

Remaining Roman in death at an eastern colony

Kathleen Warner Slane

Roman-period chamber tombs recently discovered at Corinth by the Greek Archaeological Service repeat elements of tombs and graves excavated by the American School of Classical Studies in 1961-62 at the time of construction of a modern aqueduct.¹ The graves and tombs, which lie in the face of the terrace north of the city, form the southern margin of extensive cemeteries on the S edge of the coastal plain. In the 1960s, excavation was confined to the projected line of the aqueduct more or less along the 45 m contour line, but more recent excavations for the construction of the national road and the high-speed railway have extended the excavated area many meters to the north.² In this paper I single out two of the several types of chamber tombs, both of which are known in multiple examples at Corinth, and consider their probable connections with central Italy and the light they shed on commemorative rituals.

Background: Roman Corinth

Corinth, which lies just south of the Isthmus and controlled access to both the Corinthian and Saronic Gulfs, had been a renowned trading city in Greek antiquity. After its destruction by Mummius in 146 B.C. and the sale of its inhabitants into slavery, the site lay abandoned (although occasionally visited) until a Roman colony, *Laus Julia Corinthiensis*, was founded there in about 44 B.C. This became one of the chief cities of the province of Achaia. Contrary to popular perception, it was not a veteran colony: prosopographical study of the colony's magistrates has led A. J. S. Spawforth to conclude that, between 44 B.C. and A.D. 69 (the duoviral coinage ends with Galba), freedmen of well-known Romans of the Late Republican and Augustan periods and their descendants were prominent in the colony, as were Roman *negotiatores*, and that Greek "notables" largely avoided having anything to do with it until the late Julio-Claudian period.³ He concluded that "the colony's

1 The chamber tombs at Pleures were reported by K. Skarmoutzou-Dimitroupoulou in "Αρχαία Κόρινθος, Οικόπεδο Μιχαλακόπουλου," *ADelt* 45, B2, 1990 [1995] 152-55); the tomb at the interchange was excavated in 2010. Both are reported here with permission of the 25th Ephoreia of Byzantine Antiquities. Some 70 graves of Classical to Late Roman date and 7 chamber tombs first used in the 1st or 2nd c. were excavated in 1961-62 under the supervision of H. Robinson, director of the Corinth Excavations, at the request of the Greek Archaeological Service. Brief reports of those tombs appeared, by H. S. Robinson, "Excavations at Corinth," *ADelt* 18 (1963) 76-80, and by G. Daux, "Chronique des fouilles," *BCH* 87 (1963) 722-28; the final report by the author will appear as *Corinth XXI, A slice through time. Tombs along the North Terrace at Corinth* (in press). This report expands and partly corrects M. E. H. Walbank, "Unquiet graves: burial practices of Roman Corinthians," in D. N. Showalter and S. J. Friesen (edd.), *Urban religion in Roman Corinth: interdisciplinary approaches* (HarvTheolStud 53, 2005) 249-80.

2 Most features have been covered by construction but two of the tombs discussed below are still visible today.

3 A. J. S. Spawforth, "Roman Corinth: the formation of a colonial elite," in A. Rizakis (ed.), *Roman onomastics in the Greek East, social and political aspects* (Μελετήματα 21; Athens 1996) 167-82. His sample (pp. 168-69) contained 19% freedman stock, 6% probable veteran families, 29% *negotiatores*, 8% provincial Greek notables, 2% élite Romans, and 19% of uncertain background (the remainder consist of second terms of office and honorary *praefecti*); he also remarks that, of 37 *cognomina* attested, 29 are Latin. A. D. Rizakis ("La constitution des élites municipales dans les colonies romaines de la province d'Achaïe," in O. Salamies (ed.), *The Greek East in the Roman context* [Pap. Monog. Finnish Inst. Athens VII, 2001] 49), surveying the municipal élites of the