



Pottery and Burial Customs in Hellenistic Megara, Greece

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The city of Megara is located on a particularly strategic site with the advantages of being in close proximity to the Saronic Gulf and having fertile farming land¹ (**fig. 1**). During the 7th and 6th centuries BCE the town was situated on the two low fortified hills of Alkathos and Karia, which were surrounded by the cemeteries. The erection of the fortification wall in the period between 479 to 460 BCE resulted in the relocation of the cemeteries outside the boundaries of the fortified town², and also at a distance from the banks of the two streams, Mauratza and Exobrisis, which functioned as ditches for the wall³ (**fig. 2**). Tombs of classical and Hellenistic times were located near the main roads, leading to Megaris and the neighbouring cities (Corinth, Athens, Thebes). Besides, *Pausanias* (1, 43, 3–5; 1, 44, 3; 1, 44, 6) describes special burials of mythical persons and heroes inside and outside the city. The habit of the Megarians to build public buildings around the tombs of heroes is also interesting, because they thought that these graves could protect public life and political assemblies⁴. The Megarians, after all, had distinctive beliefs about death, and Cynic *Diogenes* observes that they »feast as if to die tomorrow, and build as if they were never to die at all«⁵.

In this paper we will examine the relation of pottery to the burial customs, based on the data emerged from the rescue excavation in the P. Staurakis plot in the north-eastern part of the city of Megara (**fig. 2**, Site 1; **fig. 3**), where an extensive necropolis dated from the late 8th to the early 1st century BCE has been excavated⁶.

1 For the history and the topography of the city, see HIGHBARGER 1927; LEGON 1981; ZORIDIS 2008.

2 ALEXANDRI 1970; ZORIDIS 1985.

3 CHAIRETAKIS 2018.

4 HERDA 2013, 82–83.

5 SSR² II Diogenes Sinopeus (= V B) fr. 285 (p. 341) apud Tert. apol. 39, 14: »Megarenses obsonant quasi crastina diemorituri, aedifi cantuero quasi numquam morituri«; HAAKE 2018, 237.

6 ADelt B 63, 2008, 131–134; CHAIRETAKIS 2016; CHAIRETAKIS 2018.



Fig. 1 : The location of Megara.



Fig. 2 : Plan of the city of Megara.



Fig. 3 : Site 1, Staurakis' plot. View of the cemetery.

Burial Customs: An Overview

The cemeteries of Megara⁷ grow in small or larger clusters, containing simple graves, enclosures with graves (peribolos) and grave monuments. The placement and the orientation of the graves depend on the available space in the cemeteries each time⁸. In many cases the orientation of the graves, enclosures or monuments is defined by their proximity to a road⁹ (fig. 2, Site 2; fig. 4). Impressive grave monuments are being erected on the two main roads, which lead to the city harbour (Nisaia) and Corinth. There is no doubt that only wealthy families could buy the best land near these roads, as well as choose the type of monument, thus showing in many ways their social status¹⁰. Furthermore, there are also cases where burial enclosures and monuments were never used, as no bodies were found inside¹¹ (fig. 2, Site 2; fig. 4). Their desuetude probably indicates that due to their high cost they were never completed or did not find a buyer.

The predominant type of burial used for both adults and children is the sarcophagus (fig. 5), but there are also cist-graves (fig. 6), pit-graves, tile-graves and jar-burials¹². The sarcophagi and the cist graves are made of a soft limestone rock, the >λίθος κογχίτης<, (mussel

7 CHAIRETAKIS 2016, 219–237; TSALKOU 2016, 259–261; KAZAZAKI 2020, 98–107.

8 CHAIRETAKIS 2016, 220–221.

9 ADelt B 63, 2008, 136–142.

10 TSARAVOPOULOS – KROUSTALIS 2009, 210. 214. In Megara, for example, the funeral monument with the Siren statues (ADelt B 63, 2008, 138).

11 Peribolos: ADelt B 44, 1989, 46–48; funeral monument: ADelt B 49, 1994, 59.

12 TSALKOU 2016, 261.

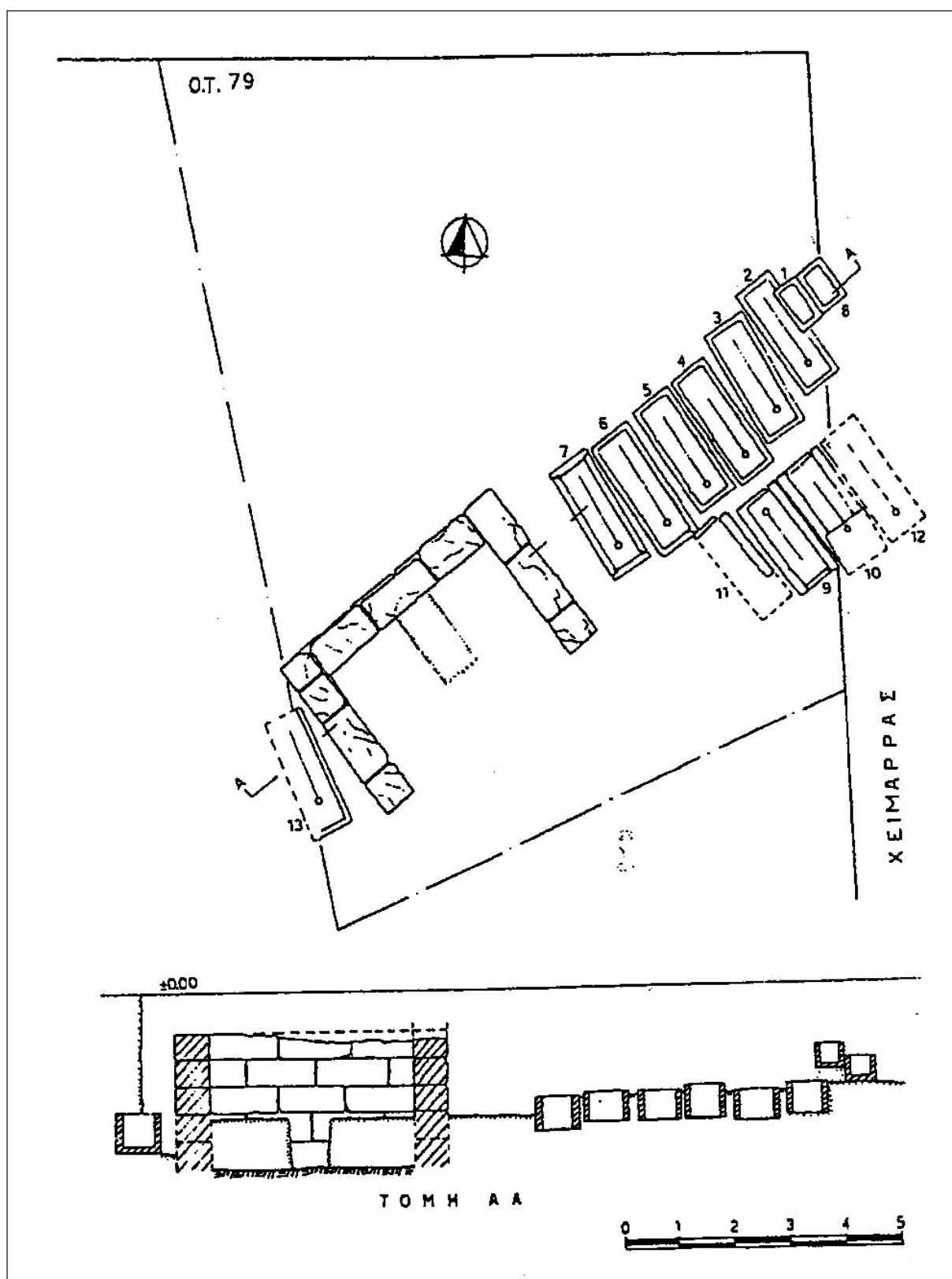


Fig. 4: Site 2. Plan of a cemetery with unused peribolos (ADelt B 44, 1989, 48 fig. 10).



Fig. 5: Site 1, Staurakis' plot, Grave 22.
The Hellenistic dead covered two early classical burials.

stone, lacustrine limestone), for which *Pausanias* mentions its extraction only in the area of Megara (1, 44, 6). In some cases, their interior faces are painted with white or red plaster¹³. Reuse and modifications of older tombs are common too (figs. 5, 6).

During this period the body of the deceased is placed in an extended position¹⁴ (fig. 5). The graves contain usually one dead, but there are also multiple burials¹⁵. Adults and children are buried in the same areas. The dead are placed in wooden coffins judging by the small nails that have been found in several burials. For the gender and age of the dead the available data are scarce. Traditionally, some special finds have been related to the gender of the deceased, such as strigils with men and mirrors with women, although these finds are not safe criteria for gender definition¹⁶. The tombs are marked with tombstones¹⁷, marble kraters¹⁸, sculptures of Sirens¹⁹ and simple inscribed blocks²⁰. Funeral epigrams are also known²¹.

- 13 For example: ADelt B 36, 1981, 34, grave 15; ADelt B 38, 1983, 38, grave 40; ADelt B 45, 1990, 64–68, grave 18; ADelt B 48, 1993, 59, grave 2; ADelt B 49, 1994, 57–59, graves 7, 42; ADelt B 49, 1994, 60, grave 2; ADelt B 60, 2005, 116, grave 2; The red colour is related to the burial customs (KALOGEROPOULOU 1974, 216; ANDRIANOU 2012, 44). For the interpretation of the red colour see JOHANSEN 1951, 116; KURTZ – BOARDMAN 1971, 97, 217. Other symbolic practices are known from Megara too, where at the bottom of a child's larnax, dated to the 5th c. BCE, a phallus, painted with red colour, was depicted (ADelt B 56–59, 2001–2004, 293).
- 14 CHAIRETAKIS 2016, 223.
- 15 Plutarch's reference to multiple burials in Megara (Sol. 10, 3) can easily be confirmed by many tombs in the city from the Archaic to the Roman era, where members of the same family were buried together (CHAIRETAKIS 2016, 223, 228; TSALKOU 2016, 261).
- 16 In Megara a female grave contained jewelry and a strigil (ADelt B 49, 1994, 59, grave 42). Strigils have been found in many female burials, as women used strigils in their daily hygiene (BOGDANOVA 2016, 60–66). However, these items could also be personal belongings of the relatives or the mourners who placed them in the graves (PARKER PEARSON 1999, 8; DIMAKIS 2011, 118). For similar conclusions concerning mirrors, see CARPINO 2008, 5–7. For the symbolism of peculiar items on female grave steles, see Anth. Pal. 7, 424–425.
- 17 FILIPPOU-AGGELOU 1990–1991; TSALKOU 2016, 261. A special case are the small rectangular marble tablets with the name of the deceased, which were integrated in a niche at the top of the grave steles (ROBU 2016). This custom is also known in the Taurus Peninsula and in Callatis, revealing the transfer of burial customs from the metropolis to its colonies.
- 18 TSOULI 2013, 247 pl. 93.
- 19 ADelt B 63, 2008, 138. A special type of grave monument is mentioned by Pausanias, who describes the tomb of Hippolyte in the form of an Amazon shield (Paus. 1, 41, 7). See also, Plut. Thes. 27.
- 20 ADelt B 63, 2008, 136, 138; TSALKOU 2016, 261.
- 21 Paus. 1, 43, 8; Anth. Pal. 7, 154; 7, 337; 12, 129.

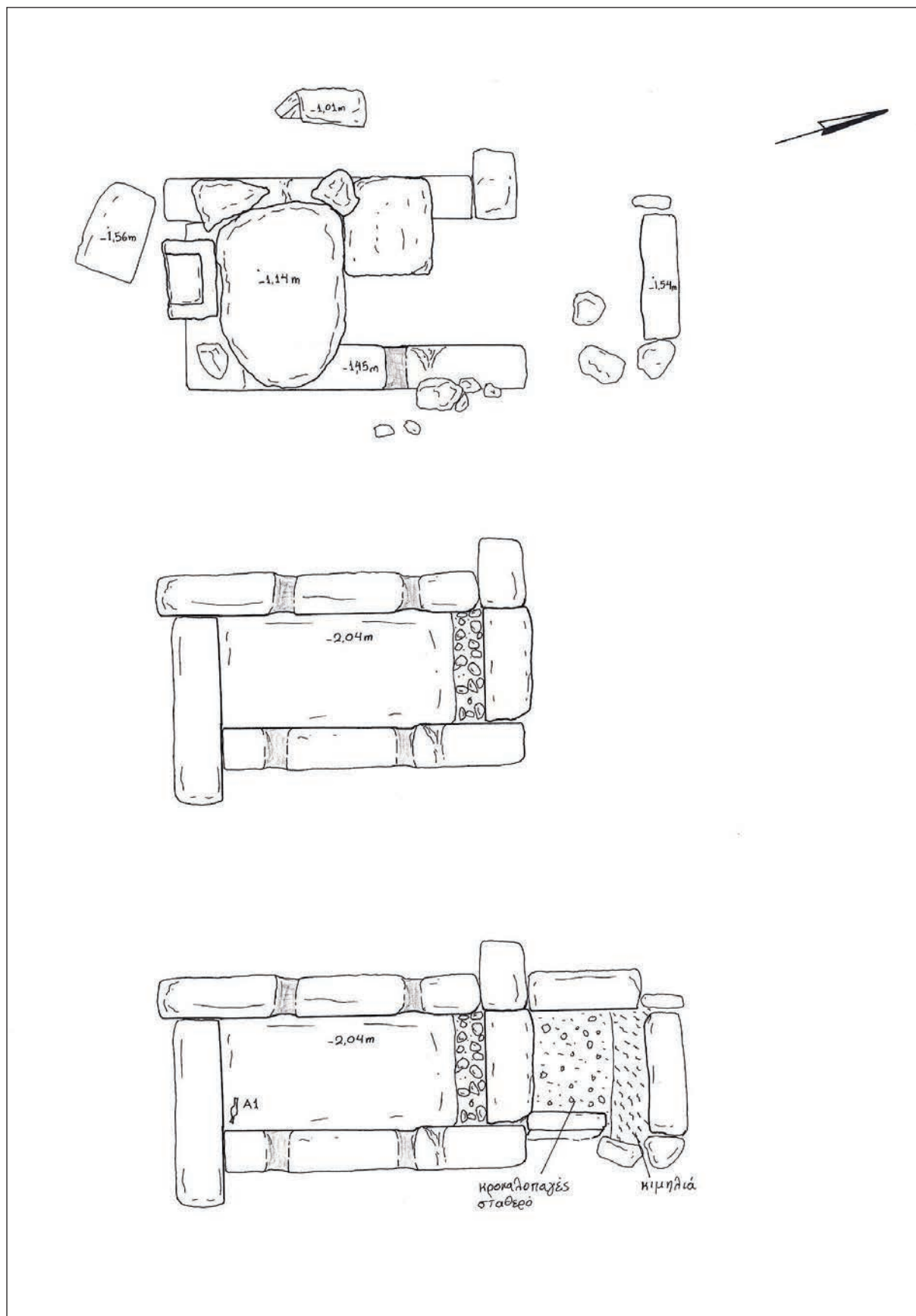


Fig. 6 : Site 1, Staurakis' plot, Grave 20. Modification of an archaic grave during the 2nd c. BCE.

Grave Offerings: The Pottery

The Hellenistic graves contain personal objects belonging to the deceased (earrings, strigils, mirrors, pins, flutes, etc.), objects serving the burial rituals (unguentaria, wine vessels, lagynoi etc., see **fig. 5**) and objects with some symbolism (miniature vessels, Charon obols, eggs), while in some cases, the deceased simply carries a ›message‹ (curse tablets).

The vessels in the tombs of Megara are products of the pottery workshops of the city, without excluding, however, vessels of Attic and Corinthian origin. Megara had a significant pottery production, recognized since Archaic times²². *Athenaeus* (Deipn. 1, 50) includes a report by the comedian of the 4th c. BCE Euboulos, where the ›Μεγαρικά πιθάκνια‹, e.g. the small pithoi, are mentioned. The streams that surround the city were probably essential in creating the right conditions for the existence of clay deposits. The report of *Thucydides* (4, 67, 1) that in 424 BCE ›the Athenians, ..., took post in a quarry not far off, out of which bricks used to be taken for the walls²³‹, gives a first picture of the existence in the soil area suitable for cultivation. *Pliny* (Nat. Hist. 17, 4, 42) refers to the leucargillos that existed in Megara and was used for the enrichment of the soil: ›Leucargillon vocant candidam argillam, qua in Megarico agro utuntur, sed tantum in umida frigidaque terra‹.

A pottery workshop dated to the second half of the 4th – first half of the 3rd c. BCE, excavated between the fortification wall and the Mauratza stream²⁴, had ditches, which may have been used for the cleaning of the clay (**fig. 2**, Site 3). Apart from a large amount of black-glazed, red-figured and plain pottery, masses of clay and 30 small kiln firing supports have been found²⁵. A little further north, a refuse deposit of another pottery workshop with a huge amount of unguentaria and wasters has also been excavated²⁶ (**fig. 2**, Site 4). The workshop produced fusiform unguentaria in the 3rd and 2nd c. BCE.

Pottery in Burial Rituals

In the ancient Greek world, the funeral consisted of three parts. The first stage, the ›prothesis‹, concerned the preparation of the deceased, the second stage, the ›ekphora‹, was the transportation of the deceased to the cemetery, and the third was the burial, usually in the morning of the third day. Some ceremonies related to special burials in Megara are known from *Pausanias*:

›... He (Tereus) committed suicide in Megara, and the Megarians forthwith raised him a barrow, and every year sacrifice to him, using in the sacrifice gravel instead of barley meal²⁷‹ (Paus. 1, 41, 9)²⁸.

›... and the tomb of Iphinoe, the daughter of Alcathous; she died, they say, a maid. It is customary for the girls to bring libations to the tomb of Iphinoe and to offer a lock of their hair before their wedding, just as the daughters of the Delians once cut their hair for Hecaege and Opis²⁹‹ (Paus. 1, 43, 4).

Pausanias had also visited the tomb of the dead of the Persian wars at Megara (Paus. 1, 43, 3). The copy of the relevant inscription (IG VII.53 = SEG 13.312), dated to around 400, preserves the reference to the blood sacrifice of a bull on the tomb³⁰. Related to burial customs

22 ADelt B 55, 2000, 93; For the Late Roman pottery workshops, see KOROSIS 2014, 305–312; For other Hellenistic workshops, see SANIDAS 2013, 119–120.

23 Trans. R. Crawley, Thucydides. The Peloponnesian War (London – New York 1910).

24 ADelt B 65, 2010, 96.

25 For similar kiln firing supports in Athens, see PAPADOPOULOS 1992, 214–215.

26 ADelt B 64, 2009, 134.

27 Trans. F. Spiro, Pausanias. Pausaniae Graeciae descriptio (Leipzig 1903).

28 AGER 2018, 63–64 for the pebbles.

29 Trans. F. Spiro, Pausanias. Pausaniae Graeciae descriptio (Leipzig 1903).

30 SCHÖRNER 2014, 158; REEVES 2018, 173–176; PROIETTI 2019.

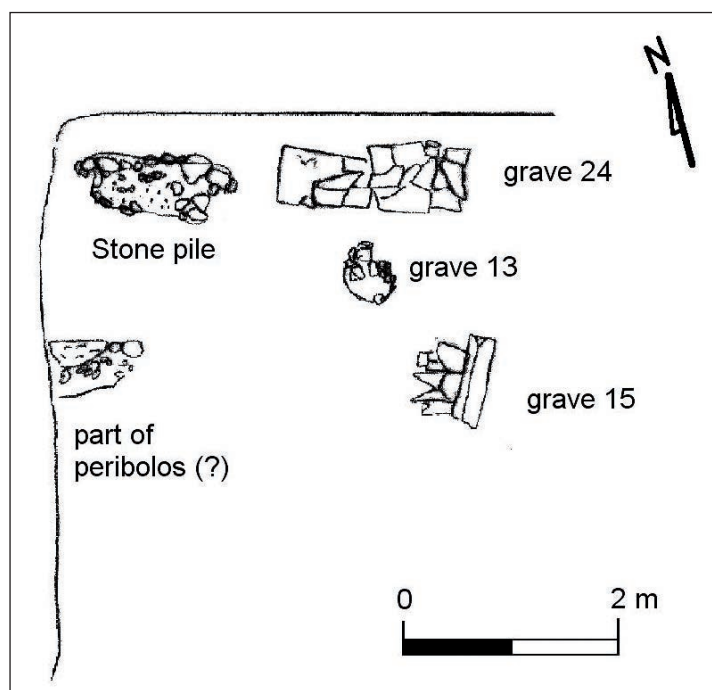


Fig. 7 : Site 1, Staurakis' plot, plan of the Early Hellenistic group of graves.



Fig. 8 : Site 1, Staurakis' plot, the heap of stones.

is the proverbial phrase ›Megarians' Tears‹, which seems to mean something like ›crocodile tears‹³¹. Two different versions tell a story of mourning in a grave after coercion. *Zenobius* (5, 8) says that the daughter of a Megarian king married a Corinthian prince, and when she died, her father forced the Megarians to go to Corinth to mourn for her. The other story tells that the wife of a Megarian king forced the Megarians to mourn the death of her husband (*Diogenian.* 6, 34; *Apostolius* 11, 10).

In the cemetery in the Staurakis plot, a further ritual practice is recognized. A group of three Early Hellenistic tombs, comprising a jar-burial³² and two tile-graves, was discovered in the north-western part of the plot (fig. 7). A small wall may have been part of an enclosure which bordered the burial site at least to the southwest³³. What is more, a stone pile of medium-sized river stones and pebbles, 1.40 m long, with a maximum width of 45 cm, and with a height circa 25 cm, was found between these tombs (figs. 7. 8). Among its stones a black-glazed echinus bowl, dated to the end of the 4th or the beginning of the 3rd c. BCE, was discovered (fig. 9). No ashes, bones or other broken pottery was found. The autonomous pile between the tombs is a separate structure, and we must pay special attention. Heaps of stones covering graves or tumuli are known all over the ancient world. Some of them could function as tombstones³⁴, and there are also relevant examples in Megara, where »extended stone piles partially covered the

31 SALMON 1972, 198; TOBER 2018.

32 The jar-burial was the only furnished grave of the group. The amphora, of Knidian origin, contained a small bolsal cup, a small trefoil jug and an echinus bowl, similar to that from the stone pile. The vessels are dated from the end of the 4th to the beginning of the 3rd c. BCE.

33 If the wall encloses the three graves, we have a family-owned peribolos.

34 *Soph. Ant.* 481; For extensive discussion, see AVAGIANNOU 2002, 77–78. 97–102; KURTZ – BOARDMAN 1971, 241–242.



Fig. 9 : Site 1, Staurakis' plot, the echinus bowl from the heap of stones.

slabs» of some graves, functioning as »a kind of stele for these graves«³⁵. However, the heap of stones in the Staurakis plot is not a grave stele, but it could be related to ›choai‹, the offerings to the dead and the chthonic gods. Although for the ›choai‹, usually made outside the tombs, there is no a fixed structure³⁶, this interpretation is the only possible for the Megarian case³⁷. The closest example – of classical times – comes from the cemetery in Aiani, Macedonia where bronze phialai, crushed and pierced with a hole in their bases, were found on the top of stone piles³⁸. Thus, we believe that this modest structure in the Staurakis plot is part of the burial rituals which consisted of various kinds of libations – ›choai‹, made of wine, water, milk, honey and oil³⁹, in the vicinity of the graves.

Miniature Vessels: The ›Set‹

Miniature vessels, many of which have been found in several tombs, constitute another group of pottery related to the burial customs in Megara. They have been produced from the middle of the 4th c. BCE, throughout the 3rd c. BCE, while some pieces date back to the 2nd c. BCE. Two types of miniature vessels, commonly 2.5–3.0 cm in height, were made: trefoil jugs⁴⁰ (figs. 10. 11) and lamps⁴¹ (figs. 12. 13). The small variations in shape depend on the different workshops or potters. What is of great interest is that they often form a ›set‹ of similar objects consisting of two jugs and a lamp, often as the exclusive find in the tombs⁴². Sometimes, this set is accompanied by personal objects of the deceased (bins, strigils), objects of some symbolism (Charon obols) or ritual vases (unguentaria); at other time, the set is among a multitude of offerings. In all cases the miniature vessels are unused.

The jugs are usually associated with the eternal thirst of the dead, as well as with the water from the two rivers of the underworld, ›Lethe‹ and ›Mnemosyne‹⁴³. The placement of ›two‹ similar vessels in the Megarian graves cannot be accidental. If we assume their relation with the two rivers and their symbolism, and since these rivers are a common ›topos‹ in mystic

35 ADelt B 56–59, 2001–2004, 303.

36 KURTZ – BOARDMAN 1971, 145. 164.

37 There are also the offerings on heap of stones (the hermax / hermaces) at crossroads in honor of Hermes: Scholia veterain Nicandri 150 d, 4 Theriaca; Theophr. char. 16; Anth. Pal. 6, 253; Xen. an. 4, 7, 25 (although there is no reference to Hermes); AVAGIANNOY 2002, 77–79; DOYLE 2020, 261–272. There are also heaps of stones related to the Chthonian Hermes in the so-called Necromancy of Acheron (DOYLE 2020, 269–270).

38 KARAMITROU-MENTESSIDI 2013, 144.

39 EKROTH 2002, 104–105. 254.

40 Flat base, compressed body, cylindrical neck, trefoil mouth and one vertical strap handle.

41 Flat base, spherical body, short nozzle, large central filling-hole. Some pieces bear a short lug.

42 For example: ADelt B 35, 1980, 43–45, grave XI; ADelt B 36, 1981, 28–31, grave 9; ADelt B 37, 1982, 38, grave 33; ADelt B 39, 1984, 24–25, grave 15; ADelt B 40, 1985, 42–44, grave 12; ADelt B 46, 1991, 46–48, grave 20; ADelt B 50, 1995, 45, grave 8; ADelt B 60, 2005, 113, grave 41.

43 KURTZ – BOARDMAN 1971, 209–210.



Figs. 10–11 :
Site 1, Staurakis' plot, Grave 27.
Miniature jugs A2 (left) and A1
(right).



Figs. 12–13 :
Site 1, Staurakis' plot. Miniature
lamps from Grave 27 (left) and
Grave 26 (right).

Number of unguentaria	Number of graves
1–10	161
11–20	16
21–30	9
31–40	8
41–50	5
51–60	2
61–70	3
71–80	3
81–90	-
91–100	-
100–150	3
151–200	2
	217

Table 1.

rituals⁴⁴, we cannot rule out a connection with an unofficial or less widespread religious belief in Megara⁴⁵.

Several interpretations have been given for the deposit of lamps in tombs, such as lighting equipment used by the mourners, lighting equipment for the new home of the deceased, remnants of ritual ceremonies and / or magic, tributes as luxury items etc.⁴⁶. A fairly common interpretation is their symbolic use as a lighting device for the dead on their journey to the underworld⁴⁷.

What is certain is that the miniature vessels from Megara are a strong and clearly defined set, which can only represent a circumscribed code, and their symbolic use dictates the ad hoc production of only two specific types of vessels for a long period of time. Unfortunately, any attempt to define their precise role in the graves is fruitless.

The Unguentaria

Unguentaria, common finds throughout the Mediterranean, are predominant in many graves in Hellenistic Megara (**fig. 14**), and in the Staurakis plot as well (**figs. 15–17**).

Adding the published data in the ›Archaiologikon Deltion‹ and those from the Staurakis plot, 217 graves dating from the end of the 4th to the beginning of the 1st c. BCE contain fusiform unguentaria (**table 1**). The unguentaria in these graves range from one to several dozens, while the vast majority of graves contain one to ten unguentaria.

44 See for example the oracle of Trophonius at Lebedea (Paus. 9, 39, 8); KURTZ – BOARDMAN 1971, 210.

45 See for example the oracle of Nyx at Megara (MERTENS-HORN 2010).

46 ŞÖFÖROĞLU – SUMMERER 2016, 263–265.

47 KURTZ – BOARDMAN 1971, 211; For extensive discussion, see DIMAKIS 2015.



Fig. 14 : Grave with dozens of unguentaria (ADelt B 62, 2007, 122 fig. 24).

Fig. 15 :
Grave 25.Fig. 16 :
Grave 26.Fig. 17 :
Grave 20.

Figs. 15–17 : Site 1, Staurakis' plot. Unguentaria (scale ca. 1 : 2).

However, five graves contain more than 100 unguentaria. In general, the presence of 10 to 20 unguentaria is usual in the cemeteries of Central Greece⁴⁸. On the contrary, it is a remarkable feature when the graves contain 31 to 72 unguentaria in Athens⁴⁹, and 87 in Argos⁵⁰. Five graves in Thebes contained from 40 to 79 unguentaria⁵¹.

Many hypotheses regarding the existence of the large number of unguentaria in graves appear to be debatable. Anderson-Stojanović speculates that »(t)he number of unguentaria in any grave might ... represent the number of persons present at the graveside ceremony of burial«⁵². Georgoulaki, following Garland⁵³, advocates that »(d)espite the careless manufacture of the unguentaria, the elevated number of similar artefacts in certain tombs indicates that the mourners wished to make up by numbers for the insignificance of the vessel itself«⁵⁴. Iliopoulou, on the other hand, underlines that the accumulation of a large number of such vessels was obviously dictated by the vanity of the relatives for the appearance of a richly

48 1–20 unguentaria: Moschato Piraeus (ADelt B 44, 1989, 55); 11 unguentaria: Troizen (GIANNPOULOU 2014, 180–184); 13 unguentaria: Basiliko Euboea (ADelt B 49, 1994, 296); 13 unguentaria: Phtiotis Thebes (ADelt B 61, 2006, 607–610); 11–16 unguentaria: Lamia (ADelt B 49, 1994, 305–307; ADelt B 60, 2005, 442; ADelt B 61, 2006, 537–538); 17 unguentaria: Tanagra Boeotia (ADelt B 52, 1997, 376–377); 20 unguentaria: Athens (ADelt B 44, 1989, 27).

49 31 unguentaria: Lenormant Street, 43 unguentaria: Kerameikos (ANDERSON-STOJANOVIĆ 1987, 120, note 92); 72 unguentaria: Syntagma Square (PARLAMA – STAMPOLIDIS 2000, 170, no. 146).

50 ANDERSON-STOJANOVIĆ 1987, 120, note 92.

51 CHARAMI 2012, 140. 333, pl. 4 β.

52 ANDERSON-STOJANOVIĆ 1987, 122.

53 GARLAND 1985, 37.

54 GEORGIOULAKI 1996, 107.

Grave	Unguentaria	Golden jewellery	Metal objects	Clay objects	Deads	Date (cent. BCE)
ADelt B 62, 2010, 78–81: Kallimachou St., grave 3	118	-	strigil	lagynos	1	3rd–2nd
ADelt B 46, 1991, 46–48: Choiromandra area, grave 19	121	-	strigil	lagynos	1	3rd–2nd
ADelt B 49, 1994, 57–59: Chaniou and Aigeirouson St., grave 4	122	leaves from wreath	-	1 lagynos 2 kantharoi	1	2nd
ADelt B 45, 1990, 28: Oktobriou 223 St., grave 34	175	leaves	bronze pyxis	spatula, bowl	1	3rd–2nd
ADelt B 38, 1983, 33–38: Minoas 76 and Platonos St., grave 42	186	ring, earring	bronze vases, iron tool	jug	1	3rd–2nd

Table 2.

endowed burial⁵⁵. These arguments need further analysis. Three of the five graves in Megara with more than 100 unguentaria show that we may have to do with eminent dead (**table 2**). These graves contain offerings that reflect a rather wealthy dead. Golden leaves from wreaths or clothing in combination with metal objects suggest that the relatives or the mourners could afford more expensive offerings. Here, the large number of unguentaria seems to be related to the social status of the deceased, as an act of showing off. Further to this, there are also the other two graves containing only two ›typical‹ offerings each. In these cases, the unguentaria may indeed compensate for the lack of richest finds, and their existence in graves reinforces Iliopoulou's opinion. Surprisingly, although in Megara there is the pottery workshop producing unguentaria and someone could easily purchase many of them, we realize that the presence of dozens of unguentaria in graves is an exception. In this respect, this exception cannot be related to the number of the mourners in a funeral, and Anderson-Stojanović's hypothesis seems less reasonable.

Concerning the content, Lilimbaki-Akamati assumes that the large number of unguentaria could contain perfume oil substitutes, which would be cheaper than the original substance⁵⁶. In other cases, some unguentaria were empty having only a symbolic use⁵⁷, or contained known perfumes⁵⁸, sweat wine or even milk⁵⁹. A bronze unguentarium in a child burial in Megara may indicate the expensive content⁶⁰.

Epilogue

The data from the cemeteries in Megara add substantial information to our understanding of the burial customs of the city during the Hellenistic era. Our work has led to some trite observations: a) plain pottery can be used in any kind of rituals; b) miniature pottery, reflecting symbolic ideas, can be produced only for specific rituals; and c) pottery assemblages may

55 ILIOPOULOU 2015, 161, and note 771.

56 LILIMBAKI-AKAMATI 1989–1991, 149.

57 ANDERSON-STOJANOVIĆ 1987, 121–122; LILIMBAKI-AKAMATI 1989–1991, 149.

58 KOTITSA 2014, 418–419, for an inscribed unguentarium, and for further analysis.

59 FRÈRE – GARNIER 2017, 225.

60 ADelt B 47, 1992, 46, grave 24.



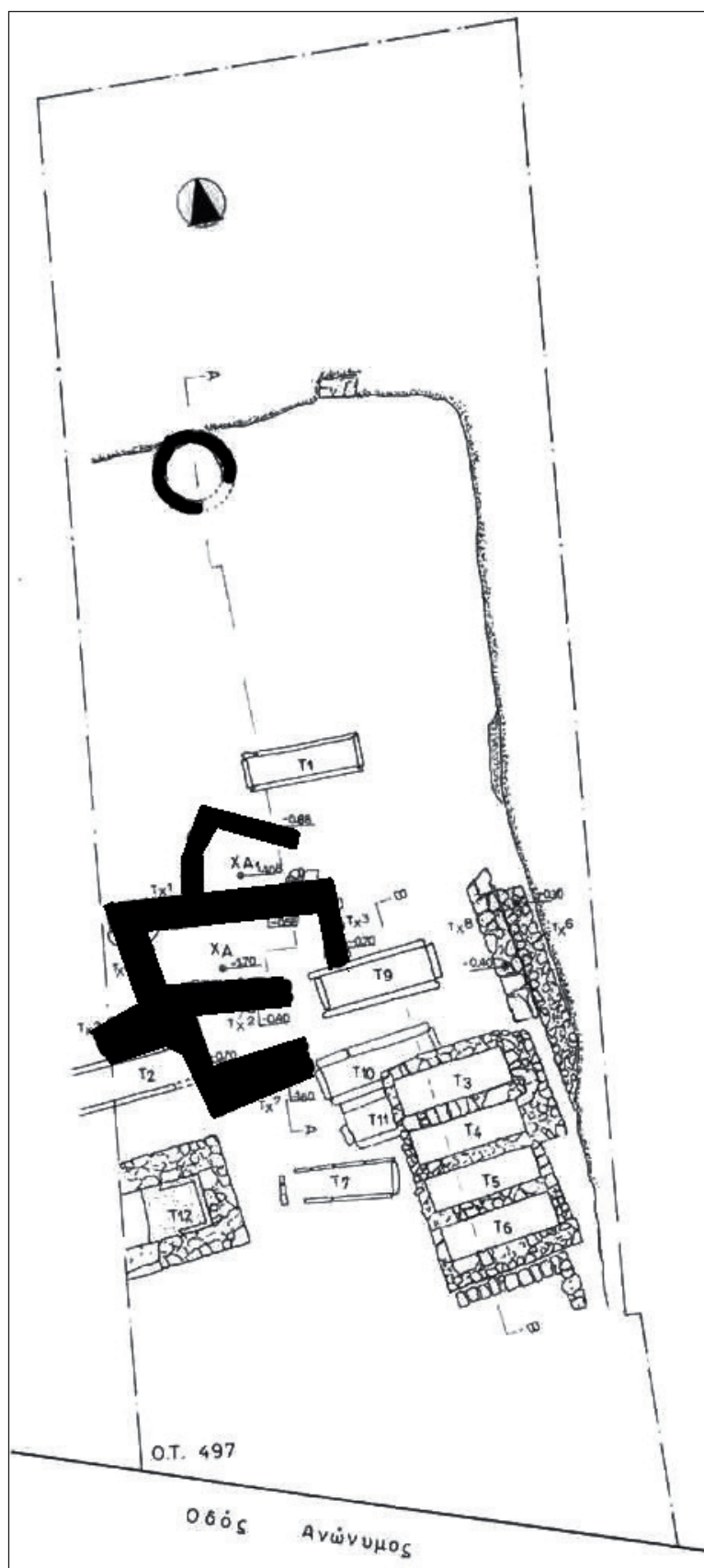


Fig. 18 : Site 5, plan of the Hermes' sanctuary
(ADelt B 60, 2005, 115 fig. 40, with modifications).

reflect wealth and/or social status. Megara forms an interconnected customary sphere with its neighbors, and not many differentiations in burial customs can be seen. However, the city never ceases to amaze us. Recently, a small sanctuary dedicated to Hermes was excavated outside the residential area, in a place where cemeteries had been developed over time⁶¹ (fig. 2, Site 5; fig. 18). The sanctuary was built at the end of the 6th c. BCE and was in use until early Hellenistic times, when part of it was destroyed for the placement of tombs. An inscription on a drinking cup, dated to the end of the 6th c. BCE, identifies the worshiped deity: >IAPOΣ: HEPMA: EMI<. Furthermore, a large number of architectural sculptures was discarded in a well after its abandonment. The sanctuary yielded mainly drinking vessels (skyphoi, kotylai, cups and plates), cooking pots and amphoras, that is vessels related to meals and >enagismoι<, the offerings to the dead. The presence of this small sanctuary highlights the connection of Hermes with boundaries, roads and tombs. The role of Hermes as herdsman of the dead (>Psychopompos<) is known⁶², while the depiction of herms on tombstones may indicate the gates of Hades⁶³. Furthermore, as in other cases, the well could function as an entrance to the underworld and through this Hermes could be the guard of the souls on their route⁶⁴. Thus, in Megara, the small sanctuary of Hermes was connected to both travellers and the dead⁶⁵. Besides, sanctuaries associated with cemeteries are known in the ancient world⁶⁶, and the presence of this small sanctuary of Hermes reveals the complex posthumous beliefs prevalent among Megara's citizens.

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61 ADelt B 60, 2005, 114–116.

62 KURTZ – BOARDMAN 1971, 241–243; AVAGIANNOU 2002.

63 PALAGIA 2016, 375.

64 STROSZECK 2019, 353.

65 DOYLE 2020, 269–270; *Plutarch* (qu. Gr. 296f) mentions the custom of the Argives to sacrifice to Hermes thirty days after the death of their relatives. In Attica, the feast of Chytroi was a similar case, when the Athenians on the third and last day of the feast of Anthesteria sacrificed to Hermes.

66 For Aphrodite Melainis, see PAPACHATZIS 1987, 60–64. The location of infant jar-burials near the possible sanctuary of Artemis in Astypalea is also interesting (MICHALAKI-KOLLIA 2010, 279–298). Furthermore, according to *Skymnos* (551), Astypalea was a Megarian colony. For discussion for the funerary sanctuaries, see STAMATOPOULOU 2014.



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