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The Late 6th and 5th Century Kerameikos Necropolis at Athens: A Theoretically Informed Interpretation

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Kerameikos Necropolis at Athens:
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Abstract

Located in the midst of the modern Athens, the Kerameikos necropolis site has yielded considerable information about ancient human activity in the area. The Early Middle Helladic population of the area buried their dead in the Kerameikos as early as the 3rd millennium B.C., and burials continued to take place in the same space throughout the Classical period. Archaeological evidence about these burials has accumulated as a result of almost 150 years of periodic excavation by the Greek Archaeological Service and the German Institute of Archaeology. A number of studies have analyzed the data from these excavations from culture historic and art historic perspectives, to great effect. One curiosity that arises from this previous scholarship on the Kerameikos necropolis is the culture of restraint evident in the burials of the late 6th and 5th century B.C. These graves, published by Karl Kübler in 1976 as volume VII of Kerameikos: Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen from the German Archaeological Institute in 1976, have not yet been adequately considered from the perspective of archaeological and anthropological theory.

This study aims to provide the first theoretical interpretation of the late 6th and 5th century data from the Kerameikos necropolis. Working from a post-processual framework, the categories of body treatment, spatial organization, and grave goods are evaluated and then integrated to provide as complete an understanding of burial practices as possible. From the picture that emerges from this analysis, it is clear that the late 6th and 5th century Athenians dramatically decreased the resources they spent on burying the dead, but still used burial culture as a medium for the communication of individual, family, and community identities. Additionally, this study can serve as a model of how a theoretical approach can complement other methods of analysis and provide additional insight into the data from old excavations.
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Fig. 64 Figural decoration of choës from child burial (after Kunze-Götte et al 1999, Pl. 29.2).
Introduction

The transition from the late 6th to the 5th century, and the 5th century itself, is a period of great historical importance for the ancient city of Athens. It includes the reign of the Peisistratid tyrants during the second half of the 6th century until their downfall and the establishment of the democracy under Kleisthenes at the end of the 6th century. There is the battle of Marathon in 490 and the invasion of the Persians and the destruction of Athens in 480/79, followed by the construction of the Themistoklean city wall in 478. During the 5th century the Delian League was founded and eventually became an Athenian naval empire as Athens came to dominate the Aegean. By the end of the 5th century, however, the Peloponnesian War had taken its toll and Athens had surrendered to Sparta by 404. The effects of these dramatic events can be seen in the archaeological record throughout Athens, and the Kerameikos necropolis is no exception.

For such a crucial period in Athenian history, there is little study from a theoretical and anthropological perspective. This is especially true for the Kerameikos necropolis, where the burial context is particularly suited to modern methods of mortuary analysis. Donna Kurtz and John Boardman do include chapters on both the Archaic and the Classical in their 1971 book on Greek burial customs, but while their summary of the material is very useful they do not proceed to any significant interpretation. This may be due to the fact, as they themselves point out, that the final publication of the late 6th and early 5th century graves had not yet appeared when their book went to press; the authors had to rely on preliminary excavation reports. Even after the publication of the majority of these graves in 1976, there are only a handful of studies

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1 All dates, unless they describe modern excavations or scholarly publications, are B.C.
2 Kurtz and Boardman 1971, 68-90, 91-141.
3 Kübler 1976.
that discuss the late 6th and 5th centuries as a together,⁴ as the archaeological evidence would seem to dictate.

There are two potential reasons for the lack of theoretical analysis in the scholarship. First of all, the late 6th and early 5th century mark the transition from the Archaic into the Classical period, so this period falls at the end of studies on the Archaic period and at the beginning of studies on the Classical period but is rarely studied in its own right. Second, there are few grave goods from this period and elite goods are even rarer in comparison with other periods in the Kerameikos. The more lavish grave assemblages of the Geometric period, by contrast, have received far more attention from scholars, because this period marks the reintroduction of visual depictions of the human form⁵ and potentially contains evidence for the development of the polis system.⁶ Perhaps the small quantity of finds discourages analysis because it is believed that there is insufficient data to work with in a meaningful way. When grave goods and other aspects of burial culture such as body treatment and grave monuments are considered together, however, interesting conclusions can result. A good example of this is a 2004 article by Maria Liston and John Papadopoulos. Revisiting the data from an old excavation of a Geometric grave in the Athenian Agora, they use both grave goods and osteology in their analysis. They conclude that the woman buried in the grave was either pregnant or had just given birth, and used these findings to identify typical elements in the burial of a pregnant woman and suggest other potential burials of the same type.⁷ The intent of the authors was to create a model of how human remains can supplement other categories of data for a more complete understanding of the archaeological context.

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⁴ Such as Morris 1991; Arrington 2010.
⁵ Snodgrass 1971.
⁶ Whitley 1991; Osborne 1996.
⁷ Liston and Papadopoulos 2004.
The first theoretically informed diachronic study of Attic burial practices is the 1987 study *Burial and Ancient Society* by Ian Morris, who employs methods of analysis familiar to anthropology but uncommon in Classical archaeology. His use of demography and mortality statistics, linguistic analysis of symbols, and especially quantification and statistical analysis mark a departure from the previous scholarship in this area. The author’s thesis is that the burials of Athens and Attica as a whole reflect the social structure of contemporary Athenian society and that changes in burial patterns have a direct correlation to the development of the polis—a thesis that Morris has continued to develop in his subsequent works. While groundbreaking, debate continues over Morris’s conclusions, as I hope the following summary and discussion will demonstrate. Theoretical analysis sheds light on the prevailing trend of restraint in the burial culture of the late 6th and 5th century. As the Athenian democracy developed, aristocratic competition through conspicuous consumption moved away from burial contexts. In the absence of monumental grave architecture and lavish grave assemblages, however, more subtle expressions of identity can be recovered. A theoretical approach, therefore, provides the best framework for understanding the restraint seen in the burial culture of the period.

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9 Morris 1987, 171.
Chapter 1: Background

The Site in Antiquity

In antiquity, the necropolis lay to the northwest of the city of Athens (Fig. 1). The earliest burials date to the Early Middle Helladic period, the 3rd through the early 2nd millennium The Eridanos river flowed through the area and probably made it too swampy for habitation and thus an attractive area for the disposal of the dead. Burials continued on both banks of the river until the construction of the Themistoklean city wall in 478. After this, burials continued in the area of the necropolis outside the wall, particularly on the south bank of the river, but burial activity ceased within the circuit of the city wall. Two gates were located along the wall in this area: the Dipylon Gate, through which the Panathenaic procession passed on its way up to the acropolis, and the Sacred Gate, through which the Sacred Way exited the city and lead to Demeter’s sanctuary at Eleusis. Graves clustered around the gates and roads; this spatial patterning served two purposes. First, it provided easy access for the relatives of the deceased to visit graves during religious festivals. Second, the visual prominence of ancestral graves along two major thoroughfares demonstrated the piety of the Athenians to visitors approaching from the northwest. Burials continued in the necropolis through the Hellenistic and Roman period (Fig. 3).

To modern archaeologists, the necropolis is known as the “Kerameikos necropolis” and the surrounding area is often referred to as “the Kerameikos” after the discovery of a horos bearing this name (Fig. 4). This usage seems to agree with the earliest uses of the name

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12 Kraiker and Kübler 1939, 1-3.
13 Winter 1982, 203-204.
14 Kurtz and Boardman 1971, 147-8.
15 Koumanudis 1872, 8-10.
“Kerameikos” which refer either to the area just outside the city walls\textsuperscript{16} or to the cemetery itself.\textsuperscript{17} Scholars debate whether the term was used only for the cemetery or for an urban deme.\textsuperscript{18} Pausanias uses the term only for the Classical agora, located within the city walls; he records that the name “Kerameikos” comes from the hero “Keramos,” son of Dionysos and Ariadne.\textsuperscript{19} The name literally means “potters’ quarter,” however, and there were pottery workshops in close proximity to the cemeteries.\textsuperscript{20} In addition to graves and pottery workshops, the Kerameikos area was also notorious for its prostitutes.\textsuperscript{21} For the remainder of the paper, the term “Kerameikos necropolis” or “necropolis” will be used to refer specifically to the graves of the Kerameikos excavations (Fig. 2).

The period under consideration here, the late 6\textsuperscript{th} and early 5\textsuperscript{th} century (corresponding to the late Archaic and early Classical) is brief in comparison to the long life of the necropolis but has a distinctive appearance in the archaeological record. The graves at this time lack the monumental display seen in the preceding and subsequent periods. The earth mounds and offering trenches of the early 6\textsuperscript{th} century become rarer and modest,\textsuperscript{22} while funerary sculpture disappears until the late 5\textsuperscript{th} century,\textsuperscript{23} when it reappears along with the adoption of enclosed burial plots.\textsuperscript{24} The trend of limited display, however, continues outside of the city wall for another half century before signs of change begin to manifest. A short summary of the developments in the necropolis from the 9\textsuperscript{th} through the 4\textsuperscript{th} century will help to illustrate these

\textsuperscript{16} Thuc. 6.57.1; Pl. Prm. 127.
\textsuperscript{17} Ar. Av. 395.
\textsuperscript{18} Osborne 2007, 198.
\textsuperscript{19} Paus. I.3.
\textsuperscript{20} Wycherley 1959 and 1987; Vanderpool 1974; Papadopoulos 2003.
\textsuperscript{21} Davidson 1997, 84-6.
\textsuperscript{22} Kübler 1976, 183-188.
\textsuperscript{23} Kurtz and Boardman 1971, 89-90, 121-122; see also Riemann 1940.
\textsuperscript{24} Garland 1982.
trends in mortuary culture, while a brief discussion of the contemporary events in the city of Athens will provide a historical backdrop.

Burials of the 9th through the 8th century, the Geometric period, held impressive grave assemblages, including the first appearance of gold jewelry in the Kerameikos necropolis.\(^{25}\) Geometric graves were also sometimes marked above ground by monumental ceramic vessels.\(^{26}\) By the early Archaic, the lavish grave assemblages had given way to a different form of display: massive earth mounds erected above the grave itself and deposits of grave offerings in external trenches or pits.\(^{27}\) Used only in the case of inhumations, the earliest examples from the late 8th century are ditches around 60 cm wide and up to 12 m long. They are littered with the charred remnants of wood, burnt offerings, and smashed pottery.\(^{28}\) Finally, there are many examples of early Archaic funerary sculpture, although none were found in situ and many had been incorporated into the 5th century city wall.\(^{29}\)

By the late 6th century, monumentality is in decline in the necropolis. Tumuli decrease in both size and frequency. This could perhaps be attributed to a lack of space, if not for the fact that offering trenches also become rarer, and funerary sculpture becomes less elaborate as well.\(^{30}\) This reduced expenditure of time and money can also be seen in the construction of the graves themselves; the primary cremation graves, for example, are less frequently provided with a ventilation shaft.\(^{31}\) In addition, there is no corresponding increase in the quantity or quality of grave goods, which would have demonstrated that the desire for display had simply been

\(^{26}\) Kurtz and Boardman 1971, 56-58.  
\(^{27}\) Kübler 1959, 87-92.  
\(^{28}\) Kurtz and Boardman 1971, 76.  
\(^{29}\) Richter 1961, 4.  
\(^{30}\) Kurtz and Boardman 1971, 89-90, 121-122; see also Riemann 1940.  
\(^{31}\) Kurtz and Boardman 1971, 98.
transferred to a different media – a reversal of the process that occurred at the transition from the Geometric to the Archaic. While it is always possible these graves contained objects that did not survive to become part of the archaeological record – high quality textiles, for example\textsuperscript{32} – there is nevertheless an overall movement away from conspicuous display in material culture.

Monumental display returned to the Kerameikos necropolis starting at around the end of the 5\textsuperscript{th} century. A new type of monumental tomb – an enclosed grave precinct known as a peribolos – emerged at this time and gained popularity up until the end of the 4\textsuperscript{th} century (Fig. 29). The peribolos consisted of a roughly rectangular enclosure above a grave or group of graves, sometimes set on a terrace platform to contend with the irregular terrain. Three walls were constructed of rough stone, but the wall facing the road was almost always executed in fine ashlar masonry.\textsuperscript{33} Eventually the walls came to be topped with sculpture. The re-introduction of sculpture to the necropolis has been attributed to the influx of sculptors brought in to work on the Parthenon frieze,\textsuperscript{34} but nevertheless a demand for funerary sculpture must have been present. Some of these works were relief sculptures, set in elaborately styled architectural frames (Figs. 31 and 32). This trend of display in the material culture of graves, re-adopted at the end of the 5\textsuperscript{th} century, continued in the Kerameikos necropolis into the Hellenistic period.

\textsuperscript{32} Humphreys 1992, 264. See Kübler 1976, 192 for textile evidence from the excavation.
\textsuperscript{33} For examples, see the catalog in Garland 1982.
\textsuperscript{34} Kurtz and Boardman 1971, 122; Clairmont 2007.
A History of the Excavation

Although excavations in the area of the Kerameikos necropolis date back to the late 19th century, work on the late 6th and 5th century remains began with the discovery of Grave Mound G in 1910. The German Archaeological Institute conducted excavations of the mound and the surrounding area from 1931 until 1940. The presentation of each grave varies from publication to publication and indeed from grave to grave, although in all cases the emphasis in the catalogs is on the grave goods and grave types rather than the bodily remains. Thus grave assemblages are methodically recorded, but the data collected on each skeleton is inconsistent and may include any, but never all, of the following: length, condition and the position of body, arms, and legs, orientation of the body, and in rare instances, sex (in the case of inhumations) or the thickness and composition of the burned layer (in the case of cremations).

The excavation catalog for the 6th and 5th century Kerameikos lists both cremation and inhumation graves, with inhumation as the most common form of disposal. Both child and adult burials occur; each group has its own signature grave types and categories of grave goods. A few broad generalizations are possible, but there does not appear to be any standard assemblage for either group. There is no standard orientation within any distinguishable category of burials. Although grave mounds and other built monuments are relatively scarce in the late 6th and 5th century, they occur with both cremations and inhumations in a ratio of about 2:1 – a change from the previous period when they occurred almost exclusively with cremation graves. Offering places and offering trenches are also rarer than the preceding period, and sometimes difficult to distinguish from a cremation.

35 A summary of the history of the excavation can be found in Kübler 1976, 1-3.
The quality of the data is naturally affected by the era of the excavations as well as the publication. It is unclear, for example, whether variability in the amount of data present is the result of different individuals engaged in record keeping, or whether in some instances certain information could not be ascertained. Also frustrating are the cases when a substance is recorded but not identified – for example the “white, greasy substance” listed in the entries of several dozen graves.\(^{36}\) While Classical archaeology may still lag behind other fields in its use of osteological analysis,\(^{37}\) the excavators from the Kerameikos at least included some information about the skeletal remains and also the orientation of the graves. S. C. Humphreys does argue that orientation is a “dubious” variable because excavators at that time attributed orientation to the terrain – but that is a problem in their interpretation, not in the recording of the data itself.\(^{38}\) Excavations in the Kerameikos continue into the present day, although in recent years the focus has been on the Dipylon Gate and its associated architecture rather than the necropolis.\(^{39}\)

**Contemporary Athenian History**

Historically, the developments in the burial culture of the late 6th and 5th century correspond to the rise and fall of the Peisistratid tyranny and the establishment of the democracy. Under the rule of Peisistratos and his sons Hippias and Hipparchos, the physical landscape of Athens was transformed by the construction of new temples and other public building projects. They encouraged other forms of display as well, reviving or establishing various religious observances including the Greater Dionysia and the Panathenaia. Their patronage encouraged a flowering in the arts, as can be seen in the funerary sculpture of this period. The Kerameikos

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\(^{36}\) For example, graves 206, 285, and 570 in Kübler 1976.


\(^{38}\) Humphreys 1992, 264; Young 1951, 78-80.

excavators identified one grave mound as the “Peisistratid tumulus” probably used for the burial of their foreign envoys. This identification almost certainly not accurate, but it speaks to a connection between the period of tyranny and the monumentality of the Kerameikos at this time.

The tyranny was ultimately unable to secure stable hereditary succession, however, and the rule of the Peisistratids came to an end with the murder of Hipparchos and the exile of Hippias in 510. Subsequently the politician Kleisthenes instituted a policy of democratic reform aimed at reducing the power of the old aristocratic families and promoting a new egalitarian ethos. The Kleisthenic agenda has been associated with the obliteration of two of the largest early Archaic grave mounds in the Kerameikos necropolis; the ground level was then raised to the height of the mounds by deliberate dumping of fill. The area was then used for additional burials – although admittedly this may also have been due less to political pressures than the need for additional space in the necropolis. By the early 5th century Athens had risen to a position of prominence after its central role in the defeat of the Persians at Marathon in 490 and at again in 480/79. In 478 construction of the Themistoklean city walls began; in the same year Athens and its allies founded the Delian League. By the middle of the 5th century the Athenian democracy was at its height and the Delian League had become an Athenian empire.

Subsequent challenges to the security of Athenian society began in the late 5th century with the start of the Archidamian War in 431. The subsequent events of the Peloponnesian War, including the annual invasions of Attica, the plague and death of the statesman Pericles, and the disastrous expedition to Sicily finally concluded with the surrender of Athens and the destruction of the Long Walls to the Peiraios in 404. The democracy was overturned, and an oligarchic form of government instituted, although this development was short lived and the democracy was

40 Knigge 1976, 75-76.
41 Knigge 1976, 1-3.
restored in 403. From this point until the invasion of Philip II of Macedon in 338 Athens experienced a second period of stability and a corresponding second cultural floruit. This timeline of events and its literary sources, from the Archaic through to the 4th century, has significantly influenced the archaeological scholarship in the Kerameikos necropolis as scholars have primarily focused on aligning historical and archaeological timelines and searching for objects and monuments associated with individuals known from ancient literary sources.

**Previous Scholarly Approaches**

Cicero, writing in the 1st century, describes three iterations of anti-luxury funerary legislation in Athens. The first, attributed to Solon and dated to the early sixth century, forbade any mutilation or demolition of funerary monument. Then “after a while” the lavish display surrounding burial prompted an additional wave of legislation limiting both the funeral and the grave itself. Panegyric and eulogy were forbidden except in the case of state funerals, and no grave could be built exceeding what ten men could accomplish in three days. Sculpture was also forbidden. The effects of this law eventually waned, so that Demetrios of Phaleron (Cicero’s source, according to the passage) was forced to enact additional limitations at the end of the 4th century. Funerals had to take place before sunrise and grave markers were limited to a small column or tablet. This passage from Cicero is part of a larger discourse on an ideal government, and is phrased in extremely vague terms, as reflected in the above summary. It is probably intended more to praise the legislators in Classical Athens than to record the legislation accurately.

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The second collection of laws from Cicero’s account has no specified author, nor is any date provided except that it occurred after Solon but before Demetrius and so between the beginning of the 6th century and the end of the 4th century. Scholars, however, taking this as a measure intended to limit aristocratic display and promote democratic ideals, attribute the laws to Kleisthenes, to Themistokles, or in one case even argue that the law was envisioned by the former but enforced by the latter.\textsuperscript{43} The correlation between the passage from Cicero and the restraint of late 6th and early 5th century burial practices is suggestive, but by no means conclusive evidence of causation.

In the late 1980s, Morris and others introduced the concept of bottom-up rather than top-down cause for the restraint in the late 6th and 5th century, in the form of a new democratic ethos structuring burial culture. One example of this explanation is the scholarship on grave mounds, which are often discussed in the context of hero and tomb cult. Early studies proposed a continuity of practice from the tumuli of the Bronze Age through the grave monuments of the 5th century.\textsuperscript{44} This hypothesis has been challenged in recent decades, since no example of continuous cult at any one mound has been produced.\textsuperscript{45} Rather, the development of hero cult is seen as the manifestation of a new social structure that distinguishes between private/family and public/polis activity.\textsuperscript{46} The argument is that private graves became poorer accompanying a desire to emphasize community solidarity over kinship during the Archaic period. Tomb cult dedicated to one’s own ancestors gave way to hero cult directed at a named hero of the local community. This explains the burial of the Marathon soldiers (Fig. 5), heroes of the new Athenian democracy, in an old aristocratic tomb type – it was an appropriation of that aristocratic symbol by the new

\textsuperscript{43} Clairmont 1971, 11.
\textsuperscript{44} For example, Coldstream 1976.
\textsuperscript{45} Whitley 1988.
\textsuperscript{46} Antonaccio 1994; Whitley 1991.
democracy.\textsuperscript{47} While more convincing than the anti-luxury legislation explanation, this still assumes that the desire for conspicuous display simply died out, replaced by a new austere democratic ethos.

Another example of the odd chronology at play, this time from the Classical period, is the study of white-ground lekythoi. This type of pottery, characteristic in Classical graves, interests scholars because many examples bear figural decoration – a fact that has given rise to a small but enlightening genre of art historical studies on lekythoi painters and the scenes depicted.\textsuperscript{48} The scenes include images from mythology, domestic life and also funerary rites, an important source of information about this topic that is largely invisible in the archaeological record (Fig. 6).\textsuperscript{49} While informative, these studies divorce the pots from their context, discussing them in isolation from the graves in which they were found and the other objects accompanying them.

Thus up until the late 1980s scholars discussing the Kerameikos used culture- and art historical approaches. As mentioned above, Morris was the first to apply the theoretical methods of analysis developed in anthropology to the Kerameikos necropolis to determine Athenian burial practices across age and social groups. Morris’s analysis of the age demographics of Athenian burials has some merit, in particular his argument that the ratio of child to adult burials does not reflect the population but rather the contemporary criteria for formal burial.\textsuperscript{50} At certain points in Athenian history, the number of recovered child burials would reflect an infant mortality rate not paralleled until 1900 A.D., a very unlikely occurrence. A low number of child burials does not represent low infant mortality, but rather that deceased children are being

\textsuperscript{47} Whitley 1994, 227-230.  
\textsuperscript{48} As articulated by Fairbanks 1907, 9. See also Beazley 1938; Kurtz 1975; Brinkman 1999; Oakley 2004.  
\textsuperscript{49} Kurtz and Boardman 1971, 102-105.  
\textsuperscript{50} Morris 1987, 57-71.
disposed of in archaeologically invisible ways. The ratio of child to adult burials, however, is open to question because the age of the individual in each grave is determined based on the length of the grave (Fig. 7). Morris determines a mean ratio of grave to skeleton, but this is based only on those instances when the length of the skeleton is provided. Of the 642 graves cataloged in Kübler’s 1976 volume, for example, only 98 of the over 300 inhumation burials included this information. The argument, therefore, that the length of the grave represents the height of the individual and therefore the age of the individual is questionable. Morris himself admits that it is possible to confuse the graves of the very old and the sub-adult by this method, but goes on to assert that these are only minor problems. Further problems arise in the conclusions based on demography where Morris extends his argument about archaeologically invisible child burials to include adult burials as well. The author argues that in those periods with reduced numbers of adult burials, only certain segments of the population are receiving formal burial. Although tentatively worded at first this becomes an essential premise to his proposition that numbers of formal burials fluctuated as a result of class conflict.

Equally questionable is the quantification of the expression of social personae through mortuary variability. Morris divides burial culture into types, where each type is a distinct combination of attributes – the method of disposal (inhumation versus cremation), the type of grave, the orientation of the grave, and the elite goods contained in the grave. Because these attributes are nominal rather than numerical, Morris cannot quantify the data according to a mean. Rather, he establishes an “ideal modal type” – that is, the most common combination of

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51 Morris 1987, 93-96.  
52 Morris 1987, 93.  
53 Morris 1987, 110-139.
the attributes, and then calculates the deviation, or mortuary variability, from this ideal (Fig. 8). There are several problems with this method of analysis. As Morris himself admits, in order to achieve a statistically relevant sample group analysis cannot be limited only to intact and well-published graves. Furthermore, the selection of attributes is entirely subjective. For example, Morris includes only six categories of grave goods, based on both material and shape (Fig. 10). Does the notation “vase” indicate a clay vessel, or a vessel with figural decoration? At times metal vessels and glass vessels are also included in graves. Are these included under the material or the shape? Finally, the Morris’s key diagram does not evaluate the number of objects – can it really be assumed that a grave with one lekythos expresses the same social persona as a grave with 22 lekythoi?

Finally, Morris calculates the diversity of the population buried over time based on the ratio of graves with metal to those without metal. He points out that any metal used in Attica was imported and therefore probably a prestigious grave good. This assertion is deceptive, however. In the catalog of late 6th and 5th century graves, some contained only a single bronze or iron nail, or perhaps only a strigil, while graves containing amber or glass objects had no metal objects in them at all. In a larger body of data, one could perhaps argue that these are exceptions and not statistically relevant. But with just over 1,000 burials from this period, with a wide range of grave assemblages, it is hard to see how this method of analysis works for this period. His analysis demonstrates, however, a low degree of variability during the late 6th and 5th century in

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55 Morris 1987, 111.
56 Morris 1987, 147-151.
57 Morris 1987, 148.
the Kerameikos, and furthermore, a low degree of “entropy” or the association between burial attributes and social persona (Fig. 9).^58

Morris’s conclusion, that the trends in mortuary variability reflect the rise of the polis, are therefore insecure – a fact that his reviews discuss. Several commented that the rigorous methods of analysis found in this book went beyond the quality and quantity of the data involved – a problem masked partly by the sometimes confusing use of statistical jargon.^59 Perhaps as a response to these criticisms, Morris’s 1992 volume *Death-Ritual and Social Structure in Classical Antiquity* used more numerically quantifiable variables. Here the emphasis is not so much on the aristocracy versus the common man but on family versus community, and individual versus group, based on the use of grave markers from the 6th to the 4th century. Even here, however, changes in mortuary practice are attributed to developments in the social structure – a decreased emphasis on the individual and family represents the subjugation of both to the polis. Individuals are defined by their status as citizens or non-citizens, an idea explored in a 1991 article in which Morris formulates the hypothesis that Athenians reserved certain areas for the burial of citizens only and that these formally defined cemeteries were symbols of membership in the citizen body.^60

If the merit of an author’s work can be measured by the amount of discussion it generates, then Morris’s scholarship is very valuable indeed. Review of his 1987 and 1991 books on the relationship between burial and society are plentiful and varied. His 1991 book is aimed as much at educating his audience to the potential of a theoretically-informed approach as presenting an original argument. This agenda does not escape the notice of his reviewers, who

^58 Morris 1987 144-145.
are generally receptive to the idea. As Philip Rahtz points out, however, beyond the use of quantification the application of the theory introduced at the beginning of *Death Ritual and Social Structure* is not immediately evident in what follows. As is perhaps natural considering the type of work this is, the reviews focus not so much on the actual theses as the methodology.

Morris’s work is an early example of a now thriving genre of studies linking burial practices in the Kerameikos to the social structure of contemporary Athens. While his use of theory and quantification were new to the field, however, the idea of a connection between burial and political culture had a long history in Classical archaeology due to the political motivations inherent in funerary orations of the period. Nicole Loraux, for example, argues that the speeches made at the annual public funeral for the Athenian war dead played a crucial role in forming the very concept of a democratic Athens. Elizabeth Meyer has made a similar argument in favor of this connection through the medium of epitaphs.

Another trend in scholarship in the Kerameikos is the search for expressions of gender or family identity in the burial culture. This discussion arises partly as a reaction to nineteenth century scholarship and its now unfashionable ideas. In a 1980 article Susan Humphreys revisited the 1864 thesis of Fustel de Coulanges, who argued that the arrangement of the burials in the Kerameikos reflected lines of descent from a common ancestor. Humphreys’s main argument is that the peribolos tombs of the 4th century did not represent an unbroken and centuries-old tradition but rather a trend for traditionalism that was ultimately short lived. Grave groups from earlier periods were rarely in use for more than a few generations. In the few cases

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61 For example Wahl 1991; Whitley 1991.
63 Loraux 1971.
64 Meyer 1993. For more on Athenian epitaphs, see Oliver 2000.
65 Fustel de Coulanges 1864.
where longer continuity existed, that continuity was disrupted both by the establishment of state burials and the Peloponnesian War before peribolos tombs came into vogue. Although not part of this central argument, Humphreys does provide an analysis of the monumental burials of the late-6th century, concluding that the crowded condition of the Kerameikos at that time makes the concrete identification of family groups impossible. With the establishment of the peribolos tombs, and especially with the re-introduction of funerary sculpture at the end of the 5th century, there is an increased interest in the search for expressed female and childhood identity. In general, these studies conclude that depictions of these groups on funerary markers express idealized versions of Athenian values – family solidarity, professional aptitude, or loving and protective child-adult interaction within a family setting (Fig. 36). Commemoration of an actual individual, while not entirely absent, is the exception rather than the rule.

The studies seeking expressions of identity all have a certain value. Each explains some of the evidence, but none explain all of the evidence. I propose that the situation in the late 6th and 5th century Kerameikos is more complex than a dialogue between binary opposites like private versus public, family versus community or aristocracy versus democracy. Rather, the burials of this period communicate a plurality of group identities that emerged from the background in the relative stability of the new democracy.

The Existing Theoretical Framework

Burial archaeology has played an important role in the development of archaeological theory, and the work of Morris and related studies rely heavily on the work of Lewis Binford and Arthur Saxe. These two scholars outlined an approach to the subject in the 1960s and 1970s.

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Prior to this, archaeology operated exclusively from a culture historic approach.\textsuperscript{67} The emphasis was on identifying differences in ethnicity through variations in material culture, and also to trace the rise of civilizations with the underlying premise that all cultural change was the result of outside influences – diffusion, invasion, or migration. Archaeologists focused primarily on placing artifacts in detailed classification systems and developing precise chronologies, without articulating an underlying theoretical framework. Valuable scholarship arose out of this approach and continues to do so today, but by the 1960s a need for an explicit theory of archaeological theory had been recognized.

Binford and Saxe and their successors attempted to transform anthropology and archaeology into objective scientific fields with the goal of articulating universal principles of human behavior. In the belief that such principles exist and can be identified, both Saxe and Binford developed hypotheses based on previously collected archaeological and ethnographic data. Their new, “scientific” approach encouraged the use of quantification, the creation of statistical models, and the formulation of testable hypotheses in an attempt to reach conclusions based on deductive reasoning, as in the experimental sciences. In this way, they hoped to obtain objective knowledge about both past and contemporary cultures through observation and research. The essential principle that arose from these studies was the theory that mortuary practices were a direct reflection of social structure.

Saxe outlined eight hypotheses about the relationship between behavior and material culture in his 1970 Ph.D. dissertation. His work emphasizes deductive reasoning and relies heavily on the concept of formal analysis – the relative degree of redundancy and entropy in a

\textsuperscript{67} For a more detailed summary of the culture historic approach, see Cherry 2011.
In burial, this formulation translates to complex and hierarchical societies having a high degree of redundancy due to the correlation between attributes of the burial and the social persona. In egalitarian societies, on the other hand, attributes do not display this correspondence and have a high degree of entropy. The most influential of Saxes’s hypotheses was the 8th, which posited that formal, bounded disposal areas for the dead arose as the result of groups legitimizing their identity through descent from a common ancestor, motivated by limited access to important resources. Saxe’s hypothesis has had considerable influence on the Kerameikos scholarship, as seen in Morris’s argument for the existence of cemeteries reserved exclusively for the burial of Athenian citizens. In the case of democratic Athens, the privileged resource in question is political power.

The influence of Saxe is also evident in the use of quantification, especially of nominal rather than numerical variables. In a 1971 article, Saxe demonstrate this method of analysis on evidence taken from the excavation of a Mesolithic population in Wadi Halfa, Sudan. He divided the burials into groups based on factors such as age and sex – constants, because they cannot be changed for an individual. Saxe makes a point of investigating the demography of the cemetery, concluding that the sample in the cemetery is representative of the population at large – important because it demonstrates that age and sex did not determine who was buried at the site. Finally, Saxe identified variables such as the position of the body and the orientation of the grave and calculated the percentage of each variable in each age/sex group – the mortuary variability. Finding no significant differences in these percentages, or a low mortuary variability, Saxe concluded that the individuals must have participated in an egalitarian social structure in life.

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69 First proposed in Morris 1987, 54, more confidently asserted in the same volume, 210.
Binford categorized dozens of ethnographically documented societies according to subsistence-based definitions (hunter-gatherer, shifting agriculturalist, settled agriculturalist, pastoralist) in the belief that this information translated into total social complexity. In more complicated societies, Binford argued, individuals have more complicated social personae – that is, the sum of all the relationships between an individual, those around him, and society as a whole. As social complexity increases, individuals participate in more varied, and more ranked, relationships with others. Binford’s formulation of the relationship between burial and society is as follows: the more complex a society, the more complex the burial culture. By “complex,” Binford means that more dimensions of a social persona (e.g. age, sex, social position, etc.) are reflected in the burial of an individual. This translates into the quantity and quality of grave goods, the treatment of the body, and the form and orientation of the grave itself. Thus, by working backwards from burials recovered in the archaeological record, scholars can recreate the social structure of a past society.

The main appeal of this very processual approach is for prehistoric societies, where the social structure is a complete unknown and settlement data is unavailable. Contemporary sources do exist, in a very limited fashion, for late 6th and 5th century Athens, and the period is discussed in detail in ancient sources from later periods. Morris uses this approach to shed light on earlier periods in Athenian history and to provide a diachronic picture of the development of the polis. There are good objections to an approach based on Saxe and Binford, which will be discussed below. To raise a more specific problem here, let me point out that the social structure of the historical period – the democratic polis – is already established. Searching for its inception and tracing its development through earlier periods has some value, but it is also important to

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70 Binford 1971.
remember that the unique character of specific time periods may be lost in such a vast undertaking. In other words, the culture of these earlier periods is seen as the developmental stages of an arbitrarily selected “final” stage.

Quantification and statistical analysis are not appropriate methods of analysis in the Kerameikos due to the variability and inconsistent recording of the data from the excavations. Beyond such specific concerns, the value of quantification as an analytical method has been challenged on the basis that a completely objective selection of variables is impossible. Archaeology is not the objective recording of facts but the subjective interpretation of observations by an individual scholar, and thus the use of methods from the experimental sciences is questionable. Furthermore, the evidence for mortuary practices undergoes a transformation from the time they are preserved to the time they are observed by archaeologists. Not all the objects used in funerary practices will survive to enter the archaeological record – food offerings and textiles, for example, are subject to decay and any evidence for them is secondary, in the form of containers or fasteners in more durable materials. Some may be used in the funeral but taken back to be used in a settlement context. The performative aspects of funeral rites, such as gestures and sounds, leave no traces at all. When Saxe evaluated the Wadi Halfa Mesolithic population, he only had to identify the quantifiable variables of the corpse and grave. In the case of Athens, the addition of grave goods adds another dimension of complexity. For a complete analysis all possible distinctions – material, shape, use, etc. – would have to be taken into account. An arbitrary selection of only some of these factors – as when Morris evaluates only the metal objects, and only by virtue of their material – could

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72 O’shea 1981, 39.
73 Morris 1987, 147-151.
miss the factors that the original depositors considered significant. In the case of Athens, the literary sources provide additional evidence for display – for example processions and lamentation - that are visible only in iconography, or not at all.

A related question is whether or not mortuary practices are a direct representation of the social structure of their contemporary society in the first place. Ethnographic studies have shown that burial culture sometimes reflects an ideal or desired social reality, rather than that actually experienced by the deceased. The living can use the dead as a medium for communication, to establish and entrench new social relationships as well as challenge old practices, and therefore mortuary practices reflect relationships between the living as well as those between the deceased and society.\(^\text{74}\) Additionally, mortuary symbols probably do not have a direct meaning, but are employed as a language in which each symbol may have a variety of meanings and must be interpreted in context. Additionally, meanings do not remain constant over time but are constructed and adapted to conform to changing ideas and conventions.\(^\text{75}\) The idea of a direct representational relationship between mortuary practices and social structure does not allow a consideration of such complexities. A wider concern is the fact that after decades of analysis, it has emerged that mortuary behavior is highly variable and universal principles of mortuary practices may not exist at all.\(^\text{76}\) There is a need for context-specific research questions, limited not only by time but also by the burial context.

\(^{74}\) Parker Pearson 1982.
\(^{75}\) Barrett and Fewster 1998, 851.
\(^{76}\) Larsen 1995.
An Alternative Theoretical Framework

The alternative theoretical framework proposed below builds on the work of post-processual archaeological theory and emphasizes different underlying principles than the other theoretical approaches outlined above. A different theoretical background gives rise to different research questions, and different questions produce different answers. Mortuary practices are the outcome of diverse influences from social, political, and economic factors that may be expressed for a variety of reasons. Before searching for what is being expressed and why, however, it is important to remember the context of the evidence: an individual has died. Everything else, the content of the funeral practices, is the response of the survivors to this initial event. Already one question has emerged: why do the survivors feel a need to act under these circumstances? Why does the death of an individual almost universally initiate a chain of events, often leaving indelible marks on the archaeological record?

Burial practices are a rite of passage, intended to restore normal life to a community that has been disrupted by the death of an individual member. This formulation arises from the work of two early twentieth century scholars, Arnold van Gennep and Robert Hertz. Hertz\textsuperscript{77} proposed that it is not the death of the “animal life,” but rather the death of the social being that disrupts society. Such a death challenges belief in the continuity of society, a belief that must be reaffirmed. The process of challenge and reaffirmation is a transitory period marked by a rite of passage. Van Gennep\textsuperscript{78} divided rites of passage into three stages: rites of separation, transition, and incorporation. In funerary rites, the most important of these is the transitional stage, during which the deceased individual moves from the living community, which he departed at death (the rite of separation) to eventually join the community of the dead in a rite of incorporation.

\textsuperscript{77} Hertz 1960.
\textsuperscript{78} Van Gennep 1960.
This transitional stage varies in length, and of course all the rites have many different forms, but the themes of disruption and restoration reoccur in the context of mortuary rites.

Because mortuary rites occur when the normal order of society is suspended, it cannot be assumed that burial culture is a direct representation of everyday social structure. Burial culture is perhaps best understood not as the passive expression of ideology, but as the active creation of ideology.79 As the normal order is re-established, however, it is possible to substitute a new concept of what form this order should take. A concept of the past is created simultaneously with the creation of monuments for the dead, and burial culture can also project an idealized or desirable view of society that is not a direct reflection of reality. Such expression reaches its height in times of societal instability. Gordon Childe80 noted that grave-goods decrease in intrinsic value and are present in progressively smaller quantities as societies grow more stable; likewise monumental tombs and grave markers are a sign of conflict and become less common as the conflict is resolved. Monumental display is an indication of a changing power structure.81

Even in times of relative stability, however, mortuary rites provide the opportunity to express individual and group identity and to reassert and strengthen economic, social, or political bonds between individuals and between groups. An alternative to processual attempts to reconstruct the social structure of past societies is a post-processual investigation into ancient identities. The search for identity, as undertaken from a post-processual perspective, is not the culture historic goal of matching material culture remains with famous individuals named in literary sources. Instead, identity is understood as the total of an individual’s attitudes towards ideas and actions – for example, morality – that remain constant as the individual moves between

79 Smith 2007, 165.
80 Childe 1945.
81 Parker Pearson 1982, 112.
different social contexts. Furthermore, identity is not passively received but rather actively created, albeit unconsciously, as an individual interacts with other people and material objects. The participation of living and dead in mortuary rites creates social memories, a group consciousness that the living continue to maintain when the specific rites have ended. The form these memories and expressions of identity take during the ritual and in the archaeological record can vary widely between different groups and different contexts. The expression of various forms of group identity has the potential to explain the variety in burial practices that exists in the late 6th and 5th century Kerameikos in spite of an overarching trend away from monumentality.

Using the theoretical approach outlined above, this study will examine three categories of evidence: body treatment, the use of space and grave markers, and grave goods – all bodies of evidence with the potential to be used for the expression of identity. Choices in how the body is treated after death affect the length of the rite of passage and thus how (and how long) the deceased could be viewed. The use of space and in particular grave monuments gives insight into the structuring principles of cemeteries and also patterns of elite competition. Finally, grave goods communicate elements of the deceased’s identity and demonstrate that identity is a sum of parts. While it is possible to draw conclusions from each category of evidence in isolation, it is by considering all the available evidence in the context of mortuary culture, that the most complete picture of Athenian burial practices can be achieved.

82 Jones 1997, 88.
83 Gilchrist 1993, 16.
84 Chesson 2001, 110.
Chapter 2: Body Treatment

As a rite of passage, burial rites are intended to help the deceased individual separate from the community of the living and join the community of the dead, but such rites have a second, more practical purpose: disposing of a dead body. The corpse is the central element of a burial. Because the corpse decays, however, archaeological analyses sometimes focus on better-preserved forms of evidence such as grave goods or grave markers, neglecting the actual body itself. For the most complete understanding of burial culture, it is necessary to consider all the available evidence. Different forms of body treatment have different theoretical connotations for archaeologists, arising from the different psychological significance body disposal techniques have on the survivors, who participate in burial rituals. In the Kerameikos necropolis, different forms of body treatment are used simultaneously, with an overall trend towards a lower expenditure of time and money. In the late 6th and 5th century, therefore, the Athenians did not use body treatment as an arena for conspicuous consumption, but the variety of techniques employed by the Athenians demonstrates that they had significant freedom of choice in this area.

In a death ritual, the rite of passage usually begins with the physical death of the individual and ends when the necessary steps have been undertaken to separate the individual from the world of the living and initiate him or her into the world of the dead. Literary evidence indicates that an ancient Greek funeral was a three-part process, involving the laying out of the body (the prothesis), the movement of the body to the grave or pyre (the ekphora) and the final deposition of the body or cremated remains in the grave. Archaeology only provides evidence for the last of these three stages; for the first two, scholars rely on literary and iconographic evidence. The literary evidence in particular is rarely period specific, and so only broad
generalizations are possible. Nevertheless, a brief summary of what is known about the beginning stages of the right of passage will give a more complete picture of the whole process.

The first stage of the funeral, the prothesis, is pictured in vase iconography and funerary plaques beginning in the Geometric period and continuing through the Classical (Fig. 11-13, see also Fig. 6). It began with the closing of the eyes and mouth of the dead. This would certainly prevent the unsettling image of staring eyes and gaping mouth, but may eventually have taken on symbolic significance for the release of the soul or spirit as well. Originally the mouth was kept closed by placing a cushion behind the head of the deceased, but eventually a cloth strap, tied around the head, came to be employed for this purpose. The corpse was then bathed by the women of the household, clothed, and placed on a bier. Special categories of the dead might be specifically attired – the unmarried in marriage robes, or soldiers in their armor. There is some iconographic evidence for food offerings during the prothesis, and the white-ground lekythoi of the 5th century picture lekythoi placed near the bier as well as fillets and wreaths adorning the deceased. Mourners gathered around the body for about a day, as indicated by the laws attributed to Solon. A passage from Plato suggests that the purpose of this was to confirm that death had occurred, but it also provided an opportunity for the family of the deceased to demonstrate their social connections as others visited the corpse (Fig. 14).

The rite continued with the ekphora, when the body, accompanied by a funeral procession, traveled to either the funeral pyre or gravesite (Fig. 15). This is also a scene on vases beginning in the Geometric, although it is less common than the prothesis. There is also a terra-

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85 The following is a summary of Garland 2001, 21-37. For funerary plaques, see Boardman 1955.
86 Oakley 2004, 76-87.
87 Kurtz and Boardman 1971, 59-60.
88 Pl. Leg. 12.959A
cotta model of an ekphora scene from the middle of the 7th century (Fig. 16). The corpse, laid out on a bier, is carried either by human pallbearers or a horse- or mule-drawn cart. Pallbearers could be friends or relatives of the deceased, or could be hired specifically for the purpose. Mourners accompanied the body, probably including wailing or chanting women and men carrying weapons and wearing armor. As with the prothesis, there was ample opportunity for display during the ekphora – perhaps even more, because the prothesis occurred indoors while the ekphora was outdoors and moved through space. Lawmakers eventually saw fit to limit the ostentation of the ekphora, as Demetrios of Phaleron decreed that it had to take place before dawn when a limited number of people would be outside their homes. During the late 6th and 5th century, however, there is no evidence that similar laws were in place. While the transport of the corpse to the pyre received specific attention, however, there is little evidence regarding the transport of ashes from the pyre to the grave.89

The Archaeological Evidence for Deposition

I have already commented upon the lack of osteological sampling in the Kerameikos data elsewhere in this paper. Though unfortunate, such brusque treatment was standard for the era of the excavation (1930s, with additional brief excavation in 1972). In the 1976 Kerameikos volume Kübler defers discussion of the bones pending further study.90 In any case the value of skeletal evidence was apparently still being debated even as Douglas Ubelaker published his handbook for the excavation and study of human remains in 1978.91 The data that does exist for the Kerameikos can still be informative, but must be approached with different research

89 Although there is at least one image of the internment of a coffin. See Figs. 17 and 18.
questions. It is never wise to privilege the method of analysis over the evidence itself.\textsuperscript{92} One of the most interesting features of the late 6\textsuperscript{th} and 5\textsuperscript{th} century Kerameikos is the variety of burial methods employed contemporaneously. John Robb argues that variations in the treatment of the body after death may reflect the specific biography of the individual in question.\textsuperscript{93} Robb examined the categorization of deaths into “normal” and “abnormal” categories (such as death away from home, or death resulting in the loss of the body). In this section I would like to consider other categories can be communicated through body treatment as well, and demonstrate that even the incomplete data from field research can prove informative.

In the context of burials, funerary architecture and grave goods can eclipse the body itself, yet without a body – or at least a death, in the case of a cenotaph – there would be no burial. In the last two decades, the need to provide a theoretical framework for the anthropology and archaeology of the body has been addressed.\textsuperscript{94} There has been much discussion of the agency of the body – the capacity of physical remains to act upon the living,\textsuperscript{95} and how this agency affects both the contemporary people and archaeologists.\textsuperscript{96} As Sharon Kaufman and Lynn Morgan have argued, “The dead make the living.”\textsuperscript{97} In her study of the political use of the dead in modern-day Eastern Europe, Katherine Verdery remarks that bodies, unlike abstract ideas about patriotism, can be seen and touched. While subject to ideological manipulation as

\textsuperscript{92} See Morris 1987, 11 where he states that restricting his quantitative analysis only to intact and well-published graves would “reduce the sample to a uselessly small body.”
\textsuperscript{93} Robb 2007, 293.
\textsuperscript{94} A need identified in Meskell 2000; Joyce 2005.
\textsuperscript{95} Knappett and Malafouris 2008.
\textsuperscript{96} For example Tarlow 2000.
\textsuperscript{97} Kaufman and Morgan 2005, 323-325.
symbols, bodies are indisputably there and can lend the illusion of objectivity to otherwise subjective claims.  

Burial techniques vary across space and time and methods, rituals, and symbols may not have the same significance in different cultural contexts. In his study of the British Iron Age, for example, Parker Pearson notes that body orientation played a very important role in the structure of the living space and had a corresponding role in burial contexts. In the same study Parker Pearson noted that position – whether the body was placed on the right or left side – also communicated information about social status. In the Athenian Kerameikos, however, the determinant for the orientation of a grave seems to have been the terrain and the orientation of recent graves in the same area, while the burial of an individual in a supine and extended posture is practically a constant among the adult burials. For the purposes of this analysis, therefore, body orientation is too varied to be meaningful and can be better explained by practical considerations. Body position might seem to support the idea of an egalitarian structure principle, but it is also possible that the Athenians simply did not find body position a desirable medium to communicate ideas about identity (Fig. 19).

In the late 6th and 5th century Kerameikos, cremation and inhumation are practiced side by side with no obvious differences in grave monuments or the wealth of the associated grave goods. Acknowledging this phenomenon, Kurtz and Boardman call it “a matter of personal or family preference” – essentially restating the existence of the variety without attempting to explain it. Cremation and inhumation, and indeed different methods of cremation and inhumation, emphasize different stages of the rite of passage and extend or contract the time

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100 Parker Pearson 1999.
101 Kurtz and Boardman 1971, 96.
involved in the process. They require different investments in time and money. They affect the body differently and leave unique marks on the archaeological record. We can consider the different connotations of these types with the help of a theoretically informed perspective.

**Inhumation**

In the late 6th and early 5th century Kerameikos, inhumation is more common than cremation. All inhumations in the Kerameikos are primary, which means that the body is buried in the grave and left there without later ritual manipulation. The body decays naturally, leaving behind skeletal remains. Of course, the skeleton may also decay under certain conditions, but conditions in the Kerameikos preserved skeletons from the late 6th and 5th century to be recovered in the 19th and 20th century A.D. excavations. Skeletons represent the materiality of which Verdery speaks but only after the flesh has decayed. Flesh transforms state from solid to liquid and becomes essentially inhuman as both the sight and smell of a rotting corpse offends the senses of an observer; bones, on the other hand, suggest permanence. Psychologically, bones have a special significance in many cultures, whether as individual pieces or complete skeletons.

This idea of permanence is present, to some degree, in the Archaic and Classical periods. There is literary evidence for annual religious festivals that required certain rites to be performed at the graveside, and as Patterson notes, funerary oration suggests that having ancestors buried in an Athenian cemetery could be used as evidence in a case for Athenian citizenship. In a few

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103 Krmpotich et al. 2010.
104 Hallam 2010.
105 Kurtz and Boardman 1971, 147-148; Garland 2001, 104-120.
106 Patterson 2006, 50-51.
burials in the Kerameikos, however, the permanence of the body itself seems not to have been a major concern for the contemporary inhabitants of Athens. Later graves cut through earlier graves and in some cases disrupted the skeletal remains. The disruption caused by this activity makes dating the graves difficult, but in some cases it appears the integrity of the graves was only respected for a few decades. These individual graves seem not to have been considered permanent features in the landscape. The reason for this is unknown, but perhaps these graves were left unmarked for some reason – because the family could not afford a grave marker, for example, or because there were no relatives to visit and maintain the grave.

Among adults, almost without exception, the body is interred in a supine position, legs extended, hands alongside the torso (Fig. 20). In rare cases one or both hands are placed on the pelvis, a leg is bent, or the head is turned to one side, although these minor differences may be the result of site formation processes. There are also rare instances in which the skull has been separated from the rest of the skeleton, although this seems to represent the accidental disruption caused by later burials. Only in a few instances is the length of the skeleton recorded, and in even fewer cases were the skeletons sexed. Adults were interred in several different types of grave. The most common is a simple pit-grave dug into the earth. In some instances the body was covered with flat clay roof tiles, either along the entire length or only the torso. It has been speculated that these may be attempts to conceal botched cremations. In some instances the body was interred in a shaft grave, sometimes within a poros or marble sarcophagus. A few examples of both pit- and shaft-graves contained the remains of a wooden coffin, and the occasional discovery of iron or bronze nails may be further evidence for their use.

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107 Kübler 1976, 189.
108 Kurtz and Boardman 1971, 97.
The modes of inhumation for children differ somewhat from those employed for adults. First of all, children were virtually never cremated. Usually the corpse of the child was placed in a clay vessel that was then interred on its side. The most common vessels used for this purpose are recycled wine amphora (Fig. 21) or an oval or rectangular clay tub (Fig. 22). There are a handful of examples of burial in a hydria, cooking pot or pithos. Offerings were placed both inside the container with the body or in the grave next to the exterior of the container. In several cases, an apparently empty pot was interred, sometimes along with grave offerings. The graves lack not only a standard orientation, but also vary in whether the head of the skeleton is oriented towards or away from the mouth of the vessel. There are also a few cases where children were interred in pit-, shaft-, or tile-graves, although the distinction between child and adult graves in these cases appears at times to have been made on the basis of the length of the grave rather than the skeletal remains.

Cremation

Cremation has different psychological effects than inhumation. The body is deliberately transformed to a condition that does not resemble either the living individual or the corpse. As mentioned before, the natural processes of decay render the flesh essentially inhuman. In cremation, these natural processes are subverted and controlled by the survivors. The result, ash, is like bone in that it will not decay. Unlike bone, however, ashes are not a bounded and solid object but are more like a liquid in that they can be divided or scattered. The cremations of the Kerameikos fall into two categories: primary and secondary. The two methods have different theoretical implications, although both are marked by monumental grave architecture more

109 Krmpotich et al. 2010.
110 Prendergast et al. 2006.
frequently than inhumations.\footnote{Kübler 1976, 183-187.} In his ethnographic studies Douglas Miles observed that primary burials involved a severance with the remains, while during secondary treatment the remains were usually the focus of transformative ritual aimed at the non-corporeal spirit or soul of the deceased.\footnote{Miles 1965.} The rite of passage accompanying death often concludes with the final deposition of the remains. Secondary cremation prolongs the rite to a different degree than primary cremation.

In the Kerameikos, the older and more elaborate of the two methods is secondary cremation (Fig. 23). In this method the body is burned on a funeral pyre, after which the ashes and bone fragments are collected and deposited in a grave. A large quantity of fuel is required to reduce a body to ash, and considering the scarcity of wood in ancient Greece a pyre of this size would have been expensive. Furthermore, it would take a long time to reduce a human body to the condition found in ash urns, and someone would have to be present to tend the fire – time spent away from utilitarian tasks.\footnote{Ubelacker 1978, 33-36.} The fire itself would therefore be a display of wealth and status. After burning the remains were collected and placed in a vessel. The ash urn could be one of a variety of shapes in metal, clay, or stone. These vessels are types also found in domestic contexts and sometimes show evidence of domestic use; it is probable that they were not manufactured specifically for the burial.\footnote{Kurtz and Boardman 1971, 98.} In the case of metal vessels, traces of textiles are preserved, suggesting that the urn was sometimes wrapped in cloth. With or without a cloth wrapping the urn was often placed in a secondary container, a box of wood or stone, and finally buried. Thus the final resting place is separate in both space and time from the location of the fire. This type of body treatment involves two separate locations – pyre and grave\footnote{McKinley 1998.} – but for the
most part only the graves have been preserved in the Kerameikos. Only a handful of potential pyre sites have been identified;\textsuperscript{116} not surprising given the constant re-use of space in the area.

The multi-step process from the death of the individual to the final deposition of the remains prolongs the transitional stage of the rite. There is opportunity for ritual and display at each stage in the process, and each additional ritual also offers the opportunity to include or exclude. Consider the funeral of Patroclus, for example. Great emphasis is placed on the size of the pyre, certainly, but what is more interesting is the fact that different groups of people are present for different parts of the rite – the whole army processes by the unlit pyre offering locks of hair, but only the commanders of the Greeks are present for the actual cremation.\textsuperscript{117} Of course, this cannot be understood as a direct reflection of actual practices in the late 6\textsuperscript{th} and 5\textsuperscript{th} century,\textsuperscript{118} but it does demonstrate that the inhabitants of Attica were not unaware of the display potential of such a scene since the Homeric poems were in circulation at this time. An example of such elaborate display in the Kerameikos necropolis is Grave 264,\textsuperscript{119} in which the remains were collected and deposited in a bronze cauldron. The cauldron was then wrapped in a purple cloth. This was placed inside a wooden coffin which was then placed inside a poros sarcophagus. Finally, the whole elaborate configuration was deposited beneath a built tomb with two alabastra as grave offerings. This is certainly the most elaborate example of a secondary cremation from this period in the Kerameikos, but similar opportunity for display is present in the size of the funeral pyre and the transport of the ashes to the grave.

While secondary cremation was the standard practice in prior to the late 8\textsuperscript{th} or early 7\textsuperscript{th} century, primary cremations emerged around that time and came to outnumber the secondary

\textsuperscript{116} Kübler 1976, 4, 137.
\textsuperscript{117} IL 23: 127-295.
\textsuperscript{118} Sherratt 1990.
\textsuperscript{119} Kübler 1976, 83-84.
cremations during the Archaic period. Although the primary cremations continue into the late Archaic and early Classical period, secondary cremations appear again and the two forms occur side-by-side. In primary cremations, the body is burned within the grave itself rather than on a nearby pyre. There are sometimes remains of charred wood in the grave, in a few cases preserved in situ extending across the pit. The grave cuttings are deeper than in the case of inhumations or secondary cremations in order to accommodate the fuel. This increased depth created a problem, making it difficult to ignite a fire hot enough to completely cremate the remains. Archaic primary cremation graves solved this problem with the construction of ventilation shafts, cut into the floor of the grave shaft so that air could circulate around the fuel pile. The body, on a bier, was set on top of the fuel. The bier usually had projecting handles that fit into cuttings in the walls of the grave, or legs that fit around the pyre.

The cremations left thick layer of black charcoal ash from the wood fuel, and a thin layer of white bone ash (Fig. 24). Sometimes there is an additional burned layer above the bone ash, which may be the remains of a collapsed wooden structure; the offerings in the graves are often charred, indicating that they were probably placed around the body before the fire was lit. The emergence of the primary cremations coincides with the development of offering places and offering trenches external to the grave itself. In the 5th century, ventilation channels became much less common; the reduced airflow meant that the fires could not burn as efficiently and the body was not always completely immolated. This simplification of the grave coincides with

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120 Kurtz and Boardman 1976, 74.
121 For more on the offering trenches (opferrinne) and offering places (opferplatz) see Kübler 1959, 87-88 and 92-93; Kübler 1976, 187-188; Kistler 1998.
122 For example Kübler 1976, 74. The remains in Grave 247 are said to be in the shape of a burned corpse.
the general trend towards restraint seen in this period, although it is curious given the recurrence
of the more elaborate tradition of secondary cremation.

From a theoretical perspective primary cremation is an intriguing mode of disposal. On
the one hand, the same amount of fuel is required to immolate the body completely, but rather
than displaying this expenditure it is hidden inside the grave cutting. On the other hand, it is
possible that this was a strategy to conceal an insufficient quantity of fuel. Further evidence that
these were a less expensive method of cremation is the fact that, while originally universally
provided with a ventilation shaft, primary cremation graves in the late 6th and 5th century often
omitted this feature. Perhaps it is the combination of poor ventilation and insufficient fuel that
left some graves with larger charred bone fragments. In any case, this method omits the steps
between burning and final deposition seen in the secondary cremations, so perhaps the reduction
of the corpse was less important since the remains would not be collected and deposited in a
container. Thus primary cremations demonstrate less expenditure of both material resources and
time when compared with secondary cremations - yet secondary cremations disappear during a
period of heightened monumentality (the early Archaic) only to reappear in a period of restraint
(the late 6th and 5th century).

Interpretation

Interpretation

Over time, there is a general trend towards simplification in the methods of body
treatment employed in the Kerameikos necropolis, a movement away from conspicuous display.
The elaborate and expensive secondary cremations of the Geometric period are replaced by the
less showy, but more cost-effective, primary cremations of the Archaic period. Between the
Archaic and Classical periods, inhumation eventually replaced cremation as the most common
form of burial. While primary cremations continued to occur, the majority lacked proper
ventilation channels, a trend in construction that reduced the effectiveness of the pyre for
reducing the corpse to ash. The act of deposition was no longer a prolonged event, in which the
burning of the corpse on a massive pyre presented a visual display that lasted for hours. Rather,
the fire within the grave cutting was almost cursory and the body buried soon after, almost in the
manner of an inhumation.

Without the prolonged rite of passage seen in secondary cremation, burial provided less
of an opportunity for conspicuous display. This development suggests that the Athenians at this
time felt that their social institutions and family structures were secure. As the democracy
developed, the death of a single individual did not produce as great a disruption in the normal
operation of society as in the previous period. It is interesting to note, however, that both
inhumation and cremation are used at the same time and in the same necropolis, demonstrating
variety in burial practices even in a period of simplification and financial restraint.

Archaeological theory suggests that in the late 6th and 5th century, Athenian society was
stable enough that the death of a single individual did not disrupt the normal life of the
community to the same degree as in earlier periods. As the democracy developed, the Athenians
experienced greater confidence about the ability of their social institutions and family structures
to survive the birth and death of succeeding generations. Thus, by the 5th century body treatment
was no longer an arena for the display of wealth and power as it had been in earlier periods,
although the language of display was still available when needed – the Athenians who died at
Marathon in 490 were cremated on the battlefield, for example. As the following chapters on the
use of space and monuments and the quantity and quality of grave goods will illustrate, however,
the absence of display is seen in all aspects Athenian burial culture in the Kerameikos necropolis in the late 6th and 5th centuries.
Chapter 3: Space and Grave Markers

The body, whether cremated or inhumed, and its accompanying grave goods were buried, but grave markers remained part of the visible landscape – and the landscape itself was defined by the use of space. The Kerameikos necropolis, prominently located between two important thoroughfares, was ideally suited to communicate visual messages. The Panathenaic procession moved through the necropolis on its way to the Acropolis, but Athenian citizens and visitors to the city would have passed through the area everyday as well, especially after the construction of the Themistoklean city wall put the Kerameikos immediately outside the northwest city gates. This chapter examines the use of space in the Kerameikos necropolis, with special attention devoted to trends in grave markers, from a theoretical perspective. First, what are the structuring principles of the late 6th and 5th century necropolis, if any exist? Second, does the use of grave markers react to the culture of restraint seen in this period? Finally, how do the monumental grave mounds of the Kerameikos, which are grave markers and also involve a significant use of space, fit into the burial culture of the necropolis? The best explanation for the lack of monumental grave markers or defined cemeteries in the late 6th and 5th century Kerameikos is that these were meant to communicate in a way that did not serve the needs of the Athenians at this particular time.

The Use of Space

Spatial analysis has become a useful tool in archaeology, perhaps most obviously in on the regional level, where human activity can be fed into quantitative models such that patterns can emerge and be interpreted.123 Space also affects, and is affected by, communities and even

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123 See, for example, Hodder and Orten 1976.
individuals, and it is important for archaeologists to investigate the use of space on this smaller scale as well.\textsuperscript{124}

The construction of the Themistoklean city wall in 478 physically affected the environment of the Athenians and may have been the first fortification of Athens since Mycenaean times (see Fig. 1). It transected the Kerameikos, used fragments of stone grave markers in its composition, and included part of the necropolis within its circuit wall.\textsuperscript{125} No further burials took place in the newly created “inner” Kerameikos. Beginning sometime in the 7\textsuperscript{th} century, Athenians showed an increasing reluctance to bury their dead in their settlement areas,\textsuperscript{126} and from this time forward the community assigned different locations to the living and the dead (Fig. 25). The 5\textsuperscript{th} century wall provided a clear definition of settlement versus non-settlement, living versus dead, which overcame the traditional use of the necropolis.

Burial culture provides so many different categories of evidence for archaeologists that their spatial dimension is sometimes neglected. As Lynne Goldstein pointed out, however, it is the relationship between “substance” components such as bodily treatment and grave goods, and the spatial components of burials that will yield the greatest amount of information about the burial culture of an ancient society; furthermore, such analysis is best conducted by the use of simple, visual techniques rather than complex quantitative ones.\textsuperscript{127} The trend away from intra-settlement burial in 7\textsuperscript{th} century Athens is paralleled in many societies, but must be evaluated within the specific cultural context.\textsuperscript{128} In modern western cultures, the increased separation between the living and the dead is seen as a response to improved medical care and an increased

\textsuperscript{124} Chesson 2001, 100.  
\textsuperscript{125} Theocharaki 2011.  
\textsuperscript{126} Morris 1987, 62-69.  
\textsuperscript{127} Goldstein 1981.  
\textsuperscript{128} Parker Pearson 1993; Thomas 2000.
frequency of death in hospitals, resulting in the notion of death as an illness.\textsuperscript{129} This explanation is, however, specific to modern western society and not applicable to ancient Athens. Since the Athenians participated in religious festivals and regularly revisited the grave site,\textsuperscript{130} it is possible that cemeteries were viewed as the domain of the ancestors, as has been suggested for Stonehenge in Britain\textsuperscript{131} - although as the disruption of earlier graves demonstrates, in Athens these ancestors were important to individual families and rather than the community as a whole. As mentioned above, the specific reasoning involved in separating the living from the dead is probably not recoverable, but it is still useful to consider the theoretical implications of such choices.

Within the cemeteries, the late 6\textsuperscript{th} and 5\textsuperscript{th} century is remarkable for the absence of segregation between different groups of the dead. Most significant is the presence of child burials, and in large numbers, alongside the burials of adults. This is not always the case even in ancient Athens; as Morris points out, there are times in Athenian history when children are virtually absent from the burial record (Figs. 26 and 27).\textsuperscript{132} Child burials are singled out by their type of grave, but evidently not by the space in which they were interred. Furthermore, poor and rich burials occur side-by-side, as the wide variety of grave goods and body treatment demonstrates. It seems that economic class, like age, was not communicated through the use of space. Enclosed family plots, the peribolos tomb type, do not come into use until the end of the 5\textsuperscript{th} century, when family becomes the structuring principle of the necropolis (Fig. 29).\textsuperscript{133} While they used different spaces for life and death, therefore, the Athenians of this period seem not to

\textsuperscript{129} Foucault and Miskowiec, 1986; Parker Pearson 1982.
\textsuperscript{130} Kurtz and Boardman 1971, 147-8.
\textsuperscript{131} Parker Pearson and Rampilisonina 1998.
\textsuperscript{132} Morris 1987, 57-62; see also Lagia 2007.
\textsuperscript{133} Garland 1982; Humpreys 1980. See also the following discussion of grave markers.
have distinguished different groups among the dead through the use of reserved spaces, except in the instance of the demosion sema.

The question of the demosion sema, or the Athenian public cemetery, has its roots in the funeral oration of Pericles. According to Thucydides, this speech was given at the annual state funeral on behalf of the war dead, after the first year of the Archidamian War.\textsuperscript{134} Thucydides states that it was an annual tradition for the Athenians to bury all those who had been killed in battle on behalf of the city, at public expense, in the publically maintained cemetery. The state funeral was accompanied by great ceremony; the bones of the dead were collected in a tent while their friends and relatives made offerings, then sorted according to tribe and driven on wagons to the cemetery, one wagon for each tribe and one empty wagon for those whose remains could not be recovered. Citizens and foreigners alike were invited to join in the procession. Women made their laments at the graves, and to conclude the proceedings a prominent Athenian made a funeral oration. The exception to this tradition, Thucydides notes, is those who died on the battlefield at Marathon, who were interred there in recognition of their special achievement.

Despite the fact that Thucydides never provides a specific location for the \textit{demosion sema}, this passage is considered alongside the statement of Pausanias that there was a monument for Athenians who died in battle alongside the Academy Road\textsuperscript{135} to locate the public cemetery in the Kerameiks.\textsuperscript{136}

The existence of a public cemetery for the war dead in the Kerameikos necropolis in the late 6\textsuperscript{th} and 5\textsuperscript{th} century is now widely accepted, especially after discoveries made in the course of

\textsuperscript{134} Thuc. 2.34-46.
\textsuperscript{135} Paus. I.12.4.
\textsuperscript{136} Clairmont 1983.
a rescue excavation by the Greek Archaeological Service in the 1997-1998.\footnote{AR 1997-1998, 9-12; see also AR 2002-2003, 7. Prior to these discoveries, some scholars questioned the existence of an Athenian public cemetery: see Jacoby 1944, 42-47.} Prior to these discoveries, some scholars questioned the existence of such an institution. Nicholas Arrington places the public cemetery in the vicinity of the Academy Road, and argues that the new democracy deliberately chose a space apart from the monumental aristocratic burials of the preceding period in order to emphasize the contrast between the old and new orders (Fig. 28). This choice of location was part of an attempt to emphasize the community over the individual in a physical language, similar to the ideals promoted in the speeches made at public funerals.\footnote{Arrington 2010.}

Thus, the Athenians assigned different spaces to the living and the dead, but did not distinguish between different categories among the dead except in the case of those who died in battle on behalf of the city. Outside of the demosion sema, space – for example, proximity to the city gates - was not used to communicate status.

**Grave Markers**

The earliest grave markers employed in the Kerameikos necropolis were plain gravestones and the monumental ceramic vases of the Geometric period.\footnote{Kurtz and Boardman 1971, 56-7.} By the mid-6\(^{th}\) century these vessels were replaced by stone stelai monuments and funerary sculpture, with stelai as the more common monument (Fig. 31).\footnote{Kurtz and Boardman 1971, 84-89, Richter 1961.} To this period belong the kouros and kore figures, carved in the round and depicting youthful figures in frozen attitudes; these statues were used as funerary dedications and to mark individual graves. The kouros figure is a male youth, arms rigidly held to his sides, one foot slightly in advance of the other. The kore is a female figure
dressed in elaborate robes (although the kore is much rarer than the kouros as a grave marker). More common than either are the stelai monuments in marble or limestone. These stelai consisted of three pieces: base, narrow shaft of dressed stone, usually with relief sculpture and a finial, often depicting a sphinx or palmette. In the mid-6th century this shape was reduced to two pieces by the combination of the shaft and finial (Fig. 30). Limestone monuments were coated in a layer of stucco and both types were painted. The relief sculptures depict figures similar to the kouros figures – men in frozen attitudes with generic features and little individualizing detail. These figures do, however, communicate identity through iconography - their attire or the objects they carry – they may be dressed for battle and carrying weapons, or holding athletic equipment (Figs. 32-33). Unfortunately, virtually none of these monuments have been found in situ, and so associating specific graves and monuments is an impossible task.

Towards the end of the 6th century grave markers of both types fall out of use and the general absence of funerary sculpture continues until the end of the 5th century.141 The only grave markers from this period are simple slab stelai. Like their Archaic predecessors these consisted of base, slab and finial but were usually less than 1 m tall. The finials were palmettes or similar non-figural designs, and the slabs were adorned with short inscriptions and sometimes non-figural painted designs.142 These in turn are replaced by more elaborately carved and larger stelai towards the end of the 5th century (Fig. 34). The re-introduction of sculpture may be, as Kurtz and Boardman suggested, the result of the large number of sculptors needing work in Athens after work on the Parthenon was completed.143 It is important to note, however, that there

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142 Kurtz and Boardman 1971, 123-4.
143 Kurtz and Boardman 1971, 122; see also Stearns 2000.
would be no supply without demand and that contemporary Athenians must have wanted such monuments for the graves of their dead, perhaps even in defiance of the anti-sumptuary laws.

These Classical reliefs were meant to portray an idealized version of reality through images, while individual was commemorated through the inscription. As Wendy Closterman has noted, the figural reliefs on the stelai accompanying the family burial plot known as peribolos tombs are meant to portray Athenian ideals about family solidarity rather than the specific relationships of the individuals in question (Fig. 36).\textsuperscript{144} The epitaphs accompanying these markers, on the other hand, grew increasingly more individual as the 5\textsuperscript{th} century progressed. Meyer argues that the appearance of individual epitaphs in the 5\textsuperscript{th} century, with individuals identified not only by name but by demotic, demonstrated the introduction of a “bottom-up” view of society – that epitaphs now reflected Athens as seen by individual citizens, rather than by a centralized authority. Thus, epitaphs become increasingly focused on the individual person, rather than that person’s identity as a citizen of Athens, as the initial rigid control of ideas about citizenship relaxed over the course of the 5\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{145}

\textbf{Grave Mounds}

Monumental tomb architecture has evolved independently in many societies throughout the world, and all categories, including grave architecture, are built to communicate.\textsuperscript{146} This type of commemoration is usually a mark of instability or uncertainty, a demonstration of power and authority that might otherwise be questioned; this fact is attested both archaeologically and ethnographically. Power is communicated through the appropriation of surplus labor for an

\textsuperscript{144} Closterman 2007; see also Kosmopoulou 2001.
\textsuperscript{145} Meyer 1993, 112-119.
\textsuperscript{146} Trigger 1990, 119-122.
ultimately non-utilitarian end.¹⁴⁷ Many scholars have sought a more specific message in monumental architecture, and of course a number of competing explanations have arisen. Such monuments could serve as territorial markers during times of competition between communities, especially when the resource in short supply is the land itself.¹⁴⁸ A similar purpose has been attributed to the use of bounded, fixed, and multi-generational cemeteries, in which case the cemetery itself serves in the place of a built monument, although built monuments communicate in a much more impressive way.¹⁴⁹ If the presence of such monuments is important, their absence in an area where they were once common must be equally significant. Monumental tombs tend to disappear in times of stability, when there is no need to communicate power, but can re-emerge at critical points when the community feels pressure to demonstrate the permanence of its social institutions.¹⁵⁰

The connection between monumental tombs and social stability is evident, to a certain degree, in the late 6th and 5th century Kerameikos. Although relatively common in the 7th and early 6th centuries, monumental graves are much rarer in the subsequent period.¹⁵¹ With the development of a stable democracy, the Athenians’ confidence in their social institutions increased. At the same time, aristocratic families were no longer competing for control of the city in the same way as before; aristocratic competition was channeled by the democracy into campaigns for political office. Rather than constructing monumental tombs, wealthy Athenians projected power through participation in the liturgy system, which benefited both the individual patron and the city. The patron could demonstrate his wealth and garner a reputation for service

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¹⁴⁸ Renfrew 1976, 165-199.
¹⁵⁰ Childe 1945, 17-18.
¹⁵¹ Kübler 1959, 89-9; Kurtz and Boardman 1971, 79-84.
to the city, while the city benefited with a well-maintained navy and suitably outfitted religious festivals.

There are two types of monumental grave markers in the Kerameikos. The first type is a large circular mound made of earth, reaching a maximum height of six to ten meters in the early 6th century. These were usually placed over a single burial, although some hosted later burials in their mantle. The second was a rectangular mound, smaller than the circular variety but covered with layers of mud and lime plaster to hold the shape. By the 7th century these rectangular mounds had become a variety of built tomb, with walls of brick or stone. Monumental graves of both types were concentrated on the south bank of the Eridanos river, and by the end of the 7th century newer monuments frequently cut into or replaced older ones due to the limited availability of space (Fig. 39). By the middle of the 6th century, the grave mounds were usually more moderate in size than their earlier equivalents and were found over both inhumations and cremations in almost a 2:1 ratio, although in the preceding period they occurred almost exclusively with cremations152 – a development that mirrors the overall shift towards inhumation discussed in the section on body treatment. Despite the general trend away from monumentality, there are three grave mounds in the late 6th and 5th century Kerameikos necropolis that deserve a full description, which will contribute to the following discussion.

The Rundbau (Fig. 40–42)

The oldest of these three monumental mounds was called the “Rundbau” by the German excavators. The complicated history of its discovery and excavation, spanning more than a

century, is characteristic of the Kerameikos in general. The first mention of the area containing the Rundbau comes from the Greek Archaeological Society’s report on the 1873/74 field season. Although there is no specific mention of the Rundbau itself, excavation in the area north of the Eridanos, outside the ancient city walls, uncovered several vessels in funerary contexts. The report of the 1880/81 season, conducted under Kumanudis, mentions the discovery of 12 poros blocks, reused as part of the Eridanos canal but originally part of a circular wall. These blocks were later determined to be part of the 4th century retaining wall (see below). The Souros plan, drawn between 1880 and 1890, includes the eastern extent of the Rundbau as well as the famous messenger stele, in situ. These must have been cleared sometime shortly after the plan was drawn, because they are not present in two photographs from 1910 (Figs. 43 and 44). H. Knackfuss began formal excavations of the Rundbau and the surrounding area but work was halted in the same year, resumed in 1940 under K. Gebauer. Final publication in 1980 followed a 1972 excavation under Ursula Knigge.

From prehistoric times, the Eridanos river deposited sediment at a curve along its bank. These sediments, consisting of even layers of alternating clay and sand, are typical of a continuously flowing water way. The course of the stream eventually shifted to the north of the elevated area, while the Sacred Way ran past directly to the south. As mentioned in a previous section, the frequent shifting of the riverbed in such low-lying terrain made the whole surrounding area swampy and generally unsuitable for habitation, leading to its use as a burial

153 A summary of the excavation history can be found in Knigge 1980, 57-58.
154 Prakt. 1874/5, 12f.
155 Prakt. 1990/82, 9.
157 Karo 1916, 157-162.
158 Gebauer 1940, 333-44.
159 Knigge 1980.
When the Themistoklean city wall was constructed in 479/8, the course of the Eridanos river was fixed through the construction of a stone channel passing to the south of the mound. The earliest burials here date to the 7th century and it was used for burials through the early 5th century. The natural mound was located prominently between the Sacred Way and the Academy Road. The naturally elevated area was twice topped by a man-made earth mound, which was supported in the 4th century by a stone retaining wall on its south side. It probably remained in this form at least until the time of Pausanias, who mentions such a mound just outside of the city wall in this area.

The excavators recorded a total of 22 graves beneath the Rundbau in the earlier, naturally deposited alluvial layers: eight inhumations (including one child and one adult in a poros sarcophagus), nine cremations (including one secondary cremation, contained in a marble urn), two grave pits without the remains of a body and two badly damaged poros sarcophagi, also without remains. The final and most unusual burial beneath the Rundbau contained the skeleton of a very small horse, donkey, or mule. From its proximity to a nearby cremation grave dated to the 2nd quarter of the 7th century, the excavators believed the two graves were part of the same event. Of these graves, the excavators assigned no date to five. Eleven of the graves date to the 8th, 7th, or early 6th century, and one is dated by virtue of its relative height to sometime after the 8th century. Only four of the graves can be securely dated to the late 6th and 5th centuries, with a fifth dated to sometime after 470. Among these four is a mid-6th century cremation, the early 5th century child burial, the burial of an adult in a sarcophagus around 480, a cremation around 470,

161 Kraiker and Kübler 1939, 1-3.
162 Knigge 1980, 72.
163 The following is a summary of Knigge 1980, 59-76.
164 Paus. I.36.3
165 Knigge 1980, 77-84.
and an empty sarcophagus dating to sometime after the 5th century cremation. Grave assemblages vary, with no perceptible patterns by date or grave type. One of the bodies was sexed by the excavators, but the basis of this identification is unclear.\textsuperscript{166}

The Rundbau is made up of two successive earth mounds; the first was constructed above Grave 6 at the beginning of the 7th century and the second over the plain sarcophagus, listed in the catalog as Grave 20, in the second half of the 5th century. In the opinion of the excavators, a burial ground in such a prominent location, used over the course of several centuries, had to be the special grave precinct of an old Attic aristocratic family.\textsuperscript{167} Based on a passage from Pausanias\textsuperscript{168} the excavators identified the second mound as a monument for the herald Anthemokritos, who according to Plutarch was killed by the Megarians during an embassy concerning the disputed territory of Eleusis; afterwards, Anthemokritos was buried with honors outside the Thriasian (also known as the Dipylon) gates.\textsuperscript{169} The identification is based on the proximity of the Rundbau to the Dipylon gate, and the discovery of two additional grave stelai marking the burials of herald nearby.\textsuperscript{170} The argument of the excavators continues on to link Anthemokritos with the aristocratic Kerykes family, and to posit that the Rundbau was the burial ground for this ancient clan.\textsuperscript{171}

**South Hill**

S. Kumanidis first began excavation of the area containing the so-called South Hill in 1870, prompted by the discovery of two grave stelai, known as the “envoys’ stelai” in situ, in the

\textsuperscript{166} Knigge 1980, 81. (Grave 16)
\textsuperscript{167} Knigge 1980, 75-76.
\textsuperscript{168} Paus. I.36.3
\textsuperscript{169} Plutarch *Pericles* 30.3.
\textsuperscript{170} Knigge 1972.
\textsuperscript{171} Knigge 1980, 75-76.
immediate vicinity (Fig. 37 and 38). From the graves and associated grave goods beneath the bases it is believed that the original stelai dated to the third quarter of the fifth century. Kumanudis extended his inquiries to the surrounding area and found what he believed to be an ancient tomb, buried by later fill. He discovered four stone sarcophagi, shown on a plan drawn shortly thereafter by C. Curtius. By the time A. Bruckner made his plan of the area in 1907, only two of the sarcophagi discovered by Kumanudis remained, one of which was only partially preserved. Work in the area ceased after 1872 and was not resumed until 1896, when V. Staïs continued excavation of the northern extent of the South Hill. In 1963 the German Archeological Institute set out to revisit and uncover the old excavation, and discovered that only the north side of the hill had been cleared. This project uncovered a large number of late 6th and 5th century graves set in the fill above an early 6th century grave mound.

In the third quarter of the 6th century a monumental earth mound was constructed above two shaft graves. One of the two graves had been previously disturbed and contained no bodily remains or grave goods. The second, on the other hand, was untouched and contained the skeleton of an unusually tall individual on an elaborate dining couch, with Ionic but no Attic grave goods. (Grave goods are discussed in the following chapter.) On the basis of relative height and stratigraphy of the two shaft graves, the previously disturbed grave was judged to be the older of the two. The two graves were covered by three layers of fill, each about 1 m thick. The fill is thickest in the middle and falls off to the west, south, and east with the uppermost layer extending the furthest, indicating that it was deliberately deposited to form an artificial hill.

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172 Prakt. 1871, 8.
173 Curtius 1872, Fig. 42.
174 Prakt. 1910, Fig. 3.
175 Knigge 1972, 584.
No further burials took place in the diameter of the mound until the very end of the 6th century. Shortly before burials resumed the ground level of the surrounding area was raised to the height of the hill, concealing the monument beneath a layer of fill. The later burials bear no relationship to the earlier graves in terms of orientation or relative height (Fig. 45). These late 6th century burials, unlike the shaft graves beneath, are primarily poorly-furnished inhumation burials of adults in pit graves and the graves of children.

The interruption between the initial shaft graves and the later burials in the South Hill, and the proximity of the two 5th century envoys’ stelai, requires a different explanation than the continuous patterns of use seen in the Rundbau. The first of the two stelai is dedicated to a proxenos named Pythagoras of Selymbria and dates to the mid-5th century, while the second is dedicated to two envoys from Corcyra named Thersander and Simylos and dates from around 375 - but the second stele is on a much older base. From the graves and associated grave goods beneath the base it is believed that the original stele dated to the third quarter of the fifth century. Both inscriptions belong to the period of the democracy, and state that the individuals were buried at public expense. Thus, after the South Hill monument was leveled in the late 6th century, individuals who died while in public service received special consideration in a similar fashion to those who died in battle and were interred in the demesion sema.

Based on these two inscriptions the excavators proposed a long tradition of state-sponsored burials of envoys and other foreign dignitaries in the area beginning in the era of the Peisistratid tyranny. This explanation is somewhat problematic, given that there is no evidence to suggest that envoys were buried here prior to the mid-5th century, several decades after the

177 Knigge 1976, 7-10, 12.
179 Knigge 1972, 590-596.
180 Knigge 1976, 10.
overthrow of the Peisistratids. More probably, the South Hill was a family burial plot like the Rundbau. Located just south of the Sacred Way, such a monument would have been a very potent symbol of power. The monument was buried at a time when the culture of restraint was taking hold throughout the Kerameikos, perhaps due to the crowded conditions in the necropolis or because the family traditionally buried in the South Hill had died out or otherwise had no use for the monument. On the other hand, the act of leveling the South Hill may have been an expression of power through the organization of surplus labor. Just as an aristocratic family displayed its wealth and power by building the monument, the democracy may have displayed wealth and power in destroying it, taking over the space and using it for foreign dignitaries who died while in public service.

**Grave Mound G**

In 1910, the Greek Archaeological Service undertook an investigation of the early cemetery on the southern bank of the Eridanos river under the direction of Kumanudis. After clearing away the layers from a road dating from the 4th century through the Roman period, excavators uncovered the uppermost extent of an artificial hill, later named Grave Mound G.\(^{181}\) The hilltop and the surrounding area was not formally investigated until the 1931/32 season, when Wilhelm Kraiker cleared the top of Grave Mound G and the nearby sanctuary of the Tritopatres under the German Archaeological Institute.\(^{182}\) In the following year, the excavators discovered a shaft grave located beneath the mound, as well as several later shaft graves also located within the perimeter of the mound.\(^{183}\) Excavations continued in the area until 1940,

\(^{181}\) Prakt. 1910, 105; Karo 1910, 155.
\(^{183}\) Kübler 1933a, Kübler 1933b, 218.
uncovering numerous graves from a late 6th and 5th century cemetery. Final publication of the 1931-1940 excavation was delayed until 1976 due to the loss of some of the documents and images from the project during the course of World War II. The volume on the finds from the excavation did not appear until more than twenty years later, in 1999. The manifold nature of the excavation, spread over more than a century, complicates analysis.

Grave Mound G sits above a large Geometric cemetery, dating from the 8th century through the early 6th century, including a 7th century built tomb. The monument was constructed in conjunction with a mid-6th century shaft grave. This shaft grave is remarkably similar to that found beneath the South Hill, containing the inhumation of an adult with an ivory and amber dining couch but no other grave goods (Fig. 46). A grave stele of fine-grained, light and sandy limestone, dated to around 560 was found in close proximity to the shaft grave and depicted a man bearing a sword (Figs. 32 and 33). Unlike older grave mounds in the Kerameikos, Grave Mound G demonstrated a unique lack of concern for earlier monumental grave architecture in the area. Not only was it constructed over a built tomb, but in order to procure the necessary amount of earth its builders disturbed many nearby graves and older grave monuments. Fragments of pottery, skeletal remains, and ashes are all included within it. Shortly after the first shaft grave eleven more burials took place in the mound, roughly oriented in a circle within its perimeter and

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184 Kraiker 1934; Kübler 1935; Gebauer and Johannes 1936; Gebauer 1938 and 1940; Kübler and Gebauer 1942.
185 Kübler 1976, ix-x.
186 Kunze-Götte et al. 1999.
188 Kübler 1976, 5-7.
189 Kübler 1976, 11-13; Kübler 1935, 272, Fig. 5; Gebauer 1938, 587-601, Figs. 14 and 15; Richter 1961, 20-21, Fig. 86.
the sanctuary of the Tritopatres was established nearby (Fig. 47-48). A large number of late 6th and 5th century graves, of simpler construction took place on the slopes of the mound and in the surrounding area, including the construction of several much smaller grave mounds (Fig. 49).

Initially Kübler proposed that the grave mound and stele marked the burial of the Athenian lawmaker Solon. Analysis of the ceramics from the corresponding layers proved that this hypothesis could not be true because pot sherds contained in the fill date to the mid-6th century. In the final 1976 publication Kübler remarks that Grave Mound G must the result of a state-sponsored effort, rather than the elite display of an aristocratic family, based on the significant disruption of the graves in the surrounding area and the monumental size of the mound. The establishment of the sanctuary of the Tritopatres at the same time or shortly after the construction of the mound, he continues, was an offering to purify the state after the ritual pollution garnered through the activities in the Geometric cemetery. In her commentary on the South Hill, however, Knigge disagreed and argued that because of its similarity to the South Hill Grave Mound G must also be the burial ground of an old and aristocratic Athenian family.

**Interpretation**

The most frequent explanation for the developments in monumental grave architecture from the 7th and early 6th into the late 6th and 5th century in the Kerameikos necropolis is that the Athenians largely abandoned a form of commemoration with strong aristocratic connotations.

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191 Kübler 1976, 22-90.
194 Kübler 1976, 15.
195 Knigge 1976, 10 (n. 26).
when they adopted a democratic form of government. South Hill and Grave Mound G, as reminders of the old aristocratic regime, were taken over by the new democracy – one concealed under a load of fill and both used for the burial of individuals of all ages and from all walks of life. The Rundbau, on the other hand, continued in use because the aristocratic family in possession of the plot was permitted to continue using it, in the same way that certain old religious duties retained their association with particular aristocratic families. The new democracy did make some effort to appropriate the symbol however, as demonstrated by the widespread appearance of monumental grave mounds white-ground lekythoi. Morris argues that the monumental grave mound was simultaneously a symbol used by the aristocracy as a link with their past and by the democracy to demonstrate their power over those same aristocrats – but by the end of the 5th century the symbol had been so often used that it had lost its “special, subversive, and elitist” qualities. In a similar vein James Whitley proposes that the tumulus for the dead at Marathon was part of a campaign to build a connection between the new democracy and the glorious heroic past of the Homeric epics. Nevertheless, Whitley has trouble accepting this conclusion, and qualifies it by proposing that the Athenians simply did not have available any symbols of power that did not have aristocratic connotations.

It is important to recognize that the grave mounds and built tombs do not disappear, but they do become smaller and less common. Had the democracy wished to appropriate the symbol as Morris and Whitley suggest, the state could have continued building such monuments – and indeed did so on the battlefield of Marathon. It seems strange that neither comments on Kübler’s

197 Morris 1994, 77.
199 Morris 1995, 80-81. See also Kistler 1998.
201 Whitley 1994, 229-230.
suggestion that Grave Mound G is also a state-sponsored project, although this is also unlikely given the later indiscriminate use of the area. Furthermore, the old aristocratic families do not themselves disappear, nor were they remotely disenfranchised. Kleisthenes, Perikles, and many other prominent Athenian statesman were members of these same old families. Two of the three largest monumental mounds continued to be visible in the Kerameikos throughout the 5th century, and one seems to have continued to be the burial ground of an elite group. It is true that the third, the South Hill, was buried, but it is important to remember to other facts. First, the monumental grave mounds were often disturbed or destroyed by the construction of other similar monuments, even during the height of their use, which leads to the second point – the Kerameikos necropolis was chronically short on space, a problem exacerbated by the construction of the Themistoklean wall. Non-elite burials also took place on Grave Mound G, which was not buried.

The reduced size and number of grave monuments can better be explained by theories of competition and the communication of power. Competition had always existed among the aristocratic families. In such an atmosphere, the erection of monumental tombs and funerary sculpture makes sense. It not only projected the power of the families but also their continuity. The heirs of the previous generation were present to build a tomb, or commission a kouros, demonstrating the continuation of the line and the power and wealth of the family as well. Even the tyrants had to participate in this competition, as their many contributions to temples and religious festivals demonstrates. Peisistratos himself was an aristocrat who seized power illegally, and a constant projection of wealth and power served to discourage other aristocrats from doing the same. Indeed, the tyranny was ultimately unable to maintain itself, although it eventually lost out to a democratic government rather than another tyrant. Once the democracy
became stable, there was simply no benefit to spending vast sums on monumental grave architecture anymore, especially because the democracy channeled the urge for expensive display into roles such as the trierarch or the sponsor of a dramatic production. Thus, aristocratic families no longer felt the pressure to compete via monumental tombs. Some competition continued, but on a much smaller scale and in a more limited fashion than the earlier period.

This also answers the question posed by James Whitley – why use an old aristocratic form at Marathon, the battle fought on behalf of the democracy? Under threat from outside, the Athenians felt that same old pressure to project the power and continuity of their society. The survivors and remaining Athenians were still present, able to commemorate their dead through the construction of a monumental tomb. The message to the Persians, when interpreted in this way, is clear – the Athenians are saying that they are powerful, possessed of considerable resources, and thus still able to put up a fight if threatened. The message of the grave mound at Marathon, and grave mounds in general, may not have been aristocratic in content at all. Rather, the message was power, and it did not matter whether the language was being employed by aristocrats, tyrants, or democratic citizens.

The Athenians of the late 6th and 5th century did not use different spaces to define groups among the dead, except in the case of those who died in the service of the city. The slab stelai marking the graves of this period are simple compared to those employed in earlier and later periods, and emphasize citizenship as the core of identity. Simultaneously, the construction of new monumental earth mounds ceases. Some of the most impressive Archaic mounds are re-used for new burials unrelated to the monuments themselves, although this is perhaps due to the limited availability of space in the necropolis as a whole. The developments in the use of space and monuments in the late 6th and 5th century Kerameikos indicate that the Athenians had a new
perspective towards burying and commemorating their dead, with citizenship in the democracy as the key component of individual identity.
Chapter 4: Grave Goods

The interpretation of ancient grave assemblages is a complicated undertaking, with several different dimensions that must be considered. The first and most important of these is context. A single grave and its contents have little significance in isolation. For example, an abundance of grave goods in a particular burial could be a mark of social status, intended to distinguish the deceased from his or her poorer contemporaries and their graves. On the other hand, the abundance in a single grave or group of graves could be the result of a general diachronic phenomenon affecting the disposal of wealth, since the disposition of wealth in graves changes over time. Thus grave goods are not always intended to communicate the wealth of the deceased, but other meanings only emerge if each grave is considered in terms of the prevailing burial culture at the time it occurred, and trends in burial culture within that society over time. Furthermore, definitions of value are not constant; ancient societies may have assigned different values to materials than those familiar to modern societies. It is also possible that objects made out of common, non-valuable materials acquired value through their form, function, or age. Each assemblage must be evaluated according to its collective wealth and the presence or absence of certain objects in comparison to other contemporary graves. Finally, the grave goods that are preserved as part of the archaeological record may only be part of a larger assemblage that originally included food, textiles, or other similar items that may have also played a role in the rite but are not preserved.

It is also important to recognize that objects can communicate more about individual identity than wealth or social status. Archaeologists must consider not only the vertical

202 Ucko 1969, 265-266.
203 Renfrew 1986, 148-150.
204 Kopytoff 1986.
connotations of objects – how artifacts might reflect rank in a hierarchical social structure – but also their horizontal connotations – how artifacts might reflect membership in co-equal but distinct groups. The identity of an individual is an amalgamation the categories to which he or she belongs. As Ian Hodder argued, artifacts not only express a group identity to outsiders, but can also communicate membership status to others in the same group. The use of common symbols emphasizes the existence of a shared identity, whether social status is also expressed or not. In some communities, social status has little effect on the nature of funeral rites and burials at all; these events are sometimes structured primarily by horizontal categories such as age, sex, and kinship affiliation. Perfect recovery of these complicated identities is, of course, not possible, but particular elements can sometimes be identified – objects found only in child burials but not adult burials, for example, can be understood as having a particular association with members of an immature age group.

Furthermore, it is necessary to consider not only the passive role of objects as reflections of identity, but also their potential to create identity – in other words, their agency. As people create, use, and dispose of objects, the objects simultaneously have an effect on these people. The effects may be internal – that is to say, the object may influence the thoughts, perceptions, and actions of an individual – and/or external, influencing how an individual is perceived by others in the community. Thus the relationship between people and things is truly one of mutual interaction. With this realization comes the further understanding that things, like people, have an individual biography – a life-span during which value and meaning are acquired and

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205 Hodder 1979, 450.
206 See for example Vallee 1955; O’shea 1996.
207 Gell 1998; Malafouris 2008; see also Knappett and Malafouris 2008.
dispensed.

A collection of knuckle-bones or a bronze strigil does not have a great deal of
intrinsic value, but it gains significance through its association with an individual and in the
process becomes almost a part of that individual’s identity, a relationship sometimes emphasized
by the incorporation of some personal items in a person’s grave. Finally, objects can
communicate in ways that words cannot, by nature of their relative permanence and practical
capabilities as compared to the spoken or written word. Thus the study of Athenian demotics
in funerary epitaphs, for example, is a useful contribution towards an understanding of group
identity within the community, but literary sources must always be used cautiously, since the
intentions of the author affects the presentation of the material. As a medium of communication,
grave goods are also subject to manipulation, but a careful analysis of grave goods may yield
additional dimensions to the discussion of the complete burial context.

The grave assemblages of the late 6th and 5th century Kerameikos vary widely, although
the tendency towards poorly furnished graves continues from the early Archaic into this
period. It is possible that these graves contained perishable offerings such as textiles, but apart
from a few scraps of material found wrapped around metal vessels, and a few animal bones these
have left no remains, and with so little evidence it is better to restrict discussion to what is
preserved. When grave goods were present in the grave, the excavators sometimes, but not
always, recorded the relationship between the objects and the skeletal remains (in the case of
inhumations) or the perimeter of the grave. Where the data exists there appears to be no

209 Hoskins 2006.
211 Meyer 1993.
212 Kurtz and Boardman 1971, 75-59.
213 For the remains of wooden coffins, see Kübler 1976, 180-182 and for textiles, see Kübler
1976, 192-3.
standardization. Objects are placed at the hands, above the head or below the feet, between the arm and body, or between the legs with no marked preference for the right or left side of the body. Sometimes the objects are placed in the corners of the grave rather than in immediate proximity to the body itself. While most grave offerings in this period occur within the grave itself, extra-burial offering places and offering trenches continue in use from the early Archaic although, as with monumental grave markers, they are much less common in this period.214 The position of the grave goods in relation to the body and/or the grave does not, therefore, seem to be a deliberately manipulated component of Athenian burial culture in this period.

Clay vessels are the most common type of object in the graves, and of these lekythoi are the most common, although not present in all the grave assemblages (Fig. 50). After clay vessels, clay figurines are the most commonly found objects, often located in child graves but sometimes in adult graves as well. They come in a variety of shapes, both animals and humans in standing, sitting, or crouching poses. Materials other than ceramics are rare. The paucity of metal objects is particularly striking; they are so rare, indeed, that Morris is forced to omit the 6th and 5th century from his analysis of the display of wealth through grave goods.215 The few metal objects that exist in this context are domestic objects such as strigils and nails, usually bronze but occasionally iron as well. Other bronze and iron objects such as vessels and mirrors are much rarer, as are figural Attic vessels other than lekythoi, while other exotic materials such as gold, amber, and ivory, are almost absent from the necropolis. In most of the graves where they do exist, they date to the very beginning of this period and may represent the end of early Archaic practices rather than anomalies of the late 6th and 5th century. Overall, therefore, the grave assemblages demonstrate the same restraint also apparent in body treatment and the use of space

214 Kübler 1976, 187-188.
and monuments as compared with earlier periods. The poverty of individual graves in this period is thus probably an example of a diachronic phenomenon as suggested by Ucko, and not evidence that this is a cemetery for Athenians from lower economic classes.\textsuperscript{216} Furthermore, there appears to be no standardization in the use of grave goods in conjunction with other elements of burial culture such as grave markers or body treatment.

The discussion of the grave goods contained in the original Kerameikos publications varies from author to author and volume to volume; the publication history itself is as complicated as the history of excavations at the site. Kübler provides only the briefest outline of his findings, deferring further discussion for a forthcoming second part of the volume, which did not appear for more than twenty years.\textsuperscript{217} In the volumes on the Tumulus and South Hill, Knigge devotes considerable attention to certain individual, elite objects; for example, her description of the ivory kline beneath the South Hill takes up twenty-three pages.\textsuperscript{218} This emphasis on individual objects is mirrored in her discussion of the pottery in both volumes, which focuses on the figural vases in an attempt to identify specific workshops and painters. A similar approach can be found in the 1999 Kerameikos volume and indeed in much of the secondary scholarship on Attic pottery. The identification of individual painters provides an interesting glimpse into the lives and work of individuals in antiquity, and reading the iconography of funerary vessels has generated insights into Athenian burial practices and cultural values, but other avenues of inquiry, and especially theoretically grounded research questions, have yet to be asked from this body of data.

\textsuperscript{216} Ucko 1969, 265-266.
\textsuperscript{217} Kübler 1976, 193.
\textsuperscript{218} Knigge 1976, 60-83.
The lack of grave goods makes analyzing the depositional practices of this period difficult, but not impossible. Rather, poor data makes the study of all categories of burial practice together all the more critical. Where grave goods alone may seem uninformative, studying them together with body treatment and monuments can produce interesting results. The absence of grave goods in an archaeological context can potentially be as informative as their presence. Both conditions say something not only about the wealth of an ancient society but also about how that society chose to dispose of that wealth. Furthermore, it is productive to compare grave assemblages with assemblages from domestic contexts where such data exists. Such comparisons can result in a clearer understanding of the relationship between the living and the dead and especially the life of the objects before they became grave goods. As always, asking new research questions of old data has the potential to produce interesting results. In the late 6th and 5th century Kerameikos, for example, the Athenians usually used the same types of pottery as grave offerings that they used in domestic contexts. They still attempted to communicate elite status, but using different materials than in previous periods. Finally, grave assemblages provide a unique glimpse into expressions of Athenian childhood and also demonstrate that age was not the exclusive structuring principle in the burials of children.

**Domestic Objects**

While it is important not to forget the burial context of grave assemblages, it is also important to compare them to contemporary assemblages from domestic contexts, where data from both contexts exists. The intent of such a comparison should not be to infer the meaning of a specific object as part of the funerary rite, since the same item may have a different significance in the grave than it does in the household. A comparison of grave and household
assemblages is, however, a useful tool for producing insight into the production and consumption of objects. Were the artifacts from late 6th and 5th century graves produced specifically for deposition in burials, or did they have a place in contemporary households as well? Personal grooming items such as strigils and mirrors have an obvious practical use in daily life, as do objects such as jewelry or toys. Ceramic vessels, as the most common and varied category of finds from the Kerameikos necropolis, are potentially more interesting. The plastic nature of clay and the near infinite possibilities of painted decoration present a unique flexibility. Vessels with identical functions can take very different forms, making the exact appearance of a specific vessel a matter of choice – but it is up to the individuals in society whether to take advantage of this freedom or not. The reasons behind such choices are invisible to the archaeologist, but by comparing grave and domestic assemblages we can discover whether such choices were made or not.

Traditionally the topic of Attic ceramics is approached from an art historical perspective.\textsuperscript{219} In the 1980s Michael Vickers challenged this claim, noting that most of the vessels studied came from funerary contexts (although not in Greece).\textsuperscript{220} He proposes that the ceramics with figural decoration found in graves were low cost imitations of metal vessels with black paint standing in for silver, white for ivory, purple for copper, and the red of the clay representing gold.\textsuperscript{221} The original prices of Attic figural pottery in antiquity have been greatly overestimated, Vickers claims, as a result of the prices these vessels bring in on the modern antiquities market.\textsuperscript{222} Working from this hypothesis, Vickers believed he was able to explain most of the unanswered questions about the development of figural pottery – for example, the

\textsuperscript{219} See Beazley 1956; Cook 1997.
\textsuperscript{220} Vickers 1984, 89; see also Hoffman 1979.
\textsuperscript{221} Vickers 1985, 109-112.
\textsuperscript{222} Vickers 1987.
shift from black-figure to red-figure mimicked a cost-reducing shift from silver-figure to gold-figure. The proposition that different shades of paint and clay stand in for precious metals has been convincingly refuted, notably by John Boardman, but this still leaves the question of whether or not figural pottery was produced specifically for funerary contexts.

Vickers asserts that the absence of gold and silver figural pottery in Athenian deposits is evidence of their “very sensible practice of not putting precious vessels in the tomb.” Most of the figural vases in question, however, come from graves outside of Attica, especially in Italy. A lively discussion about the import of these items has sprung up. David Gill argues that figural vases arrived in Italy as ballast, accompanying more valuable cargos. Boardman responds that the relative value of pottery by weight and by volume made it competitive with other commodities in terms of profit, and Sean McGrail notes that the ratio of weight to volume of decorated pottery makes it an unlikely source of ballast. It seems likely, therefore, that Attic figural pottery was deliberately exported to meet demand outside of Attica; even if this is the case, however, the value and significance of Attic figural pottery was not necessarily the same in both Italy and Attica.

What was the role of Attic figural pottery in Athenian burial practices? Morris finds that there is no correlation between white-ground vessels – stand-ins for ivory vessels, according to Vickers – and the overall wealth of a grave, although he does accept Vickers’ general statement that the Athenians practiced restraint in their burial practices. More significantly, nearly all of the shapes and decorative styles represented in the Kerameikos necropolis are also found in

223 Boardman 1987; Cook 1987.
contemporary domestic assemblages. The early 5th century is a unique period in the archaeology of Athens because the Persian destruction ironically preserved an uncharacteristic quantity of household objects, which were collected and buried en masse by the Athenians during the rebuilding process. The resulting deposits in the Agora, studied and published by T. Leslie Shear Jr., demonstrate that the Athenians from this period were producing and using the same types of pottery in their daily lives as they were using for grave goods. These household deposits prove that similar vessels were manufactured for both domestic and funerary contexts and were used by the living, undermining Vickers’ claim that such pots were produced for use as grave goods, as substitutes for the “real” precious-metal objects. Morris is correct when he states that these grave goods are evidence for restraint, but it is because they are the same readily available vessels from daily life.

The lekythos, often considered to be the signature shape in the late 6th and 5th century Kerameikos burials, is well represented in the Agora deposits in black-figure, black glaze, and red figure decorative styles, as well as with the palmette motif paralleled in the Kerameikos (Fig. 51 and 52).228 Indeed, the black-figure lekythos is the single-most common vessel type in these domestic assemblages, although black-glaze is the more common decorative style across all vessel shapes.229 The Kerameikos also contains large numbers of shapes used for consumption, such as cups, bowls and jugs, also found in the Agora. Largely absent from the grave contexts are vessels used for food preparation; in the graves, the emphasis is on consumption. These deposition patterns demonstrate that the Athenians not only lacked a specialized industry producing ceramics as grave goods, but also that they placed particular importance on consumption rather than storage or food production in burial contexts. The ancient Athenians

228 Shear Jr. 1993, Tables 2-4; 394-395.
229 Shear Jr. 1993, Table 2.
were not, however, concerned with equipping the dead for an afterlife; the pottery must be serving another purpose here.

**Elite Objects**

Domestic vessels are not very numerous in burial contexts from the late 6th and 5th century Kerameikos, but non-domestic items are even rarer, and such items as are usually classified as “elite” almost non-existent. This statement is true whether grave goods are categorized by their component materials or by their shape and function. The majority of grave goods from this period are vessels and more specifically, oil containers such as the lekythos. The vast majority of vessels of all shapes are of course ceramic, but there are also a few examples in alabaster, glass, iron, and bronze. Likewise, most of the non-vessel objects in these grave assemblages are also ceramic, including the second most common class of object, the clay figurines. Non-ceramic items are very rare, although bone, stone, bronze, and iron are present in small quantities while the number of glass, amber, ivory, and gold objects number in the single digits. Nevertheless, the excavator and indeed most subsequent scholarship have focused on the few objects that clearly have elite connotations. For the most part, however, what scholarship that does exist for this period has largely left the grave goods out of the discussion altogether.

The exception to this general omission is the scholarship on the white-ground lekythoi (Figs. 6 and 53). Elvia Giudice argues that the aristocratic display of the early Archaic mounds and built tombs is displaced onto the scenes depicted on the white-ground lekythoi. These vessels are a characteristic Classical funerary type, with the earliest examples dating to

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230 For a discussion of the shape and technique, see Oakley 2004, 4-11.
231 Giudice 2002.
around 470 232 In the Kerameikos, there are only 60 examples from 31 graves during the 5th century – a mixture of shaft graves, child burials, cremation graves, and burials. These graves contain anywhere from one to nine white-ground lekythoi. Some contain other offerings, even as many as 12-14 additional vessels, while some have no other offerings. The only generalization that can be made is that none of these graves except shaft graves 275 and 292 contain other potentially elite goods such as exotic ceramic shapes or metal objects. Giudice makes an interesting suggestion, but there are too few examples from the late 6th and 5th century and from too wide a variety of grave assemblages and grave types to support this hypothesis. The white-ground lekythoi do not always occur with other potentially elite objects, in large numbers, or in conjunction with monumental grave markers or secondary cremations, although the fact that they come into use in the 5th century could indicate the beginning of a new trend towards greater display in burial culture. This suggestion is supported by the fact that the production of white-ground lekythoi ceases at the end of the 5th century, the same time as the re-introduction of funerary sculpture.233

In his diachronic, quantitative analysis of elite goods in Attica even Morris is forced to admit that the data from the late 6th and 5th century is too limited for his purposes; he only applies his model to the data from the 11th century down to 700 234 While metal objects are listed in the catalogs for the period under consideration here, most are common items such as nails and strigils. The remaining objects, while intrinsically interesting, are so few in number that they do not support any significant conclusions. Morris has found that the lack of elite goods in Athenian cemeteries during this period is complemented by an increase in elite offerings in sanctuaries,

233 Oakley 2004, 216.
234 Morris 1987, 147-151.
putting their wealth “out of circulation almost as permanently,” the difference being that wealth in sanctuaries was on display and could be retrieved in times of emergency. Regardless, it is true that the Athenians of this period were not communicating elite status through the use of metal objects or white-ground lekythoi, but that does not mean that status was not being communicated through objects at all. A close examination of the largest class of grave goods, the unguentaria or oil vessels, demonstrates that a small group of Athenians favored an exotic form, the lydion.

As observed by Knigge, unguent vessels other than lekythoi are rare in Kerameikos burials of this period, but three similar shapes do make an appearance in limited quantities (Fig. 54). These three shapes are the alabastron (Fig. 55), amphoriskos (Fig. 56), and the lydion (Fig. 57). Of these, alabastra are the most common, with 29 examples from 17 graves: 20 were made of alabaster, seven were ceramic, and two were glass. Lydia are the next most common with 27 examples from 18 graves, all ceramic. Amphoriskoi are the rarer type with only eight examples, one each in eight separate graves: three were made of glass, four were ceramic, and in one instance the material of the vessel was not in the catalog. Of course, these vessels cannot strictly be classified as elite objects by nature of their scarcity alone. A slight alteration of Kopytoff’s formulation of sacralization can be applied here: if the elite status of an object can be achieved through singularity, singularity does not guarantee elite status.

Considered as a single group, alabastra, amphoriskoi, and lydia are usually, but not always, found in graves associated with a monumental grave marker such as a grave mound or

236 See for example Samons 2000, 28-82.
237 Knigge 1976, 15.
238 The original catalog entry can be found in Kübler 1976, 111-112; the entry in Kunze-GÖtte 1999, 94 refers the reader back to the Kübler volume.
239 Kopytoff 1986, 74.
built tomb. The exact number is difficult to determine, however, since the chaotic organization of graves in and among the mounds during the late 6th and 5th century often makes it difficult to determine whether or not a grave was deliberately associated with a mound or tomb. Conversely, graves associated with monumental grave markers do not always contain a non-leythos oil vessel. On the other hand, of the 47 graves in which these vessels occur, 21 are shaft graves and 13 are child burials, including one child burial in a shaft grave. While comparing the vessel shapes and monumental grave architecture is inconclusive, therefore, the concentration of vessels in shaft graves does indicate some kind of association, but the pattern of evidence is not overwhelmingly conclusive. The inclusion of these oil vessels in particular grave assemblages is similarly difficult to interpret. Graves containing one or more of these vessels tend to have large quantities of other grave goods, including rare items such as metal objects and jewelry – although it must again be stressed that this is not universally true. While most of the graves contained other offerings, three held none at all and several others had only a few additional lekythoi.

All these vessel shapes of course have the same function: they are intended to hold perfumed oil. Since this is the case, the shape and material of each vessel is the result of decisions unrelated to its function. Examining the vessels by their material is no more enlightening than examining them in the context of their complete assemblage or the location and type of grave. Alabastra are almost always stone (alabaster) but the few ceramic examples do not necessarily come from more poorly furnished or less prominently located graves. Amphoriskoi are almost evenly divided among glass and ceramic, but there are no perceptible patterns when the two different materials are compared. Furthermore, there are so few examples that it is difficult to formulate any generalizations. Perhaps the alabastra and amphoriskoi were
selected for purely aesthetic or economic reasons. If they are the result of a more complicated selection process, that process is now invisible. The situation is different for the lydia. While not so numerous as the alabastra, there are far more examples than the amphoriskoi, and all are ceramic. Patterns in their distribution among the graves suggest the presence of one or more of these vessels in a grave assemblage may have a special significance.

The lydion (German lydion or a “lydische Salbgefäße”) is not a shape typically found in domestic contexts and not as prevalent in the grave assemblages of this period as domestic shapes. In particular it is far less common than the lekythos despite the fact that they had the same function. Furthermore, lydia occur more frequently in the Kerameikos necropolis in the second half of the 6th century than in late Archaic and early Classical contexts — in other words, primarily in the first part of the period discussed in this study. Judging from the evidence of ancient literature, lydia may have contained a specific type of cosmetic called “bakkaris,” a substance mentioned in the Greek literature from the 6th up until the 4th century. This was a type of perfumed oil applied to the face, or perhaps the face and the entire head. Although originally a shape imported from Lydia, hence the name, the Athenians did imitate the shape. While it would be interesting to evaluate the different depositional patterns, if any, between imports and local imitations, however, it is not possible to distinguish between the two groups from the excavation publication. Young’s assertion that earlier examples would have been more faithful imitations may be true, but what is more interesting is the fact that even the Athenian

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240 Knigge 1976, 15.
241 Rumpf 1920, 166.
242 Grenewalt 1966, 103-104.
243 Rumpf 1920, 163.
244 Young 1951, 88-89.
imitations would perhaps have had exotic, and therefore potentially elite, connotations in the late 6th century.

When the amphoriskoi and alabastra are removed from the analysis of non-leythos unguent vessels and only the lydia remain, the resulting data becomes much more informative. Lydia are present in 18 graves; six of these graves contained a single lydion while nine contained a pair. Of these 18 graves, the overwhelming majority (15) are shaft graves – one of which contained a child burial and one of which was a secondary cremation grave. The remaining graves include two nondescript inhumations and a single cremation grave. All but one of the graves had some proximity to a grave mound, and in 15 cases (unfortunately not a perfect match to the 15 shaft graves) the association between grave and mound was very clearly defined. All but two of these graves contained additional offerings, usually ceramic vessels, and one of the two other graves had been disturbed by later activity. What is most striking about this class of object, however, is the singular connection that seemed to exist between the lydion shape and Grave Mound G. Eight of the 15 graves containing one or more lydia were located in or around Grave Mound G. Six of these eight graves were among the original twelve shaft graves whose orientation indicates they were deliberately placed in the mound.245 The other two were located in shaft graves cut into the mound at a later date.246 Before a final analysis of this trend is undertaken, it will be useful to review the finds from the original shaft grave beneath the South Hill.

The original shaft grave beneath the South Hill contained no Attic pottery, only Ionian imports. On the basis of this observation, scholars have concluded that this man was an Ionian and not a native Athenian, and that the South Hill was a burial ground for foreigners with

245 Shaft Graves 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, and 10 in Kunze-Götte et al. 1999.
diplomatic connections.\textsuperscript{247} A more likely explanation, however, is that the imported pots were a mark of status. In Aegean prehistory, the elite-making power of exotic goods has long been recognized,\textsuperscript{248} and the elite-making power of Attic pottery abroad is also generally accepted\textsuperscript{249} – the same is probably the case here. The original imported lydia was not only an imported shape, but may originally have contained imported perfumes as well, so that it was at the same time an exotic sight and scent. The fact that such vessels were manufactured locally probably represents a desire to capitalize on the elite-making power of exotic goods. The concentration of these vessels in and around a single monumental grave mound reinforces the assertion that, although not made of a rare or valuable material, these items did communicate prestige.

**Horizontal Group Identity**

The Athenians burying their dead in the late 6\textsuperscript{th} and 5\textsuperscript{th} century Kerameikos necropolis made some effort to communicate elite status through grave goods, but what about horizontal social groups such as family, gender, and age? Before searching for expressions of such group identities in the grave assemblages, it is important to recognize the limitations of the archaeologist’s ability to reconstruct them. As mentioned above, family groups are not clearly expressed in the Kerameikos until the advent of the peribolos tomb type around the end of the 5\textsuperscript{th} century. In the overcrowded conditions of the late 6\textsuperscript{th} and 5\textsuperscript{th} century, however, it is difficult to determine whether or not tombs were deliberately grouped, and the lack of \textit{in situ} grave markers makes establishing family ties difficult.\textsuperscript{250} Likewise, the skeletons in the Kerameikos were not reliably sexed, and where the bones are not preserved, as in the case of cremations, determining

\textsuperscript{247} Knigge 1976, 10-14.  
\textsuperscript{248} Broodbank 1993.  
\textsuperscript{249} Boardman 1964, 210-215.  
\textsuperscript{250} Humphreys 1980, 98.
the sex of the individual is all but impossible. Determinations of gender based on grave goods are speculative at best. For example, Sanne Houby-Nielsen assigns a female gender to graves that contain vessel types that often carry iconographic representations of women. On this basis, Houby-Nielsen argues that the number of women buried in the Kerameikos increases contemporaneously with the increase in the number of child burials in the late 6th century. This argument relies on a number of inductive steps: first, that vase iconography accurately reflects the users of the vessel, and second that these vessels were deposited only in the graves of those who used them in life.²⁵¹ This results in a circular argument, since the author uses grave goods to establish gender, in order to argue that specific grave goods only accompanied the burials of members of one gender.

Age, on the other hand, can be established within certain broad categories using the data from the Kerameikos publications. Just as the skeletons were not sexed, neither were they examined to determine age, but the difference between a young child and a fully-grown adult can be roughly judged according to size, and there are clear distinctions in the method of deposition used for children and adults. Because it is evident in most cases which graves belong to children and which to adults, the differences in their accompanying assemblages can be interpreted.²⁵² There are a number of items that are predominantly found in the graves of children. Common sense suggests that at least some of the large numbers of clay figurines, for example, were toys (Fig. 58-60).²⁵³ This is probably also true of the astragaloi found only in the graves of children. More difficult to interpret are the ten cases where a shell was placed inside a lidded container and then deposited in the grave – like the astragaloi such items are only found with children but

²⁵² For a discussion of children in funerary iconography, see Oakley 2003.
²⁵³ Hamilton 1992, 83-111.
the significance is unknown. More relevant to this analysis, however, are the assortment of ceramic shapes with a recognized association with children, and the significance of these vessels in communicating Athenian ideas about childhood. These shapes are the feeder and certain varieties of small juglets, especially the choës.

The feeder (German “schnabeltasse” and “saugtasse”) is restricted in burial contexts to the graves of children, with 19 examples from the late 6th and 5th century Kerameikos necropolis (Fig. 61 and 62). All seventeen examples are black-glazed; none have figural decoration. The feeder is a small, closed shape with a spout projecting horizontally from one side-wall and a single handle that can be either horizontal or vertical. Some examples have a closed top, pierced to form a sieve; others are open at the top with a sieve separating the spout from the body of the vessel. Most of the examples from the Kerameikos were worn around the spout, supporting the suggestion that these pots were used to feed children and also indicating that they were actually used before being deposited in the grave, although there are only a handful of examples from domestic contexts.

While feeders have a practical relationship with children, the chous has a symbolic one. The chous is a small jug with a squat profile (Fig. 63 and 64). It has a trefoil mouth and low handle; the size is standard enough to suggest that it served as a unit of measure. This shape is also produced in miniature from the last quarter of the 5th century through the first quarter of the 4th century. The exact number of these jugs recovered from child graves in the Kerameikos is unfortunately difficult to discern; Knigge records four examples from the excavation around the

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258 On the production and significance of the miniature chous see Ham 1999.
South Hill, and Kübler lists eighteen. Houby-Nielsen points out, however, that the “small olpe” may have the same function, reserving final judgment until the final publication of the pottery; the 1999 volume does not clarify this issue as it contains no descriptions of the shapes.

Children were presented with a chous containing their first drink of wine at a ceremony known as the Choës, on the second day of the spring festival, the Anthesteria; it was at this ceremony that children were first enrolled in the phratry, or family association. The relationship between children and the choes is further underscored by the frequent depiction of children in the iconography of the chous.

The apparent relationship between these vase shapes and child burials has been commented on before. What is interesting about the feeder and chous is that there is only one instance where both types are contained in the same grave. Both vessels have a special significance for children, but the fact that they almost never occur together suggests that it was not the same significance. Wear patterns on the spouts of the feeders indicates that they were used by children with teeth, probably over nine-months old, but the participants in the Choës ceremony were significantly older, probably around 3-4 years of age. It is possible that the feeder and the chous correspond to different age groupings in the mind of the Athenians. This suggestion is supported by the fact that the Athenians also took great care to depict the age of

\[259\] Knigge 1976; Kübler 1976.
\[261\] Garland 1990, 122; see also Hamilton 1992.
\[262\] Hamilton 1992, 71-81
\[264\] Knigge 1976, Grave 267.
\[266\] Garland 1990, 122.
children on grave markers, within groups such as infant, toddler, etc., through the use of specific symbols.\textsuperscript{267}

**Interpretation**

The trend of restraint seen in the previous two categories of evidence, body treatment and the use of space and monuments, is also evident in the grave goods from the late 6th and 5th century Kerameikos. The majority of the objects recovered from the Kerameikos graves of this period are ceramic vessels of types also found in contemporary domestic deposits, suggesting that regardless of the exact value of these objects at the time of their manufacture, they were not being produced specifically for burials. This is true even of the grave goods in the Marathon mound, where lekythoi are by far the most common vessel type, followed by cups, bowls and jugs used in food consumption.\textsuperscript{268} Even non-ceramic grave goods from the late 6th and 5th century Kerameikos necropolis are domestic objects that were not obviously intrinsically valuable. The elite objects that do exist are either unique, in the case of objects in ivory, amber or other rare materials, or they are elite because of their exotic connotations, as in the case of the lydion. In the late 6th and 5th century, therefore, the Athenians were not disposing of their wealth in burial contexts and not using grave goods to make dramatic statements about social status. This is true even of the Marathon mound, which despite its projection of power through a monumental tumulus, contained primarily domestic pottery.\textsuperscript{269}

Nevertheless, it seems that the Athenians were still using objects to express membership in horizontal groups. While this may have been true for many groups based on sex or age

\textsuperscript{267} Grossman 2007.  
\textsuperscript{268} Valavanes 2001, 78-83.  
\textsuperscript{269} Excavation reports in Schliemann 1884; Stais 1893. See also Valavanes 2001.
categories, such a suggestion is difficult to prove without further information on sex or age markers from adult skeletons. Child graves, on the other hand, are relatively easy to recognize due to the small size of the skeleton and the unique burial methods used for them in the Kerameikos necropolis. Feeders and choës are both found exclusively in the graves of children; like the ceramics found in adult graves, the feeder is a shape from daily life, and while the chous also appears in domestic contexts it has ritual connotations as well. The two types virtually never appear together in the same grave, however. This suggests that the Athenians were burying their children with shapes that had a special significance to the age the child had reached at the time of death. Furthermore, it is possible that age was not the only group identity expressed in child burials. The chous, for example, probably denoted ideas of citizenship as well as childhood, since only citizen-children, mostly males, participated in the Choës. Elite status was also a consideration in child burials, as demonstrated by at least one example of a lydion in a child grave. These are clear examples of the expression of individual identity, as constructed out of membership status in distinct but compatible groups.

270 Kübler 1976, Grave 477.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

The burial culture of the late 6th and 5th century Kerameikos necropolis is distinct from the preceding and subsequent periods, characterized by a unique preference for restraint and an abstention from conspicuous display. Previous scholarly explanations have proposed a top-down explanation for this culture of restraint, arguing that a new, “democratic ethos” became the structuring principle of the Kerameikos as the Athenian democracy was established in the late 6th century, motivated by a desire to trace the development of the Athenian polis-structure through material culture. According to this view, old and aristocratic forms of commemoration such as grave mounds and secondary cremation were abandoned or outlawed in order to promote more egalitarian practices in burial culture. This “democratic ethos” argument relies on an analytical framework derived from processual archaeological theory, which is primarily concerned with reconstructing the social structure, and in particular the vertical stratification, of past societies. Other studies of the late 6th and 5th century Kerameikos have either taken a more narrow approach, considering for example, only gender or family identity, or have dismissed the restraint of the 6th and 5th century as a brief interruption in the otherwise continuous development of burial culture from the Archaic to the Classical period.

When viewed from a perspective of more recent archaeological theory, the evidence from the late 6th and 5th century Kerameikos reveals a fascinating pattern in the material culture, especially when all the categories of evidence are considered together. The body treatments of inhumation and cremation were practiced contemporaneously and in the same space, but the expensive and spectacular secondary cremation, popular prior to the late 6th century, was largely abandoned in favor of the more understated techniques of primary cremation and inhumation. This shift in body treatment indicates that the Athenians had considerably reduced the resources,
measured in both time and wealth, spent on funerals. They no longer attended massive funeral pyres for the better part of a day, carefully collecting the remains from the site of pyre, transporting them to a secondary location and then finally burying them. Bodies were lowered into the ground and buried in a single step; even in the case of primary cremation the pyre and grave were combined. Children were inhumed in different ways than adults, but not spatially distinguished from adults.

Indeed, apart from the general separation made between the living and the dead, there is no spatial distinction among any perceptible horizontally stratified social groups. The only evidence for reserved space in the late 6th and 5th century Kerameikos was the demosion sema, dedicated to the burial of individuals who died in the service of the city. The monumental grave mounds and elaborately sculpted grave stones of the Archaic period disappear by the late 6th century; in the late 6th and 5th century graves are marked by modest grave mounds or simple slab stelai, with epitaphs emphasizing membership in the polis as the core of individual identity.

Nevertheless, symbols such as the monumental grave mound retained their meaning even after they had fallen into disuse. When the Athenians felt the need to express power, they did so in a familiar language – and thus, threatened by the Persians in the early 5th century, they constructed a massive earthen mound to mark the graves of those who perished on the battlefield at Marathon. Individual Athenian soldiers had died there, but more important than marking their grave was asserting that the institution behind them, the city of Athens, survived to commemorate them, and if need be, continue their defense against foreign assault.

Are the few examples of grave mounds in the late 6th and 5th century Kerameikos merely troublesome exceptions to the prevailing “democratic ethos,” perhaps in violation of anti-luxury legislation? Do they represent the appropriation of aristocratic symbolism by the new democratic
order? These two explanations, proposed in previous studies, share a similar flaw: they require a binary opposition between aristocracy and democracy that is not reflected in the material culture; such a dichotomy does not, for example, explain the continuity of use seen in the Rundbau burial plot. As an alternative, I propose that the message of the modest grave mounds of the late 6th and 5th century was identical to their Archaic counterparts, but targeted towards a different and less critical audience. Prior to the establishment of the democracy, aristocratic families vied for control of the city. With adequate popular support, it was even possible to establish a hereditary tyranny, as Peisistratos did – although his efforts were ultimately foiled by the diplomatic efforts of the other aristocratic families. In this atmosphere of competition, grave mounds not only communicated the continuity of a family line, but also the raw wealth and power of the family. The target audience for this message was the whole community, to deter challenges from other aristocratic families and to impress the populace.

Under the democracy, however, there was (in theory) no clear division between “aristocrats” and “democrats.” Many Athenian politicians, even in the earliest years of the democracy, were members of old aristocratic families, including Kleisthenes himself. Competition through conspicuous display was still an important element of Athenian culture, but the Athenians stabilized their new government system by channeling the aristocratic impulse for display away from non-utilitarian projects such as monumental grave architecture and into arenas such as religious festivals and the navy. This shift in expenditure allowed aristocrats to display their wealth, impressing elite and common alike, but also provided for the practical needs of the city. Nevertheless, aristocratic families still needed to emphasize the continuity of their lineage; descent from a line of ancestral Athenian heroes was a powerful political tool. Thus, the continued use of the earthen mound as a grave marker was intended to project family continuity,
despite the reduced expense. Even on a modest scale, the construction of a grave mound still indicated that the deceased had heirs to carry on the family name, while the family fortune remained intact for use on public liturgies.

The evidence from the grave goods of the late 6th and 5th century Kerameikos reveals similar patterns in deposition practices as body treatment and the use of space and grave markers. The majority of the objects found in graves are also found in domestic assemblages from the same period, although the burial contexts contain a more limited assortment of shapes. The similarity in objects used in daily life, and deposited in graves, indicates that the Athenians of the late 6th and 5th century were not allocating resources to produce items specifically for burial contexts, unlike, for example, the monumental vases used as grave markers during the Geometric period. Not only was Athens spending less time and money on burying and commemorating the dead, the city also spent less equipping the graves of the dead, using the same objects from daily life. Nevertheless, these simple assemblages still contain expressions of group identity. The graves of children, for example, contain vase shapes that had a special significance in childhood development in Athens. The feeder had a practical association with children, used as the name suggests to feed the young, while the chous had more symbolic significance. This small juglet was used at the Choës festival, a rite of passage for Athenian citizens of about three years of age; the connection with young children is further underscored by the frequent appearance of children and chous in the iconography of this vessel shape.

Elite identity is evident in the grave goods of the late 6th and 5th century Kerameikos as well, although as with the use of grave mounds it is expressed in a more restrained manner than in previous periods. The use of the lydion is perhaps the best example of this understated means of communication. This imported vessel shape, originally used to contain exotic perfumes, was
already being domestically produced in the 5th century but would nevertheless have had elite connotations. The use of this particular shape, as opposed to more common varieties of unguent vessels such as the lekythos, is manifestly an attempt to create an exclusive group identity, an assertion underscored by the concentration of this vessel type in and around Grave Mound G. In this case, there is evidence for a distinct group expressing elite identity, but in a manner consistent with the overarching culture of restraint in the Kerameikos during the late 6th and 5th century. Although originally reserved for a more selective group, by the 5th century the area in and around Grave Mound G was being used for a variety of burials. Nevertheless, elite burials in the area continued, demonstrating a connection to the original elite burials in the mound, not through exotic materials such as amber or ivory, but through the use of the lydion.

I would like to suggest that this development in the funerary rite of passage was part of a larger trend, a change in focus on the part of the Athenians of the late 6th and 5th century away from the world of the dead and towards living society. As mentioned above, competition among the living, reduced from the family to the individual level, moved out of cemeteries and into the political arena. Eventually the democracy channeled this urge to compete, and the associated expenditure, into roles that served the needs of the living population. Furthermore, rather than disposing of their wealth in burial contexts, the Athenians began putting their wealth out of circulation in sanctuary contexts where the objects could still be seen and accessed in times of emergency. Athens had, in a way, come alive; the Athenians of the late 6th and 5th century greatly reduced the amount time, money, and attention they spent on burying their dead.

The shift back towards conspicuous display in burial culture at the end of the 5th century is perhaps a response to the instability experienced by Athens as a result of the Peloponnesian war. By 404, Athens had lost its empire and navy, surrendered to Sparta and been forced to
demolish the Long Walls. The city would recover, but would never again rise to the position of prominence it enjoyed for most of the 5th century. Faced with defeat and humiliation, the Athenians were also forced to confront questions of identity – without an Aegean empire, tribute, prestige, what did it mean to be an Athenian? Peribolos tombs emerge, emphasizing the family as a structuring principle of society, while grave markers become more elaborate and individualized. This behavior on the part of the Athenians has been observed in other societies and articulated in archaeological theory; societies spend less of their resources on burials during times of stability and confidence, and refocus on burial culture in times of insecurity.

The goal of this study was not only to present a new interpretation of the material culture of the late 6th and 5th century Kerameikos necropolis, but also to illustrate how a theoretically informed analysis can be used to supplement traditional archaeological interpretations. First, it can assist in placing archaeological sites into regional or even global contexts. Second, a theoretical framework enables a more complete analysis of the data from old excavations, conducted before contemporary standards of recording and publication were established. Gaps in the data are frustrating, but even inconsistently recorded and published data should not be overlooked, and theory enables archaeologists to analyze the data that does exist. By applying a post-processual interpretive framework to all the available categories of evidence, building on the work of Van Gennep, Hertz, and Childe as well as more recent scholars such as Parker Pearson, the most coherent explanation of the burial culture of the late 6th and 5th century Kerameikos necropolis has emerged.
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Fig. 1 The location of the Kerameikos necropolis (here labeled “cemetery”) relative to ancient Athens, with the perimeter of the Themistoklean city wall. Wycherley 1978, 6.

Fig. 2 Area of the Kerameikos excavations. Knigge 1991, 9.
Fig. 3 Plan of the Kerameikos site. Knigge, 1991, Fig. 165 (insert).
Fig. 4 Τιτόρας with inscription from the Kerameikos. Knigge 1991, 10.

Fig. 5 Plan of the Marathon tumulus. Whitley 1994, 214.

Fig. 6 White-ground lekythos with prothesis scene, 460-400 B.C. Shapiro 1991, 648.
Fig. 7 Grave lengths at Athens, 1100-500 B.C. Solid bars represent adult graves, hollow bars subadult graves (after Morris 1987, Fig. 15)

Fig. 8 Morris’s "variability scores" for the Kerameikos. Morris 1987, 116.

Fig. 9 Morris’s relative entropy scores for the Kerameikos adult burials, 1125-500 B.C. Morris 1987, 144.
Fig. 34. Key diagram for the Kerameikos Pompeion cemetery in Zeitstufe 2b (see also fig. 37). Key diagrams are laid out according to a set of formal conventions (Saxe 1970, 50–9). Beginning at the left hand side with u, the ‘universe’ or complete set of burials being classified, each column (a–d) represents a non-trivial dimension of funerary ritual in which the burials differ; the variables used must encompass all significant distinctions which occur among the graves. Here the variables identified are the method of disposal of the corpse (a), form of facility (b), orientation (c), and grave goods (d). Non-varying attributes are not included in the key diagram. It makes no difference to the partitioning of the personae what order these dimensions are placed in, but it is conventional to place those with fewest variables to the left, so that the other components ‘nestle’ into them. Similarly, dimensions for which values are missing are placed on the right, so that they have the least effect on the appearance of the key as a whole. It is not possible (or necessary) to present the key diagrams and variability curves for each period of each cemetery here; the sources can be found in the site lists at the back of the book, and an exhaustive breakdown in I. Morris 1985, ch. 4, figs. 5–88.

The alternative practices used within each dimension of differentiation in Zeitstufe 2b were:

- a1 = inhumation; a2 = cremation.
- b1 = cist grave; b2 = shaft grave; b3 = ‘Steinschuttung’; b4 = pit grave (see Styrenius 1967 for definitions); b5 = vase.
- c1 = North-East/South-West; c2 = North/South; c3 = East/West; c4 = North-West/South-East; c5 = no orientation.
- d1 = vases, bronze, pearl, glass grave goods; d2 = vases, iron; d3 = bronze; d4 = vases; d5 = no grave goods; d6 = vases, bronze; d7 = iron.

Fig. 10 Morris’s quantification of grave goods. Morris 1987, 113.
Fig. 11 Amphora with Geometric prothesis scene. Garland 1985, 25.

Fig. 12 Funerary plaque with prothesis scene. Boardman 1955, Pl. 8a.

Fig. 13 Prothesis scene from a loutrophos, Athens National Museum. Garland 1985, 27.

Fig. 14 Prothesis scene from a loutrophos, 525-475 B.C., Paris, Musée du Louvre. Kurtz and Boardman 1971, Pl. 3.
A enable ascertaining the lament a study beloved.

Scenes and of was commonly (12.959a) importance by function (7928,36) close that their suggests prothesis attended of loss'. Homer, prothesis are worse to the lament. movement. the antiphonal, and to the antiquity, at the parts rite kinswomen of the in that example should internment scene, 525 the other last connection its 'bindings contradiction To seven Boardman, Pl. 36 the off raised by ekphora on his horse-drawn hearse. a covered a bier also in the trenches in the decorated in a daytime, to the law permitted this holding or underworld hand the remaining days. On this account, these communities can supplemented the evidence, hand or aulos-player regulated the underworld. Some of the lost objects are perhaps the sepulchral law preserved. The sepulchral law thus provided a protective measure for the dead. Evidence of the sepulchral law and evidence of the underworld were key elements in the funerary rites.

The sepulchral law, as detailed in Homer's Iliad and Odyssey, prescribed the conduct of the funerary rites. The law required that the corpse be carried on a bier to the grave and that the body be buried within a set period. The cremation of the dead was also prescribed by the law. The sepulchral law was often supplemented by other customs and practices, such as the use of heralds and the blowing of the aulos, a type of double-reed instrument.

The underworld, as depicted in the Homeric texts, was a shadowy world of the dead. It was a place of darkness and desolation, where the dead were ruled over by the god Hades and his queen, Persephone. The underworld was accessible through various gates, such as the entrance at the mouth of the river Styx. The dead were often depicted as wandering aimlessly through the underworld, searching for their place among the living.

The funerary rites were an important aspect of the Homeric world, as they marked the transition from life to death. The rites were carefully prescribed by the sepulchral law, and were often accompanied by the presence of the deceased's family and friends. The rites were not only a means of honoring the dead, but also a means of maintaining the social order of the community. The Homeric world was a world of complex rituals and customs, and the funerary rites were just one aspect of this rich cultural tapestry.
Fig. 19 Plan of graves cut into Grave Mound G, showing unsystematic orientation and placement of graves. Kübler 1976, Plan 3.
Fig. 20 Typical body position of the late 6th and 5th c. Kübler 1976, Pl. 14, Fig. 1. (Grave 51)

Fig. 21 Child burial in a wine amphora. Kübler 1976, Pl. 71, Fig. 4. (Grave 566)

Fig. 22 Child burial in a clay tub. Kübler 1976, Pl. 12, Fig. 4. (Grave 39)

Fig. 23 Secondary cremation; ash urn in poros sarcophagus. Kübler 1976, Pl. 29, Fig. 2. (Grave 264)

Fig. 24 Remains of four graves, including one primary cremation. Kübler 1976, Pl. 15, Fig. 2. (Graves 83, 84, 85, 87)
Fig. 25 Maps showing the locations of settlements and cemeteries: (a) Late Geometric II; (b) Protoattic and Transitional; (c) Black Figure; (d) Early Red Figure. Morris 1987, 66.
Fig. 26 Morris's calculation of child versus adult burials over time. Morris 1987, 73.

Fig. 27 Changing age structures and spatial organization in Attic cemeteries, 1100-500 B.C. r= reserved; u=unreserved; A=adult; B=mixed; C=child. Morris 1987, 71.
Fig. 28 Arrington’s map of the demosion sema. Pol = polyandria; CL = casualty lists; H = hippoc material; AK = sites related to the shrine of Artemis Ariste and Kalliste; Epi = sites related to the gardens of Epikouros; Pits = sites with 10 trenches or pits in the road. Underlined labels = approximate locations. Arrington 2010, 513.
Fig. 29 Example of a peribolos tomb. Closterman 2007, 634.

Fig. 30 Attic grave stele. Type I about 610-525 B.C. Type IIa, b about 530-500 B.C. Type IIc about 450 B.C. Richter 1960, 3.
Fig. 31 Two types of Archaic Grave sculpture: stele on left, kouro on right. 6th c. B.C.
Kurtz and Boardman 1971, 113.

Fig. 32 Stele from Grave Mound G. 6th c. Kübler 1976, 13.

Fig. 33 Stele from within Grave Mound G. 6th c. Shapiro 1991, 632.

Fig. 34 Grave monument of Euphemeros, c. 430-25 B.C. Stears 2000, 36.
Fig. 35 Classical grave stele. First quarter of the 4th c. B.C. Kosmopoulou 2001, 307.

Fig. 36 Stele depicting family group. Second half of the 4th c. B.C. Leader 1997, 696.

Fig. 37 Grave stele with epigram for the envoy Proxenos. Mid-5th c. B.C. Knigge 1991, 98.

Fig. 38 Monument with epigram for two envoys from Corcyra. ca. 375 B.C. Probably a replacement for an older 5th c. monument. Knigge 1991, 92.
Fig. 39 Plan showing disruption of early grave mounds by later activity. Kübler 1976, Plan 2.

Fig. 40 Section through the Rundbau. Knigge 1991, 96.
Fig. 41 Rundbau retaining wall, ca. 4th c. B.C. Knigge 1991, 97.

Fig. 42 Retaining wall of the Rundbau. c. 4th c. B.C. Knigge 1980, Pl. 31, Fig. 2.
Fig. 43 Knigge 1980, Pl. 11, Fig. 1. Photograph of the Rundbau, 1910. The messangers’ stelai are not in evidence.

Fig. 44 Knigge 1980, Pl. 11, Fig. 2. Photograph of the Rundbau, 1910. See above.
Fig. 45 Plan of the South Hill area. Knigge 1976, Plan 5.
Fig. 46 Plan of Grave Mound G, with location of Shaft Grave 1. Kübler 1976, Plan 1.

Fig. 47 Plan of Grave Mound G, with locations of Shaft Graves 2-12. Kübler 1976, Plan 2.
Fig. 48 Plan of the late 6th and 5th c. graves about Grave Mound G. Kübler 1976, Plan 3.

Fig. 49 Cross-section of Grave Mound G. Kübler 1976, Plan 4.3.
Fig. 50 Grave goods by burial type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Burial Type</th>
<th>Clay Vessels</th>
<th>Clay Figurines</th>
<th>Metal Objects</th>
<th>Other</th>
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<tr>
<td>Adult Inhumations (out of 266 graves)</td>
<td>905</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>109</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child Inhumations (out of 286 graves)</td>
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<td>50</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>2204</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>139*</td>
<td>193**</td>
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* The number of metal objects is heavily influenced by 3 graves that contained a total of 73 arrowheads (61 from a single grave). ** The number of “other” objects is heavily influenced by deposits of astragales, 76 from 15 graves (11 child, 4 adult).

Fig. 51 Lekythoi from Athenian domestic contexts. Late 6th – second quarter of the 5th c. Sparkes and Talcott. 1970, Pl. 38 nos. 1115-1119.

Fig. 52 Lekythoi from the Kerameikos necropolis, Grave 140. ca. 460/50 B.C. Kunze-Götte et al. 1999, Pl. 27, Fig. 1.

Fig. 53 Detail of two white-ground lekythoi from the Kerameikos necropolis, Grave 493. ca. 460/50 B.C. Kunze-Götte et al. 1999, Pl. 88 Figs. 7 and 8.
**Fig. 54 Distribution of non-leythos unguent vessels**

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<th>Publication</th>
<th>Catalog no. &amp; Grave Type</th>
<th>Type and no. of Vessels</th>
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<td>Lydion</td>
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<tr>
<td>KG1999</td>
<td>shaft grave 3</td>
<td>Lydion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KG1999</td>
<td>shaft grave 5</td>
<td>1 glass alabastron, 1 lydion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KG1999</td>
<td>shaft grave 6</td>
<td>Lydion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KG1999</td>
<td>shaft grave 8</td>
<td>Lydion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KG1999</td>
<td>shaft grave 10</td>
<td>Lydion</td>
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<td>KG1999</td>
<td>2 earth pit</td>
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<td>1 clay alabastron</td>
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<td>KG1999</td>
<td>57 child burial</td>
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<td>234 shaft grave</td>
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<td>242 shaft grave</td>
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<td>42 child burial</td>
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<td>Kn1978</td>
<td>55 burial</td>
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Fig. 55 Alabaster alabastra from the Kerameikos necropolis, Grave 234. Last quarter of the 6th c. B.C. Kunze-Götte et al. 1999, Pl. 37, Fig. 4.

Fig. 56 Amphoriskos from the Kerameikos necropolis, Grave 472. ca. 510-500 B.C. Kunze-Götte et al. 1999, Pl. 81, Fig. 7.

Fig. 57 Lydia from the Kerameikos necropolis, Grave 243. Mid-6th c. B.C. Kunze-Götte et al. 1999, Pl. 42 Fig. 2.

Fig. 58 Bird figurine from child burial, Grave 87. ca. 450 B.C. Kunze-Götte et al. 1999, Pl. 22, Fig. 4.

Fig. 59 Boar figurine from child burial, Grave 63. ca. 470 B.C. Kunze-Götte et al. 1999, Pl. 16, Fig. 2.

Fig. 60 Clay figurine from child burial, Grave 55. ca. 480-70 B.C. Kunze-Götte et al. 1999, Pl. 14, Fig. 5.
Fig. 61 Feeders from child burials, Graves 152, 229, 194, 226, and 239. 5th c. B.C. Knigge 1976, Pl. 80, Fig. 5.

Fig. 62 Detail of strainer on feeder from the Agora deposits. Sparkes and Talcott 1970, Pl. 47, no. 1198.

Fig. 63 Choës from a child burial (after Kunze-Götte et al 1999, Pl. 29.1)

Fig. 64 Figural decoration of choës from child burial (after Kunze-Götte et al 1999, Pl. 29.2)