of Kenchreai, and the sanctuary of Poseidon at Isthmia. Consequently, in narratives of Corinthian history, the decline or even destruction of these public monuments in the third and fourth centuries AD has signified nothing short of the end of the Roman city and the beginning of the middle ages. Some of the most famous religious monuments of the city, such as the Asklepeion and the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore, fell down and were never rebuilt, the space turned over to early Christian graveyards. Even the old forum accumulated dust and became by the sixth century a repository of
human skeletons, the city center probably shifting to the east. Such horrifying termination and reuse of traditional Roman public architecture and civic space have reinforced historiographic visions of the Late Antique city suffering major decline. There are, however, potentially less dramatic and pessimistic narratives possible from archaeological data if we accept a broader landscape view of the spheres of building activity. Arguably the simpler and more ephemeral places of Corinthian life—the houses, habitations, and privately owned structures—were sometimes more stable and long-lasting than even public monumental architecture, and may consequently tell us more about the health of Late Antique society at the local level.

If as the fourth and fifth chapters argued, Late Roman places in the Corinthian rural landscape were embedded in much deeper pasts and histories of habitation, this chapter offers a detailed examination of how smaller-scale structures in this landscape were sustained, renewed, and redefined over the long term. The chapter will focus on the processes of building, maintaining, repairing, and refurbishing structures, and how these processes affected cultural continuity and change over the course of the broad Roman period. The chapter will show how the renewing and refurbishing of domestic buildings and private architecture, and rebuilding on the same plots of land, were fundamental to sustaining and changing societal structures. Refurbishing continued and renewed the most ordinary structures of the past, reconstructing both the sense of place and the most basic societal units. Refurbishing was also the process by which society renewed and altered its relationship to its material past. The built environment of the late Roman Corinthia arose from the solid foundations of the pasts, and yet rebuilding dramatically, albeit gradually, restructured the landscape.

This chapter argues that refurbishing was an important mechanism in rematerializing the relationship of late Roman inhabitants to their world, and extending the social life of antiquity through the sixth century. It attempts not an exhaustive survey of Roman

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106 At times I will use the term ‘private’, although admittedly this is difficult to define from archaeological data.
housing for the territory, so much as an analysis of the processes of recycling buildings through time, and their significance for the continuity and transformation of society and place in Late Antiquity. The chapter begins with a survey of excavated private buildings and building plots in the Corinthia (6.1) and the physical mechanisms of renewing house, home, and place; then (6.2) discusses the significance of refurbishing for perpetuating cultural structures of antiquity; and concludes with (6.3) a brief discussion of how refurbishment contributed to cultural continuity and redefinition in the Late Roman Corinthia.
6.1. Corinthian Structures in Time

A century of excavations by foreign schools and the Greek archaeological service has uncovered a variety of villas, farmsteads, and towers that had extended life uses throughout the Roman period. The corpus of excavated habitations is large enough that there is potential for analyzing these buildings in a variety of different ways; it is somewhat surprising that there has been so little comprehensive treatment on these for the Roman period. The following section surveys excavated small-scale buildings in the Corinthia to understand the nature of these places in time: How long were these sites in use? How did they remain in use for so long? And how did they change over time? Unlike archaeological survey data, excavation can reveal changes in the shorter term, in the order of generations, and is potentially very useful for understanding the life cycles of the countryside. Ultimately, of course, the archaeologist still has to establish the nature of the relationship between periods, but the detailed record of stratigraphy constitutes a more precise medium for doing so.

There are of course problems with using reports of excavated structures to reconstruct the history and life cycles of Roman buildings. Many of these structures were excavated quickly as rescue operations, at a scale coarse enough that artifacts like coins and potsherds that could be used to date the buildings, were missed. Most of the publications themselves are preliminary and do little more than report on archaeological fieldwork in the most general ways; they consequently do not provide much detail for reconstructing the histories of these buildings. In some of these reports, it is difficult to understand the details of excavation and, consequently, the data behind the interpretations of the investigator. In many cases, without data sets available for the reader to examine,

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one has to trust that the interpretations reached by the excavators are relatively reasonable and reliable, which may not always be the case; we must still attempt comparison.

There is a more troubling source of bias: excavation tends to occur only on sites considered *worthy of excavation*, usually defined according to the size of the building and the presence of elite-status architecture and goods. Who wants to spend time excavating an ephemeral Roman farm building? As such, a picture of the domestic landscape based on excavation is likely to greatly exaggerate the frequency of prestige residence relative to more ephemeral habitations. Shabby buildings on the land that existed for only a generation or less are less likely to survive in the archaeological record, and less likely to attract the attention of the curious classical archaeologist. Turning to a building like the Pyrgouthi Tower in the Berbati Valley may offer clues to ‘middling class’ residence, but I suspect that even this building lies at a much higher material threshold than many rural buildings of antiquity. We only need to keep in mind that the buildings discussed here lie at a higher threshold of material investment and participation in Roman culture than would have been typical in the Roman Corinthia.

This section then surveys excavated structures to show how urban and extra-urban houses were inhabited through time in the Roman Corinthia.109

6.1.1. Urban and Suburban Buildings

It is perhaps no great surprise that many of the best examples of domestic buildings come from contexts either urban and suburban, in the case of Corinth, or areas we would expect significant settlement buildup, as in the case of Lechaion and Kenchreai. Continued discoveries by the archaeological service and good stratigraphic excavations by the American School at Corinth suggest that Late Antique houses usually absorb and reuse structures from previous days.

109 The following survey attempts to focus only on buildings which were labeled by their investigators as ‘private’ or ‘domestic’, that is, not specifically serviced for or by public resources and to be lived in. In most cases, there is no way of knowing whether the buildings were ‘private’ or ‘public’, or passed through a period of ‘private’ / ‘public’ ownership.
Kokkinovrysi Villa

One of the earliest Roman houses excavated by the American School at Corinth was the Kokkinovrysi Villa, also known as the “Shear Villa” because excavated by T. Leslie Shear in 1925 and subsequently published by him in a fifth volume of the *Corinth* series. The villa is situated on the southeastern outskirts of the city approximately fifteen minutes (by foot) from the Roman forum, near the Kokkinovrysi Spring and about eighty meters south of the new highway. Shear’s excavation suggested that the building was constructed and used in the later first or early second centuries AD and remained in use into the fifth century AD. The most impressive feature of the building is the exquisite group of mosaics depicting mythological figures such as Dionysus and Europa riding a bull, embedded in agricultural and natural scenes, and bordered by geometric patterns. Shear argued that the mosaics belonged to pre-destruction Hellenistic phases of the city, possibly the third / early second centuries BC, which were incorporated into the floor of the early imperial villa; others have argued that the mosaics were set in the second century AD, possibly in two different phases.

Although the mosaics have understandably been the focal point of scholarship on this building, there are other interesting facets of its history. On the one hand, it is clear that this building was impressive on a number of levels, including not only the technical mastery of the floor mosaic patterns, but also the complete outfitting of the room walls with marble revetment at the base and painted stucco extending upward toward the

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111 Shear 1930, 25.

112 Mosaics: Cf. G. Asimakopoulou-Atzaka, “*Katalogos Romaikon Psiphidoton Depedoí me Anthropines morphes ston elliniko Choro*,” in *Hellenika* 26 (1973), 216-54, at p. 228, for full bibliography on mosaic as of 1973; and S.E. Waywell, “Roman Mosaics in Greece,” in *AJA* 83 (1979), 293-321, at 297. G. Asimakopoulou-Atzaka says that these are second century mosaics, and Waywell believed that the pavements were placed in at least two building phases in 1) the early second and 2) late second / early third centuries AD.
ceiling. The central atrium was supported by columns, the bases of which survive, and there was evidence for large pithoi to the northwest and southwest and sub-floor water pipes servicing the atrium. Although the five rooms measured only about 20 m (E-W) x 10-15 m (N-S), this plan represents a partial clearing; the building extended to the northwest and southwest of Room E where the presence of pithoi indicate storage rooms, and the layout of walls suggested a cistern.\textsuperscript{113} Anyone journeying northwestward to Corinth on the road from Sicyon throughout the Roman period necessarily passed this impressively decorated building standing at the city’s border.

The form of excavation (cleaning) and incomplete recording of stratigraphy make it difficult to understand well the chronology of the site, but there is little doubt that this suburban villa underwent a number of refurbishments. As Shear himself emphasized,\textsuperscript{114}

\begin{figure}[h]
  \centering
  \includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Figure6.1.png}
  \caption{Plan of Kokkinovrysi Villa (after Shear 1930), with refurbished walls in gray}
\end{figure}

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\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[\textsuperscript{113}] Shear 1930, 17.
\item[\textsuperscript{114}] Shear 1930, 17, 25.
\end{footnotesize}
\end{flushright}
the internal walls of the structure correspond irregularly and awkwardly to the rectangular paneling of the mosaics, suggesting that the walls were not original to the mosaic. Shear concluded that the floor mosaics were the structural remains of a Hellenistic house that existed on the spot, with the irregular walls belonging to the early imperial construction of the villa, but it seems as likely that these walls represent later refurbished phases of the Roman use of the building, for Shear noted several internal walls subdividing Room E, as well as a possible later cistern in the area. We might infer, too, that the pithoi belong to the latest use of the site. As noted above, some scholars have suggested that the insetting of the mosaics themselves occurred in several phases.

Dating the end of the use of the villa is itself a difficult issue. There are over a dozen coins spanning the second to early fifth centuries, which suggest a final antique use life extending at least into the first half of the fifth century AD, and probably longer; coins of Constantine III and Justin II leave open the possibility for continued use to the late sixth century. There is a good possibility that there were structural changes in the later Roman period that cannot be discerned from the recorded evidence. In the end, the collapse of the roof was followed by the walls, but the ruins of the building must have long remained visible for at some point the columns were taken away, and later Byzantine coins point to activity on the site; even in the 1920s, the soil burying the ruins was less than half a meter thick.

115 Shear’s list of Roman coins (1930, 25) include issues of Domitian (1), Hadrian (1), Antoninus Pius (2), Commodus (1), Caracalla (1), Gallienus (2), Constantine I (2), Constantius II (2), Gratian (1), Valentinian (1), Valens (2), Theodosius (4), Arcadius (2), Honorius (1), Constantine III, and Justin II (2). There are two main problems with using coin evidence for dating the end of the use of a building: 1) Coins stay in circulation for many years beyond their minting; a generation or two is not at all uncommon; and 2) Coins of the fifth century are smaller and consequently less recognized during normal excavation processes. For discussion of these issues, Cf. Jairus Banaji, “The Circulation of gold as an index of prosperity in the central and eastern Mediterranean in Late Antiquity,” in C.E. King and D.G. Wigg (eds.), Coin Finds and Coin Use in the Roman World. The Thirteenth Oxford Symposium on Coinage and Monetary History, 25.-27.3.1993, a NATO Advanced Research Workshop, Berlin 1996, 44-47; and G. Sanders, “Problems in interpreting Rural and Urban settlement in S. Greece, AD 365-700,” in N. Christie and S. Scott (eds.), Landscapes of Change: the Evolution of the Countryside from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages, Aldershot 2004.
Regardless of how we reconstruct the life cycle of the Kokkinovrysi Villa specifically, the building never stood in isolation but was embedded in the historical and spatial material context of long-term use in the area, dating at least to the Classical period. Shear himself noted a variety of fifth century BC Attic and Corinthian pottery outside the walls of the building, and a dozen pre-destruction coins were recovered, pointing probably to earlier houses in the area. Excavations by the Greek Archaeological Service in 1963 uncovered two Roman country houses nearby, possibly dated to the third century, with associated wine press and olive processing collection tank; other investigations have noted the presence of nearby Hellenistic and Roman tombs. No doubt the existence of earlier features on the land contributed to the long use of this building and area through the Roman period.

Anaploga Villa

The ‘Anaploga Villa’ is a large building that lay north of the road between Ancient Corinth and the modern village of Hagioi Anargyroi, about half a kilometer west of the Odeion. The building was discovered when plowing in the area turned up a colossal statue head, a column capital fragment, and two pieces of an epistyle frieze, all dated to the first century AD. Brief excavations by the American School uncovered a sizable complex that was interpreted by Robinson at the time as a building of ‘a semi-civic character,’ such as that belonging to a merchant’s club, but was later interpreted as an early imperial villa. The plan published by Miller shows a substantial building (15 m. N-S x 25 m. E-W) with 11 rooms, including an atrium with impressive mosaic floor (Room

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117 The basic report is in H.S. Robinson, “Excavations at Corinth,” in *Archaiologikon Deltion* 18 (1963), *Chronika* B1, 76-80, at 78-79, pl. 92.c; but see Stella G. Miller, “A Mosaic Floor from a Roman Villa at Anaploga,” in *Hesperia* 41 (1972), 332-54, for a full publication of the mosaic from Room 7. The building has been discussed most recently in Rothaus 2000, 28, 152. It is unfortunate that the Anaploga Villa was never published beyond a brief overview of the 1962 field season for it has subsequently been destroyed.
VII) and a courtyard. The building stood outside the wall of the city in the late Roman period, along an east-west Roman road; its remains have subsequently been destroyed.

The chronology of the building is poorly recorded but Miller’s publication at least suggests a four hundred year long life, with two major alterations following construction: 1) The building was originally constructed in the first century AD, with 2) the mosaic floor added by the end of the first century. The building remained in use, with no evidence for structural change in its main plan for the next two hundred years until 3) a major alteration in the fourth century divided the southern panel of mosaic flooring from the main area with a wall. The latest coins at the site are emperors of the late fourth century AD, suggesting a life at least through the early fifth century.118

118 Coins from late fourth century emperors lie in a deposit on top of the floor: Valentinian, Arcadius, Theodosius I
The possible reasons for the continuity of use of the building through time are not hard to understand. The house is impressive in size, with a brightly colored mosaic floor
showing still-life vignettes of birds pecking on fruits, vines and plants interspersed with centaurs and animals, and bordered by interlocked circles, foliage, and meander patterns. Given the associated statuary and architecture found in the area, we can infer that the villa was only a single impressive structure in a broader group of prestige buildings. Robinson’s investigation of the area uncovered other buildings dated to the third and fourth centuries AD, as well as earlier Classical structures, such as an industrial establishment immediately to the north of the Anaploga Villa. It is not out of question to suggest some material relationship between Roman domestic buildings and their pre-destruction past. What is most telling is that the building remained so structurally constant for so long; even the fourth century refurbishment did not alter the structure dramatically.

Panayia Field Villa and Site

More recent excavations by the American School of Classical Studies have uncovered an extensive complex (c. 60 m x 40 m) of Roman houses, buildings, and baths in the area known as the Panayia Field, southeast of the main Roman forum area, and lying immediately west of a N-S Roman road. The entire area was carefully excavated, providing a detailed glimpse of stratigraphy and making possible a finer reconstruction of the history of the site; the Late Antique bath has recently been published by G. Sanders. The history of the buildings in this area is as follows:

119 Robinson notes that this was the most impressive of the buildings in the area. For industrial facility: Robinson 1963, 79.

The earliest attested Roman use of the site (so far) is a luxury villa constructed in the first or second century. The artifacts and the structural remains of the earliest building are poorly preserved, however, due to the erection of an urban house that immediately followed the building’s destruction by fire in the third century. The early fourth century reconstruction represents a more substantial investment in the area that leveled the entire site down to the foundations and walls. The middle Roman villa assumed the same general orientation of the earlier building, with some of its walls immediately overlaying those of the previous building, but was constructed on a more impressive scale, with a peristyle mosaic-paved courtyard added to the southwest. This building was outfitted with fancy marble, small sculptures, floor mosaics, fountains, and frescoed wall paintings. The middle Roman building burned down in the later fourth century, after which it became vacant for a time, although the ruins continued to exist until many of the walls and blocks had been robbed away.

The space of the expanded middle Roman complex was reused in two later phases. Another less substantial apsidal house, perhaps dating to the middle or later fifth century AD, was constructed over the remains of the middle Roman building, cutting into the former building’s destruction rubble, in turn partially damaging the mosaic of the earlier building; this building did not reuse the walls of the earlier structure in a major way. By the mid-sixth century, the entire site was rebuilt at a major level with two separate foundations: a long building of unknown function (at least 50 m. E-W, and 20 m. N-S) was built over the southern half of the middle Roman complex (e.g., the courtyard), and a sizable bath (c. 12 x 20 m) with marble flooring and wall revetment, was constructed over the northern half. Both buildings reuse north-south walls of the earlier building, although there is clear evidence also for disregard of the layout of the previous building as the trenches for the walls of the bath cut through middle and early Roman layers.

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121 Sanders 1999, 443, 458.

122 Sanders 1999, 444, 458-59. The pre-construction material from the fill of the bath date to the fifth century. Cf. also Sanders 2004 and 2005, for the apsidal building.

123 Sanders 1999, 445.
The Late Antique complex apparently fell out of use by the late sixth century, but a small house dating to the early seventh century overlay the remains of the bath and reused the *calidarium* for heating purposes.\textsuperscript{124} Graves of the late sixth and seventh centuries were recovered from this area. Only in the following centuries, from the seventh to eleventh, is there little evidence for use of the area.

The detailed recording of this excavation allow us, then, to see the complex intricacies of the life cycle of an area of building space over many centuries. The Panayia field area was a site of prestige architecture for nearly 400 years, with several uneven episodes of total rebuilding that differently made use of previous foundations and preexisting walls. The destruction of the earliest Roman building on the spot was followed by the immediate reconstruction of the Roman house at an impressive scale. Following the conflagration of this middle Roman *domus* in the later fourth century, however, there was no immediate rebuilding. The ruins of the building remained, probably an ugly eyesore for the city until much of the building material had been reused elsewhere. But within a century, the site again came to life with the construction of a new house, and then, later, a lavish bathing complex and long building; both of these later phases overlay and incorporate some of the foundation of the earlier structures. We can surmise that the construction of the later buildings occurred in respect to the abandoned ruins: a good extensive building plot along a main north-south thoroughfare with terraced foundation offered attractions for reconstruction of large elite-status buildings well to the end of antiquity.

The “Aphrodision” Villa at Kenchreai

A large Roman building in the northwestern area of the harbor of Kenchreai was excavated by Americans in the 1970s and published by Scranton in 1978. Although originally interpreted as a temple of Aphrodite mentioned by Pausanias, Rothaus

\textsuperscript{124} Sanders 1999, 456-57, 462.
convincingly re-identified the building as a villa that remained in use in Late Antiquity. Based on Scranton’s detailed publication and plans, it is possible to reconstruct nine building phases covering eleven centuries of reuse, from the Classical period to at least the late fourth century. The building site as it existed for much of the Roman period included two buildings, a south building and a brick building that were later united in a single complex. The entire site was extensive, covering a space 75 m x 40 m.

The Greek period is represented by at least three building phases, each of which overlay each other, but at different orientations and plans. The Roman period buildings begin with construction of a complex with stoa and peristyle court early in the first century AD. Around AD 100, a brick building with a hall and peristyle courtyard (with mosaics) was constructed over the court of the earlier building, reusing many of the walls of the previous phase. This was remodeled and enlarged around AD 200, but followed the same general orientation and reused the same walls of the two previous phases; the floors were remodeled at this time. Another minor refurbishment occurred in the early fourth century with new partitions in some of the rooms. Finally, the destruction of this building at the end of the fourth century was followed by reconstruction on the same orientation of earlier buildings, but uniting the two buildings into a single complex. This final building lasted into the sixth century, when it was replaced by a new building of roughly the same plan but lying on a different orientation.

Like the Panayia field area, refurbishment was a process that continually rewrote the walls of earlier phases while still bearing a relation for the site’s general form and lay, incorporating foundation walls of previous phases. Despite changes, especially to the internal walls, there is considerable continuity in the basic outline and orientation of the main structure, and definite continuity in the practices of rebuilding even into the sixth century.

6.1.2. Rural Structures of the Eastern Corinthia

There are only two good candidates for rural villas or structures in the Eastern Corinthia, the Pano Magoula and Katounistra villas. The lack of excavated villas is mainly a product of incomplete investigation, since the EKAS survey produced many probable candidates for villas and farms in this territory.
Pano Magoula

One of the best examples of a true rural villa in the immediate vicinity of Corinth is the *Pano Magoula* villa, along the Argos-New Corinth road, excavated and reported on by D. Pallas. Deep plowing in the 1950s upturned large fragments of architecture (including columns and capitals), pithoi, a circular millstone, and pieces of the floor of the building (in pebble and mortared tiles). D. Pallas subsequently excavated four trenches that uncovered parts of a large Italian-style villa with atrium and peristyle courtyard, and associated features: an enormous cistern (at least 23 m. x 10 m, depth of 1.30 m), an olive press, and pithoi. Water pipes tapping into the cistern connected to and serviced the buildings to the south, with a garden in-between. The partial clearing of this site indicates an impressive size (over 20 m long) and complete with agricultural features.

The chronology is complicated but indicates at least a 300 year long life cycle. The only finely dated artifacts span the course of the Roman period: second century lamp fragments (probably Type XXVI) in the fill of the eastern wall of the cistern, a lamp of Type XXVIII, and a Late Roman coin of unclear type. Despite the paucity of early imperial material, Pallas argued that the construction style and brickwork pattern, as well as the basic atrium-style (with *impluvium*) plan and ornamentation of the villa, demonstrated a previously existing villa of the first or second centuries AD. This earlier villa, which was contemporary with the construction of the cistern, was demolished and replaced by a new building after the mid-third century AD. The marble revetments, pavements, and columns of the late Roman villa, then, were in ‘secondary’ context, absorbed into the later phase of use of the site. This later building, then, seriously refurbished the earlier, but still made use of the foundation, plan (including atrium), and building material of the older building. The late phase of the house is unclear, but Pallas thought he found a tile grave in one part of the house, suggesting early Christian use.

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126 Guy Sanders and I located the property of this excavation in the fall of 2004, but there is quite literally nothing to see there. It has been backfilled and is currently overgrown with tall weeds.

127 The coin and lamp date the fill on which the house was founded to not before the middle of the 3C AD.
Figure 6.5. Pano Magoula Villa (after Pallas 1955)
Katounistra

In the district called Katounistra, about 4.5 km northeast of Loutraki, excavations have uncovered an enormous elite-residence building of Roman date, complete with apsidal rooms, hypocaust bath, clay drains, exquisite imported columns, marble revetment, and polychrome geometric mosaic floors. The complex represents a villa residence with associated bath, measuring some 50 x 75 m. Because the building is still under investigation, there has been little discussion of its chronological development. The current construction has been dated to the late Roman period based on fourth century coins found in several rooms, and a lamp fragment dating to the fourth / early fifth century AD. But it is clear that there are substantial early imperial architectural fragments (blocks, columns, and marble) at this site as well, suggesting an earlier phase to the site; the reports also mention the occurrence of building material (e.g., columns) in secondary context. This suggests, no doubt, that the building underwent several phases, the details of which will only come with fuller study.

The site has obvious attractions. Sitting on a natural rise, it has a marvelous view of the Corinthian Gulf to the north, as well as the Oneion mountain range, the entire Isthmian plain, and the eastern coast of the Corinthia extending southward. One can also get a clear view of Acrocorinth and the mountains of the western Corinthia from Katounistra. The site is situated above good agricultural land, and when I visited the site in 2004, there were millstone fragments visible among the remains.

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129 I thank Timothy Gregory for this observation.

130 AD 51 (1996), 95; AD 52 (1997), Chronika 149.

131 One also might wonder whether there might be an even earlier pre-Roman phase, since Wiseman noted that plowing had revealed classical pottery in the area. Wiseman 1978, 48.
6.1.3. Rural Villas and Towers of the Southern Corinthia

The following two case studies from the Southern Corinthia are introduced for the sake of comparanda. Although they are not located on the Isthmus, they do offer insights into the processes of refurbishing in other parts of Corinthian territory in the Roman period.

Varela

The site of Varela is situated just west of the modern village of Ayios Vasilios, near the little church of Ayios Nikolaos, on the lower slopes of a gentle hill above a small valley. Excavations on several plots of land there in 1984 revealed several buildings covering an extensive area (75 m x 50 m), and with a complex chronology ranging from Late Roman to the Ottoman period. Excavations revealed rooms with geometric mosaic floors, a bathing establishment, a cistern, and, as I noticed in my visit to the site, several large pithoi. The combination of what appear to be a residential complex with bathing structures suggest a large rural villa of Late Antique date.

132 So far as I know, the only report on the building is AD 39 (1984), B1, 109-10 1991-92, with English summary in AR 1992, 10. Rothaus discusses it briefly as well (Rothaus 2000, 29).
Based on coins and pottery, investigators argued for a long continuous habitation from the third to late sixth centuries. Coins of the third and fourth centuries presumably indicate a construction date in the late third / early fourth century, although coins beneath the floor of one room of the bath date to the late fourth century, suggesting that the bath was added in a later phase. Following an earthquake of the mid-sixth century, repairs were made in the later sixth century, but it is unclear from the notes the nature of habitation following this point. The Byzantine buildings apparently lay adjacent to the Late Antique structures.

This villa complex is not an isolated site. Ancient Cleonae is located nearby, and presumably the site lay near the north-south road to the Argolid and an east-west pass into the Nemea Valley. A view toward Acrocorinth is possible from the hills above, a visual reminder of the major city nearby. Today, the valley is cultivated for olives, vines, and grain, and we should expect similar agricultural aspects in antiquity as well. The Roman life of the Varela villa as a villa lasts at least 300 years, from the third / fourth through the sixth centuries, with several phases of major construction attested.

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133 Artifacts include lots of pottery (66 groups of sherds), 26 bronze coins, and an ear-pick and spear-head.

134 Rothaus 2000, 29.
The Pyrgouthi Tower-Farmstead

We can catch a good glimpse of rural recycling practices in one of the best excavated rural structures in Greece, the Pyrgouthi Tower in the Berbati Valley, and east of Mycenae. This Hellenistic tower (Pyrgouthi) has long been known, but was only seriously investigated and excavated in recent years by the Berbati Valley Project. The excavations were careful and thorough enough that the tower became the subject of two dissertations at Stockholm University, and will constitute part of a forthcoming volume by the Swedish Institute at Athens. Consequently, the careful reporting allows for detailed reconstruction of the different phases of use of the tower.135

Like the buildings examined already, the surface scatters around the Hellenistic Tower at Pyrgouthi (FS 506) were rich, but had long suggested Classical occupation.136 Intensive survey around the site corroborated dates between the fifth century BC and late Hellenistic periods,137 which led the investigators to the hypothesis that the tower was a small part of a larger farmstead complex dating to the Classical or Hellenistic period. Only a more intensive gridded survey in 1995 revealed later Roman material, and only excavation demonstrated the complex lifecycles of the building.138

The early Hellenistic construction of the Pyrgouthi tower as a fortified storage facility for a nearby village settlement was only the first of several lives for the building.139 The first refurbishing dates to the first century BC.140 It involved revamping


136 Penttinen 1996, 239.

137 Penttinen 1996, 278. Forsell 1996, 336-42, hardly mentions the site in her catalogue of Roman sites discovered by the Berbati Survey.

138 Penttinen 2001, 7-8, 88-93.

139 The tower is dated to the early HE period on the basis of its construction style (coursed polygonal to irregular trapezoidal) and a limited amount of pottery in and around the tower (Penttinen 2001, 91). There are earlier periods represented at Pyrgouthi, but it is difficult to know what relationship they bear to later
the tower itself—cleaning out its fill, repairing its faces, plastering some of its interior walls, reducing its height by eliminating the second story, and perhaps converting it into a storage facility. It also entailed appending an external complex of walls to the western end of the structure, increasing the length of the entire structure, including the tower, to sixteen meters. Furthermore, five cut blocks from the tower, which indicate the earlier structure had been pulled down, were incorporated into the new structures to the west. A range of storage jars, cooking vessels, and fine wares, along with loom weights and beehives, were introduced to the place, attesting to the intensification of the agricultural function of the complex. Following its use in the first century BC, the early and middle Roman period use of the site is difficult to assess, but a limited amount of second century pottery suggests that the tower may have been occupied and maintained during this period; there was, however, no evident architectural refurbishment during this period.

The final major refurbishing of the farm occurred in the mid-sixth century AD, which began with a cleaning that removed or obliterated traces of earlier occupation, taking the new building down to rebuild directly on bedrock. The construction of phases. The site was inhabited during the late 8th and 7th centuries BC, and the absence of storage wares convinced Penttinen that the site was a seasonal settlement for a pastoralist community. Two cavities cut into the bedrock, along with misfired pottery and wasters dating to the Classical period, indicate that in the Classical period, the site was used for kilns and workshop. Is there any relationship between earlier and later periods?

Like the blockhouses in the Argolid, refurbishing the tower obliterated all but the slightest traces of cultural material from the early Hellenistic period. On the basis of the absence of ceramic remains dating to late Hellenistic period, and toppled blocks, Penttinen argues that the tower fell out of use within a hundred year period and was followed by periods of disuse in the late Hellenistic period. Penttinen 2001, 91.

The tower was still only 8 meters N-S.


Hjohlman 2002, 117, points out that the upper story of the tower was made of mud brick and consequently, the tower became dilapidated sometime before Late Antiquity. In any case, mud brick is not a material that will survive for several hundred years without periodic replacement.

significant storage rooms to the south and southwest of the tower leveled preexisting remains, destroying parts of the external late Hellenistic / early Roman walls and scattering much of the pottery scatter of the earlier period.146 Constructing the walls to the south of the tower also utilized ancient inscribed Hellenistic blocks.147 The tower in turn, which had initially been used for storing grain, and was first refurbished into an agricultural complex, was now converted into some kind of wine press house with agricultural facilities, including a trough, treading floor, and press.148 The late occupation of the site ended only in the seventh century AD, when it was burned down, the walls and roof collapsing into the house. Although the ruins of the Late Antique farm underwent additional brief periods of use, disuse, and reoccupation of a lesser kind until the modern period, the tower complex was never fully refurbished following its Late Antique phase.149

6.1.4. Conclusion

This concludes the survey of excavated villas and farmsteads in the Corinthia that have been sufficiently published to allow inference about the life cycles of Roman domestic buildings. We could pile up a longer list of buildings from the region, as well as other areas of Greece, that have been superficially noted in archaeological reports, but many of these buildings were identified only with the generic descriptor ‘Roman structure’, and rarely are described in any detail.150 It is better to tie together the

146 Penttinen 2001, 36, 52, 70, 82.

147 Penttinen 2001, 81. The inscriptions probably derive from nearby grave monument. They bear the names “Hanthro” and “Poseidaniou.”


149 Penttinen 2001, 53; Hjohlman 2002, 120. Material was found that date to the twelfth and nineteenth/twentieth centuries. Even in modern times, the tower was used as a dump for stones and garbage.

disparate examples above into some coherent statements about refurbishing and long-term use of places in the Corinthia.

6.2. Building the Past into a New Future

Habitation in the Roman Corinthia was embedded in particular places with long histories. As discussed in the previous chapter, we can see this best at the broad level of landscape, but the review of excavated domestic buildings above provides additional evidence for long histories of use and reuse of specific places over several centuries and even longer. In a number of cases, such as the Pyrgouthi tower and the Aphrodision at Kenchreai, the original construction certainly dates to the Classical or early Hellenistic periods. In Corinth also, preexisting buildings are suggested at several of the sites, but excavations were not thorough enough to indicate the relationship of later to earlier structures. Even those villas and houses that originate in the Roman period have life cycles of at least 300 years. There simply are not many excavated buildings in the Corinthia that do not provide evidence for very long use cycles. A summary of the evidence can be seen in Figure 6.8 below, which tabulates the number of episodes of refurbishment and investment in rural structures by half century.\textsuperscript{151}

\textsuperscript{151} The presence of a “?” indicates uncertainty about the nature of construction in the phase, while the “/” and “\” indicate that the building episode could be dated to either of two successive periods. Note that this table does not tabulate the evidence for habitation, is far more frequent.
Figure 6.8. Building investment episodes in urban and rural structures, by half century

The reasons for re-inhabiting particular places on the landscape over long periods of time are both simple enough to understand and too complex to pin on a single explanation. The economy of reusing old building material and sites,\(^\text{152}\) civic and state laws encouraging upkeep and even requiring reuse of buildings,\(^\text{153}\) the aesthetic ideal of

\(^{152}\) Percival 1976, 198-99, recording the insightful observation made by Linckenheld about the reuse of a villa in Moselle for graves: “the attraction of ruins, he said, could well have been that they made the land on which they stood quite useless for agricultural purposes, so that by using them as cemeteries the local people could ensure, first, that their dead were not likely to be disturbed, and second, that they would not diminish the area available for farming”

upkeeping buildings,\textsuperscript{154} the passing of houses as property through inheritance,\textsuperscript{155} the significance of the building for family and civic identity, and social memory all must have played into and fostered a structure of place that generated numerous phases of use and reuse over the centuries. The point that I would like to emphasize in the following discussion is not why buildings were reused but how reuse played into the renewal and redefinition of Corinthian society in the Roman period. For this discussion, I will single out three important facets of the patterns of domestic building in the Corinthia and the processes of refurbishing: 1) the physical pattern of refurbishing Roman houses, both generally and in the Corinthia; 2) the implications of refurbishing for understanding the social and economic health of the region in Late Antiquity; and 3) the significance of recycling and rehabilitation for cultural continuity and change in a Late Antique landscape.

6.2.1. Cycles of the Roman House

First, a word about the mechanics of maintenance and refurbishing can be informative in its own right. How long did elite-status houses typically (not) endure in the Roman period and how frequently were they rebuilt? Archaeologists prefer to blame the destruction of buildings on earthquakes, but we might question how often other causes for collapse (simple neglect, for instance) compare with fires and earthquakes. Certainly literary sources for the Roman period recognize the role of ‘greater forces’, such as floods, earthquakes, and fire in leveling a finely built house.\textsuperscript{156} John Chrysostom describes in vivid detail the destruction by fire of one of these splendid houses, the capitals and columns crumbling, the half-burnt timber, the dust and mud, statues hideously disfigured from the heat, and the terrifying tumbling of the different features of


\textsuperscript{155} E.g., John Chrysostom, \textit{Hom. Mt.} 20.6; \textit{Hom. 1 Tim.} 9 (437); \textit{Hom. John} 56.3 (203) and 80.3 (298).

\textsuperscript{156} There are many instances in the Roman jurists about such hypothetical scenarios, and who would be responsible for rebuilding. D. 7.1.34.2 (Julian); 7.1.36 pr (Africanus); D. 19.2.36 (Florentinus) and 19.2.37 (Javolenus); 19.2.59 (Javolenus); 19.2.62 (Labeo 1 \textit{pith}). D. 39.2.24 (Ulpian)
the building to the ground, while the whole city gathers round to watch.\textsuperscript{157} As the jurists reason, “What building is so secure that it can stand the shock of a river or the sea or a storm or collapse or fire or earthquake?”\textsuperscript{158} Even still, though, these forces are usually recognized as chance events and misfortunes and are singled out for their exceptional quality; they are not normative process of destruction.

Arguably, neglect and the wear of time were far more extensive forces in the destruction of Roman houses because of their frequency. The loss of one or two tiles, Chrysostom relates to his congregation in Antioch, can destroy the entire fabric of the building; such accidental tile losses are also mentioned in legal contexts.\textsuperscript{159} A neglected leaky roof, writes John Cassian, finds its way in and ruins the walls and the entire house.\textsuperscript{160} Gregory of Nyssa compares the human brain to the foundation of a house --- messing with it brings down the entire structure.\textsuperscript{161} At a more technical level, Vitruvius recommends for wall construction using bricks dried for two years, lest they expand and crack the walls; better still is the ashlar and coursed large-stone construction of the Greeks, far stronger and longer-lasting than masonry with rubble core, which is bound to give way.\textsuperscript{162} Such processes are impossible to quantify, but we can infer than they are normative processes responsible for the collapse of buildings in antiquity.

\textsuperscript{157} Hom. Ephes. 10 (100-101).

\textsuperscript{158} D. 39.2.24.4.

\textsuperscript{159} John Chrysostom, On the Statues 19.14 (470); and Hom. 1 Cor. 8.7 (47). Cf. D. 39.2.43 pr. (Alfenus Verus): a case where the wind blows tiles off one man’s building onto his neighbor’s roof, in turn breaking his neighbor’s tiles.

\textsuperscript{160} Cf. John Cassian, Conference 6.17 (361), “No house ever fails to the ground by a sudden collapse, but only when there is some flaw of long standing in the foundation, or when by long continued neglect of its inmates, what was at first only a little drip finds its way through, and so the protecting wails are by degrees ruined, and in consequence of long standing neglect the gap becomes larger, and break away, and in time the drenching storm and rain pours in like a river”

\textsuperscript{161} Gregory Nyssa, On the Making of Man, 30.10

\textsuperscript{162} Vitruvius 2.3.2; and 2.8.2-9. Cf. John Hom. 7.1 (27), for the importance of proper wall construction
We can get a sense of how neglect could quickly contribute to a building’s collapse by turning to one of the first century AD laws regulating demolition: Alliatorius Celsus had purchased a property with buildings where there had formerly been a market which was now no longer in business; the buildings “were becoming dilapidated through age and were not going to be repaired for use because no one lived in them and no one wanted to move into deserted ruins.”\(^{163}\) In a slightly later context, Pliny (Ep. 9.70) wrote to the emperor Trajan asking for his advice about constructing on a property in Prusa where there were the unsightly ruins of a former private house; the building with an associated shrine had been dedicated to the emperor Claudius two generations earlier and was to be leased out on a regular basis but, “partly through pillage and partly through neglect, the whole house, court and garden gradually fell into ruins, so that now little but the site remains.”

Examples like these indicate that privately-owned buildings do not endure for more than a generation or two without maintenance. The consequence of neglect is not simply that tiles fall off, exposing both the walls and wood to decay—that much is true and detrimental to the building’s fabric—but also that abandoned houses are subject to processes of depletion as individuals come and strip the remains away for their own use elsewhere, in spite of laws against this. That these processes must have been common is suggested in the case of Pliny above and by other literary evidence. John Chrysostom uses the illustration of how the collapsed mansion, “is so entirely desolate that all things that were in it have come into the hands of others.”\(^{164}\) Even with maintenance, rebuilding and renovation might occur rather frequently, as often as homeowners felt the need to make home improvements. As Wallace-Hadrill has argued (1994) for the villas at Pompeii and Herculaneum, for example, the impetus for the generational changes in wall painting and decoration may originate in the needs of an ever-changing elite society, not simply the need for physical renewal of the house.

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\(^{164}\) John Chrys. 1 Corinthians, Hom. 11.10 (63)
The frequency of rebuilding then would occur as often as walls and foundations became unstable and required new building—which, in turn, relates to the nature and form of construction and the degree of building neglect—or as frequently as homeowners wished to make changes. In the Corinthia, the well-excavated area of the Panayia field in Corinth shows major reconstructions on new plans about every 150 years, although the cause for the middle Roman house going out of use was extraordinary (fire). The other buildings of the Corinthia suggest that major reconstructions on the order of 150 to 200 years might be typical, although the careful excavation of the Aphrodision Villa at Kenchreai indicates that serious refurbishments of buildings could occur in the order of once per century. Major reconstructions on new plans on the order of 100-200 years appears then to be a typical value for well-constructed buildings of the Corinthia. We can expect that the housing of the urban and rural poor was far more ephemeral and needed rebuilding at a more regular generational frequency.\(^{165}\)

A more typical kind of renovation in antiquity, the repairing of walls and floors made on the order of the generation, usually is too elusive for the archaeologist to measure precisely. Vitruvius says that masonry party walls with soft rubble cores were expected to last only 80 years (Vitr. 2.8.8-9), and we should expect shorter life spans for wall construction in mudbrick. At places like the Pyrgouthi Tower in the Corinthia, where the entire upper story was constructed in mudbrick, we simply cannot say how frequently renovation occurred, but it must have been common. We can recognize renovations of this more minor kind in the Corinthia in the form of new walls and divisions of houses and changes to the mosaic floors in some of the Corinthian houses (e.g., Kokkinovrysi).

The complexity of these processes can be seen in the long-term cycles of houses of Pompeii. These houses are usually envisioned in terms of a moment frozen in time, but it

\(^{165}\) Bagnall 1993, 51-52, suggests ‘constant rebuilding’ of simply constructed urban homes in Late Antique Egypt. The study by EKAS of modern houses at Lakka Skoutara in the southeast Corinthia suggests that simple long houses constructed with fieldstone walls and tile roofs will not stand more than two decades if not maintained.
is more accurate to see them as palimpsests and aggregates of constructing through time.\footnote{On the cycles of change: A. Wallace-Hadrill, \textit{Houses and Society in Pompeii and Herculaneum}, Princeton 1994, 149-50, 160-64. P.M. Allison, \textit{The distribution of Pompeian house contents and its significance}. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Sydney 1992, 15-16. For an example of a building history: Frank Sear, “History of the House of the Painted Capitals,” in Jean-Paul Descoydes \textit{et al.}, \textit{Pompeii Revisited: the life and death of a Roman Town}, Sydney 1994, 54-56.} The presence of first-style wall painting indicates that some of the walls of the houses may be three hundred years old, and yet the interesting history of this city suggests a much greater frequency of change and renovation than can be precisely measured in the architectural evidence. The paucity of walls with first and second style, and even third style, wall paintings, of previous generations are telling indicators of change.\footnote{L. Richardson, Jr., \textit{Pompeii: an Architectural History}, Baltimore 1988, 107-8, 154, 221.} Whether the older styles lie buried beneath the redecorated phases of the later style, or whether the walls that originally bore the earlier paintings have been knocked down and replaced through normal renovation processes, is difficult to say, but the pace of structural changes in these buildings does appear to occur at a generational level. As Penelope Alison’s catalogue of these houses suggests, there is widespread evidence for both building activity at some of these houses, repair work, continuing alterations, and functional shifts in the use of rooms. Certainly these changes relate to the seismic activity of the previous two decades, but there are still instances where the reasons for the changes (the simple wear of time) are rooted in a changing society.\footnote{Alison 1992, 88-92, 95-97} In any case, the houses at Pompeii tell endless stories of remodeling, expansions, repair work, columns falling down, earthquakes, replastering, painting and constant rebuilding, at the minimum threshold of a century and, probably more frequently.

Although the Roman houses of the Corinthia are poorly preserved and do not allow the kind of analysis that has been conducted at Vesuvian houses, the survey of houses above suggests that full-scale rebuilding occurred on the order of every century or two. The episodes of refurbishment listed in Figure 6.8 are probably even a significant underestimate of the frequency and forms of investment and rebuilding in urban and rural
structures. The archaeological record does not provide a very complete picture of the cycles of structural renewal but only the major periods of rebuilding, and evidence for earlier refurbishments may have been eliminated or diminished through later reconstruction, especially construction at a more substantial threshold of investment. The archaeological record instead provides fossilized indications of only some of the major episodes of rebuilding. It is reasonable to think that there must have been numerous minor renovations at the generational level that have not survived well in the archaeological record.

6.2.2. Refurbishment, Wealthy Corinth(ia), and the Formation of the Built Landscape

There are, secondly, major implications of frequent refurbishment for understanding the social and economic world of the Corinthia. Despite the lack of hard facts relating to the costs of construction and maintenance of private residence in the Roman world, there are different means of approaching the subject of expenditure.169 The detailed discussion that follows highlights how constructing, maintaining, and refurbishing houses and small-scale or private buildings through Late Antiquity demonstrate elements of material continuity of local society well into the sixth century. Small-scale building activity, that is, demonstrates the health and vitality of the local world.

The erection or total rebuilding of a substantial privately-owned urban villa required a significant investment of time and energy commensurate with the scale of building. Even the construction of a basic country house would require a variety of building phases that cost much in time and energy: planning and surveying; material extraction, preparation, and movement; digging, forming, and laying foundations; erecting walls and roof; finishing and decorating walls and floors; installing heating and drainage facilities; equipping with furniture and installations; and landscaping. Each of these broad building

169 On the general social and economic conditions assumed by rural buildings and villas, cf. A.L.F. Rivet, “Social and Economic Aspects,” in A.L.F. Rivet (ed), The Roman Villa in Britain, London 1969, 173-216; and John Percival, The Roman Villa: An Historical Introduction, Berkeley 1976, 145-65. From pp. 163, Percival discusses the main problem in investigating economic processes: “We do not know, for example, what it would cost to build a villa, or to maintain and administer it for a given period of time; even the price of estates that we have are few in number, exceptional in size, and unrepresentative in place and period.”
phases necessitated a whole range of technical work. Certain processes, like laying the foundation and erecting walls, had to run perfectly lest the building be constructed insecurely and fall over, as we hear sometimes did occur. Other processes like wall painting and mosaic installation required tedious technical work and expertise. The time required to complete these processes under normal circumstances depended on the number of workmen involved in construction and the complexity of the building, but must have been, at the very minimum, many months, and possibly several years; there are instances in both the jurists and literature where the construction of a private residence is never finished. The process of constructing was long and protracted. A house torn down immediately after construction could be so disheartening that the owner might simply abandon the project altogether.

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170 These include stone cutting, lifting, finishing, bonding; formation of mud brick by extracting, molding, drying; creation of mortar through production of lime and inclusions; production of tiles; earth and stone removal, leveling, flattening of bedrock, leveling of clay, laying beds of crushed ceramics, gravel, rubble; building retaining walls and forming drainage; constructing timber and laying tiles; plastering, painting, forming veneers, setting mosaics in walls; adding beddings of crushed stone, mortar, and ceramics for floors; installing water and drainage installations; laying of stone slabs and mosaics in floors.


173 We hear, for instance, of a laborer for the church of Rome who worked for three years on a house: Cf. Jones 1964, Vol. III, note 82, p. 288, citing Gregory Ep. 9.43. For a much later Byzantine context, the construction of urban homes has been estimated at 6 to 50 days, but these are far simpler houses than those we are considering here. Cf. A. Cutler and Alexander Kazhdan, “Building Industry”, in ODB, Vol. 1, 331-32. One could apply to private buildings Kardulias’ figures for energy expenditure for construction activities at public buildings at Isthmia: P.N. Kardulias, “Architecture, Energy, and Social Evolution at Isthmia, Greece: Some Thoughts about Late Antiquity in the Korinthia,” in JMA 8.2 (1995), 33-59. For instance, based on his estimation for the production of roof tiles (cf. Table 1, p. 38: 1 person-day / 100 tiles for production, and 2 p-days / 500 tiles for firing), a roof with 1,500 roof tiles (the minimum number required for a decurion’s house in the municipal law of Tarentum) would require 21 person days for simply molding and firing the tiles; this does not include assembly. Cf. Lex Municipii Tarenti, CIL I 22 290 (ILS 6089), cited by Wallace-Hadrill 1994, 72.

174 As in: John Chrysostom, Homily on Acts, Hom. 8 (52-53): “For it is said, he that has built up a house, and then sees his building pulled down, will have less spirit for building again. Yes, but for all this, one must not be dispirited, but must once more set to work zealously.” Cf. also John Chrysostom, Letter I.19 (110), An Exhortation to Theodore after his Fall.
The complexities of home building is also indicated by the variety of specialists who were involved in the process. While certain building activities like mud brick construction and laying might require laborers with only basic training and skills, other phases required expertise work, either arranged through contract with specialists, or with a single architect who would be responsible for subcontracting the work. In either case, numerous decisions were required about the expected date of completion, payment amounts and arrangements, construction materials, and the means of assessing the final product. There are practically no private building contracts that survive antiquity, but Cato provides us with a kind of model contract for arranging the construction of a rural farmhouse:

If you are contracting for the building of a new steading from the ground up, the contractor should be responsible for the following: all walls as specified, of quarry-stone set in mortar, pillars of solid masonry, all necessary beams, sills, uprights, lintel, door-framing, supports, winter stables and summer feed racks for cattle, a horse stall, quarters for servants, 3 meat racks, a round table, 2 copper boilers, 10 coops, a fireplace, 1 main entrance, and another at the option of the owner, windows, 10 two-foot lattices for the larger windows, 6 window-shutters, 3 benches, 5 stools, 2 looms, 1 small mortar for crushing wheat, 1 fuller’s mortar, trimmings, and 2 presses. The owner will furnish the timber and necessary material for this and deliver it on the ground, and also one saw and one plumb-line (but the contractor will fell, hew, square and finish the timber), stone, lime, sand, water, and earth for making mortar…. In a steading of stone and mortar groundwork, carry the foundation one foot above ground, the rest of the walls of brick; add the necessary lintel and trimmings. The rest of the specifications as for the house of rough stibe set in mortar. The cost per tile will be one sesterce.

Cato’s model contract indicate not only how precisely the work could be contracted, but also reconfirm the different steps of technical construction in erecting a modest rural farm

in the first place. Even the most basic elite-status house construction could require contracting with a range of specialists and semi-professionals including builders/architects, carpenters, stone masons and column masons, brick makers and brick layers, plasterers and molders, painters, cabinet makers and bed makers, wood carvers, sculptors, and stone carriers. This same variety is found in other documents of Late Antiquity, as for instance, in an edict of Constantine in AD 337, allowing tax breaks for:

- architects, makers of paneled ceilings, plasterers, carpenters, stonecutters,
- ...builders,...stone-masons,...step-makers, painters, sculptors, engravers, joiners,
- statuaries, workers in mosaics, coppersmiths, blacksmiths, marble-masons, builders,
- founders,...layers of tessellated stones.

Even among the very incomplete early Christian inscriptions of Late Antique Achaia are included skilled laborers in architecture, stonecutting, marble working, carpentry, painting, glass working, and mosaics. Erecting Roman houses and private buildings required specialists, technicians, and expert builders; this was not something to leave to those without knowledge.

There is very little evidence for the cost of house construction in antiquity, and any inferences require a series of numerical acrobatics; but even hypothetical figures can provide a sense of the financial end of construction. For instance, if we take Cato’s suggested reasonable, ‘honest’ price (14.1-5) of 1 sesterces / roof tile for contracting labor for constructing a simple farm building from the ground up, the construction of a

178 Cf. Johnson and West 1967, 108-109, for papyri from Arsinoe, Theadelphia, Oxyrhynchus, Hermopolis, Panopolis, This, Aphrodito, Hermothis, Fayum, among others.

179 CTh. 13.2. Jones 1964, 862-63, discusses this text and notes that this law was preserved in the Justinianic Code. For a good discussion of the tedious and difficult work required of the floor and wall finishers and decorators, cf. Taylor 2003, 212-55.

180 Sironen 1997, 405-6

181 The folly of building a house without having the skills or knowing how to construct well was a frequent image in early Christian literature. Besides the passage from Paul quoted earlier (“be careful how he builds”), there are several passages in the Gospels (Mt. 7.24-27; Lk. 6.46-49; 14.28-30), and many in the patristic writings. E.g., John Chrys. Treatise on the Priesthood 1.62-64; Chrys. A Treatise to prove that no one can harm the man who does not injure himself, 12-13 (279-80); Chrys. On the Statues, Hom. 4.4 (365-66); Cyril of Jerusalem, Prologue to the Letters 11 (3). The basic idea is that you leave house building to the experts who know how to do it.
simple but modest house might require 1,000-2,000 sesterces for labor costs in Cato’s day, well above a small farmer’s yearly earnings in Cato’s day; and this does not include building material. Urban and rural villas of larger size, or with luxury features like mosaics and wall paintings, would require substantially more in terms of labor and material cost.

We are in better straits when we look to the costs for the ‘ingredients’ of construction, including the wages for builders and construction material. Let us start with the wages of craftsmen. Besides Cato’s ‘honest’ cost given above, the relativity of wages is suggested in the price edict of Diocletian (VII), where the typical wage for semi-skilled labor is 50 denarii / day. Stonemasons, cabinet makers, carpenters, lime burners, workers of tessellated floors, and plasterers all fall into this wage bracket, along with bakers, blacksmiths, and wagon wrights. Mosaicists earn only slightly more, 60 denarii/ day, while unskilled labor such as farmhands, water carriers, and sewer cleaners earn half as much (25 denarii / day). The real wage-earner among the skilled professionals is the wall painter and especially the figure painter who can earn, respectively, 75 and 150 denarii/ day. In a later antique context, we find an unskilled construction worker in Rome getting paid less than 5 solidi / year for three years for his

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182 The municipal law of Tarentum, *Lex Muniscipii Tarenti*, CIL I 22 290 (ILS 6089), specifies that a decurion’s townhouse should have a minimum of 1,500 roof tiles, and certainly many more thousand tiles would be needed for large rural villas.

183 Cf. A. Burford, *Craftsmen in Greek and Roman Society*, London 1972, 135-44, who discusses the problems in attempting to infer wage earnings among craftsmen in the Greek and Roman world. Burford observes that the standard daily wage of a craftsman does not represent real wages but a more arbitrary ‘conventional’ wage, which does not correspond to economically rational principles. Wages fluctuated in antiquity, but the generally low status of the semi-skilled worker does not greatly change. They are not at the bottom of society, but all except a few (e.g., sculptors and painters) are usually low status and poor. For similar observations for a Late Antique and Byzantine context, cf. Jones 1964, 858-64; Cyril Mango, *Byzantium: the empire of new Rome*, London 1980, 39-41; Charalambos Bouras, “Master Craftsmen, Craftsmen, and Building Activities in Byzantium,” in A.E. Laious (ed), *The economic history of Byzantium: from the seventh through the fifteenth century*, DOP 39 (2002), 540-54.

part in building a house; he complained that this was too low. More frequently in Late Antiquity we hear of wages for common laborers in the range of 7-12 solidi / year, about as much as a soldier might earn, with skilled workers at the higher end of that range. Wages follow no strict market currents, but there is typically a scale of pay, from unskilled laborers to skilled craftsmen, to technical work (wall painters and sculptures) to professional architects / builders. Needless to say that someone putting up or rebuilding a house would need to negotiate a variety of contracts with different kinds of skilled builders ranging from simple manual laborers to professional architects. None of this adds up to a typical cost for a house but it does point to the differentiated pay brackets necessary for different elements of prestige buildings. Any sustained construction effort, as would be assumed in building a house from ground up, would require substantial cash spending on labor alone.

The costs of material also vary significantly depending on the scale of construction. Solid brick wall construction probably cost significantly more than limestone rubble masonry, and both cost more than simple mud brick. The price edict of Diocletian, for instance, sets as a maximum price 2 denarii for preparing 8 mud brick

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185 Cf. Jones 1964, Vol. III, note 82, p. 288. At Hermopolis in Egypt in the early fourth century, we hear of contracted work to building houses at 400-500 dr. / day, the same price as other maintenance work such as working on the dykes, clearing ground, and cutting weeds. Johnson & West 1967, p. 194.

186 Cf. Jones 1964, 858-60, who suggests that laborers and semi-skilled builders earned frequently about as much as or more than a soldier’s yearly income of 7 solidi. He notes a monk in Egypt digging a cistern earned 5 folles / day, which might come out around 6 or 7 solidi / year, depending on how consistently he worked. Mango 1980, 39-41, suggests slightly higher wages for laborers and semi-skilled workers of 10-20 solidi / year, and provides instances for Alexandria and Jerusalem. Cf., also, Cécile Morrisson and Jean-Claude Cheynet, “Prices and Wages in the Byzantine World,” in A.E. Laious (ed), The economic history of Byzantium: from the seventh through the fifteenth century, DOP 39 (2002), 864, Table 18, for laborers in Late Antiquity earning about 6-12 solidi / year; a stonecutter earns less than 12 solidi / year.

187 Another example is from third century Egypt is Dominic Rathbone, Economic Rationalism and Rural Society in Third-Century A.D. Egypt: the Heroninos archive and the Appianus Estate, Cambridge 1991, 155-74, who shows that unskilled laborers on the Appianus Estate typically earned only about 2 dr. / day for harvesting, digging, and helping in basic construction work; this was half as much (4 dr. / day) as specialists and craftsmen earned, such as the potamitai (river-workers), contracted builders (oikodomoi), mudbrick-wallers, and carpenters.

fired brick are double the cost to produce (4 bricks for 2 denarii). The use of 5,000 mud bricks in the construction of a house would cost 1,250 denarii, equivalent to 25 days wages for the typical wage earner (at 50 denarii / day); the same number of fired bricks would be the equivalent of 50 days’ wages. A similar cost can be inferred in a recorded price for fired brick in Late Antique Egypt. There the construction of a church in the Fayum records the purchase of 21,000 fired bricks for 3-2/3 solidi, or 5,722 fired bricks / solidus. Using the same estimate of 5,000 bricks / house, the hypothetical cost would be just shy of a solidus, or about one or two months of a semi-skilled laborer’s yearly income (7-12 solidi / year). The cost of other kinds of construction, like rubble and mortar, would presumably lie somewhere in-between. Obviously, coursed large-stone construction would be in an expenditure bracket of its own.

At the other end of the spectrum, as Bowden has pointed out in his discussion of churches in Late Antique Epirus, imported sculpture and fancy marbles were the most expensive elements to a building, and mosaics the least expensive way of decorating a place. If we plug in the lowest price (1/50 solidus / sq. meter) provided by Caillet’s survey of mosaic construction in Late Antiquity, floor mosaics still add up to significant costs. If we were to apply the Late Antique rate to the mosaic in Room 7 of the Anaploga Villa (9.25 x 5.14 m) in the Corinthia (see below), the cost would be (in Late Antique monetary terms) about one solidus for the mosaic. Applying the same rate to the rooms of the Kokkinovrysi villa in Corinth, we might expect minimum costs of a solidus each for the central atrium (7.13 x 7.13 m) and the triclinium (7.05 x 7.05 m). If we were to take the suggested higher cost for mosaic pavements of 2/3 solidus per sq. meter, as we find in the east, we could expect these rooms to be incredibly expensive. If the price edict of Diocletian is any indication, we can expect significantly higher expenditure for

189 Edict of Diocletian 7.15, 7.16

wall and figural painting, as in the middle Roman urban *domus* at Panayia field. Despite these high prices, these were perhaps the most important features of elite buildings.\(^{191}\)

Buildings also cost significantly in maintenance. It was obviously an economic advantage to a property owner to upkeep buildings and equipment in order to maintain the value of the property. The assumption lying behind Roman juristic texts on cases of owner-tenant and usufruct agreements, for instance, is that the failure to upkeep buildings decreased property value. For the aristocratic elite in the Roman empire, wealth was in land and buildings were the means of exploiting that land. The economy of investment encouraged that landowners take the necessary measures for upkeeping buildings that were essential for ensuring their own and their descendants’ financial stability; both landowners and renters played a role in the process.\(^{192}\) The best evidence for the burdensome costs of maintaining buildings comes from the data compiled by A.H.M. Jones for public building maintenance in the Roman provinces in the early imperial period; maintenance costs assume an enormous proportion of state and local expenditure. Although the evidence is lacking, we can infer that private buildings, as much as public buildings, were also very expensive to maintain.

The constructing, maintenance, and refurbishing of domestic buildings then, were a substantial investment of time, energy, building expertise, and resources, indicating the continuity in the health of the most basic social and economic structures of the Roman world. Although there are not many excavated houses from the Corinthia, those surveyed above suggest that the Roman Corinthia retained a health through the end of antiquity.

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\(^{191}\) On the ornamentation of buildings and its importance for elite-status residence, cf. Ellis 2000, 114-44; Wallace-Hadrill 1994, 149-51

\(^{192}\) Cf. Kehoe 1997, Chapter 2, “Profit, Security, and the Law of Legacy,” in pp. 77-136. In Kehoe’s view, the goal of farm management is to maintain the estate to produce a stable income; this includes basic upkeep and maintenance of buildings and equipment. Kehoe argues that basic minimal maintenance, rather than farm improvement, was typically the rule. Cf., for instance, his discussion on *instrumenta*, pp. 113-23; and for the split of risks, pp. 137-80. Although Kehoe’s assessment of landowning behavior for the early empire may be a little too conservative (is there no room for direct exploitation and real profit earning?), the private expenditure habits of the kind John Chrysostom harps against are truly a Late Antique beast of its own kind.
As Nick Kardulias has argued for the Late Antique reuse of the Sanctuary of Poseidon at Isthmia, major changes that seem to signal decline actually can indicate exceptional energy expenditure consistent with the existence of complex society.\footnote{Kardulias 1995; 1988.} Like the major public building of the Byzantine fortress at Isthmia, a healthy society and economy is also evident in the constructing of different kinds of smaller-scale (ordinary) private buildings in this period. That such refurbishing of private buildings in the Corinthia continues unabated from the second to sixth centuries is a fine indication that the basic economic structures of wealth, as rooted in material forms of investments, remained strong for this entire period. We can catch glimpses of a continuity of investment energy and a scale and threshold of construction well into the sixth century, extending older structures a new life for a final phase of antiquity.

There is, in fact, a more specific argument to be made here. The Corinthian data indicate a phenomenon that is essentially an extension of processes, thresholds, and energies of investment common from the early Roman period, and, even arguably, from the Archaic-Classical period. Late antique habitation, that is, can be understood in terms of an outgrowth and accumulation of earlier structures on the land. The few Corinthian urban and rural villas of Late Antiquity provide a good case in point. Rothaus’ argument that these sites were a phenomenon of Late Antiquity is true in that some of the surviving buildings have their fullest expression at a late phase.\footnote{Cf., for instance, Rothaus 1994; and Rothaus 2000, 26-30, 62.} But the foundations for all of these villas lie in an earlier Roman period, and even, arguably, in a pre-Roman context. Processes of maintenance and rebuilding occurred at each of the sites in antiquity over a minimum of 300 years, in some cases much longer, and all were refurbished at a significant scale at least once (and probably multiple times) in their history. In several villas, such as Katounistra and Varela, the Late Antique phase appears to be the most splendid, but in other cases (at Panayia, Aphrodision, Pano Magoula), one prestige building follows another in chronological succession. With such patterning, it is difficult
to put a chronological bulls eye on the period of greatest building investment and whether there is, in fact, a chronological pattern to investing. What does stand out, however, is the significant scale of construction made in the early Roman centuries that evoked conspicuous expenditures at the same places in later Roman centuries.

This last point is worth emphasizing. “Refurbishing” is one specific form of recycling former habitations and structures, which is decidedly different than other ways of recycling buildings. In the western provinces, for instance, Roman villas were commonly reused in the fifth and sixth century either as churches or, more commonly, as cemeteries and tombs. And, there are many cases in Greece where former buildings were reused for graves, animal pens, and ‘squatter’ occupations during Late Antiquity. While undoubtedly such processes must also have occurred throughout antiquity at dilapidated buildings in the Corinthia, this is not refurbishment. In the examples discussed in this paper, we see something more, a continual and frequent renewal of the urban and rural structure in the Roman period that presuppose the substantial (new) investment of time and resources of construction, even when the forms of construction changed (e.g., as at Panayia: a small bath reoccupies the former site of a villa). Such renovation is a process that both expresses material prosperity of its period and in turn contributes to that prosperity, extending economic structures of life for another generation.

One final confirmation of this Late Antique vibrancy can be seen also in the broader array of building activity in this period that demonstrates great expenditures of

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195 It would be tempting to see an application of Banaji’s argument about the Late Antique accumulation of gold and wealth expressed in the material accumulation and expansion of buildings, the later period piggybacked on the earlier, which some scholars have suggested occurred in other regions of the Mediterranean. We lack the kind of detailed excavation data for private house construction that would allow us to see a developmental model for the late Roman Corinthia. In several cases, there is evidence for a material ‘expansion’ of buildings, as at Pyrgouthi, but rarely has excavation been conducted on a wide enough scale to contextualize immediate buildings in terms of their greater environment.

presumably private wealth. In the city itself, substantial Late Antique buildings have
often been found, including a complex of buildings (including a large building with
marbles and mosaic pavements) in the general vicinity of the Panayia; buildings
uncovered through the University of Texas excavations; large domestic structures and
substantial buildings in the forum; and at least four Late Antique baths.197 Outside the
city, substantial late Roman buildings have turned up in Lechaion, Kenchreai, and
elsewhere;198 such is the complex of Late Antique buildings at Akra Sophia near
Kenchreai investigated by T. Gregory.199 And of course, a broader impression of
building on the land can be sought in the countryside discussed in Chapters four and five:
the habitations and buildings that must be beneath the highest density late Roman sites in
the eastern Corinthia. As suggested in an earlier chapter, every single one of the 24 LR
LOCAs produced ceramics dating to the fifth and sixth centuries; 15 of the 24 LOCAs
produced definite material from the mid-fifth century or later; and 12 produced certainly
sixth century material or later. Taken altogether, and looking at the broader picture, we
have here innumerable signatures of a Corinthia that is well-flourishing in both town and
countryside at least to the mid-sixth century.

Whether we throw at the Corinthia wandering bands of Herulians and Goths, or
massive earthquakes, such forces do not appear to have permanently disrupted the overall
processes of inhabiting the landscape in the long term, at least until the later sixth
century. While these may have knocked down buildings, reconstruction apparently
followed in the same places, as was typical in ancient building practices. The formation
of the later Roman built environment that we see in the Corinthia assumes the time and

197 Panayia field (Sanders 1999, 441-443): This includes a nymphaion-like structure, c. 30 x 12 m. in
dimensions, with marble revetment, mosaic flooring, and a central pool; a substantial late Roman building
excavated by Scranton with marble floors, overlaying an earlier Roman building. U. Texas excavations:
summary in Slane and Sanders forthcoming. Forum: These include a fifth century house built over the
southeast basilica, among others: Sanders 1999, 441; Slane & Sanders forthcoming. Baths: Sanders 1999;
J. Biers, “Lavari est vivere: baths in Roman Corinth,” in C.K. Williams II and N. Bookidis (eds.), Corinth,

198 E.g., AD 28 (1973), B1, 228-29; A. Philadelphus 1918, and Eustathios Stikas 1957 (?), “Anaskaphi
Pwmaikou Nymphaiou kai Palaioxristianikis krenis para to Lechaion tis Korinthias.”

resources expended on building, maintaining, repairing, and refurbishing that can only be consistent with not simply a ‘functioning’ economy and society, but a healthy and vibrant one. If we are looking for an end for the broad material structures of Corinthian society, we must look to the mid- to late sixth centuries. Such is the picture that emerges from the physical landscape.\footnote{This chapter has focused on the economy, not because this is the only or main thing to matter, but because it is an important factor in antiquity and is easier to get to from the material remains of archaeology and, often, from the literary sources themselves. There are additional reasons to refurbish, especially prestige buildings, and other motivations to reuse beside. These simply require far more argumentation than I wish to go into here. Cf. Jon Frey’s unpublished dissertation on the meaningful reuse of spolia during this period.}

\section*{6.2.3. The Renewal of the World}

Beyond the continuity of social, economic, and material structures, and thresholds of investing through Late Antiquity, refurbishing and rebuilding also speak to something more abstract and difficult to pin down from ephemeral material structural remains: the redefinition of the past for a new present. Rufinus, for instance, asks, “Do we not know cases in which old houses have been of use in the construction of new ones? Sometimes a stone is taken from the parts of an old house which are remote and concealed, to decorate the portal of the new house and adorn its entrance. And at times an edifice of modern architecture is supported by the strength of a single ancient beam.” The new building need not take the exact same shape as the former building, Rufinus finishes, and yet, the elements of construction are the same.\footnote{Rufinus \textit{Apology} 2.40 (479).} Chrysostom compares the process of creating a ‘new’ covenant to the rebuilding of a house from the material already present in the former structure:\footnote{Chrys. \textit{Hom. Hebrews} 14.6 (435-36).}

\begin{quote}
A covenant is then said to be ‘new,’ when it is different and shows some advantage over the old. ‘Nay surely,’ says one, ‘it is new also when part of it has been taken away, and part not. For instance, when an old house is ready to fall down, if a person leaving the whole, has patched up the foundation, straightway we say, he has made it new, when he has taken some parts away, and brought others into their place….the house is likewise new, when portions of it have been taken away, and portions remain. And thus, he says, he hath well termed it ‘a New Covenant.’
\end{quote}
In a very different context, Wallace-Hadrill concluded for his analysis of houses in Pompeian society (185),

Romanness was not given but constructed: built and rebuilt over the years in the tangle of superimposed structures whose sequences are not so hard to disentangle. The houses of Pompeii and Herculaneum everywhere bear evidence of change; changing property boundaries, changing uses of space, changing fashions in house decoration and self-presentation.

And of course, the recent emphasis in scholarship dealing with recycling and spoliation has been the importance of reusing the past for the legitimating of the present, for the construction of social memory, and for other ideological purposes. Rebuilding is an obvious means of establishing connections between the past and present.

Arguably, however, refurbishment is not simply a mechanism for reproducing the past but contributes to the redefining of the world. Private building, after all, says as much about the relationship of the present to the future as it does about its relationship to the past since the process of building is an effort to create permanence on earth. This is well encapsulated in the homilies of John Chrysostom who, more than any other early Christian author, criticizes his audiences in Antioch and Constantinople for investing too greatly in an earthly future. Chrysostom constantly reminds his audience of the futility


204 This theme is common to all of Chrysostom’s sermons. Chrysostom’s general critiques of wealth include condemnations of gardens, baths, farms, fine houses (urban and suburban), fields, slaves, gold & silver vessels, trees, inns, herds and flocks Cf., among others, Chrysostom, Hom. on Mt. 12.5; 15.12; 23.10-11; 53.4; Hom. John 56.3 (203); Hom. on Acts, 32; Hom. 1 Cor. 23.8 (137-38); Hom. Ephes. 2 (58-59). His general critique is the construction habits of the wealthy who invest all their resources in their earthly property with no concern for either the poor around them or their souls. Chrysostom is certainly not alone in the patristic condemnation of wealth, but he is definitely the most prolific and vocal. Cf. H. Maguire, “The Good Life,” in G.W. Bowersock, P. Brown, and O. Grabar (eds.), Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World, Cambridge 1999, 238-57, who argues that Chrysostom’s characterization here is not merely rhetorical, but actually accurate. Maguire’s survey of the forms and images of wealth (pp. 238-43) touches upon mosaics and marbles, woven textiles, silver vessels, rich foods, vegetation (greenery and
of investment in a future that cannot last. In his homilies on 1 Timothy, for instance, he comments on the mansions of the wealthy:

> These that are here are dissolved at the resurrection, or rather before the resurrection destroyed by the stroke of time. Nay often in their most flourishing state and period an earthquake overthrows, or fire entirely ruins them. For not only the bodies of men, but their very buildings are liable to untimely deaths. Nay, sometimes things decayed by time stand firm under the shock of an earthquake, whilst glittering edifices, firmly fixed, and newly constructed, are struck butt by lightning and perish. And this, I believe, is the interposition of God, that we may not take pride in our buildings.

The unpredictability of wealth is one of the most frequent themes in his sermons. In another passage, Chrysostom argues:

> ‘That’ (he says) ‘those which cannot be shaken may remain.’ But of what sort are ‘those things which cannot be shaken’? The things to come….Let us not build in this world; it will fall after a little, and all will be destroyed. But why do I say, It will fall? Before its fall we shall be destroyed, and suffer what is fearful; we shall be removed from them. Why build we upon the sand? Let us build upon the rock: for whatsoever may happen, that building remains impregnable, nothing will be able to destroy it. With good reason. For to all such attacks that region is inaccessible, just as this is accessible. For earthquakes, and fires, and inroad of enemies, take it away from us even while we are alive: and oftentimes destroy us with it.

The impermanence of earthly buildings is often starkly contrasted to the spiritual investment of the house or the church. “Do you wish to build large and splendid houses?” he asks the people of Antioch, “I forbid it not, but let it be not upon earth!”; heavenly houses, he reasons, never fall to pieces, continuing to pay off interests forever and costing the homeowner nothing in anxiety or repair work. Chrysostom returns again and again to the destruction of buildings as one of the damning facets of material possessions; wealth is symbolized by the house that is struck by lightning, goes up in flames, becomes dilapidated, and falls down.

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205 Chrys. Hom. Hebrews 32.5-7 (512-13)

206 John Chrysostom, On the Statues II.16 (349-50). In other passages, the heavenly house continues to pay off interests forever, costs nothing in anxiety or repair work, and has a solid permanent foundation of Christ. Cf. Chrysostom Hom. Ephes. 6 (76); Hom. John 56.3 (203) and 80.3 (298).
There is, nonetheless, implicit in these invectives, the assumption of his audience that well-constructed buildings in fact last for long periods of time and that this is one of the principal objectives of constructing in the first place. Hence, the specific object of the preacher’s critiques usually centers on the impermanence of the building owners, despite the endurance of the buildings. The buildings last, for a time, while the owners do not. As he says in this rueful commentary on the material world, “The tree that you have planted remains, and the house that you have built, it too stands on. But the planter and the builder go away, and perish. Yet these things happen without our regarding it, and we live on in luxury and pleasure, and are ever furnishing ourselves with such things, as if we were immortal.” 207 In this case and others, 208 it is not the building that perishes but its builder, who passes on while his investment lives on. The well-built house continues onward for a time, through the inheritance to the children, subject to the eventual misfortunes common to the passing world.

These quotations highlight the goal and ideal of private construction, which was permanence or at least stability. Well-built houses could be passed along in the patrimony through the normal run of inheritance processes. Chrysostom’s audiences, for instance, are reminded that the splendid houses and the trees will be enjoyed by those who did not work for them, and that death will mark the end of one’s life’s investment. 209 As he proclaims in his homilies on John, 210

How then dost thou this very same thing upon the earth which thou shall shortly leave? “But I shall leave it to my children,” saith some one. Yet they too shall leave it soon after thee; nay, often even before thee; and their successors the same. And even here it is a subject of melancholy to thee that thou seest not thine heirs retain their possessions, but there thou needest apprehend nothing of the sort; the possession remaineth immovable, to thee, to thy children, and to their descendants, if they imitate the same goodness. That

207 Hom. 1 Tim. 15 (462-463). Cf. also
208 Chrys. Hom. Hebrews, 12.6 (426).
209 John Chrysostom, Hom. Mt. 20.6; Hom. 1 Tim. 9 (437).
210 Hom. John 56.3 (203) and 80.3 (298).
building Christ taketh in hand, he who buildeth that needs not to appoint care-takers, nor be thoughtful, nor anxious; for when God hath undertaken the work, what need of thought? He bringeth all things together, and raiseth the house.

The ideal of building toward a permanence to benefit future generations is well expressed: buildings go on through the generations despite the passing of those and their descendents who might enjoy them. Chrysostom ultimately suggests to his audience that they invest in houses that will not perish, whether those be heavenly ones in the next world, or churches in the present world that will continue to bear interest beyond the death of the owner.\textsuperscript{211}

If the building and refurbishing of a house can restructure the past in a new present and signify the current belief in the future, what, if anything, do excavated Roman private buildings of the Corinthia suggest about cultural change? Here we enter a problematic area, for the evidence for refurbishment in the Corinthian houses survives poorly and is nothing like, for instance, the surviving houses at Pompeii that Wallace-Hadrill argues reflect expressions of \textit{Romanitas}. The shades of cultural redefinition are elusive phantoms in the material remains in the Corinthian house, for the physical evidence for refurbishment usually carries little telltale signature of culture redefinition. Some of the most visible symbols of elite expression, for instance, wall paintings, domestic decoration, and furniture, have not survived well, and even domestic architecture has not usually been documented very thoroughly. Even still, we can catch glimpses of a transforming and transformed \textit{mentalité} lying beneath the structures that appear to us so flat. These changes can be seen most clearly in certain features of the house and when set against the broader array of conspicuous expenditure in building for Corinth and its territory in Late Antiquity. I will end with a brief discussion of two related trends in private construction in the Corinthia in Late Antiquity that point to significantly different beliefs and cultural values despite their construction within past structures: the trend of constructing private baths and the Christianization of domestic material culture.\textsuperscript{212}

\textsuperscript{211} John Chrys., \textit{Homily on Acts}, Hom. 18, Acts 7.54 (117-120)

Private Baths in Late Antique Corinthia

Although several public baths at Isthmia and Corinth went out of use by the fourth century, if not earlier, the constructing of small private baths in the Corinthia seems to gain momentum in Late Antiquity. Jane Biers’ study of Corinthian baths (2003) has highlighted four baths that were constructed in the fifth and sixth centuries, and Sanders has recently published in great detail the Late Antique bath in the Panayia Field. Additionally, the Late Antique villas at Katounistra, Varela, and Dervenaki (Southern Corinthia) all have baths attached to residence, and at two of these, the baths seem to be added at a point after the initial construction of the residence, possibly the late fourth or early fifth centuries. Although small baths are not unknown in Corinth from an early imperial date, they become very common in Late Antiquity at a point that large public baths become less frequent.

How do we explain this pattern in the Corinthia? Certainly in part, Corinthian elite were participating in broader trends in the eastern Mediterranean in Late Antiquity, as confirmed by both archaeology and textual sources. For instance, John Chrysostom in the late fourth century constantly lists bath construction among the common forms of expenditure of the rich (along with fine houses, gardens, slaves, silver chariots, terraces,

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213 The public bath at Isthmia is abandoned only in the fourth century.


Indeed, baths were very expensive to build and maintain and their construction presuppose the same spending potentials of an earlier period, with supporting social personnel, including construction workers, bath keepers, and water carriers who could maintain and look after the buildings. It seems clear, moreover, that private baths became crystallized as a new form of elite-status building culture in Late Antiquity, and a privileged and legitimate outlet for private expenditure among the wealthy.

There are, moreover, several related cultural trends in this pattern that are too complicated to unpack in this concluding space, but worth mentioning here. One, it is a curious feature of the Corinthian landscape that the spread of smaller-scale bathing establishments emerge only slightly later than the decline of several public bathing establishments at Corinth and Isthmia. The absorption of bathing facilities into the realm of domestic architecture through the attaching of baths to private houses (as in the villas noted above) and even the constructing of stand-alone baths must have reinforced in popular perception the importance of the local aristocrat responsible for the building. Bathing, like the spread of churches and private gathering halls, became tied to and further reinforced developing hierarchical relationships in Late Antique local society.

In a related vein, as G. Sanders has shown for the Panayia Bath at Corinth, that there are remarkable similarities between the architecture of sixth century Corinthian baths and the baptistery of the enormous Christian basilica at Lechaion. Accepting that private baths are imitative of early Christian baptisteries, it is no great step to consider how its use in private contexts played into elite self-conceptions. If monumental church

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217 Cf. John Chrysostom, *Hom Mt.* 12.5; 53.4; *Hom. Acts* 18 (117-20); *Hom. Rom.* 14 (451-52); *Hom. 1 Cor.* 23.8 (138); *Hom. 2 Cor.* 12.5 (340-41).


219 See W.R. Caraher’s recent dissertation, which is a compelling argument for how religious architecture and the Christianization of society restructured and reinforced social hierarchies in Late Antique Achaia.

220 Sanders 1999, 473-75.
architecture, which constituted substantial material earthly investments, became tied to a notion of eternity, permanence, and future glory, we may wonder whether the appropriation of elements of church architecture into other kinds of private architectural contexts also played into and reinforced an elite self-consciousness about its place in the world. At the very least, there is clear evidence for an intertextuality in Late Antique private architecture, and a confidence in the importance of small-scale bathing establishments as elite investments in the present and future. This leads us to a second related issue.

Christianization of the Corinthian House

The great age of church construction in the Corinthia date occurs in the later fifth and sixth centuries AD. The most famous of the buildings are the enormous Lechaion basilica, and the other churches immediately surrounding Corinth (Kraneion, Skoutelas, Kodratos), but as suggested by Caraher’s catalogue of churches, substantial architecture and architectural remains of the period—columns, architectural moldings and sculpture, mosaic pavements, built tombs, inscriptions, and furnishings—have been found at many places in the Corinthia, especially along the Corinthian plain, indicating the presence of substantial buildings of this period. As with baths, churches required enormous monetary investments, and although we might expect a building like Lechaion to be an imperial foundation, the other churches of the Corinthia were probably privately funded, and Christians of a different economic standing could contribute to their foundation, construction, maintenance, and repair. As Bowden suggests for the province of Epirus

221 For a basic general overview of the most well-known and published buildings, cf. D. Pallas, “Korinth”, in *Reallexicon zur Byzantinischen Kunst* 4, 1990, and Rothaus 2000. Sanders 2004, and Sanders, “Archaeological Evidence” offers new suggestions about down-dating the Lechaion basilica. Cf., especially, W.R. Caraher, *Church, Society, and the Sacred in Early Christian Greece*, Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, 2003, pp. 442-57, for a full and thorough cataloguing of these sites, as well as other sites of the modern Corinthia where early Christian architecture and inscriptions have been found, suggesting the presence of buildings.

222 Cf. W.R. Caraher’s dissertation that discusses this specific issue at length. On the wealth presupposed by the presence of churches (Mango 1980, 36-39). These include not only the construction and maintenance of the buildings, but also the salaries of the enormous body of associated higher and lower clergy and the costs of caring for the poor. Significant bishops might have salaries of several hundred *solidi*. 
Vetus, the constructing of churches need not bolster the local economy and could actually tax it; nonetheless, the building of churches indicates the capabilities of a society to expend resources as late as the sixth century AD.\textsuperscript{223}

As importantly, we should question how religious change and Christianization in the Corinthia interacted with and influenced domestic contexts, private expenditure, and the manner of inhabiting space. Beyond the conjecture suggested above for the bathing establishments in the region, there is admittedly very little evidence, but perhaps enough to suggest that the symbolic world behind habitation and inhabiting in the fifth and sixth century was remarkably different than that of the preceding two centuries. It is not simply that a Christian material culture replaced a pagan one in domestic contexts, but that two very different material cultures were embedded in two very different ways of seeing the world. As Sanders has suggested for the late third / fourth century middle Roman \textit{domus} in the Panayia field,\textsuperscript{224} the painted figures of Nikes that framed the door of the north wall were not flat images but were designed to interact with the visitor in real space; arguably, too, the collection of small statuary in the house (Europa, Dionysos, etc…) represented gods and goddesses worshipped by the inhabitants of the house. This fourth century domestic material culture lay in the tradition that had given rise to the fine mosaics at the Kokkinovrysi Villa two centuries earlier. At the other end of the temporal spectrum, we have the spread of a Christian material culture (e.g., Christian symbols on lamps) in the Corinthia from the later fifth century, with firm examples in early sixth century domestic contexts at the Pyrgouthi Tower in the Southern Corinthia and the sixth century apsidal building south of the Panayia bath.\textsuperscript{225} The meaning of such change for Corinthian thought structures is difficult to assess, but surely the demise of traditional

\textsuperscript{223} William Bowden, \textit{Epirus Vetus: the Archaeology of a Late Antique Province}, London 2003, 128-60, has suggested (especially pp. 151-54) that although church construction assumes economic surplus, it need not indicate a period of economic expansion. The flurry of church construction and the pumping of surplus into monumental architecture might actually indicate the draining of resources of the local economy and contribute to its decline; it indicates that the local economy could sustain a century of building activity.

\textsuperscript{224} Sanders 2005.

\textsuperscript{225} Hjohlman 2002: Christian lamps; for the apsidal building, see Sanders, “Archaeological Evidence.”
imagery in Late Antique Corinthian houses and the spread of a Christian material culture reflects more than simple shifts in decorative schemes and point to ways of thinking and understanding the world.

All of these examples may leave us only with questions but do provide evidence against concluding, as is often done, that the reuse of cultural structures and place over long periods of time need signify cultural conservatism or generally static visions of the world. The evidence, although spotty, points to a far more complex picture: the redefinition of the world occurred in terms of the structural remains of former buildings and places. The shape and pace of this transformation between the fourth and sixth centuries is difficult to assess from current evidence, but, arguably, redefinition was embedded in ordinary generational processes like refurbishing and rebuilding which allowed local elites to renew or change the way they viewed the world and expressed themselves in it. Cultural rebirth, like the refurbishing of buildings, must have inched along at the elusive threshold of generational change. 226

6.3. Conclusion

A new image of the landscape of ancient Corinth and its territory is slowly emerging for Late Antiquity. 227 In spite of the end of the use of the civic center and the civic buildings of the ancient city and the widespread dilapidation and spoliation of former public buildings, private building expenditure continued onward, thriving, through the sixth century. We catch glimpses of this in city, suburb, and country, on the coasts and in

226 Cf. Kardulias 1995; 1988 for another kind of argument in a ‘modified continuity’ in the use of the site of Isthmia between the Roman period and Late Antiquity. Kardulias explicitly diminishes semiotic redefinition and posits the continuity of adaptive structures, energy expenditure. According to Kardulias, there was little change between the Roman period and early Byzantine period in the processes of pragmatic societal decision-making, adaptation, and complex society. I am arguing similarly for a continuity of private building expenditure and investment but also for a simultaneous cultural and ideological redefinition of the built environment that is as important in understanding the world of Late Antiquity.

the interior, in the wealthy agricultural plain of the region and in the more peripheral regions of the southern Corinthia. This continued inhabiting of the land strengthen our impressions that the resources, the cultural structures, and the prosperity of a deeper antiquity of the Roman city continued onward to this later date. The processes involved in refurbishing urban and rural structures assume significant monetary expenditures and a society capable of such building endeavors. In this continuity of building expenditure and the process of material renewal, construction activity assumes new forms towards the end of our period, with diversion of resources to new expenditures (baths and churches), which played into the redefinition of the landscape. It is in that tension between material continuity and change where lies the fascinating transformation of Late Antique culture.

And although it lies beyond the scope of this chapter, the historical formation of the built environment of the Corinthia, culminating as it did in the construction activities at the end of antiquity, darkens that ‘great divide’ between the Roman period and the centuries to follow, when the momentum of private building activity that had been occurring since the foundation of the colony slowed down drastically. The end of antiquity in the Corinthia came not only with the end of certain forms of settlement, but the end of large-scale private construction activities altogether. Rebirth, as with refurbishment, however, lies in the seeds of death. In the revival of the economy of the Corinthia in the middle Byzantine period, new connections to a Roman past were forged through the investments made in urban and rural places at the end of antiquity.

228 Erkki Sironen, The Late Roman and Early Byzantine Inscriptions of Athens and Attica, Helsinki 1997. Dissertation for Faculty of Arts at University of Helsinki, Appendix 3. “Occupations in Early Christian Epitaphs of Greece,” 401-8. There was also continuity of the professions of society in Late Antiquity. The Early Christian epitaphs for Corinth indicate a wide variety of professionals and technicians even in this Late Antique date. Leaving aside the ecclesiastical and administrative officials, Sironen’s list for professionals for the Corinthia include a marble worker (in Sicyonia), bootmaker, metal bowl maker, veterinarians, elementary teachers, innkeepers, barbers, bath attendants, tailors, drivers, butchers, fyke fisher, pickle merchants, vegetable gardeners, goatherd, and poultryman.

CHAPTER 7
A Brief Conclusion about Future Directions

When did ancient Corinth come to an end? This is the question with which I began this study. It is a question, I have argued, tied to our interpretive paradigms, and a question that requires addressing a broader context than simply either the urban center or the countryside. A profitable direction for writing “local history” for Late Antique cities is a landscape approach that considers not only town and countryside, but also the changing image and identity of cities, as detailed, for example, in documentary sources. In this study, we have seen how appropriate landscape is for analyzing Corinth, the city at the crossroads of the world that derived not only many social and economic advantages from its isthmus, but its very cultural image and mythology! As this study has suggested, Corinth was known as the city on the Isthmus, and faced its eastern landscape that connected it to a broader world. While Corinth may not be very typical in this regard, it does provide an example of how a landscape could matter tremendously to the ancient city. As importantly, the end of that landscape sheds light on the nature of cultural change in Late Antique Greece and the Mediterranean.

Glimpses of continuity, discontinuity, and redefinition are found throughout the different chapters of this dissertation, and the reader should go to the conclusions of each chapter to read the different ways that the Corinthian landscape came to an end (and did not) between the third and seventh centuries. As the chapters have shown, change was not in any sense an even process, for ideological and conceptual redefinition occurred independently of the discontinuity of the rural structures that made the city function. Hence, while there is good evidence that individuals across the Mediterranean began to think and write about Corinth and its landscape very differently from the fourth century
AD, the material structures of rural life—the role of the region in trade networks, the most important rural structures and places (e.g., crossroads), and the many ordinary settlements, villas, and farmsteads—appear to have been more stable, continuing through the sixth century AD. The Late Antique Corinthian landscape was radically redefined while remaining constant and salubrious. Such strands of continuity, discontinuity, and redefinition create a very complex picture of the city during this period.

In the final draft of this study, I intend to expand on several topics raised, but not developed, through this dissertation. Allow me to end by commenting on prospects for future study and the chapters that I feel would be most beneficial to develop beyond the dissertation.

In the third chapter, “The Image of the City”, I alluded to the interesting changes that Isthmia underwent in Late Antiquity at both the material and conceptual levels. It might be interesting to develop this more fully into a focused study of how the place was redefined in this period. The recent publication of P.N. Kardulias’ dissertation (2006), the forthcoming Isthmia volumes concerning the skeletal remains (J. Rife) and the Roman Bath, will make an additional historical and archaeological overview redundant and unnecessary. Moreover, the dissertation research by J. Frey will also contribute significantly to how we understand the construction and interpretation of the Late Antique wall. But within this matrix of recent and current scholarship, there might be room for a more focused chapter on the place of Isthmia in Late Antiquity—as perceived by visitors to the Corinthia and understood by those familiar with classical literature—and with special attention to the material evidence produced by the Eastern Korinthia Archaeological Survey.

Second, there may be room to develop a chapter providing a general overview of Late Roman settlement in the Corinthia. Chapters four to six of this dissertation dance around this issue and deal with it in very different ways. Neither, however, provides a full overview of the locations of villas and villages, settlements, and the like. Would it be
worth developing a chapter that treats settlement generally, or would such a study only be repetitive to the chapters already provided here? Perhaps more focused studies of several other important places, such as Kenchreai (again, using the archaeological data from the EKAS survey) and Isthmia (see above) would address these shortcomings.

The most fruitful direction of further research, I believe, is one that I alluded to at several points in this study: the nature of Christianization of the city of Corinth, an issue still so poorly understood. How did an early Christian literature affect and help to create a new image and landscape of the city in Late Antiquity—as classical literature had structured the former image of the city? Was there a collective ‘memory’ of the visit of St. Paul and other early Christian saints in the area? How did the construction of large-scale basilicas in the city and territory relate to the rebirth of the city’s image? I have completed much of the research on this topic already and hope to bring together the evidence in a productive manner in two chapters: one centered on the rebirth of the image of Corinth, in its connection to the Apostle Paul and the Saints, and preserved in early Christian literature; and the other surrounding the rebirth of the physical landscape in the material forms of the Christian religion (e.g., churches, crosses, and the like).

Tentatively, I would posit that the late (monumental) Christianization of the city speaks less to the actual religious affiliation of the city’s inhabitants (Pagan or Christian) than the cultural significance of the city in the broader sacred geography of the fifth and sixth centuries.

Finally, I hope to expand this very brief conclusion to discuss the Corinthian landscape at different points of time: the mid-second century AD, the mid fourth-century, and the early to mid sixth-century. I might structure the conclusion around a traveler’s visit to Corinth, walking from Athens or Kenchreai, during these different periods. This would serve to summarize the observations made in the course of this study in several synchronic snapshots of image and territory, the conceptual and material. This would also allow me to tie together facets of Corinthian history examined separately in this study. An alternate idea is to sum up the observations made in this study with a broader
historical discussion of “Corinth and the World,” i.e., how the city fared in the broader changing Mediterranean landscapes of Late Antiquity; there is certainly enough evidence for such a discussion.

This, I hope, will be my own voyage to Corinth, and my place in creating new Corinthian landscapes and images.
Appendix I. Defining (Roman) Sites in a Continuous Carpet

The Eastern Korinthia Archaeological Survey was a siteless survey and did not map the distribution of archaeological sites across the landscape, as is common in regional surveys in the Mediterranean. The basic analytical unit of EKAS was the artifact recorded within the context of a ‘tract’ or survey unit (EKAS’ Discovery Unit). The analytical strength of the data produced through siteless survey is the ability to map the distribution of artifacts across the landscape in terms of both overall density and Chronotype distributions. The chapters in this dissertation on the busy and embedded countryside provide examples of the possible analytical applications of a siteless data set.

The Eastern Korinthia Survey, however, did employ the fluid analytical category “LOCA” to refer to any “Localized Cultural Anomaly” that we encountered and defined on the landscape according to a variety of criteria. The LOCA is an analytical and methodological concept used to differentiate and define the uneven distribution of artifacts and features in the Corinthian landscape. Many of the LOCAs that were defined during the course of survey designate areas of overall higher artifact density against a continuous carpet of artifacts, but we also designated LOCAs to many other kinds of cultural material including, for instance, a (ritually) deposited concentration of finewares, a concentration of lithic artifacts, sections of an aqueduct, tombs and shaft graves, millstones and olive pressing equipment, mudbrick modern fieldhouses, and structural remains of a Bronze Age settlement. The LOCA is simply the term that EKAS has employed to denote what other surveys call “sites” or “places of special interest,” and its principal value is its inherent flexibility and fluidity. Many LOCAs were defined in the course of survey based on the decisions of team leaders, but it was also possible to define

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them retroactively based on GIS and database analysis. In either case, the LOCA is principally an interpretive (and subjective) category of the archaeologist.

The objective of this appendix is to define and differentiate (based on database analysis) the densest and most diverse concentrations of Early Roman and Late Roman pottery, the LOCAs or “hot spots,” in order to facilitate comparison between these periods and to foster a way of discussing the artifactual landscape in terms of specific places in the landscape. These LOCAs form the basis for much discussion in Ch. 4-6.

1. Differentiating the Roman Artifactual Carpet of the Eastern Corinthia

As the fourth chapter argued at length, the Late Roman period in the Eastern Corinthia is very busy, and its material signature ubiquitous, while the Early Roman pottery is presumably as abundant even though it was not identified as often (Cf. full discussion in Chapter Four). The frequency of Roman material in this territory means that artifact patterns do not neatly cluster into obvious site and off-site areas, but rather, spread continuously across the countryside. This is well illustrated by Figure I.1 below, which shows units with Late Roman artifacts as blue dots against the background of units in red with Early Roman artifacts.
Although Roman pottery is ubiquitous in the areas sampled by the Eastern Korinthia Survey, it nonetheless occurs in varying quantities between different micro-regional zones, and even between different areas within the same zone. For instance, although EKAS was restricted by the Greek Ministry of Culture to mainly working in the area between Hexamilia and Isthmia, the limited survey that did occur in the Southeast Corinthia indicates a significantly less busy countryside in both ER and LR periods.

A good case study from the Southeast Corinthia is the little valley known as Lakka Skoutara / Ayia Katerini, southeast of Sophiko and north of Korphos (Figure I.2), where exists a modern (semi) village consisting of about a dozen scattered fieldhouses. The

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survey of 92 units in this area indicates ER and LR pottery can be found, but in much lesser amount. Only 13 (ca. 14.1%) of the 92 units in this area produced LR pottery while only 6 units (6.5%) yielded ER pottery. This contrasts sharply with the overall frequency of LR and ER in, respectively, 43.2% and 14.5%, of the units of the EKAS survey area generally. The limited survey in Lakka Skoutara and a few other areas of the Southern Corinthia (Vigla, Vayia, Ano Vayia) suggest that the Roman presence on the land is significantly less, and that the ‘busy countryside’ described at length in Chapter Four has its center in the land directly east of the city of Corinth, at the Isthmian crossroads.

Figure I.2. The Roman countryside of the southeast Corinthia. Units with early Roman (red background) and late Roman artifacts (blue dots) in the valley of Lakka Skoutara / Ayia Katerini, southeast of Sophiko and north of Korphos
Furthermore, even within the northern Corinthian plain, where most of the EKAS survey occurred, there is significant evidence for differential amounts of ER and LR pottery. A good visual contrast (Figure I.3 below) can be seen by comparing the distribution of ER and LR units in the area of the prehistoric sites of a) Yiriza and Gonia, and b) Kromna-Perdhikaria. While ER and LR material is present in both of these locales, it is the latter, which has been associated with a major crossroads of antiquity, that has a far more substantial signature for the periods.

Figure I.3a and b. The Roman countryside of the northern Corinthian plain. Units with early Roman (red background) and late Roman artifacts (blue dots) in the areas of a) Yiriza and Gonia; and b) Kromna and Perdhikaria

And finally, although ER and LR material is found in so many units of the EKAS area, it occurs very unevenly, differing in Total Density and Diversity Density of material from one survey unit to another. In one survey unit, for instance, one might find 7 Late Roman artifacts while in another unit, one might find only 3 LR artifacts. Because units differ in size, the total count of LR artifacts must be divided by the area of the unit to produce a total density figure. This Total Density represents the total number of LR (or ER) artifacts observed in the unit at 10 meter spacing divided by the area of the unit.
Secondly, survey units differ also in diversity of material. One unit may produce a LR assemblage consisting of 25 Combed Ware sherds and 3 Spirally Grooved sherds, while a second unit may yield only 1 Combed Ware bodysherd, 1 Spirally Grooved bodysherd, 2 African Red Slip Form 99 rims, and 1 cut marble amphora stopper. In such case, the first unit, which produced 28 LR potsherds, would have a \textit{diversity count} of 2, while the second unit, which produced 5 LR artifacts, would have a \textit{diversity count} of 4. Although the first unit has a greater \textit{total count} of LR material, the second unit actually has the greater \textit{diversity count}. As with Total Density, the \textit{diversity count} needs to be divided by the area walked in order to give a comparable value. The resulting figure, the \textit{Diversity Density}, refers to the number of unique Chronotypes/period divided by the area walked. \textit{Total Density} and \textit{Diversity Density} are simply two different ways of describing and differentiating the artifactual landscape for a period. The former index compares simply the raw total of material present for different periods, while the latter index reduces the bias caused by especially abundant highly diagnostic artifact types (for further discussion, see below).

Two patterns below suggest that the ER and LR material on the landscape occurs at differential levels and can become the basis for defining LOCAs in the EKAS area. First, Figure I.4 below shows the breakdown of LR diversity counts among survey units in the EKAS area. As can be seen in the table below, most units (ca. 80%) with Late Roman pottery in the Eastern Corinthia were simply not very diverse, yielding only one or two Chronotypes; there were, however, a few units that were particularly diverse, yielding numerous diagnostic artifacts. Again, for this to be meaningful, we would need to convert this diversity count into a diversity density, but the table below does indicate the degree to which LR pottery occurs in low frequency throughout the survey area.
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Figure I.4. The breakdown of survey units according to the “diversity count” of late Roman material within them.

The potential difference between total density and diversity density can be seen in Figure I.5 below, which shows LR units in the area between Kromna and Perdhikaria, presumably at the heart of the Isthmian crossroads. The first image, the one on the left, shows LR total density for the area, while the second image, the one on the right, shows LR diversity density. Moving from total density to diversity density flattens out LR survey units that would appear significant simply based on overall LR pottery. The LR units at the northern half of the area, for instance, which are some of the densest in the area, are not as significant in terms of their diversity.

Figure I.5a and b. Late Roman units in area of Kromna-Perdhikaria. Figure on the left shows the total density of Late Roman material, and the figure on the right shows the diversity density of Late Roman material.
There is obvious value in using diversity density as the fitting index for diagnosing artifactual landscapes like the Late Roman. As discussed in the fourth chapter, the LR period is greatly exaggerated by particularly abundant classes of artifacts: combed and grooved amphora bodysherds. Differentiating the LR countryside in terms of diversity minimizes the degree to which this single class of artifacts can affect our picture of the period on the landscape. While twenty bodysherds of Combed Ware amphora in a survey unit would give the unit a high density of LR material, it would be insignificant on the diversity scale because it represents only 1 unique LR Chronotype. An index of diversity, moreover, measures the variety of Chronotypes and artifact classes (e.g., amphorae, kitchenware, cutstone stoppers, coins, fineware) for a period, and presumably indicates either greater stability in the use of a place over time or greater functional complexity in the use of the site during LR times. At the very least, defining sites according to the diversity of material provides a coherent way of differentiating a continuous artifactual carpet in an otherwise busy landscape, and separating out the highest threshold of LR units from units which are unremarkable in their LR pattern.

The Early Roman countryside, by contrast, can better be defined according to the total density of ER artifacts. This is because the ER countryside is already significantly underrepresented in its identified pottery, and most units with ER pottery only produce 1 or 2 ER sherds. Using diversity density would quickly flatten most ER units to a scale of only 1 ER potsherd, thereby removing any basis at all for differentiating the period on the ground. In the remaining discussion, then, total density will be used to define Early Roman LOCAs while diversity density will be the basis for defining Late Roman LOCAs. Although this may contribute to an uneven comparison of periods (total density vs. diversity density), it provides a more meaningful comparative basis than comparing ER total density to LR total density (which exaggerates the latter period -- see Ch. 4), or ER diversity density to LR diversity density (which reduces the ER period altogether). In both cases, differentiating on the basis of density of artifacts per unit highlights concentrations of ER and LR material in the EKAS area that are culturally meaningful.
2. Defining ER and LR LOCAs (“Sites”)

One basis for defining ER and LR LOCAs in the EKAS area begins by simply ranking the top 50 units for each period. For the ER period, we rank the 50 units with the highest total density, while for the LR period, our list of 50 units is based on the highest diversity density. For both periods, these units represent the densest “hot spots” in the entire area surveyed by EKAS. For the LR period, these 50 units represent 8.7% of the 577 total LR units, while for the ER period, these 50 units represent 25.9% of the 193 total ER units. While this is a significant proportional difference between the two periods, it is important to remember that the ER period in the survey area is significantly underidentified (Ch. 4). The ranked units are displayed in Figure I.6 below, which shows the Top 50 ER units (in red) and Top 50 LR units (in blue) in the EKAS area.

One can see that although ER and LR material can be found throughout the entire EKAS area (Figures I.1-4), the densest ER and LR units tend to cluster together, concentrated in the area between Isthmia / Kenchreai and Kromna. Although the densest units occur in a few places near Kenchreai and on the lower slopes of Oneion, they are
mainly found in the area south of Kromna and west of Isthmia. This entire area presumably was adjacent to the main travel corridors of antiquity as even today it borders the road between Kyras Vrysi / Kenchreai and Corinth. By contrast, there are no highest density units in the areas surveyed in the territory south of the Oneion Mountain range, and only a single dense ER unit in the area of Yiriza and Gonia. It is important to keep in mind, of course, that we are highlighting the densest areas in the ER and LR EKAS area, and that although we are putting dots on the map, the pottery for both of these periods is distributed continuously throughout this area, even if in lower densities.

These densest units can be the basis for nucleating the ER and LR artifactual landscape. As Figure I.6 above shows, many of these units are adjacent to or very near to one another and there is no reason for seeing the edge of a survey unit as a particularly meaningful boundary. Clustering adjacent high-density units into larger groupings can facilitate comparison. If we group together adjacent high-density units and also group with them any other adjacent unit lying within a ten or fifteen meter radius of the highest density units, the high density units can be consolidated into 19 broader ER groupings and 24 broader LR groupings. The results of these groupings are shown in Figures I.7-I.9 below.

Figure I.7a and b. Early Roman LOCAs. The figure on the left shows densest early Roman units (red dots) against the yellow background of early Roman units. The figure on the right shows the 19 early Roman LOCAs after grouping.
This method of differentiating the ER and LR periods shows how artifacts can cluster in a continuous carpet. These 19 ER and 24 LR LOCAs represent the densest concentrations of ER and LR material in the EKAS study area, and, perhaps, in the entire Eastern Corinthia.

Figure I.8. Densest late Roman units (blue dots) against the background of late Roman artifactual carpet
3. Interpretation

What do these ER and LR LOCAs mean? They are most important as methodological constructs in discussing the Roman landscape in spatial terms that transcend the most basic unit of either artifact counts or survey unit. Defining LOCAs in this way differentiates the ER and LR landscape into larger spatial groupings against a continuous carpet of ER and LR artifacts. These LOCAs create another basis for analyzing a busy Roman countryside by highlighting spatial windows into the densest areas of the ER and LR countrysides. It is important to remember again that these units take shape against a background carpet of artifacts and do not represent self-contained ‘sites’ with clear boundaries.

The character of these LOCAs can be seen in Figure I.10 below, which shows the concentration of ER and LR LOCAs in the area between Kromna and Perdhikaria. One
notices, for instance, that there are some units within these LOCA groupings (e.g., LOCA 11) that do not even produce ER and LR pottery but have been nonetheless consolidated into the LOCA based on the criteria established above, i.e., lying within 15 meter radius of the core nuclei. There are also adjacent LOCAs, as for instance, LR LOCAs 10-12, that may represent the same LR settlement. We could regroup LR LOCAs into a single larger grouping by, for instance, extending the size of the radius to 20 meters, but this would require regrouping all ER and LR LOCAs in the EKAS area, which would absorb so many units that it would undermine the value of differentiating in the first place. The LOCAs, then, represent the minimum groupings of the densest ER and LR material.

What do the LOCAs signify at an archaeological, cultural, or historical level? Most of these LOCAs are 0.50 to 3 ha in size, and several of the LOCAs (ER LOCA # 1, 2, 6, 11, and 13; LR LOCA #s 1, 9, 11, 13, 15, and 17) are even larger, too sizable to fit the awkward conceptual category ‘farmsteads’ and ‘villas.’ In many cases, anyway, all the ER and LR pottery in the area does not neatly fall within the bounds of the LOCA but
extends beyond the LOCA borders in continuing distribution. The distribution of artifacts, moreover, does not indicate manuring haloes trailing away from the densest units, but rather, densities seem to fluctuate and vary away from the cores.

There are, in fact, much better ways to interpret and think about these artifactual patterns. At a simple material and archaeological level, these LOCAs signify places in the Eastern Corinthia where more artifacts (and a greater variety) were deposited over a period of several hundred years, survived to the present day, and were noted in archaeological survey. In most cases, there are too many methodological and archaeological factors (e.g., field conditions, land use, ground visibility, taphonomic processes, geomorphological factors) to determine with certainty whether a particular place in the countryside at one point or another was the site of a ‘farmstead’, ‘fieldhouse’, or ‘villa.’ On the other hand, the archaeological remains do afford us glimpses of the kinds of activities that occurred at these areas in antiquity and the Roman period.

The evidence for functional activities at the LR LOCAs is tabulated in Figures I.11-I.13 below. As we would only expect from LOCAs defined by the density of LR material, there are plenty of LR artifacts present at these places, including especially amphorae / storage vessels, fineware, and cooking / kitchen wares; LR cut stoppers (for amphorae), basin, lamps, and beehives occur in consistent but lesser frequency. But what is more interesting in some ways is the broader classes of material that cannot be dated specifically to this period, but likely originated in some use of the land between Archaic and late Roman times. Artifacts that should signify more permanent domestic habitation or agricultural investment—pithoi especially, but also Roman glass, Classical-Roman lamps, and Classical-Hellenistic loom weights—are frequently common at these LOCAs. Different ancient building materials appear consistently as well: tiles are always present, but tesserae, plaster, cement, marble revetment, and cut stone blocks and slabs occur regularly. And finally, agricultural equipment, such as millstone, groundstones, and trapeta occurs at half of these LOCAs; we might also wonder whether the high frequency
of obsidian and chert flakes and blades is in part related to ancient threshing, or other kinds of agricultural activity in these periods.

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**Figure I.11. Artifacts of late Roman date at late Roman LOCAs**
## Figure I.12. LR LOCAs showing presence / absence of artifacts and agricultural equipment

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Although these different artifacts and features cannot be tied to the late Roman period specifically, they certainly indicate ancient buildings on the landscape between the Classical and late Roman periods. Judging from some of the artifacts present (e.g., marble revetment), we can infer the presence of prestige construction that possibly functioned over long periods. The safest argument, then, for the interpretation of these LOCAs is to see them as places of substantial investment in the area between Corinth and Kenchreai in the Roman period. They were places where impressive buildings existed on the land, and they were areas used over the course of the Roman period to the end of antiquity (see Chapter 4). This does not mean that buildings did not exist elsewhere on
the land, outside of these LOCAs. The Roman period in the Corinthia stretches some 700 years long, and it is not impossible that buildings of whatever kind covered every field of this territory at one point or another. The LOCAs, on the other hand, probably represent the more substantial and stable places and nodes in this busy countryside (see Ch. 5-6).

Rather than ruining our eyes in a myopic search for all the vestiges of ancient habitation and building activity in the Eastern Corinthia, the bigger picture is sometimes more informative. The LOCAs defined above represent some of the areas of greatest investment in the land between Corinth and Isthmia. Occupying the land along the roads between Isthmus / Kenchreai and the city of Corinth, they were the embedded structures of the Eastern Corinthia, some of the world that Pausanias and company passed by silently (Cf. Ch. 2 and 3).

Figure I.14. ER and LR LOCAs at the Isthmian Crossroads
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