

McDONALD INSTITUTE MONOGRAPHS

An Age of Experiment: Classical Archaeology Transformed (1976–2014)

Edited by Lisa Nevett and James Whitley



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with contributions from
Susan E. Alcock, Giovanna Ceserani, Alexandra Coucouzeli, Thomas W. Gallant, Michael Given, Jonathan M. Hall, Paul Halstead, Sturt W. Manning, Ian Morris, Lisa Nevett, Robin Osborne, Sara Owen, Gillian Shepherd, David B. Small, Jeremy Tanner and James Whitley

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Contributors

Professor Susan E. Alcock
Department of Classical Studies, University of Michigan, 2160 Angell Hall, 435 S. State St., Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1003, USA
Email: salcock@umich.edu

Professor Giovanna Ceserani
Department of Classics, Stanford University, 450 Serra Mall, Building 110, Stanford, CA 94305, USA
Email: ceserani@stanford.edu

Dr Alexandra Coucouzeli
Darwin College, Silver Street, Cambridge CB3 9EU, UK
Email: alexandra.coucouzeli@cantab.net

Professor Thomas W. Gallant
Center for Hellenic Studies, 0104 Department of History, University of California, San Diego, 9500 Gilman Drive, La Jolla, CA 92093-0104, USA
Email: tgallant@ucsd.edu

Dr Michael Given
Archaeology, School of Humanities, University of Glasgow, Glasgow G12 8QQ, UK
Email: Michael.Given@glasgow.ac.uk

Professor Jonathan Hall
Department of History, University of Chicago, 1126 E 59th St., Chicago, IL 60637, USA
Email: jhall@uchicago.edu

Professor Paul Halstead
Department of Archaeology, University of Sheffield, Minalloy House, 10-16 Regent Street, Sheffield S1 3NJ, UK
Email: p.halstead@sheffield.ac.uk

Professor Sturt W. Manning
Department of Classics, Cornell University, 120 Goldwin Smith Hall, Ithaca, New York 14853, USA
Email: sm456@cornell.edu

Professor Ian Morris
Department of Classics, Stanford University, 450 Serra Mall, Building 110, Stanford, CA 94305, USA
Email: imorris@stanford.edu

Professor Lisa Nevett
Department of Classical Studies, University of Michigan, 2160 Angell Hall, 435 S. State St., Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1003, USA
Email: lcnevett@umich.edu

Professor Robin Osborne
Faculty of Classics, University of Cambridge, Sidgwick Avenue, Cambridge CB3 9DA
Email: ro225@cam.ac.uk

Dr Sara Owen
Fitzwilliam College, University of Cambridge, Storey's Way, Cambridge CB3 0DG, UK
Email: sso10@cam.ac.uk

Dr Gillian Shepherd
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, La Trobe University, Melbourne (Bundoora) 3086, Australia
Email: g.shepherd@latrobe.edu.au

Professor David B. Small
Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Lehigh University, 681 Taylor St., Bethlehem, Pennsylvania 18015, USA
Email: dbs6@lehigh.edu

Professor Jeremy Tanner
Institute of Archaeology, University College London, 31–34 Gordon Square London WC1H 0PY, UK
Email: j.tanner@ucl.ac.uk

Professor James Whitley
School of History, Archaeology and Religion, Cardiff University, Colum Road, Cardiff CF10 3EU, UK
Email: WhitleyA@Cardiff.ac.uk

Chapter 7

Location, Location, Location: Site and Status in Sicilian Cemeteries

Gillian Shepherd (La Trobe University)

In *The Dark Age of Greece*, Anthony Snodgrass observed the general lack of correspondence between the early burial customs of Greek settlements in Italy and Sicily and their historical mother-cities in Greece (Snodgrass 1971, 175–6). Some years later, when I arrived in Cambridge to start my doctorate under his supervision and mentioned my interest in burial customs, Anthony casually pointed out this issue; only once I was well entrenched in the subject did he chuckle and reveal 'I've been wanting someone to do this topic for years'.

Thanks to Anthony's supervision, encouragement and enduring support and friendship, Western Greek burial customs continue to occupy me and Anthony's work continues to inspire me. The latter has included some observations on the significance of burial location and access, such as the rural burial sites revealed by the Boeotia survey and various instances across the Greek world where burials flout conventional views of the 'rules' for Greek cemeteries (Snodgrass 1998; 2009). In Sicily, the enormous Archaic cemeteries often appear chaotic and disorganized, in contrast with the well-known order and regularity of the planned settlements, but nevertheless may also offer some insights into Western Greek society in terms of their arrangement. This chapter explores three aspects of the topography of Sicilian Greek necropoleis: the extent to which they may (or may not) have formed part of any original city plan; the arrangement of the graves within the cemeteries, especially in terms of their visibility; and strategies for both grouping and isolating graves likely to be connected with particular social units, such as families or elite groups, which might even have extended to the establishment of small, exclusive cemeteries.

Locating the cemeteries

A distinguishing feature of the cemeteries of Archaic Greek cities in Sicily is their sheer size. In contrast to their counterparts in mainland Greece, individual Sicilian necropoleis can easily yield in excess of 1000 graves for the Archaic period alone, and some sites (such as Selinus) have more than one such contemporary cemetery. There are occasional exceptions in Greece and the Aegean, such as the extraordinary cemetery of over 2000 Archaic-Classical infant burials at Kylindra on Astypalaia (Hillson 2009); but nevertheless the overall size of formal city cemeteries in Sicily compared to Greek ones is not explicable simply in terms of excavation issues or population levels, but must also reflect differences in approaches to burial, including access and locations deemed to be appropriate for burial.

When the Greeks established their first settlements in the West in the later eighth century BC, the concept of the distinct separation of the dead from the living in terms of the allocation of a piece of land beyond the city bounds was still in its infancy (de Polignac 2005, 45–6; Morris 2000, 287). The North Cemetery at Corinth, for example, was opened around the middle of the eighth century and remained a major Corinthian burial ground until the Roman period, but its institution by no means spelt the end of burial in close proximity to habitation in the area of the later Roman forum (Dickey 1992, 128). As discussed further below, it is possible that some of the very earliest burials in the Greek West were not in the areas which later became the formal cemeteries; equally, given the size of the cemeteries in conjunction with their positioning, and the evidence for methodical approaches and solutions to wider issues of town planning in the West, as well as arguments that overseas settlement played a significant role in the development of the *polis*, it could be asked whether the development of formal city cemeteries was not also a process accelerated by experiments in the West.[1]

Exactly how the ancients identified a particular location as appropriate for the burial of the dead is not

always clear. Practicality must often have played a role: the huge San Montano Cemetery at the earliest Western Greek settlement of Pithekoussai on the volcanic island of Ischia was laid out in a valley which in antiquity as today may well have been rendered unfit for any other practical purpose through geothermal activity which reduced the ancient pottery to a 'soft cheese' consistency (Ridgway 1992, 45); at Kamarina in Sicily the Passo Marinaro cemetery (fifth–third century BC) was established on land which was sandy, marshy and exposed to sea, although the same was not true of the earlier sixth-century Rifriscolaro Necropolis (Pelagatti 2006, 50; Salibra 2016, 35). In the fourth century Plato (*Leg.* XII. 958) was surely not being particularly original in exhorting his contemporaries not to squander cultivable land on the disposal of the dead – although admittedly his recommendation might have been prompted by breaches of practicality. The idea that the Greeks liked to position their cemeteries to the west of habitation areas receives as much support in Sicily as anywhere else (Kurtz and Boardman 1971, 194–5), but equally there most cities were ringed by necropoleis by the late Archaic period except where the sea or other topographical obstacles intervened. Attempts have sometimes been made to link the development of individual cemeteries to specific areas or 'suburbs' (e.g. De Miro 1988, 244); this would also demonstrate practicality on the part of the ancients, but it is not always possible to make secure correlations between urban growth and new cemeteries and in addition, as will be argued below, there is also evidence that other factors motivated the establishment of some burial grounds.

A possibility which arises regularly with regard to Western Greek cemeteries is that the very earliest graves have not yet been found; it is often suggested in the context of a chronological discrepancy between the cemetery artefacts and earlier material from the habitation area (e.g. Megara Hyblaea: Gras *et al*. 2004, 557–8). For Pithekoussai such a situation seems highly likely, given that perhaps only 10 per cent of the cemetery has been excavated and the well-equipped Late Geometric graves look like the products of a prosperous and established community. In Sicily, cemeteries have been excavated much more extensively and over a long period of time. While surprising new discoveries are sometimes made – such as the 'petite nécropole' found between the enormous South and West Necropoleis at Megara Hyblaea (Vallet 1992, 505–10) – these tend to adjust the geography of the cemeteries rather than their chronology. Thus, for example, while the 'early' graves found during railway works in the 1990s in Syracuse shifted the eastern boundary (established in the nineteenth century) of the Fusco Necropolis further east, they did not alter the cemetery's chronological parameters (Basile 1993–4, 1319–22).

Although new finds could always change the picture, the general dearth of very early graves could be due to two factors apart from the obvious possibilities of low numbers of initial arrivals and a relatively young, healthy settler group with a correspondingly skewed death rate in early years. As is now well established in mortuary archaeology, it is likely that only some proportion of the population received a burial that is archaeologically recognisable today. Detectable Archaic burial methods in Sicily tend to be both durable and archaeologically conspicuous – *fossa* (trench) graves cut in bedrock and monolithic sarcophagi are common types – but they also required effort and expenditure not necessarily available to early settlers trying to establish themselves in a new environment. Children are relatively prominent amongst early burials, doubtless due to high child mortality rates in antiquity but conceivably also because acquiring or recycling a large pot for a small body was more manageable than a non-perishable receptacle for an adult.

It is also possible that some or all of the very first burials were not made in the areas which became the formal city necropoleis, and especially if the concept of a formal cemetery was not fully established at the time. Some finds of relatively early graves do suggest that initial burial locations may have been more scattered and even located in areas which were later restricted to the living. At Megara Hyblaea, a seventh-century vessel burial was found in the Arenella depression which separates the north and south plateaux within the city boundaries (Gras *et al*. 2004, 558); at Selinus earlier graves may have proved inconveniently placed but were respected and avoided as the city streets expanded over the Manuzza plateau in the sixth century (Mertens 2006, 177–8). However, the ancients did not always respect burial areas indefinitely, as indicated by the spread of Hellenistic housing over the late seventh–sixth century Giardino Spagna cemetery in Syracuse (Orsi 1925, esp. 176).

That said, formal cemeteries do appear to have been established with some rapidity even if not in the very earliest years of settlement and as noted above may have been integral to the solutions devised for the setting up of a settlement *ab initio*. As is well known, these solutions involved the laying out of a grid plan and clear designations of space for residential, public and sacred purposes; the site of Megara Hyblaea provides the classic case study here, where it is argued that the grid plan, agora and residential plots were laid out from the start, even if the city did not acquire a fully built form until decades later (Gras *et al*. 2004, 456; 535). It is also possible, since an allocation of

agricultural land must have been a powerful incentive for migration, that similarly formal divisions were made beyond the city area; such divisions have been detected in the *chora* of Metaponto, and although they cannot be dated to earlier than the sixth century that does not preclude an earlier initial division there and elsewhere (Carter 2006, 91–132). In this context the designation of a specific area for the dead is not hard to envisage, even if there was some flexibility and change in burial areas in the very early stages.

One indication that Sicilian Greek formal cemeteries were not only established relatively early but were also part of an overarching plan might be the fact that their cores of older burials have been found further away from the habitation areas than might be anticipated and that subsequent expansion of burial grounds was often not only further away from the city – as might be expected – but also further towards it. Such 'necropolis creep' is seen for example at Syracuse and Megara Hyblaea: at the former, the Fusco Necropolis was located sufficiently distant from the city that the suggestion has even been made that it was not associated with the city (C.W. Neeft pers. comm.); although this seems unlikely it is the case that the somewhat later Viale Paolo Orsi and Giardino Spagna cemeteries were developed closer to the city limits. At Megara Hyblaea the late eighth- and early seventh-century burials of the South Necropolis are found at a greater distance from the city than many of those of the sixth century, and in the West Necropolis it is possible a similar situation existed (some unpublished burials may be very early) with later seventh- and sixth-century burials being made closer to the city walls. In both cemeteries these later placements might have been prompted by a desire for visibility as much as convenience, as discussed further below; but the overall patterns suggest an initial caution with regard to the future expansion of the new settlement which was discarded when habitation limits became more clearly defined (especially with the erection of city fortifications, as at Megara Hyblaea: Gras *et al*. 2004, 237–302) and other priorities emerged.

Occasionally, some quite isolated sets of graves are found. At Megara Hyblaea, this was the case with the discovery of the otherwise unsuspected 'petite nécropole' with Archaic and Hellenistic burials between the South and West Necropoleis (Vallet 1992, 505–10); a seventh-century multiple burial in the *chora* at Intagliata (Barreca 1956, 34–5); and seventh-century graves in the North Necropolis (see further below). One explanation for these small, isolated plots might be that put forward by Anthony Snodgrass for similar arrangements from Classical Greece, namely that such plots were established on private land as signs of ownership and also residence.[2] This might also have been a factor behind the placement of some of the earlier graves which were scattered beyond the main group even in the areas which eventually became the huge formal cemeteries, especially if the concept of a formal cemetery was still relatively new, and settlement layout and claims to land ownership were in the process of being established.

Equally, not all of the earlier grave plots appear sufficiently distant from one another to necessarily represent different land holdings and they are also within what became the formal burial zones, even if the full extent of the latter was not definitively established at the time. Another explanation for the apparently generous spacing in the earlier phases of the city necropoleis might be that some individuals or groups wished to distinguish themselves from the rest of the population through geographical isolation. If so, then these graves represent early expressions of the desires for prominence, visibility and exclusivity which are evident in the subsequent phases of the cemeteries, and especially from the sixth century BC. These features of Sicilian Greek cemeteries are examined in the following two sections of this chapter.

Locating the grave

The appeal which a prominent roadside location for tombs held in classical antiquity is well known. Cities were ringed by their cemeteries, which were necessarily traversed by main thoroughfares. In Athens, the 'Street of the Tombs' in the Kerameikos Cemetery formed part of the road to Eleusis, entered Athens at the impressive Sacred Gate and was the route of major festival processions. It was lined with expensive Classical grave monuments designed to impress, of which a particularly conspicuous example was the grave marker of Dexileos, a cavalry soldier who fell in the Corinthian War in 394 BC. Dexileos' sculptured *stele* loomed above his family's *peribolos* in a prime position on the Street of the Tombs on a corner near the Sacred Gate. It was a particularly extravagant memorial given that it marked Dexileos' cenotaph, not his burial, and represented not his second but his third memorial in Athens: he was in fact buried along with his comrades in the *demosion sema* and another monument specifically to the fallen *hippeis* also recorded his name (Hurwit 2007, 35–45).

In Sicily too there is evidence for the social significance of the siting and marking of graves. The precise details of the internal arrangement of Greek Sicilian cemeteries are not always well known, due in large part to their excavation in the later nineteenth or early twentieth centuries, but also because of other

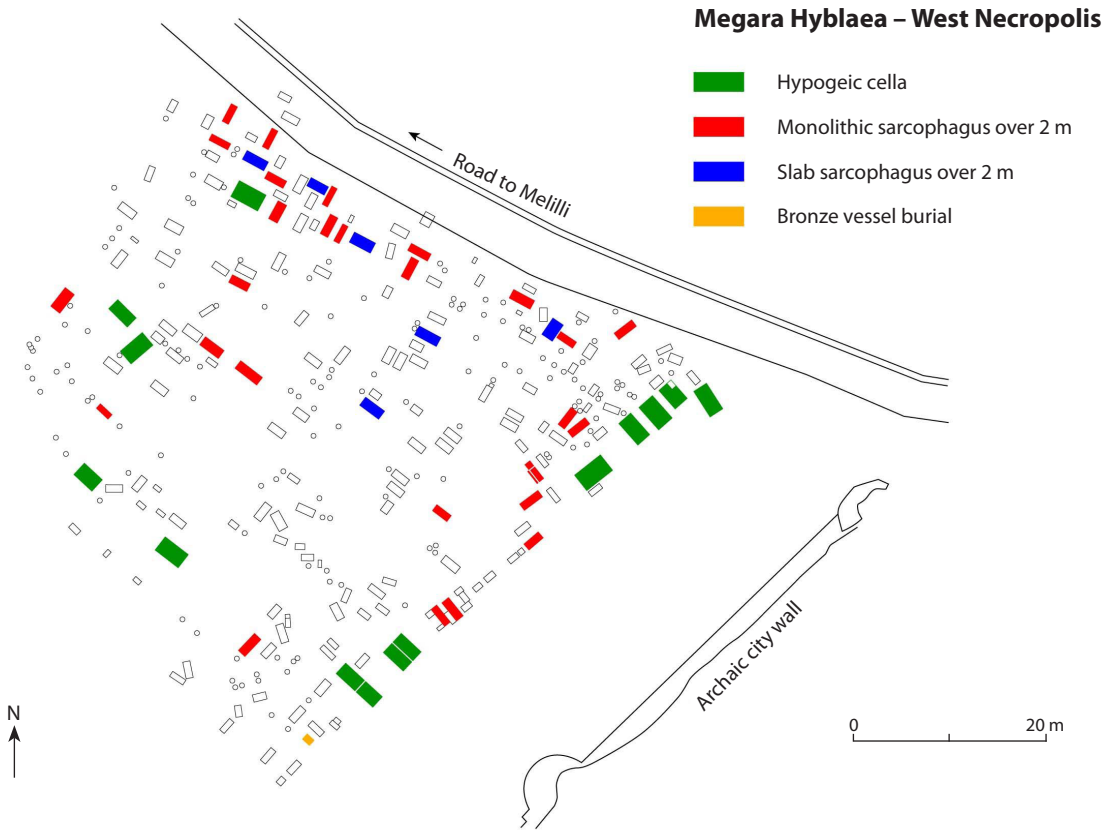


Figure 7.1. *Reconstruction of grave positions in the West Necropolis, Megara Hyblaea (prepared by Harry Buglass after Iacovella 1997). Large, 'wealthy' graves are identified in colour.*

factors including the obstacles posed by modern building – as for example at Gela, where the Archaic Borgo necropolis is known only through the graves accessible under the modern town streets (Orsi 1906, tav. IV). Sufficient detail is available, however, to suggest that the cemeteries were not as randomly or even chaotically arranged as an initial glance at some plans might suggest and that despite the contrast between the ordered grid plans of settlements and the apparent disorder of the cemeteries, there was some rationale behind their layout.

Megara Hyblaea provides a useful case study here, both because the site has remained relatively undisturbed since the demise of the Archaic city at the hands of the Syracusans in 483 BC (Herod. 7.156; Thuc. 6.4.2; 6.94.1), and also because of more recent investigation. Plans produced thus far of the excavated area of the Archaic South Necropolis depict a crowded arrangement of vessel burials (both cremations and inhumations: Cébeillac-Gervasoni 1976–77, 596–7 with tav. CXIXbis), although a greater sense of order may emerge with the full publication of the cemetery. An important observation of the excavators, however, is the existence of a row of 'monumental tombs' lining the east side of an ancient road running approximately north–south through the cemetery, conceivably the main road leading from Megara Hyblaea south to Syracuse. These 'monumental' graves included the so-called 'hypogeic cella', or (partially) underground chambers built with limestone blocks, and both very large monolithic sarcophagi and *fossa* (trench) graves cut in the bedrock and covered with stone slabs (Cébeillac-Gervasoni 1975, 21 with tavv. III, X–XII; 1976–7, 596 n. 18 with tav. CXIX). They have been dated to the second half of the sixth century when such grand receptacles were used to represent the wealthy elite of Megara Hyblaea. What is important here, however, is their position: they were conspicuously placed along a roadside for the edification of passers-by; and to achieve this prominence they jostled for positions in what seems, by and large, to have been an older (seventh-century) area of the cemetery (cf Cébeillac-Gervasoni 1976–77, 591–5: tables with date estimates). A road also ran through the North Necropolis at Megara

Hyblaea, which seems to have been have been a small but elite cemetery (see further below). The fifteen graves here with one exception dated to the second half of the sixth century and were mainly hypogeic cellae, most bordering the road.[3]

The West Necropolis was largely excavated by Paolo Orsi in the late nineteenth century, and the sketch plans he published of over 300 graves immediately west of the city wall are far from easy to use (e.g. Orsi & Cavallari 1889–92, 849–50), but the reconstructed plan produced by Andrea Iacovella indicates that here, too, location was a major priority for those with social claims or aspirations in sixth-century BC Megara Hyblaea (Iacovella 1997). Figure 7.1 identifies the very large graves – hypogeic cellae or sarcophagi over 2 m in length – on this plan. For the most part, these grand (and presumably costly) graves were located on the eastern and northern borders of the cemetery. No fewer than nine of the hypogeic cellae were lined up along the eastern edge of the necropolis facing the city wall. Between them and the wall some sort of 'pomerium' seems to have been enforced since no burials were found in a strip of land up to about 20 m wide outside the wall (possibly a ditch or moat: cf Gras *et al*. 2004, 250–3); the view of these impressive tombs was accordingly unimpeded by other graves. It is surely no coincidence that the most unusual and arguably the most ostentatious burial in the cemetery – Tomb 301, a 'heroic' style cremation in a bronze ossuary set in a block of stone – was also positioned in this 'millonaire's row' along the eastern edge of the cemetery.

Of those nine hypogeic cellae, five were clustered at the north-eastern corner of the West Necropolis. Here Paolo Orsi also found traces of a cobbled road, and although he could not trace it beyond the graves, the existence of a gate in the north-west corner of the fortifications has long been suspected (Gras *et al*. 2004, 257–62 with fig. 287; 531 with fig. 470).[4] A road leading west from such a gate might have followed more or less the route of the modern road to Melilli and provided a northern border to the cemetery along with the natural landfall towards the Cantera River, which also seems to have formed the northern border of the city. If so, these five hypogeic cellae would have occupied particularly conspicuous positions at a city access point, not unlike that of Dexileos' memorial in Athens; the existence of such a road might also explain the prevalence of large tombs along the northern border (including a possible 'family' plot observed by Orsi (Orsi and Cavallari 1889–92, 806)) incorporating a hypogeic cella and large sarcophagi in close proximity and aligned with each other. The plan produced by Mireille Cébeillac-Gervasoni of her excavations further to the west in the Necropolis might also reflect large tombs of the later sixth century lining a roadway, given their consistent north-east/south-west orientation and the strip of apparently free ground several metres wide between the two lines of graves (Cébeillac-Gervasoni 1976–7, 588 with tav. CXVIII).

At other sites where the details of the topography of the cemetery are less well known it is harder to make similar observations, but nevertheless there are some hints that efforts were made to secure the most conspicuous positions for graves. At Syracuse, burials seem to have been clustered especially along the southern border of the terrace on which the Fusco Necropolis was located and the three slight promontories between the modern Casa Scandurra and Casa Pollicino (cf Orsi 1903), suggesting that a position close to the terrace edge with enhanced visibility, especially from below, might have been desirable. At Akragas another apparently small and wealthy cemetery – the sixth-century Contrada Mosè Necropolis – included monumental graves (some clustered in tight plots) bordering an ancient road which may have led to Gela (see further below).

By the sixth century then (if not in the seventh as well) the location of a grave was an important factor in social competition and the assertion of status in the funerary arena, along with expenditure on a substantial receptacle. Yet this of course assumes that the tombs were clearly visible upon the landscape to be admired. Although – unlike Dexileos' Athens – Sicily is not renowned for its grave markers, nevertheless there is substantial evidence to suggest that the graves were clearly visible, if not explicitly marked, on the cemetery landscape.

At a basic level, the lack of collisions between earlier and subsequent graves in most Sicilian Greek cemeteries (Selinus presents some exceptions – see further below) suggests that there was some way of knowing where earlier interments lay. Since a new grave could often involve the labour of cutting a trench in the bedrock, this would clearly have had a distinct practical advantage. In addition, the existence of 'multiple' burials (either true multiple burials or very tight plots such as those at Syracuse which tend to cluster around monolithic sarcophagi: Shepherd 2005, 118–20) which were not necessarily precisely contemporaneous also suggests that the buriers – most likely family members – had some way of knowing exactly which grave or plot to revisit. Given the general dearth of retrieved grave markers from these very extensive cemeteries, several possibilities present themselves. One is that the markers were perishable, perhaps made of wood or otherwise fairly readily obliterated (such as the earth tumuli identified in the Santa Panagia Necropolis in Syracuse: Guzzardi 2003, 43); markers may also have

been of types less recognisable archaeologically today, such as large vases (the scattered fragments of which can be hard to distinguish from disturbed grave offerings or *enchytrismos* burial containers) or simple *cippi* of crudely worked stone, not easily distinguished if removed from their original context for reuse.

Another possibility is that the topsoil was stripped back and grave covers were exposed, making the layout of the cemetery easy to read. It is difficult to know how deep grave diggers had to go before they reached bedrock in antiquity, but in the modern period at least the graves are often at no great depth below the topsoil – at Megara Hyblaea Orsi further observed that thanks to the persistence of shallow ploughing in Sicily the graves were less disturbed than might otherwise have been the case (Orsi and Cavallari 1889–92, 767). Although precise stratigraphical information is not always available, in those cemeteries where roads have been identified (whether major thoroughfares or access routes through the cemetery) both roadway and rock-cut graves appear to be at approximately the same level, with the former demonstrated through wheel-ruts in the bedrock, as for example at Akragas in the Pezzino Necropolis (cf. de Miro 1988, 248 with fig. 14), and Kamarina in the sixth-century Rifriscolaro Necropolis, where again the earliest graves were not immediately outside the city walls and a 'conspicuous' group of tombs of the second half of the sixth century bordered the ancient road.[5] Kustermann-Graf (2002, 73; 75) proposes that for the Gaggera Cemetery at Selinus (arguably an elite burial ground, see further below) grave covers formed bases for monumental markers.

Megara Hyblaea again provides the best evidence for tomb visibility and markers. The excavators of the South Necropolis suspected on stratigraphical grounds that the line of 'monumental' tombs bordering the ancient road protruded partially above the surface and may well have supported *stelai* or some other grave monument (Cébeillac-Gervasoni 1975, 35–6); the fact that some of the hypogeic cellae in the West Necropolis were reused during the Roman period also suggests that larger tombs at least were obvious on the landscape in antiquity; and from the North Necropolis comes the evidence for the sorts of sculpted monuments which might have topped these large graves. This includes the unusual *kourotrophos* statue associated with Tomb I (a mid-sixth-century hypogeic cella) and fragments of an elaborate Doric funerary edifice which – judging by the marble leg and plinth fragments amongst the architectural ones – might have housed a *kouros* atop the late sixth-century hypogeic cella Tomb E (Gentili 1954). A marble *kouros* was revealed by a minor landslide in 1940 in the South Necropolis, inscribed with the name of the doctor Sombrotidas, son of Mandrokles (Bernabò Brea 1946–8; Pugliese Caratelli 1946–8). From fragmentary remains it is clear that the West Necropolis also boasted amongst various monuments at least one *kouros* (a late Archaic torso: Orsi & Cavallari 1889–92, tav. VI. 7–8), a marble sphinx (Museo Paolo Orsi no. 5892) and a Doric capital inscribed *Kalis(t)eos eimi* (I belong to Kalisteos); a truncated pyramid labelled *Kleomedos* was found just outside a (unspecified) city gate and a similar pyramid (topped with a stone sphere) found *in situ* on top of Tomb 185, a hypogeic cella (Orsi & Cavallari 1889–92, 788–89; 870–71; tav. IV).

The amount of funerary sculpture from Megara Hyblaea might in part be due to the relatively limited occupation of the site after 483 BC and its isolation in post-antique times; certainly that from other sites is less impressive. Nevertheless, there are indications of elaborate funerary monuments elsewhere also, such as the architectural and sculptural fragments from the area of the Fusco Necropolis in Syracuse (including one from a marble sphinx) reported by Mauceri, Cavallari and Orsi in their investigations of the cemetery in the later nineteenth century (Mauceri 1878; Fiorelli 1881; Cavallari 1885; Orsi 1895, 130; 188–90). In addition, all the sites under discussion here have produced a number of funerary inscriptions on simple stones, or at least which are best identified as funerary when not found *in situ* (such as the three from Megara Hyblaea which were evidently reused in Hellenistic buildings: Arena 1989 nos 1, 2 and 9; see also nos 4 and 6). These inscriptions are usually quite formulaic in nature ('I am the *sema* of ….') with little or no additional information, as in the thirty-odd from the Manicalunga, Buffa and Galera-Bagliazzo cemeteries of Selinus (Arena 1989 nos 15–32 and 34, with no. 33 from Delphi; see also Zoppi 1998, 258).

In sum, while the Greek West may never have produced funerary monuments on a par with that of Dexileos and others from Classical Athens, there is substantial evidence for the visibility and marking of graves in general and for the ostentatious adornment of some in particular. These last also seem likely to have occupied conspicuous positions in cemeteries at access points and along thoroughfares. In these respects Western necropoleis have much in common with other cemeteries in the ancient world, even if in other respects such as scale and overall cemetery population they present a different appearance. At some Sicilian sites, however, much smaller cemeteries have been identified which were in use contemporaneously with the enormous main city burial grounds. These cemeteries are distinguished by their scale, separation from the main cemeteries, sparse occupation and the relative wealth or other unusual features of the graves they contain – suggesting that even a flamboyant marker

and a prime position in a major cemetery still could not necessarily fulfil all the requirements for social distinction.

Exclusive cemeteries?

The North Necropolis at Megara Hyblaea (Fig. 7.2) has already been noted as one which provides good evidence for the positioning of elite graves which were ornamented with sculptural decorations in prominent positions along roadways. However, this necropolis has another distinctive feature: its low population in comparison with the two other contemporary cemeteries at Megara Hyblaea, the West and South Necropoleis. In contrast to these massive conglomerations – which have yielded thus far in excess of 1000 graves each and for which the full extents are not definitively established – the North Necropolis is so far known primarily through only eighteen graves (Gentili 1954; 1956).

To some degree this might be due to the circumstances of excavation and the limited period of use of the North Necropolis. The main group of fifteen graves was found in the 1950s during industrial building works around ancient Megara Hyblaea; apart from one chronologically isolated amphora burial (Tomb G) of the seventh century, all the graves belonged to the second half of the sixth century.[6] Although it was no doubt bigger (there is evidence for more graves: cf. Gentili 1956; Cébeillac-Gervasoni 1975, 6), it still looks very different from the other two large burial grounds. Apart from Tomb G the burials were all very substantial structures, mainly hypogeic cellae; in addition to their ornamentation some contained grave goods exceptional for Archaic Greek Sicily, notably the weaponry of Tombs C and F, and the gold rings of Tombs C and D. The published plans show not only a short row of graves bordering each side of the ancient road, but also indicate scattered and sparse occupation of the cemetery area, with Tombs A and Q apparently in splendid (and presumably highly visible) isolation (Gentili 1954). The cemetery has the appearance of a burial ground restricted to a wealthy elite who used it for half a century or so before the demise of the Archaic city. It has also been proposed that it belonged to a particular family, or that it is to be connected with Stiela, a suburb of Megara Hyblaea;[7] whatever the case, it does not look like a cemetery accessible to the wider population.

A similar cemetery might be the Contrada Mosè Necropolis at Akragas on the south coast of Sicily. This burial ground was located to the east of the ancient city and arranged alongside an ancient road believed to lead to Gela. There is some evidence to suggest that the area contained relatively simple tile graves in the sixth century, but was ritually cleared around the end of the century to make way for a very different set of burials. Again, the full extent of the cemetery might not yet be understood, but the graves reported (at least 18) include large and wealthy graves, arranged in tight (presumably family) plots, but with generous spacing between the groups (De Miro 1988, 244–8). Tomb 8 (late fifth century) was a built tomb of cut stone containing a marble sarcophagus embellished with akroteria and paintwork, all the more impressive given the dearth of marble sources in Sicily; Tomb 3 (late fifth century) held a superb bronze cinerary urn with swan's head handles. Like the North Necropolis of Megara Hyblaea, this cemetery also produced very rare military artefacts, namely a pair of bronze greaves (Tomb 2 (later sixth century BC), possibly a cenotaph: cf. Marconi 2004, 29–30). Again, one proposed explanation is topographical, that the necropolis could be linked with a wealthy suburb of Akragas located on the Pizzo Mosè hill (De Miro 1988, 244), but while wealth was certainly an important factor it is less clear that such cemeteries relate very specifically in geographical terms to particular city quarters. Another possible explanation is a connection with an elite family (Marconi 2004, 28–9). What makes this cemetery even more distinctive is the contrast it provides with the sixth- to fourth-century Pezzino Necropolis to the west of Akragas. The latter was in use over the same time period as the Contrada Mosè burial ground, but was an enormous and densely packed cemetery, with hundreds of graves (mainly relatively modest *fosse*) – cut into the bedrock and separated from each other by centimetres (de Miro 1988, 248–52 with figs 10–17).

At Leontinoi, the Predio Pisano Necropolis may represent another, and possibly earlier, small and elite cemetery. It was explored in the later nineteenth century, and described as containing few but wealthy graves of monumental construction dating to the seventh to sixth centuries BC. Unfortunately these finds and their contexts were not well recorded, and the artefacts were dispersed, so it is difficult to draw firm conclusions regarding the nature of this group of tombs. However, the grave goods included gold and silver objects and a bronze cinerary urn decorated with ram's heads – again, all unusual objects in the context of Sicilian Greek cemeteries (Frasca 2009, 14–16; 82)

The Gaggera Necropolis at Selinus presents yet another case of a possible 'exclusive' cemetery; here wealth may also have been a qualifying factor, but other possible criteria emerge also. This burial ground was located at the east end of the Manicalunga hill which stretches west of the ancient city and which was covered by the enormous Manicalunga Necropolis of the

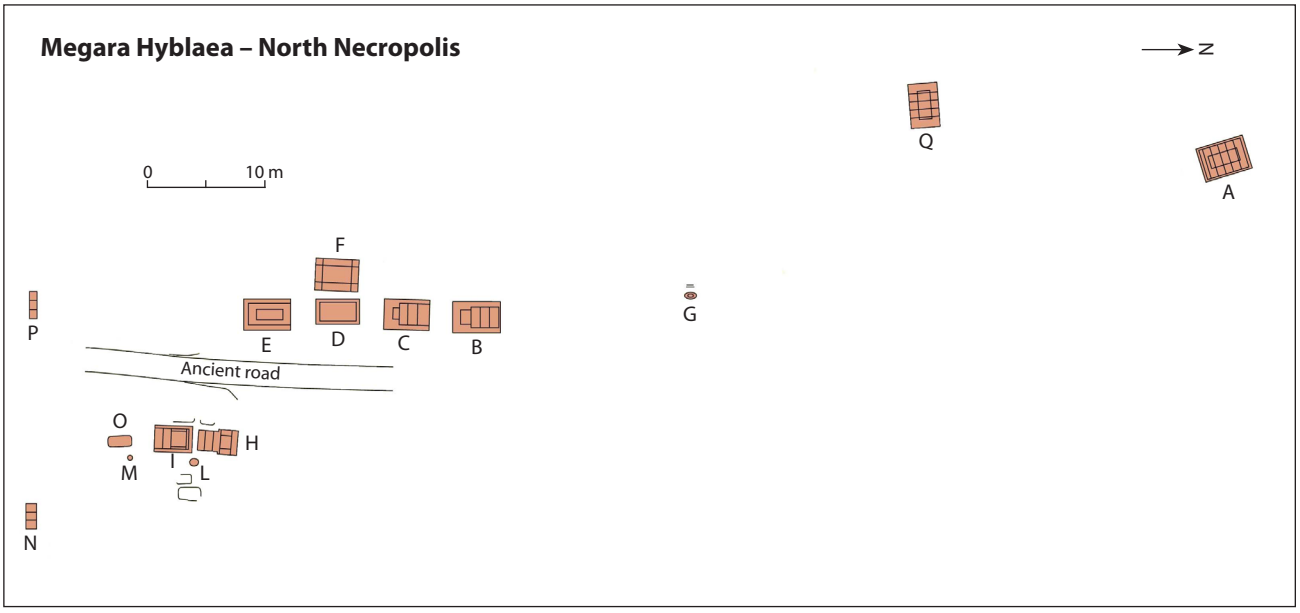


Figure 7.2. *Plan of the North Necropolis, Megara Hyblaea (prepared by Harry Buglass after Gentili 1954).*

sixth and fifth centuries BC. The Gaggera Necropolis appears to be a separate cemetery and not an extension of Manicalunga, due to a strip of land devoid of burials between the two. Unlike Manicalunga, it was not in continuous use: of the 218 retrieved burials, 60 are dated to the first half of sixth century and 140 to the fifth century. Eighteen graves are undatable, but there appears to have been a period of approximately fifty years in the second half of the sixth century when the cemetery was not in use, with burial resuming only in *c.* 500 BC and ceasing with the Carthaginian sack of the city in 409 BC (Kustermann Graf 2002, 17–23; 89).

The Gaggera graves, which include inhumations and cremations, are both more numerous and less impressive than those from the North Necropolis at Megara Hyblaea and Contrada Mosè at Akragas; in the latter respect they are in keeping with the simplicity of Selinuntine graves in general. However, there are signs that the burials were relatively wealthy for the fifth century at least, both in terms of grave goods (more imported pottery) and method (a higher frequency of cremation) in comparison with other contemporary Selinuntine cemeteries (Kustermann Graf 2002, 77; 89).

Two features of the cemetery make it very distinctive. One is the presence of several very large *fossa* graves containing multiple burials. For the sixth century two such graves (Tombs 156–58 and 160–67), each 2 × 3 m and 1.75 m deep, cut mainly into the bedrock, were constructed in close proximity and parallel to each other. The first (Tombs 156–58) contained an inhumation, an amphora with a secondary cremation and a second possible amphora burial (no remains were identified); the second also had an inhumation accompanied by four secondary cremations in amphorae, a possible further five vessel burials (again, no remains were identified) and – extraordinarily – a 'heroic' addition in the form of a horse or mule.[8] Such burials are highly unusual in the context of Greek Sicily, but when burial was resumed in the cemetery in the fifth century, four even larger *fossa* graves (Tombs 47, 67, 88 and 116) for multiple burials were constructed. The burials in these were arranged rather differently: Tomb 47 (3.6 × 1.75 m) contained a quantity of bone from more than one inhumation and had probably been disturbed; Tomb 67 (4.3 × 3.6 m) contained cremated remains from multiple incinerations; and Tomb 116 (6.2 × 1.55 m) had three Laconian kraters presumably used for urn burials (no identified remains) and another thirty vases. The most extraordinary grave was the largest, Tomb 88 (*c.* 6 × 6 m): it held 26 inhumations laid out in rows with 50 vases and fragments of bronze and iron. It might well have much in common with the recent finds at Himera, where mass burials possibly relating to the Battles of Himera (480 and 409 BC) have been identified (Vassallo & Valentino 2010); as Kustermann Graf (2002, 89) suggests, the other multiple graves might also relate to war dead, especially given Selinus' history of conflict; but whatever the precise explanation, there must have been particular circumstances relating to these individuals that warranted highly unusual burial in this particular cemetery.

The second distinctive feature of the Gaggera Necropolis is its low population and the generous spacing of the burials. The 218 graves were distributed over an area of about 480 × 200 m and the few plans produced clearly indicate how sparsely populated this cemetery was, with burials metres apart (Kustermann Graf 2002, 17; 73 with plans 2–4). In this context groups of burials are particularly conspicuous and surely deliberate, and again might bear witness to some lost form of grave marker, such as in the case of the fifth century plots of Tombs 126–29 with Tomb 136 or Tombs 217–20 (Kustermann Graf 2002, plans 2 and 4). A glance at the plans for the enormous and contemporary Manicalunga and Buffa Necropoleis (Tusa 1971, plan 18; Meola 1996–8, Tav. D–G) – where there is scarcely a spare inch of space and superimposed burials abound – further demonstrates the very generous layout of the Gaggera Necropolis. Yet this cemetery was also the most conveniently placed with regard to the city: in particular a burial at Manicalunga in fact required a trip some distance beyond the Gaggera cemetery – an inconvenience it seems only relatively few were spared.

The peculiar chronological gap of the second half of the sixth century is hard to interpret. The explanation might lie in the obscure but apparently tumultuous historical events of that period, which may have included the tyrannies of Theron and Pythagoras and the overthrow of the latter by the Spartan Euryleon, whose own rule was shortlived.[9] If anything the break in use of the cemetery seems to underline its special nature: after all, the population did not stop dying in that period; the necropolis was conveniently located; and the other cemeteries were in continual use. But for some reason the Gaggera Cemetery was out of bounds for around half a century until circumstances changed and burial was resumed for a select few.

Kustermann Graf (2002, 77) suggests the Gaggera Cemetery served a well-to-do group of people, possibly a single family. The relative richness and generous spacing of the graves suggests this may have been case; equally, the period of disuse and the multiple burials with their arguably 'warrior' character might indicate that other political or social qualifications beyond kinship governed admission to the burial ground. Another potentially significant feature which Kustermann Graf (2002, 17; 77) points out is not only the proximity of the Gaggera Necropolis to the city of Selinus (about 1.5 km from the acropolis) but also to Temple M and the Sanctuary of Demeter Malophoros (500 m and 700 m respectively) which also lay on the rising land facing the city across the Modione river. The sanctuary included a precinct dedicated to Zeus Melichios, which might be significant in the light of the possible connections between the dead and Zeus Melichios (for discussion, see Jameson *et al*. 1993, 96–7).

The concept of a separate cemetery which differed in certain physical aspects (especially layout and grave type), but which was contemporaneous with other cemeteries at the site and was designed to serve individuals and/or families with qualifications over and above those required for burial in the main cemetery (however elite), might find a parallel on Samothrace, where there is also a possible sanctuary connection. Here the Southern Nekropolis, in use from the sixth century BC to the second century AD, was a crowded and chaotic collection of burials crammed into a very small space of approximately 300 m^2. Between the sixth and fourth centuries these were mainly secondary cremations. Cemeteries in use over similar periods further north were distinctly different in character. In particular, in the H (Hotel) Nekropolis of the mid-fifth century to late Hellenistic period burials were not crowded and also mainly less space-efficient inhumations.[10] Dusenbery suggests the Southern Nekropolis – a mere 30 m or so away from the Propylon of Ptolemy II and the Sanctuary of the Great Gods – might have served priests, sanctuary officials and even unfortunate pilgrims.

Whatever the precise explanation, on Samothrace and in Sicily we seem to have a segregation of the population at death that is geographical and ritual in nature (and possibly in other respects also) rather than a more familiar arrangement of broadly similar contemporaneous cemeteries which catered for the population on a more general basis. This is not an entirely unfamiliar situation: after all, the Athenian *demosion sema* was just such a burial ground, even if its criteria for admission were different again and it was deemed insufficient by Dexileos' family. In Sicily, too, the criteria could have varied: the motives for the multiple burials of the Gaggera Necropolis were not necessarily the same as for the ornamented hypogeic cellae of the North Necropolis at Megara Hyblaea; equally it is interesting that military allusions (multiple burials and weaponry) are more prominent in both these cemeteries and the Contrada Mosè Necropolis than is usually the case in Sicily. Nevertheless, the concept of a low density, highly visible cemetery with wealthy graves that was geographically separate from the main city cemeteries seems to have emerged in at least the sixth century BC in Sicily.

Conclusion

Despite the apparent disorganization and random layout of their cemeteries, location mattered to the Sicilian Greeks when it came burying their dead. This might have started with the designation of burial grounds at

a relatively early stage in the settlement process, even if the very earliest burials were made elsewhere; plots and multiple burials identified particular groups, probably families; with the rise of large, expensive receptacles and ostentatious grave monuments, position became even more critical for visibility and display for aspiring elites; and while there may have been hot competition for roadside positions in a main city cemetery, another solution – for those who qualified – was the simple establishment of a burial ground to which most of the population could not gain access. An intriguing question is how such allocations and access might have been regulated and supervised; but whatever the formalities, where the dead were buried was as important a tool for social expression as how they were buried.

Notes

1 On the connections between overseas settlement and the rise of the polis see further Malkin 1987, 12 and 262–3; 1994; Hansen 1994, 15–16; Snodgrass 1994, 8–10.

2 Snodgrass 1998; see also the preface to the reprinted version (Snodgrass 2006, 468–78) which notes Classical and Hellenistic textual evidence linking burial and land possession.

3 Gentili 1954; see also Gentili 1956, which notes three further graves in the area.

4 This and another cobbled area are now thought to relate to Hellenistic Megara Hyblaea, but the likelihood of a north-west city gate remains: Gras *et al*. 2004, 255–62 with fig. 287; 531 with fig. 470

5 Cf. Pelagatti 1976–77, 523 with fig. 1 and Tav. LXXIV figs. 1–2. Paolo Orsi also observed wealthy tombs lining a road in the classical Passo Marinaro Necropolis (Salibra 2016, 38).

6 Gentili (1956) reported three further graves from the western sector of the RASIOM land, including two with LPC pottery.

7 Cébeillac-Gervasoni 1976–7, 588; cf. also Cébeillac-Gervasoni (1975, 33) who observes geographical isolation as well as richness for elite graves of the second half of the sixth century BC.

8 The skeletal remains were not precisely identified when the cemetery was excavated in the 1960s.

9 Herod. 5.46; Luraghi 1994, 51–8.

10 I am grateful to Anthony Snodgrass for pointing out the case of Samothrace to me; see further Dusenbery 1998, esp. 6–11; see also Snodgrass (2009, 106) who notes also the contrast with the 'North Necropolis' burials, well-spaced inhumations dating between the sixth century BC and the first century AD (Karadima and Koutsoumanis 1992).

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Editors:
Lisa Nevett is Professor of Classical Archaeology at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, where she teaches courses on the archaeology of ancient Greek society in the first millennium BC. Her research focuses on using the archaeological remains of Greek settlements of that period as a means of understanding social and economic life, particularly at the scale of the individual household.

James Whitley teaches Classical Archaeology and Archaeological Theory at Cardiff University, where he is Professor in Mediterranean Archaeology. His particular expertise lies in Iron Age and Archaic Greece, particularly Crete. Between 2002 and 2007 he was Director of the British School at Athens.

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