Summary. There have been recent suggestions that an indigenous element in ancient Greek settlements in Sicily can be detected through funerary customs. This paper reviews the evidence for ‘indigenous’ burial methods in Greek cemeteries, concentrating on multiple, contracted and acephalous burials. It argues that such evidence is limited and open to various interpretations and that while it is highly likely that Greek settlements did incorporate an indigenous population, the funerary record cannot be used as a reliable identifier of such groups. The paper also briefly assesses the evidence for the presence of Greeks deriving from areas other than the historical mother-cities and suggests that such individuals are also very difficult to detect. It concludes that the general impression given by Sicilian Greek cemeteries is one of overall subscription to coherent burial systems, which may be viewed as part of an attempt to forge a unified and independent cultural identity.

When Archias, the Corinthian oikist of Syracuse, received a Delphic oracle instructing him to found a colony in order to expiate the murder he had committed, he was given a description of the site of Syracuse in order that he could identify it:

An isle, Ortygia, lies on the misty ocean
Over against Trinacria, where the mouth of Alpheius bubbles
Mingling with the springs of broad Arethusa. (Paus. 5.7.3).

Pausanias earlier explains the myth of Arethusa and Alpheios: the hunter Alpheios fell in love with Arethusa, a huntress, and pursued her across the sea from Greece to Sicily, where she turned into a spring on the island of Ortygia. Alpheios in turn was changed into the river of the same name at Olympia, whose water went under the sea and mingled with the spring on Ortygia (Paus. 5.7.2). On a more banal level, Strabo volunteers the information that in obeying the oracle Archias acquired most of his settlers at Tenea in the Corinthia and that en route to Ortygia he picked up some Greeks (‘Dorians’) at Zephyrion in Italy who had parted company with the founders of Megara (Strabo 8.6.22; 6.2.4).

These passages give us more detail than we have for many colonial foundations and contain information which may have implications for determining the precise nature of the early stages of Greek colonies, particularly those in the West. The myth of Arethusa and Alpheios has
been interpreted by Carol Dougherty (1993, 69) as a metaphor for Greek and indigenous interaction, in particular intermarriage, and the idea that native Sikels or Italians could inhabit a Greek city not simply as slaves but also as spouses or residents is gaining wide acceptance. That this mixed population could in addition include a mixture of Greeks rather than a cohort derived solely from the historical mother-city is also implied by the passages regarding Syracuse: apparently not all the colonists came from Corinth itself, but were recruited from Tenea and their numbers were reinforced by other Dorians collected on the journey.

There has recently been a number of suggestions that such ethnic mixtures can be detected in the archaeological record, especially as far as Greek-native cohabitation is concerned, and in particular burial evidence is often cited as indicative of ethnic variation in the settlements of the Greek West. The funerary record of archaic Greek Sicily is particularly rich, and is reviewed here in conjunction with some evidence from Italy in order to determine its usefulness in detecting both mixtures of Greeks and indigenes in Greek settlements and Greeks of differing origins (Fig. 1).

**GREEK AND INDIGENOUS COHABITATION**

Much of the recent debate regarding cohabitation of Greeks and indigenous populations has centred around the issue of whether Greek women joined in the colonizing ventures or...
whether male-only groups relied upon acquiring native wives.\(^1\) Here the literary record is largely unhelpful, giving evidence both for and against the presence of Greek women in Greek colonies which on closer examination appears to report situations which are ambiguous or exceptional, with little scope for general application.\(^2\) In an effort to resolve the problem, archaeologists and historians have turned to the archaeological record, where burial evidence has thus far appeared most promising. For the West, arguments have so far concentrated mainly on the presence of goods of indigenous manufacture in graves at various sites, which are largely fibulae of varying types. The graves themselves, however, are Greek in appearance, with the possible exception of the variants discussed below, and there are some problems in interpreting the metalwork in them as ethnically distinguishing. Apart from the obvious hazards of equating artefacts with people, fibulae very often occur in the graves of children rather than adult women and at times in quantity, where they may represent reasonably wealthy and readily available grave offerings rather than the adherence of native women to their traditional dress. Moreover, their appearance in possible male graves and at sites in Greece implies that these objects could be adopted by Greeks and used without the intention of declaring ethnic affiliations. At the very least, however, their presence must imply a degree of trade and contact with the indigenous populations and influence on Greek life from that quarter as well.\(^3\)

Greek burials of children are quite often relatively wealthy, perhaps because they provided scope for display of parental status. On the other hand, it is also true that quantities of metalwork, particularly personal ornaments, are a feature of indigenous graves in Italy and Sicily. Here it may be the case that assemblages and manner of use are of more significance than the individual objects themselves, in combination with evidence of ritual. At the hellenized Sikel site of Morgantina, for example, the archaic cemetery has revealed an extraordinary mixture of Sikel and Greek burial customs, including such oddities as a ‘Greek’ sarcophagus within a traditional Sikel chamber tomb. Here also significant amounts of Greek pottery have been found and it is suggested that its appearance in the form of symposion sets is of much significance as being indicative of the adoption of Greek social practices at Morgantina rather than the simple use of objects acquired through trade. A mixed population has reasonably been suggested as the explanation for these combinations of customs and artefacts (Lyons 1996, 132–3), but even so it is difficult to differentiate unequivocally between a genuinely mixed settlement involving intermarriage and a heavily hellenized community desirous of declaring and acquiring Greek affiliations through appearances.

Cemeteries in Greek colonies present a different situation because mixing of burial customs is less obvious. Apart from the fibulae and other pieces of metalwork, however, several other burial features which occur in Greek cemeteries may be open to interpretation as indigenous practice and may extend an indigenous element in Greek colonies beyond native wives. These are multiple burial, contracted burial and akephalia, or differential treatment of the skull.

\(^1\) See for example Coldstream 1993 with earlier bibliography.
\(^2\) For a discussion of the passages in question, see Shepherd 1999, 268–70, with references.
\(^3\) For fuller discussion of this issue see Shepherd 1999. Pithekoussai is particularly noteworthy for fibulae in graves, but they also occur in lesser quantities in Sicily, in particular at Syracuse but also at Megara Hyblaea and Gela. There is also an eighth century burial of a female at Naxos (T. 72) which has been identified as that of an indigenous inhabitant on the basis of the metalwork (Albanese Procelli 1997, 519; Leighton 1999, 246).
Multiple burial

Multiple burial was not unknown in Greece in the archaic period, but it was relatively unusual; in Sicily, by contrast, it was common practice at indigenous sites with rock-cut chamber tombs designed for multiple inhumations. It also occurs with some frequency in the cemeteries of Greek settlements in Sicily, raising the possibility that such burials were influenced by Sikel practice and the graves contain residents of Sikel origin; on occasion these multiple graves also include fibulae amongst their grave goods, which may be of significance. At Greek sites, however, multiple burial does not take the form of tombs specifically designed for more than one occupant, but rather multiple depositions are made in receptacles normally reserved for single burial and in addition there is evidence for very tight grave plotting by which a grave may be described as ‘multiple’. There do not appear to be significant time lapses between individual burials – perhaps no more than a generation – and most appear to be more or less contemporary, apart from a few obvious cases of much later grave reuse unlikely to be connected with the original deposition.

Syracuse provides a good example: multiple burial was not employed in Syracuse’s historical mother-city Corinth, but in the colony some 14 per cent of burials up to around the early sixth century fall into the category of multiple interments. Most involve two skeletons within a single receptacle, but more can occur also and this category also includes plots with enchyrismoi (pot burials) or even extended skeletons on the lids of sarcophagi. Orsi (1895, 112) suggested that the latter could be slave burials, which is possible in some cases but less likely in those where such exterior skeletons are accompanied by goods. Like the fibulae, multiple burials belong largely to the seventh century and disappear in the course of the sixth, which may be indicative of stronger indigenous influence in earlier decades of the life of the colony which faded as ethnic distinctions became blurred with time. Another feature of these multiple burials may also be significant: almost all of them are associated with monolithic sarcophagi, although there is no obvious reason why the fossa (trench) graves, at least if not more common than sarcophagi during the seventh century, should not have served the purpose equally well. Over the course of the seventh century, the sarcophagus appears to have become an increasingly élite burial type, and the clustering of depositions in and around these receptacles implies the desire to create an exclusive group, most likely a family plot. This is perhaps the result of the infusion of Sikel practices, but is equally perhaps due to the crystallization of Syracusan society into stratified groups and the need to assert membership of a specific group – or perhaps a combination of the two.

It is interesting to observe that a similar phenomenon occurs at Megara Hyblaea and Gela. As at Syracuse, multiple burial appears most frequently in association with monolithic sarcophagus graves. At Megara Hyblaea, the rate of multiple deposition is much higher and also longer lived, rising to slightly over 40 per cent of graves over the course of the later seventh and sixth centuries. This is also the time when the sarcophagus becomes the most common grave type. There are relatively few groups clustered around sarcophagi, with many multiple burials being confined to two adult skeletons laid in opposite directions inside the stone box. At Gela,

4 As for example Ts 436 and 450 in the Fusco necropolis (Orsi 1895): both were impressive seventh century monolithic sarcophagi, the former containing an adult and child with two further skeletons extended on the cover; the latter had two enchyrismoi burials on the cover and an adult and child inside.

5 For example Ts 205, 320 (without goods; Orsi 1895), Ts 204, 425 and 471 (with goods; Orsi 1895).
multiple burial was less common (approx. 10 per cent) and again is concentrated in monolithic sarcophagi, disappearing with the sarcophagi in the second half of the sixth century and not being maintained in the *bauli*, or terracotta sarcophagi, which replaced the stone versions.\(^6\)

The popularity of monolithic sarcophagi and multiple burial at Megara Hyblaea does not thus far appear to be repeated at the sub-colony of Selinus, where sarcophagi are exceptional in published cemeteries and likewise multiple burials. In the Buffa necropolis (seventh–fifth centuries) six inhumations of 754 appeared to be multiple and of these several may be cases of a reuse unrelated to the original deposition given the date range of the grave goods; it may be of significance that two, Ts 307 and 333, each containing two children and dating to the first half of the sixth century, were monolithic sarcophagi.\(^7\) Multiple burials are similarly uncommon in the Manicalunga necropolis (sixth–fifth centuries): only one, a double burial, is reported so far from the Timpone Nero sector of 357 inhumations (Leibundgut Wieland 1995, 193) and three similar double inhumations dating to the fifth century were found in the Gaggera sector.\(^8\)

In the latter area, however, some extraordinary collective tombs have come to light also, all large *fossa* graves of very unusual appearance: T. 160 (c.600–575) is perhaps the oldest and also the oddest, since it contained not only an inhumation and seven urns (four empty, three with secondary cremations) but also a horse burial; T. 156, a *fossa* of similar date, also had an inhumation and one empty and one cinerary urn.\(^9\) Ts 67 and 47 were both large *fossae* dating around the middle of the fifth century and containing substantial amounts of burnt bone and so possibly collective cremation burials;\(^10\) the enormous mass grave T. 88 (at least 6 x 6m) of c.475–450 held 26 inhumation burials. From the evidence so far available from Selinus, multiple burials are rare and tend to appear in the fifth century, a rather late stage for indigenous practice to be a likely influencing factor; they are also widely varied in appearance and as such are more likely to be the *ad hoc* solutions to specific situations, such as the war graves suggested by Kustermann Graf (2002, 89).

The evidence from these sites suggests that multiple burial occurred most frequently in the first century or so of Greek settlement in Sicily – when indeed we might expect to look first for clear signs of Sikel presence – and/or in connection with monolithic sarcophagi. The

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\(^6\) For fuller discussion and references to relevant site reports for Syracuse, Megara Hyblaea and Gela, see Shepherd 1995.

\(^7\) Meola 1996–8. Other multiple graves in the Buffa necropolis are: T. 42 (rock-cut *fossa* with two inhumations; the two sets of goods date to approximately a century apart – a case of reuse rather than true multiple burial?); T. 214 (rock-cut *fossa* with three inhumations, pottery of the late sixth to mid-fifth century; T. 226 (terracotta sarcophagus containing a child and six inhumations on the cover; the single oinochoe associated with the grave is dated to the sixth–fifth centuries); T. 238 (rock-cut *fossa* with two inhumations and pottery c.550–450) and T. 417 (*enchytrismos* of two children in a pithos; no goods). From the concordance in Meola’s publication Ts 307 and 333 correspond respectively to Ts 526 and 527 as published by Isler (1968).

\(^8\) Kustermann Graf 2002: Ts 16 (*fossa*, c.475–50); T. 58 (*fossa*, mid-fifth century); T. 137 (*tiles a cappuccina; probably fifth century). Kustermann Graf also speculates that T. 81, a *fossa* dating to the second quarter of the fifth century, may have originally contained a child as well as the adult on the basis of the feeder included in the grave goods; cf. however Leibundgut Wieland (1995) who finds also feeders in adult graves (p. 203) and needles in child graves (p. 205), perhaps indicating that grave goods should not always be taken as age-specific; also Lyons (1996, 130) who notes that at Morgantina feeders were associated with adults rather than children, contrary to expectation.

\(^9\) T. 116 (c.475–450) may have been a similar collective urn burial: the substantial fifth century *fossa* contained three empty Laconian kraters which conceivably originally held secondary cremations or *enchytrismoi*.

\(^10\) Also observed at Kamarina: cf. Lanza 1990, 185.
association between these sarcophagi and multiple burial is surely significant and must have motives extending beyond the adoption of indigenous practices, given the range of other possible receptacles. The sarcophagus is clearly a relatively expensive form of grave, particularly at Gela where good stone supply was problematic, and its prestige factor seems to have been instrumental in the assertion of social status both within and between the Greek city-states. It is possible therefore that multiple burial in sarcophagi may have been not only a physical manifestation of the attempt to establish élite groups, but also to a degree a response on the part of social aspirants to the demands of economy. At Gela it was abandoned with the introduction of the more viable terracotta baule and at Megara Hyblaea both cost and social considerations may account for relatively regular multiple burial and bulk graves such as T. 8V in the West necropolis (Orsi and Caruso 1892, 178) which provided for the remains of five children. Indigenous influence may be detectable in the multiple burials at Greek sites, but they should also be viewed within the context of the economies and internal social dynamics of those societies.

**Contracted burials**

Contracted burials are inhumation burials where the skeleton has been laid in a flexed position (often on its side) rather than the extended dorsal position which is usual in Greek cemeteries in the West. Only a very few such burials have been reported amongst the hundreds of graves at colonial sites, but where they do occur they have generally been connected with Sikel or Italian burials on the basis that contracted burial is commonly found in Sikel chamber tombs and in southern Italy. In Sicily, probably the biggest group comes from the South necropolis at Megara Hyblaea, where out of about 60 inhumation burials found in 1974 six were contracted. The graves are reported to date mainly between 640–500 BC and, although they are relatively late, the excavator notes the significance of the contracted position as a possible sign of indigenous practice (Gras 1975, 48). Thus far, however, this group of contracted burials appears isolated: the full publication of the South necropolis, currently in progress, may reveal more contracted burials, but none has been noted for the hundreds of graves in the West necropolis, also in use in the later seventh and sixth centuries (Orsi and Cavallari 1889–92; Orsi and Caruso 1892). If the contracted burials do represent members of the indigenous population, at present they appear in negligible numbers. It is also worth noting that contracted burial was not exclusively a Sikel custom and in fact was far from uncommon in Greece. It was, for example, standard practice in Geometric and Archaic Corinth (although not in the Corinthian colony Syracuse) and indeed for the whole of the Peloponnese in the cist cemeteries of the sub-Mycenaean to Geometric periods. The burial customs of Megara, the historical mother-city of Megara Hyblaea, are not well known but in a group of 15 Geometric inhumation burials found at Agioi Theodoroi all burials which had a visible skeleton indicated that the corpse had been placed in a contracted position (Daux 1962, 686–8; Verdelis and Alexandri 1961–2, 52–4). The possibility, therefore, that these represent atypical Greek graves rather than the permutation of indigenous customs should also be considered. They may be better placed in a category similar

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11 See, for example, Kurtz and Boardman 1971, 308.
12 Gras 1975, 47–8. Some enchytrismos burials were also found and Gras notes that about half the skeletons were those of children or adolescents. The inhumation graves also included monumental tombs bordering the road, possibly a sign of status (Gras 1975, 41, 47).
to other atypical grave types at Megara Hyblaea and other Greek sites, as for example the
two stone boxes containing secondary cremations in the West necropolis (Orsi and Cavallari 1889–92, 823, T. 41; 826, T. 55), which could conceivably represent Greeks of varying
origins (for which see further below). Whatever the case, the contracted burials at Megara
Hyblaea thus far appear in numbers too small to represent any significant element in the
population.

Other rare instances of contracted burial are even more isolated. One such example is
T. 100 at Gela (Orsi 1906, 70–1), which, like other examples, is otherwise Greek in appearance.
It is a seventh century tile a cappuccina grave only 95 cm in length with the skeleton folded
inside. Orsi suggested it represented a Sikel slave buried amidst the Greek population (Orsi
1906, 70–1, 244) but at the same time noted it was exceptional and the idea of slave status is
somewhat belied by the presence of a Rhodian aryballos and, more significantly, a bronze pin.
Metalwork does not appear in great quantities in Geloan graves and so the pin must increase
the wealth of a grave of poor but nevertheless fairly common type. At Syracuse, in the Fusco
necropolis, a contracted adult burial was found, without goods, in a monolithic sarcophagus (T.
142, Orsi 1895, 120) and a perhaps semi-flexed one in a large rock-cut fossa also containing
a bronze pin (T. 498, Orsi 1895, 184); if anything the former in fact corresponds better than
most burials at Syracuse with those of the historical mother-city Corinth. At Selinus, in the
Buffa necropolis (seventh–fifth centuries) and the Gaggera sector (sixth–fifth centuries) of the
Manicalunga necropolis, all inhumations had extended supine skeletons, while in the Timione
Nero sector a single corpse, out of 358 confirmed inhumations, was in a contracted position and
Leibundgut Wieland notes that none of the graves in her sample suggests that the occupant could
have come from a non-Greek cultural context. Other similar examples have been found at
Lentini and Kamarina. Again, however, although contracted burials are scattered at Greek sites
across Sicily, they occur so rarely that they do not at present supply significant direct evidence
of the cohabitation of Greeks and natives and could equally represent well-attested Greek
practice.

In Italy the situation is similar. The recently excavated Pantanello necropolis at
Metapontum has yielded a total of eight burials categorized as contracted out of a total of 310
graves. Five of these were fossa burials, with only one (T. 320) in a fully flexed position. T.
301 was slightly flexed, with the skull facing west and the right arm across the body and the
latter features also occurred in Ts 299 and 356, although here the legs were in an extended
position. The fifth fossa burial (T. 247) may have been flexed but was also disturbed. The burials
cannot be dated precisely, but two at least appear to be early (Ts 299, 301) and the rest,
particularly T. 320, may in fact pre-date Greek use of the site. Other contracted burials identified at Pantanello include two *a cappuccina* tile burials, one of a child (T. 241) and the other of an adult female (T. 281). These are much later, being dated to c.475–275 and c.370–50 BC respectively. The most intriguing contracted burial is the late sixth century sarcophagus T. 131, where the rite is apparently mixed. One of the very few multiple burials in the cemetery, it contained a male skeleton in an extended position, rather uncomfortably squashed into the sarcophagus to make room for the contracted burial of a female. As Carter notes, this could indicate a mixture of Greek and indigenous customs (and perhaps a fascinating representation of intermarriage?), but equally the flexed position would have been normal for a Greek from a city such as Corinth (Carter 1998, 110). So far this burial is unique, and again at Pantanello the evidence for contracted burial is ambiguous and so limited that it is difficult to infer any significant degree of cohabitation with certainty.

It is, of course, possible that much of our evidence is simply missing. The issue of slave graves is significant here, since if slave burials or cemeteries could be clearly identified at Greek sites then they would be good candidates for graves of indigenes: enslavement may account for the demise of major Sikel sites not long after the arrival of the Greeks and for groups such as the *Killyrioi* at Syracuse who revolted against their masters in 485 BC. Unfortunately slave burials are on the whole difficult to detect in the Greek world and Western sites are no exception. Apart from generally poor graves, possible cases are confined to a small set of rather ambiguous examples, such as T. 100 at Gela, or the unusual fifth century T. 1771 grave in the Pezzino necropolis at Akragas. The latter is a *fossa* grave, a common type at the site, and it contained a fifth century oinochoe and, intriguingly, a pair of iron manacles. Finds of the accessories of slavery are very rare and it is unclear why these manacles were deposited in the grave rather than recycled, as presumably was usually the case. In general, we have no set of poor graves which is conspicuously a set of slave burials, whether indigenous or not, and the conclusion

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18 Carter (1998, 64–5). Ts 299 and 301 are dated to 761–680 and 700–540 respectively on the basis of 14C dating. Ts 320, 356 and 247 are placed between ninth–third centuries BC. Carter notes, on the basis of comparison with burials at Incoronata and San Teodoro that T. 320, the only fully contracted *fossa* burial, may pre-date all other burials at Pantanello (Carter 1998, 65).

19 The Pantanello necropolis contained between seven and nine multiple burials (two cases are unclear) out of a total of 310 graves. The earliest multiple burial dates to the mid-sixth century (Carter 1998, 108–10).

20 Other examples of possibly mixed burial grounds in Italy include Siris and Incoronata Lazazzera. At Siris, in the Schirone necropolis, some of the secondary cremations were in indigenous impasto situlae, from which a mixed population has been inferred (Adamesteau 1974, 112–13), while in the Madonelle necropolis seven of the eight adult inhumations in *fossae* were contracted (4 per cent of the total number of adult burials), which may indicate that they were slaves (Berlingò 1986, 122, 126; see also Carter 1998, 58). For Incoronata Lazazzera, which also has contracted burials, see Carter 1998, 58.

21 Cf. Cébeillac-Gervasoni 1975, 30 who asks whether or not it is possible to equate poor graves with slave burials. Orsi (1895, 112) suggested that the cases of skeletons extended upon the lids of sarcophagi at Syracuse (e.g. Ts 205, 320; Orsi 1895, 133, 148) could be slave burials, despite the fact that some are accompanied by goods (e.g. Ts 205, 425, 471; Orsi 1895, 131–2, 165–7, 181). At Poseidonia in Italy, the archaic Ponte di Ferro necropolis has been identified as a possible slave cemetery on the basis that the graves are dug in sand, are sometimes covered with misshapen tiles and the few that have grave goods have only local imitations of imported pottery (Pedley 1990, 36).

22 De Miro 1989, 70. The position of the skeleton in T. 1771 is not specifically described but in the fifth century corpses were generally laid in an extended position in the Pezzino necropolis. De Miro (1989, 22, 28) notes however the existence of two contracted burials dating to the archaic period in the necropolis: T. 1117, a rock-cut *fossa* with two skeletons and T. 120 (not described).
must be that if Greek sites were mixed at least to the extent of a resident indigenous slave population, then this group is undetectable at burial, perhaps because here as elsewhere in the Greek world slaves were disposed of in an informal manner which is not archaeologically visible.

The issue of contracted burials and their possible connections with indigenous populations is further complicated by evidence that Sikel burials were not themselves necessarily always contracted. While the flexed position certainly appears to be predominant, there are odd cases of extended burials in Iron Age Sicily: for example, Orsi noted occasional instances at Cassibile and Monte Dessueri; Iron Age Tomb VI at Morgantina contained six extended skeletons and in the chamber tombs of the Archaic Cemeteries the extended position also seems to prevail; at Finocchito Orsi described a number of skeletons as ‘disteso’ and noted a very few in the contracted position; and at Mulino della Badia/Madonna del Piano near Grammichele, where inhumation in fossae and pithoi rather than chamber tombs was employed, the fossa graves held extended burials.23 Sikel practice clearly allowed for some variation in body position and, as Leighton (1999, 234) notes for burial practices more generally, the prevailing method of corpse arrangement at Greek and Sikel sites may not have been entirely unfamiliar to either group. The decision as to whether to lay a corpse in a contracted or extended position is clearly a significant one within burial ritual – the absence, for example, of contracted burial at Syracuse is one of more significant points of departure of Syracusan burial customs from those of her historical mother-city Corinth – but is not a particularly helpful tool in distinguishing between Greeks and indigenous Sicilians.

Acephalous burials

A burial method frequently associated with native Sikel practice is that of akephalia, in which the skull receives different treatment from the rest of the body. In fact a variety of situations tend to get lumped together somewhat inaccurately under the heading of acephalous burials, ranging from those where the skull is preserved (with or without the body) to those where the skull is missing. Such burials occur at Sikel sites as well as in the Greek colonies, but with the exception of a couple of sites acephalous burials are by no means common and the majority are in contexts datable to the period of Greek settlement in Sicily. The most impressive case is that of the fortified Sikel settlement of Rossomanno, near Enna: in the appropriately named ‘campi di crani’ in the seventh–fourth century Rocca Crovacchio necropolis scores of skulls were discovered in chamber tombs, some neatly placed in individual paterae of local manufacture and lacking any accompanying body parts.24

The Rossomanno cemetery is thus far unique in Sicily and on this basis it has been plausibly suggested that it may relate to the exigencies of a specific event such as a battle (Albanese Procelli 1996, 173). Other cases of akephalia appear amidst more standard forms of disposal in major cemeteries in use over generations. The best example is Butera, a site

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24 Albanese Procelli 1996, 173; Becker 1986, 33; Fiorentini 1980, 134–5, fig. 27; Fiorentini 1980–1, 599; Leighton 1999, 255; Lyons 1996, 120; Mercuri 2001, 11. The site has yet to be fully published, but apparently the burials date to the sixth century and post-cranial remains were cremated (Albanese Procelli 1996, 173).
approximately 15 km inland from Gela and apparently in contact with the latter from the second quarter of the seventh century (Adamesteau 1958). The burials of the pre-Greek eighth and early seventh century ‘first stratum’ are of the standard Sikel type, namely multiple inhumations in rock-cut chamber tombs. In the second stratum, dating to the seventh and early sixth centuries, the burial method radically changes to one of dominant secondary cremation, where some of the burial urns contained a skull with cremated bone or simply a skull. This unusual cemetery has been explained in a number of ways: the switch to cremation is generally regarded as reflecting significant Greek influence and possibly settlement from the coastal site of Gela, founded near the beginning of the seventh century (Rizza 1984–5, 65–7; Guzzone 1985–6, 25; Albanese Procelli 1996, 172); the excavator, Adamesteau, originally suggested that the acephalous burials were a compromise between Greek cremation and Sikel inhumation (Adamesteau 1958, 568); a possible connection with similar cremation graves, including acephalous burials, found in the Siderospilia necropolis at Priniàs on Crete (a possible source of Geloan colonists) was first pointed out by Camerata Scovazzo (1978); this theory has been expanded upon by Rizza, who advocates a high degree of Greek influence from Gela at Butera, and Adamesteau, who argues that stratum II is essentially Greek and that the graves represent Cretan settlers (Rizza 1983, 50–1; 1984–5; Adamesteau 1994–5, 109–17; see also for discussion Domínguez 1989, 288–90; Guzzone (with reservations) 1985–6, 26–8; La Rosa 1989, 36; Orlandini 1962, 78–82).

There are, however, some problems with the Geloan or Cretan explanations of the Butera graves. While archaic Gela does display a higher rate of cremation than other Greek sites in the West, in fact the cemeteries of Gela and Butera are less similar than is sometimes implied (e.g. Orlandini 1962, 79; Rizza 1984–5, 65–7): cremations at Gela are more often primary and in any case never account for more than about a third of all adult burials, with most adults and children receiving inhumation. At Butera, inhumation appears to be reserved primarily for children, with adults receiving secondary cremation, sometimes with differential treatment of the skull. The Butera graves do appear to be similar to those at Priniàs, but equally differences have been pointed out in not only the form of the tombs (such as the stone tumuli of Priniàs as opposed to simple rings at Butera; see further Mercuri 2001, 28–9) but also possibly in the application of *akephalia*: the cases so far reported at Priniàs all relate to very young children and not necessarily to cremation rather than inhumation burials. Moreover, the Priniàs graves do not adequately explain the reported instances of *akephalia*, in varying forms, at other sites in Sicily.

One such site is Entella, in central Sicily, where a purportedly undisturbed ‘acephalous’ burial dating to the end of the seventh century was found. In this case, the skull, probably of an adult male, was positioned on a rock shelf above an amphora (Becker 1986, 33, 49; Guglielmino 1994, 207–9). It appears to be an isolated example, but since the rest of the archaic cemetery was disturbed it is difficult to be certain as regards its uniqueness or indeed its

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25 Orlandini (1962, 81) argues that the early sixth century terminus which Adamesteau assigned to the second stratum is too low, on the basis that no Transitional or Early Corinthian pottery appears in the stratum. Instead, he suggests that the burials belong mainly to a restricted period of the second and third quarters of the seventh century and that the cemetery was abandoned before the appearance of pottery of Corinthian date.

26 Rizza 1978, 109–10; see also Mercuri 2001, 29. At Priniàs the practice of *akephalia* may also be exceptional, in contrast to its relatively common occurrence at Butera (cf. Mercuri 2001, 29), but the site is not yet fully published and precise figures are not given in the preliminary reports.
Guglielmino argues that this burial is better placed in a fully indigenous rather than a hellenized or Greek tradition (Guglielmino 1994, 209), as may also be the case for the six skulls found with other bone remains in a disturbed archaic chamber tomb at Monte Navone, although again the state of the tomb prompts reservations (Gentili 1969, 11–12; Guglielmino 1994, 208; Albanese Procelli 1997, 520). At nearby Morgantina, the eighth century chamber tomb V contained the skulls of two children neatly placed by the side of two complete adult skeletons, and the Greek-style graves Ts 21 (double enchytrismos) and 26 (tiles a cappuccina), both dating to the late sixth or early fifth century, contained the skulls of two infants and three children respectively, with no other skeletal material (Leighton 1993, 109; Lyons 1996, 120). Leighton (1993, 109 note 35) notes that for the case of chamber tomb V the possibility that the other remains of the children had disintegrated cannot be excluded, although as Lyons argues the appearance of child skulls also in Ts 21 and 26 may be sufficiently consistent so as to imply deliberate treatment rather than random survival (Lyons 1996, 120). It is also worth considering the possibility that motives for the practice of akephalia with regard to children may differ from those for adults and the two are not necessarily comparable. There are also possible cases of adult akephalia at Morgantina in Ts 30, 31, 39 and 50, where skulls were collected together on one side of the tomb and there was insufficient skeletal material for the corresponding bodies. These tombs are all relatively late, dating to the later sixth and early fifth centuries, and Lyons (1996, 120) notes that rearrangement of the skeletons for tomb maintenance subsequent to decomposition is a possible explanation, as opposed to akephalia (cf. also Mercuri 2001, 17–19). These examples find comparison in similar cases at Monte Finocchito (Steures 1980): Tombs Northwest 1 and Vallata San Francisco 62 both included two child skulls and adult skulls were found in North 44 (one child and five adult skulls) and North 45 (seven skulls). The last two had, however, been disturbed in the past. There may also be some very limited evidence for differential treatment of the skull existing in Sicily since the Copper Age (Becker 1986, 35–6, 51–3) which might support an indigenous origin for the practice, and the Sikel custom of reusing chamber tombs and sometimes shifting earlier occupants combined with a lack of recording in early reports may make such burials harder to detect. Equally, however, ancient rearrangement of skeletons and variable environmental conditions may have effectively created some of the more isolated examples. In general, however, cases of akephalia dating to before the arrival of the Greeks are unfortunately very few, even allowing for the vagaries of survival and excavation and the same applies to those at Sikel sites dating to the period of Greek settlement.

Other known examples occur at Greek sites. The two from Gela are similar in nature to the Butera burials: T. 178 in the archaic Borgo necropolis was an amphora containing the skulls of an adult and a child but no grave goods; T. 8 in the archaic La Paglia necropolis was an amphora with some (‘insufficient’) burnt bone and three unburnt skulls. Other cases are less similar: at Himera, in the densely occupied and predominantly sixth century necropolis, a possible acephalous burial is T. 41, in which a skull was protected only by a fragment of an olla (Di Stefano 1976, 798, 818, 825). At Syracuse, an adult skull was found in an archaic monolithic sarcophagus without other bones (T. 84, with associated fragments of a bucchero kantheros: 27 Cf. Mercuri (2001, 16) who notes that the possibility that the skull was placed on the rock shelf by a facetious tomb robber. 28 Orsi 1906, 113, 214–15 and 244. T. 8 had a Corinthian pyxis (Sir. inv. 21909, described in the report as a stamnos) associated with it. Orlandini (1962, 79) suggests that these burials can be attributed to an indigenous element in the population.
Orsi 1893, 449–50, 470) and T. 126, a rock-cut fossa grave of the mid-sixth century, had a child’s skeleton at the bottom and, at a higher level, an adult skull (Orsi 1893, 450, 481–2).

At Megara Hyblaea, cases of akephalia are distinctly different from anything so far encountered at other sites. Tombs 56 and 86 were both monolithic sarcophagi containing multiple burials, the former with four complete skeletons and one skull, the latter with five child skeletons and one adult skull. In both cases, the skulls were not inhumed but had been cremated, in contrast to examples at both Sikel and Greek sites discussed above (Orsi and Cavallari 1889–92, 826, 838–9). The sixth century monolithic sarcophagus Tomb 309 contained a skeleton with two additional skulls, although Orsi expresses some doubt about this case.29 Other examples here are true acephalous burials, in which the skull is missing but the rest of the body is present. Tomb 208 is described by Orsi as a hermetically sealed (and therefore presumably undisturbed) monolithic sarcophagus containing an extended skeleton which was missing its skull (Orsi and Cavallari 1889–92, 877–8). Tomb 235 was also a sealed sarcophagus, but this time had been reused: the bones of one skeleton had been piled up at the east end to make room for a second, placed in an extended position and lacking a skull (Orsi and Cavallari 1889–92, 886). For the South necropolis, Cébeillac-Gervasoni reports that buried remains were not always complete and sometimes only the skull was found, pointing in particular to graves B133 and C247, both secondary cremations in amphorae with skulls; these at least may be closer to the Butera and Rossomanno types.30 Another variation on the akephalia theme occurs at Kamarina, where a classical sarcophagus constructed of stone blocks contained the primary cremation of a skeleton in which the skull was not detectable (Passo Marinaro T. 152 (32); Orsi 1904, 804); T. 1067, an earth burial without goods in which the skull was also not visible, may be another case (Lanza 1990, 100). In Italy, the Pantanello necropolis again provides some evidence with yet another variant in the three graves described as ‘decapitation’ burials, where the skull was apparently deliberately repositioned by the waist (T. 97 and T. 80) or the feet (T. 198). T. 97 was an a cappuccina tile grave with a female with no grave goods; the other two burials were T. 198, a fossa containing a female and T. 80, a cist with a male and a female with her head displaced. Both contained pottery and metalwork and are chronologically widely separated, T. 198 being dated to c.410–360 and T. 80 to c.300–275. The excavators note that precise parallels have not so far been observed in Greek necropoleis.31

It is clear, then, that burials which display differential treatment of the skull are highly varied in nature, encompassing inhumation, both primary and secondary cremation, and different types of receptacle. In particular, the distinction between the retention or removal of the skull seems significant and it seems more likely that the two different methods represent different

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29 ‘... furono segnalati altri due crani, senza poter assolutamente constatare la esistenza dei relativi scheletri’ (Orsi and Cavallari 1889–92, 902).

30 Cébeillac-Gervasoni 1975, 35 and 1976–7, 593, 594. From Cébeillac-Gervasoni’s list of 254 graves in the South necropolis at Megara Hyblaea (1976–7, 591–5), other possible instances of varying treatment of different body parts may include graves B110 (inhumation in an amphora with part of an adult skeleton); B124 (fossa with inhumed adult skull); B126 (fossa with inhumed child skull); and B149 (amphora cremation with adult skull). None of these graves is assigned a date.

31 Carter 1998, 110–11. Acephalous burials are also reported for the late sixth–fourth century Lucifero necropolis at Locri Epizephyrii in Italy: T. 689 was an earth fossa with an adult skeleton and the skull of a boy approximately 10 years old (Orsi 1913, 22). Orsi also reports but does not describe two further acephalous burials in Ts 1027 and 1057 (Orsi 1917, 160). At Metauros a possible case is T. IV (second half of the sixth century or later), where the skeleton is described lacking its upper part (De Franciscis 1960, 40–2); akephalia is also reported for the late fourth–second century BC cemetery at Cefalù, where most burials were primary cremations (Tullio 1979, 43).
rituals than the opposite ends, as it were, of the same rite. True akephalia does not yet seem to have been identified at indigenous sites, although tomb reuse and disturbance may make this even harder to detect than skull deposition. The burials are also fairly widely scattered across Sicily and are, in general, exceptional. Apart from Butera and Rossomanno, all these burials occur alongside hundreds of others where the treatment of the body is unremarkable. None of the graves at Greek sites is recorded as containing anything else which might be connected with the indigenous population, as for example the fibulae which occur elsewhere at the same sites; the coincidence of multiple burial and akephalia in some cases, most frequently at Megara Hyblaea, may be significant, but not necessarily: multiple burials and reuse of graves not obviously designed for more than one occupant could have resulted in significant rearrangement and even rationalization of earlier remains (cf. Mercuri 2001, 22). Otherwise, the graves are Greek in appearance, being either cremations or contained in a typically Greek sarcophagus and accompanied by Greek grave goods.

The latter are most significant in that they can give an indication of date. Not all of these burials are readily datable, since they have little in the way of diagnostic goods and have not always been published in sufficient detail. The ‘acephalous’ burials at sites with concrete native connections, such as Butera and possibly also Entella, Morgantina and Finocchito, occur as early as the seventh century or even the eighth; Rossomanno is reported to date to the sixth century (Albanese Procelli 1996, 173) but has yet to be fully published and at present appears exceptional. By contrast, all such burials at Greek sites which can be dated are relatively late, belonging in the sixth century and later rather than the seventh century when we might reasonably look for them first. Thus, for example, at Gela La Paglia T. 8 had a Late Corinthian pyxis (Sir. inv. 21909); T. 126 at Syracuse dates to c.550 and a collection of sixth century figurines and Corinthian pottery accompanied the child buried at the bottom of the fossa; and the grave at Kamarina had a black glaze skyphos and fragments of red-figure pottery in the surrounding earth. In the South necropolis at Megara Hyblaea a date is given only for T. B133, which is placed at the end of the sixth century. In the West necropolis, two of the five possible acephalos graves can be dated. Tomb 309 had a Middle Corinthian ring aryballos and a black-figure lekythos attributed by Beazley to the Taleides Painter, active in the first half of the sixth century. The substantial assemblage of Tomb 86 belongs to the sixth century (probably the first half) and includes figurines of standard sixth century type (Sir. invs 7946–8) and four aryballoi of the ‘quatrefoil’ type common in the sixth century (Sir. invs 7951–3). Orsi also refers to ten small skyphoi as Protocorinthian, but they are in fact miniature Corinthian skyphoi, also very common in the sixth century.

For a discussion of fibulae in graves at Greek sites in Sicily, see Shepherd 1999.

Rare cases of cremations are recorded in pre-Greek Sicily, as for example at Madonna del Piano (see Leighton 1999, 195–202 for discussion and references). In general, however, inhumation was the rule for the indigenous populations and cremation is more readily associated with Greek practice.

T. 126, Fusco necropolis, Syracuse: 11 East Greek figurines (Sir. invs 12533–7, 12538–42); Corinthian amphoriskos (Sir. inv. 12546); Corinthian pyxis (Sir. inv. 12545); seven small Corinthian kotylai (no inv.).

Aryballos: Amyx 1988, 440, Sir. inv. 8277; lekythos: Beazley 1956, 175, Sir. inv. 8276.

One of these skyphoi is on display in Paolo Orsi Museum, Siracusa (Sir. inv. 7960). This is an error which Orsi frequently makes (compare, for example, his description of Corinthian miniature skyphoi as Protocorinthian in the cases of Ts 105 and 282: Orsi and Cavallari 1889–92, 846–7 and 896–7, with illustrations). Orsi was writing at the time when Protocorinthian and Corinthian were not well understood and the origin of the former hotly debated (for a brief account of the debate, see Shepherd 1993, 228–9). The material he excavated at sites in Sicily was, of course, to form the basis for Payne’s fundamental work Necrocorinthia, published in 1931.
The interpretation of *akephalia* in Greek colonies is, then, problematic. Relevant burials show a high degree of variation but are otherwise Greek in appearance; they are nowhere common and, where they can be dated, they are relatively late. Indigenous custom is clearly one explanation, given the rare pre-Greek examples, Rossomanno and, more problematically, Butera, but even in the native context *akephalia* appears to have been an exceptional practice and we are ignorant of the circumstances in which it was employed. Given the lack of close correlation between *akephalia* at native sites and that at Greek sites, it may be worth casting around more widely for possible explanations other than a straightforward connection with a native element in the population: there is some Greek evidence for differential treatment of the skull not only at Priniàs but also Geometric Argos (Charles 1963, 67–9; Fiedler 1986, 193), and other suggestions such as the salvage of the skull from the battlefield for burial at home or some sort of criminal punishment have also been put forward (Carter 1998, 110–11).

**OTHER ATYPICAL BURIALS: MIXED GREEKS?**

Potential ethnic mixtures in Western Greek settlements are not confined simply to Greek and native cohabitation. There is also the possibility that these settlements were founded and populated by Greeks from different areas, bringing with them different traditions and customs. While ancient writers are generally silent regarding the practicalities of foundation, for many sites, particularly in Sicily, we have clear ancient record of the names of founding cities, from which it is usually assumed most if not all the settlers derived (e.g. Murray 1993, 113). There are occasional hints that other groups could be included: Strabo (8.6.22) implies that most of the settlers who went with the *oikist* Archias to Syracuse came from Tenea rather than Corinth itself, but since Tenea is in the Corinthia this may make little difference.37 The same may apply to the suggestion that some colonists at Gela came from Nisiros as well as Rhodes and Crete: again these settlers would have come from the same general geographical and cultural ambit as the historical colonizing party, with similar if not identical customs.38 Others may have come from further afield: as noted above, Strabo (6.2.4) reports that Archias picked up some Greeks at Zephyrion on his way to Sicily39 and Archilochos’ famous complaint that the settlement founded at Thasos by Paros was composed of the ‘misery of all Greece’ (frag. 102) may have parallels in the West also.

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37 For description and discussion of graves in Corinth and the Corinthia generally, see Dickey 1992.
38 Adamesteanu (1956) has made the suggestion that some of the settlers at Gela came from the island of Nisiros near Rhodes on the basis of vase types at Gela. Cremation was also the dominant adult burial method on Nisiros, generally in the form of pyres (Jacopy 1932–3, 472–541).
39 Boardman (1999, 172) notes that archaeological material indicates the presence of Euboeans around the Zephyrion promontory at this period.
If colonizing parties were derived from different areas of Greece, then the role of the historical mother-city was primarily that of supplier of the oikist who organized and perhaps initiated the venture.\(^{40}\) This role for the mother-city has been suggested recently on the reasonable grounds that Greek cities of the eighth and seventh centuries did not have populations sufficient to mount one, let alone several, colonizing expeditions without the remaining population suffering debilitating depletion (Snodgrass 1994, 2; \textit{contra} Boardman 1994, 138). A practice of sending parties composed solely of young males, as implied by Herodotus for Cyrene,\(^{41}\) and resulting in necessary intermarriage may have had an even more severe impact upon the population left behind.

A difficulty here is that we have very little idea of how many people constituted a colonizing party or how quickly their numbers were replaced and/or reinforced by later arrivals and these factors may have varied considerably from case to case. There is virtually no ancient evidence on this subject with regard to number or sex but figures of two or three hundred (whether male or mixed is not always stated) are usually suggested.\(^{42}\) This seems to be a figure thought suitable for the practical purposes of creating a new settlement from scratch and fending off potentially hostile native inhabitants, but it may be the case that a foundation could be successful with far fewer numbers.

Here the colonization of North America in the seventeenth century may provide a useful parallel. Contemporary records show that colonizing parties could be composed of well under a hundred people, including women and children. Many of these settlements failed, as perhaps a number of Greek settlements did – after all, we only hear about the successful ones.\(^{43}\) But equally many of the earliest settlements in the New World did survive, in what was arguably a more hostile environment than Sicily and Italy in the eighth and seventh centuries. Ships from Europe would arrive in the middle of the harsh New England winter, scarcely the easiest time to establish a settlement, and the new arrivals could be entirely ill-equipped to deal with the task ahead: records show that groups did not necessarily include individuals with experience in such practical skills such as fishing or farming which might have aided the survival and success of the settlement.\(^{44}\) Disease was rife and the native American population a constant threat.

\(^{40}\) This raises the issue of whether or not ventures were state organized. Graham (1964, 7–8) argues that both state and private enterprises existed; cf. Osborne (1998) who argues that private enterprise should account for eighth and seventh century establishments in the West.

\(^{41}\) Herod. IV . 153: the ‘Theran version’ of the colonization recorded that brothers drew lots to decide who should join the colonizing party. Women are not mentioned, but this passage in conjunction with Herodotus’ later comment (IV . 186) that Cyrenaican women, like the Libyan nomads, did not eat cow’s meat, is often taken to indicate an all male colonizing group and the necessity of intermarriage with the local population.

\(^{42}\) As for example Murray (1993, 113) who suggests 200 or less on the basis that the Therans sent two pentekonters to Platea (Herod. IV . 153), noting also that the fourth century foundation decree for Black Corycya only has space for between 150 and 300 names; see also Graham 1964, 43. One thousand settlers are recorded for Leukas (Ps-Scylax 34, \textit{GGM} I . 36), Cawkwell (1992, 290) suggests 200 for two pentekonters used for transport rather than war, on the basis that Herodotus allows for 80 men per pentekonter in war (Herod. VII. 184) and also notes Stephanus of Byzantium’s (\textit{sv} Apollonia) statement that 200 Corinthians were involved in the foundation of Apollonia as the only precise record of numbers.

\(^{43}\) Only very rarely are failures recorded, as for example Herodotus’ account of Doreius’ abortive venture which he blames on failure to consult the oracle at Delphi (Herod. V. 42–47).

\(^{44}\) Or even necessarily prepared to do the work: in Virginia, 105 settlers arrived at Jamestown in 1607, were unwilling to do the necessary work for their own survival, exhausted their provisions before the first supply ship came from England in January 1608 and by the end of the first year were reduced in number to 38 through
Nevertheless, settlements could survive under the harshest conditions and ultimately prosper: thus, for example, Plymouth in Massachusetts was successfully founded in December 1620 by a mere 65 adults, including some women, 20 boys and 11 girls, despite the fact in the first winter half the population died of disease.45

This sort of somewhat haphazard approach may be closer to the way many Greek ventures were organized, particularly if they were composed of disenfranchised or otherwise dissatisfied individuals with little other choice, rather than the high degree of central organization implied by Herodotus’ account of the Theran version of the foundation of Cyrene.46 The settlements of North America show that very small groups including women and children could survive and prosper, and the ancient Greeks were no doubt better equipped to deal with their new environment than modern Europeans, many of whom had been urban dwellers. This may mean that an original colonizing party could derive from one area and that intermarriage was not an immediate necessity. Rapid population growth would nevertheless presumably be a priority and it would be most efficiently fuelled by later arrivals, whether from the ‘mother-city’ or elsewhere. The incorporation of the indigenous population, whether by intermarriage or other means, is very difficult to detect archaeologically, even in the burials which appear to constitute the most promising evidence. This does not give encouragement for the detection of Greeks of different origins in a single settlement, but it may be worth investigating variations in the burial evidence for any clues it may give.

A feature of many Greek cemeteries in the West is that burial practices within a single cemetery broadly conform to a few particular types, indicating an adherence on the part of the community to a recognized custom. Where variations do occur, they can usually be explained in social terms, as for example the widespread distinction between adults and sub-adults or wealth factors indicating differences in status.47 I have argued elsewhere that this is the explanation for the various burial types at cemeteries in Sicily and further that they represent a departure from the practices of the historical mother-city in an attempt to create an independent cultural identity, with factors such as social status becoming more distinct with time (Shepherd 1995).
There are, however, often a few burials within cemeteries which do not follow the broad pattern. Here possible links with indigenous tradition, as in the cases of contracted and acephalous burials discussed above, are less likely, since the burials are Greek in appearance, but significantly different from other graves within the cemetery. Syracuse provides a good example of a site where the archaic cemeteries demonstrate a generally homogeneous approach to burial accompanied by a small number of atypical burials. The majority of adult burials are inhumations, made in either sarcophagi or rock-cut fossae. The latter are most common and appear to be a departure from the Corinthian sarcophagus, and other deviations from Corinthian custom such as extended rather than contracted burial and the extensive use of enchytrismos for children are also visible. Sarcophagi become significantly less common over the course of the seventh century and appear to be an élite form of burial by the sixth, also indicated by the use of finer stone and ornamentation (Shepherd 1995, 52–6, 64–5). Other types of burial may be described as atypical or exceptional: cremations fall into this category, since only a handful appears in the cemeteries ringing the city.48 These include both primary and secondary cremations, mainly in fossae but occasionally as pyres or in sarcophagi, urns or even bronze basins. These are presumably burials involving relatively high expenditure. Other atypical types appear as poor inhumations, including simple earth burials, tile graves and the occasional ossuary. Atypical graves become fewer in number and types with time and by the sixth century are mainly cremations in rock fossae.

Some of these unusual types may be explained by factors such as poverty; others, particularly the cremations, may well belong to Greeks of differing origin — those in bronze basins are particularly distinctive and do resemble burials at Cumae and also Eretria (Kurtz and Boardman 1971, 307; see also Albanese Procelli 2000). These sorts of burials are, however, always very much in the minority and cannot represent any significant proportion of the population. Such burials become fewer with time, perhaps as minority groups were assimilated. Dominant trends of burial are clearly defined by their sheer numbers and are more easily explained by social differences than ethnic distinctions. If a group of Greeks of different origin large enough to account for the fossae burials existed at Syracuse, for example, then we might expect to have evidence of them elsewhere or mention in ancient sources, since they would significantly outnumber those of Corinthian stock. Other explanations are preferable: either the population did largely derive from the historical mother-city and its surrounding area, with perhaps a few additions; or we have a population whose varied origins are almost completely disguised by a desire to forge coherent burial customs as part of the cultural identity of the new settlement, combined with the effects of the passage of time.

It may not be possible to decide between these two scenarios, although the latter may be preferable on the grounds of practicalities and the likely path of population growth. Perhaps, however, our inability to recognize specific origins within the burial record of any one settlement is one of the desired effects of funerary practices in the West. The burial customs of Greek colonies do not on the whole correspond well with what is known of the traditions of their historical mother-cities and we could probably not identify the latter on the basis of

48 From Orsi’s reports, the following figures may be derived for the main necropoleis during the archaic period. Fusco necropolis: 34 cremations for a total of 474 burials; Giardino Spagna necropolis: 13 cremations for a total of 127 burials (Orsi 1893, 1895 and 1925). Cremation was less common in the sixth century. Similarly low rates of cremation apply to other excavated areas of the cemeteries: for a breakdown and discussion see Shepherd 1993, 29–41.
archaeological evidence alone without the help of ancient texts. If colonists did derive largely from one source, then they created an independent burial tradition for themselves. If they derived from a variety of sources, then they achieved a similar effect: a burial structure specific to the new settlement which could not readily be associated with any one city in Greece, but which served to define that settlement culturally. Ultimate origins may have been of little importance or relevance in a new community, whether created from an ethnic cocktail or not, which was trying to set itself up as a viable new polis with the necessary collective and independent identity.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite various optimistic attempts, cemeteries in the Western colonies are not very useful in determining the ethnic make-up of the living populations, especially as far as the inclusion of a substantial indigenous element is concerned. In general, possible indications of indigenous practices are rare and isolated, or open to alternative explanations, or both. Multiple burial appears to be the most promising indicator in terms of sheer weight of evidence, but even here there may be other factors governing its employment. Megara Hyblaea, interestingly, seems to have produced more graves falling into the categories of possible ‘indigenous’ interpretation than other Greek sites, which may reflect the good relations with the native population recorded in her foundation story (Thuc. 6.4); but apart from multiple burials here too such graves are still exceptional and on closer examination also problematic. No site has produced graves which supply an ideal complete package of indigenous burial, with all the features of multiple burial, contraction and appropriate goods present. Slaves, who might well account for a substantial indigenous element, are not likely to be detectable archaeologically. This does not mean that cohabitation did not occur, but rather that any local traditions were largely subsumed to a prevailing Greek culture. Variations might be expected to be most obvious in the earlier stages of a new settlement, and to some extent this is true. We have very few graves dating to the earliest years of colonial foundations which might prove most revealing, but even so, given possible initial lagging death rates and subsequent influxes of later groups, whether indigenous or new arrivals from Greece, a greater medley of burial forms might be expected than that which exists. What is more conspicuous is an overall subscription to a coherent burial system incorporating methods which cannot be connected readily with any one source and specifically not the historical mother-city. This burial profile reveals little about any ethnic mixtures which may have existed within the living population: if they existed to any significant extent, distinctions were apparently quashed at burial in the interests of the unifying effects of conformity, which perhaps ultimately says more about the aims and priorities of the developing settlement.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AD Archeologikon Deltion
AJA American Journal of Archaeology
ASAA Annuario della Scuola Archeologica di Atene e delle Missioni Italiane in Oriente
ASMG Atti e Memorie della Società della Magna Grecia
ASNP Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa. Classe di lettere e filosofia
BAR British Archaeological Reports
BCA Sicilia Beni Culturali e Ambientali Sicilia
BCH Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique
BPI Bullettino di Paletnologia Italiana
CQ Classical Quarterly
GGM Geographicici Graeci Minores (C. Müller, 1855–61)
MA Monumenti Antichi dei Lincei
MEFRA Mêlanges de l’École Française de Rome, Antiquité
NSc Notizie degli Scavi (Atti dell’Accademia dei Lincei)
OJA Oxford Journal of Archaeology
Sir. inv. Siracusa inventory i.e. inventory number of an object or objects held in the Paolo Orsi Museum, Siracusa
T. (Ts) Tomb (tombs)

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