THE GRAVE OF MARIA, WIFE OF EUPLOUS

A Christian Epitaph Reconsidered

ABSTRACT

A well-known epitaph for Maria, wife of Euplous, excavated at Corinth in 1931 and originally dated to the late 4th century, has been described as "incompetent" and unworthy of the substantial cost of the grave. We show that it was carefully engraved in two stages in the Justinianic era, a date confirmed by reevaluation of the site and the lamps found with the grave. We suggest a new interpretation of the text, and consider the occupations of the seller and the purchaser of the grave in the context of 6th-century Corinth. Criteria for dating Early Christian Corinthian epitaphs are proposed in an appendix.

An inscription dedicated to Maria, wife of Euplous, was found in situ in 1931 in the entrance to a Roman chamber tomb northwest of ancient Corinth.[1] The plaque is a slightly irregular square of greenish-blue schisty marble, 0.35 m high, 0.38 m wide, and 0.028 m thick. Three crosses on the stone, as well as the language, show that it is a Christian document. In the inscription, Euplous records that he had bought the grave from a certain Anastasios, for one and a half gold pieces. In the original, brief excavation report, the inscription was dated between 380 and 395 on the basis of lamps found over the grave.[2] This dating was endorsed by John H. Kent, who commented: "Were it not for this evidence [of the lamps], one would be tempted to date it at least one century later (as does Bees) and probably several centuries later because of the decadence of the shapes of its letters and the appalling incompetence of the letter-cutter."[3] The excavator, Josephine Platner, had observed that "it seemed a very poor grave indeed to have cost one and a half gold pieces."[4]

In the present article we offer a new interpretation of the text, showing that the epitaph was carefully engraved in two stages and that the script is appropriate for the Justinianic era, a date that is confirmed by a reevaluation of the grave site and its associated finds. We also consider the wider implications of these revisions and, in particular, the occupations of the people mentioned in the inscription.

Kent's text and translation are as follows:

<p style="text-align:center">+</p>

+   Ἐνθάδε κῖτε Μαρία,
    σώφρων γυνὴ Εὔπλου
    ἡνιόχου, ὃς ἀγοράσας
    τὴν ληνὸν Εὔπλους παρὰ
5   Ἀναστασίου ὑπηρέτου
    χρισίνου ἑνὸς ἥμυσυ καὶ
    δοὺς τὰς τιμὰς Ἀναστασίω
    καὶ λαβὼν ἐξουσίαν παρ' αὐτοῦ
    ἐπέθηκα τὸν τίτλον. ἐτελεύ-
10 τησεν δὲ ἡ μακαρία τῆ
    πρ(ὸ) ιᾱ καλανδ(ῶν) Σεντενβρ(ίων).

<p style="text-align:center">+</p>

Here lies Maria, the modest wife of Euplous the teamster. I, Euplous, bought the grave from Anastasios the servant for one and one half gold pieces; I gave the purchase price to Anastasios, received full rights from him, and put the epitaph in place. My blessed wife died the eleventh day before the Kalends of September [August 22].[5]

MARIA'S GRAVE

The tomb in which Maria was buried was the most southerly of a group of four Roman chamber tombs built into the cliff opposite the hill of Cheliotomylos. The cliff is separated from Cheliotomylos by a ravine through which runs a stream fed from a spring at the head of the ravine. The building of the chamber tomb had intruded upon a no longer used fountain house of the Greek period (Fig. 1).[6] The original tomb consisted of two chambers with arcosolia let into the walls; at a later stage, two graves were dug into the floor of the south chamber, across the line of a disused, secondary supply channel to the fountain house, and the floor of the chamber was tiled over.

As in other chamber tombs of the Roman period at Corinth, nearly all the sarcophagi and graves held multiple burials; corpses had also been deposited in the reservoir at the rear of the south chamber. The date of construction cannot be determined precisely, but the tomb had probably been built by the late 2nd century, and lamps and coins found either in the graves or in fill within the tomb show that it was still being used during the 5th and into the 6th century. The latest coin found in a grave was minted under Valentinian III (425–455).[7] Other small, almost illegible

5. *Corinth* VIII.3, p. 174, no. 530.

6. It appears that the fountain house was brought back into use in the Late Roman period since the main supply tunnel cuts across two of the arcosolia in the north chamber. A detailed description of the fountain house, taken from the excavation notebook, is given by Landon (2003, pp. 48–51).

7. The coin of Valentinian III was moderately worn, and must, therefore, have been deposited a considerable time after it was minted. Coins of Arcadius (383–392), Theodosius I (383–392), Valentinian II (375–392), and Theodosius II (408–423)—found either in graves, in the reservoir, or in the fill—were also moderately or extremely worn, indicating that they, too, were deposited well after the dates of issue given here.
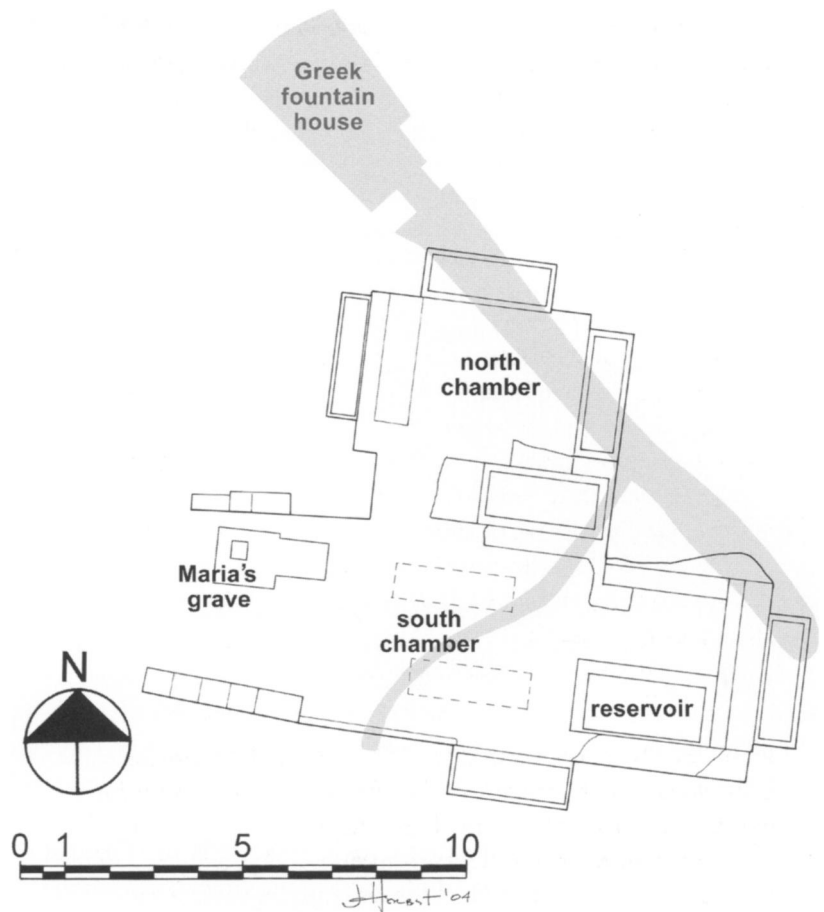
Figure 1. Plan of chamber tomb showing the location of Maria's grave. J. Herbst, after J. Platner, Corinth Notebook 555, p. 74

8. Larger slab, at west end: L. 1.20 × W. 0.80 m; smaller slab, at east end: L. 0.65 × W. 0.80 m. The layer of cement and tiles covered ca. 0.80 m of the larger slab and extended the width of the grave by ca. 0.10 m on the north side and 0.30 m on the south side.

9. Corinth Notebook 555, p. 68. The implication is that the "other bones" were also equid, but the description in the notebook is not entirely clear, and both the container and its contents were discarded. The grave was 1.60 m below the surface when excavated. The relation of the stamnos to the inscription is not recorded, but given that the tiled surface was wider on the south side, the stamnos is likely to have been placed in the upper left-hand corner of the (southwest) cement and tile layer.

coins of the 5th and early 6th century were found at floor level in the south chamber.

Maria's grave lay parallel to the north wall of the entrance. A shallow bed had been cut in the ground and the walls built up with alternating layers of broken tiles and cement. The skeleton, which was badly disintegrated, lay with the head to the west so that it faced into the tomb. A narrow marble slab, about 0.70 × 0.10 m, marked the foot of the grave. The cover, 1.85 m long × 0.80 m wide, consisted of two limestone (poros) slabs of different sizes, but at the west end a layer of broken tiles set in cement (1.50 × 1.20 m), partially covering the larger slab, lengthened the surface of the grave by 1.10 m and widened it by 0.40 m.[8]

The inscribed plaque had been placed at the head of the grave, over-lapping onto the tiled area; it was cemented to the surface and carefully framed with broken tiles that formed a decorative border. A container described by the excavator as a "large coarse Roman stamnos" had also been cemented to the cover at the west end; it contained "the jaw of a horse and also other bones."[9] Since the funerary plaque could easily have been placed on the cover slab of the grave, the purpose of the extended tile and cement surface seems to have been to provide a suitable base for the stamnos. The orientation of the corpse, with the head to the west, meant that one would have had to go into the tomb to the marble slab marking the foot of the

grave and then turn around in order to read the epitaph. One might have expected the body and the inscription above it to face outward, toward the entrance, so that the grave could be immediately identified by mourners, but evidently the normal (though not canonical) Christian practice of placing the corpse facing east to await the resurrection took precedence. Nevertheless, Maria's grave, with its large container, tiled surface, and inscribed plaque occupied a prominent position in the entrance to the tomb, and it would have been immediately visible to someone approaching this tomb or visiting other tombs a little further along the path above the ravine. The grave was also unusual in that it had been used for a single burial, whereas other graves and sarcophagi in the chamber tomb, with the exception of one of the graves beneath the tiled floor, contained at least two, and often multiple, burials.[10]

GRAVE OFFERINGS

Maria had received a Christian burial, and, as was customary, there were no grave goods within the grave. However, the excavator recorded six lamps that had been placed on the cover of the grave, and another three were found nearby in the fill. T. Leslie Shear dated the lamps on the cover between 380 and 395, thus providing a terminus post quem non for the burial and the inscription, but recent research calls this dating into question.[11] Only three of the six lamps found over the grave have survived (1–3; Fig. 2); all had been lit and one can assume that they were funerary offerings for Maria.[12] The first is an Attic post-glazing lamp (1) from the Chione workshop that was active at Athens during the second half of the 5th century and the first half of the 6th century. The second lamp (2) is a Corinthian imitation of an Attic glazed lamp with a vine pattern on the rim and rays on the disk, which had been retouched. The original Corinthian imitation is dated in the second half of the 5th century and the beginning of the 6th century, and the retouched version should be later. The third lamp (3) found over the grave is a Corinthian imitation of a North African lamp with a jeweled cross monogram on the disk (which had been deliberately chipped away). The prototype is now securely dated at Carthage in the late 5th and 6th centuries and the Corinthian imitation should be slightly later. It is evident from these revised dates that the lamps cannot be used to place Maria's burial and epitaph in the late 4th century; rather, they suggest a date toward the end of the 5th or in the first half of the 6th century.

LAMPS FOUND OVER THE GRAVE

1   Attic post-glazing lamp   Fig. 2

L-589. Intact. H. 0.035, L. 0.098, W. 0.069 m.

Reddish yellow clay, unglazed. Worn mold and dumpy shape. Burning on nozzle. Raised pattern on rim, probably a wreath or row of globules. Disk: plain with traces of two framing-rings; five filling holes and airhole. Nozzle not set off from rim or flanked by grooves. Broad solid handle with triple groove on top surface meets baseline. Base: very blurred signature **XIO|NHC** within two almond-shaped grooves. The final **C** is incomplete and smaller than the previous letters. Although

10. See *Corinth* XIV, pp. 162–167, and Wiseman 1967a, pp. 31–35, for descriptions of Early Christian graves. The broken tile and cement construction used in Maria's grave was common in the Late Roman period. Such a grave would involve some labor and expense. Poorer graves consisted of reused sarcophagi or tiles propped over the body, sometimes covered with a layer of plaster. Small children were occasionally buried in large amphoras; the top would be broken off to allow for insertion of the corpse and the container then laid in the earth.

11. For Shear's dating, see n. 2, above. Sanders (2004) summarizes recent work in southern Greece and at Corinth in particular. See now also Slane and Sanders 2005 on the chronology of Late Roman pottery at Corinth.

12. The descriptions of the other three lamps, written at the time of excavation (Corinth Notebook 555, pp. 154–155), are similar to those of the surviving lamps. One of the missing lamps had a chi-rho monogram on the disk and a base similar to that of **5** (Fig. 3), which was found near the grave.
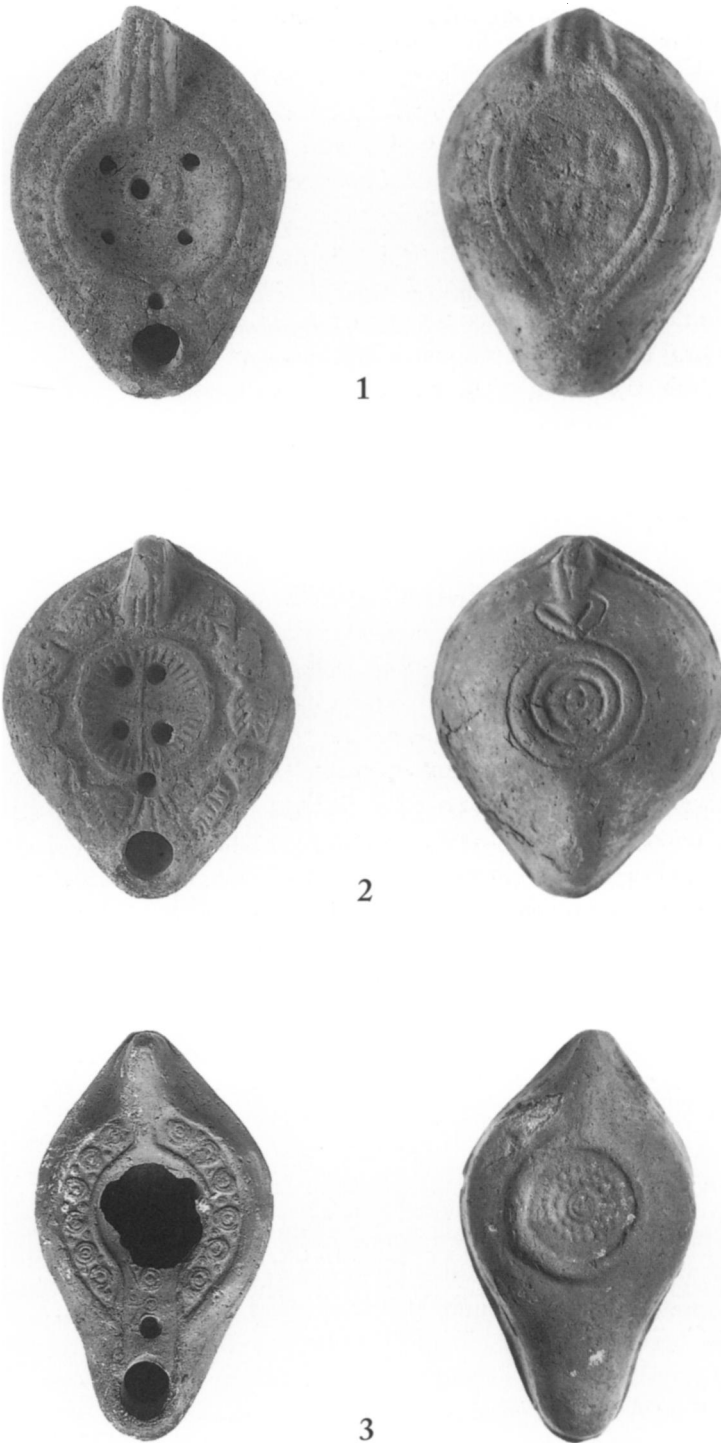
Figure 2. Lamps found over Maria's
grave: Attic post-glazing lamp 1 and
Corinthian lamps 2 and 3. Scale 1:2

the rim patterns are different, this lamp is very similar to Karivieri 1996, pp. 200–201, nos. 133, 135, 136, pls. 11, 47; Karivieri comments that no. 133 may be one of the latest products of the Chione workshop, or even a 6th-century copy.

Date: second half of the 5th century to first half of the 6th century.

2   Corinthian lamp   Fig. 2

L-588. Intact. H. 0.034, L. 0.092, W. 0.074 m.

Red clay, unglazed. Surface finish is spalding on underside of nozzle. Burning on nozzle. Imitation of an Attic glazed lamp with vine pattern of six leaves and four clusters on rim and rays on the disk. Disk retouched: raised single-line cross with four filling holes in quarterings; large airhole at edge of disk and grooves from airhole to wick hole. Solid handle with triple groove on upper surface strongly offset from lower mold; handle ends in a leaf. Base: Y (or Φ on its side) within three concentric circles. Cf. Garnett 1975, no. 6, for general form, but the incised lines that normally set off the underside of the nozzle are lacking on this example and the cross has been added to the disk. The Attic model was a lamp similar to that published in *Agora* VII, p. 146, no. 1566, pl. 28.

Date: second half of the 5th century to beginning of the 6th century for the original Corinthian imitation; this retouched version should be later.

3   Corinthian lamp   Fig. 2

L-591. Intact, except most of disk missing. H. 0.03, L. 0.113, W. 0.064 m.

Red clay, unglazed. Burning on nozzle. Imitation of a North African lamp: concentric circles on rim, separated by pairs of dots. Disk: traces (two circles) of jeweled cross monogram near airhole; broad channel to large wick hole. Pronounced luting ridge. Knob handle. Base: concentric circles in center surrounded by two rows of dots, all within thicker raised circle. The disk, which had at least three filling holes, has been deliberately chipped away. Imitation of a Hayes Type II, for which a date in the late 5th and 6th centuries is now confirmed at Carthage; see Fulford and Peacock 1994, pp. 37–40. The type was also found in 7th-century destruction levels at Emporio: see Ballance et al. 1989, p. 121, no. 330. Cf. *Corinth* XVII, p. 83, no. 142, dated to the 6th century. For discussion of the distinctive features of Corinthian imitations of North African lamps, see Garnett 1975, pp. 195–197.

Date: late 5th to 6th century, and perhaps later.

LAMPS FOUND NEAR THE GRAVE

Three more lamps, which had also been lit, were found in fill near the grave (4–6; Fig. 3). They may have been deposited by mourners visiting other burials within the tomb, but it seems more likely that these lamps were intended for Maria, because of their proximity to her grave. An Attic post-glazing lamp (4) is dated in the second half of the 5th century. A Corinthian imitation of an Attic post-glazing lamp with a crouching lion on the disk (5) has its prototype in the late 5th century, but the heavily retouched vine-and-cluster patttern on the rim suggests a somewhat later date in the 6th century for the Corinthian lamp. The third lamp (6) has a figured disk showing Abraham about to sacrifice Isaac, with the hand of God pointing to the ram behind Abraham and a palm branch behind Isaac representing wood for the burnt offering. This well-known type, an imitation of a North African lamp, has been found elsewhere at Corinth and at Kenchreai and is now dated in the late 5th to mid-6th century.

Figure 3. Lamps found in fill near
Maria's grave: Attic post-glazing
lamp 4 and Corinthian lamps 5
and 6. Scale 1:2

4   Attic post-glazing lamp   Fig. 3

L-594. Intact. H. 0.034, L. 0.098, W. 0.066 m.

Reddish yellow clay, unglazed. Heavy burning on nozzle and on disk up to handle suggests that it had been overfilled. Herringbone pattern on rim, which slopes slightly on one side. Disk: plain, with keyhole framing-ring and broad channel to large wick hole. Four filling holes and airhole. Broad solid handle, with double groove and flanking grooves, meets baseline. Base: within two almond-shaped grooves, incised branch with K below; two stamped circles at base of handle and two at base of leaf. Cf. *Agora* VII, p. 142, nos. 1414–1416, pl. 27, and p. 188, nos. 2722–2734, pl. 43; see also Karivieri 1996, pp. 203–204, esp. no. 145, pl. 13. Karivieri dates the post-glazing examples from the second half of the 5th to the early 6th century.

Date: second half of the 5th century.

5   Corinthian lamp   Fig. 3

L-595. Intact. H. 0.032, L. 0.093, W. 0.066 m.

Red clay. Surface finish is spalding on right side and base. Burning on nozzle. Imitation of an Attic post-glazing lamp with heavily retouched vine and cluster on rim. Disk: lion crouching right, within a raised framing-ring; two filling holes. Nozzle flanked by grooves and airhole, not punched through. Solid handle with hatching on upper surface; end of handle extends to base. Base: within two almond-shaped grooves, incised branch with impressed circles on left and right. See *Agora* VII, pp. 175–176, nos. 2410–2416, esp. the bases of 2412 and 2415, pl. 38, and Karivieri 1996, p. 177, no. 48, pl. 4, from a 6th-century context. Garnett 1975, p. 194, no. 13, pl. 43, is another example from the same mold; Garnett also classed this lamp as a copy of an Attic unglazed lamp. The prototype, with incised branch but no letters on the base, should not be earlier than the late 5th century.

Date: 6th century.

6   Corinthian lamp   Fig. 3

L-596. Part of nozzle missing. H. 0.026, L. 0.107, W. 0.068 m.

Overfired, dark red clay with white inclusions. Imitation of a North African lamp. Rim: concentric circles with alternating stars and diamonds within. Disk: Abraham facing right with sword in raised hand to sacrifice Isaac, with the hand of God pointing to the ram behind Abraham, and a palm tree behind Isaac. Two filling holes and airhole; framing-ring with wide channel to nozzle. Knob handle with ridge extending to base ring. Base: incised circle with rosette in center, all within raised circular ring. From the same mold as (but less neatly finished than) Garnett 1975, p. 197, no. 19, with considerable bibliography (but *Corinth* IV.1, p. 286, no. 1468, is a later generation); see also *Kenchreai* V, p. 81, no. 424, which is more stylized.

Date: late 5th to mid-6th century.

THE INSCRIPTION

We now come to the inscription (Fig. 4). The lettering is 0.017–0.033 m high. Kent misread line 6: the reading is clearly χρυσίνου and not χρισίνου. It should also be noted that the published photograph is misleading, in that the prominent nearly vertical light streak on the left of his photograph, which distorts the beginning of some lines, does not exist on the stone.[13] We believe that Kent's commentary does not do justice to the inscription on several counts (compare Kent's text above, p. 268, with Fig. 4).[14] First, the body

13. *Corinth* VIII.3, pl. 44, no. 530.

14. These comments should not be misinterpreted. Kent was working on the Corinthian inscriptions in difficult circumstances at the end of the 1940s and during the 1950s, and he completed the manuscript of *Corinth* VIII.3 not long before his death.
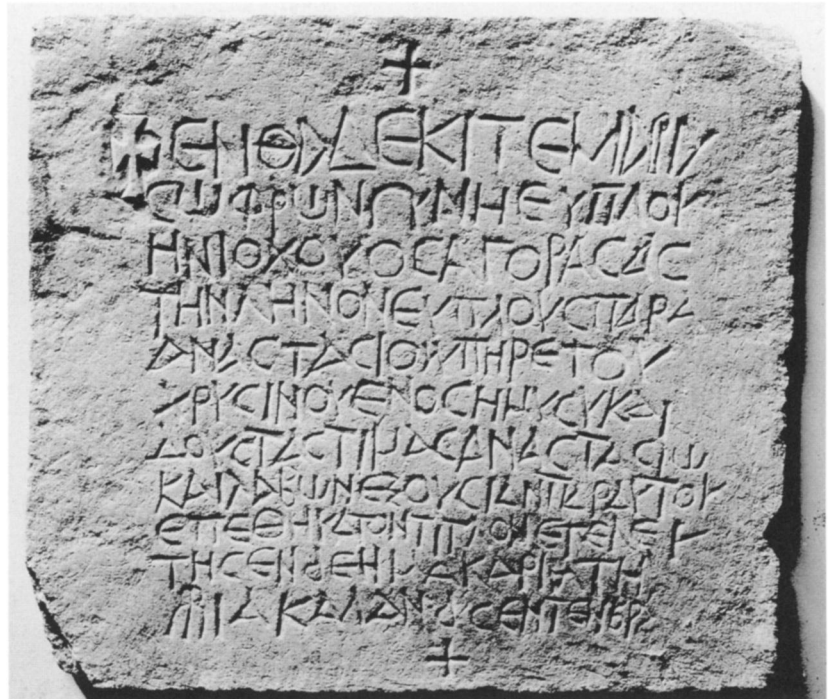
Figure 4. Maria's epitaph (I-2301).
Courtesy Corinth Excavations

of the text is, overall, carefully set out on the stone in regularly spaced lines with the left margin aligned and, except in line 9, employing syllabic division at line ends. Second, the "appalling incompetence of the letter-cutter" (to use Kent's words) applies only to certain words in lines 1–4, which are underlined below. In lines 10–11, the "incompetence" of some lettering (also underlined), although evident, is less apparent. Third, the rest of the text is quite well cut in a competent, rather "bookish" hand that is easy to read.

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  ✝ Ἐνθάδε κῖτε <u>Μαρία</u>,
      σώφρων γυνὴ <u>Εὔπλου</u>
      ἡνιόχου, ὃς ἀγοράσας
      τὴν ληνὸν <u>Εὔπλους</u> παρὰ
  5 Ἀναστασίου ὑπηρέτου
      χρυσίνου ἑνὸς ἥμυσυ καὶ
      δοὺς τὰς τιμὰς Ἀναστασίω
      καὶ λαβὼν ἐξουσίαν παρ' αὐτοῦ
      ἐπέθηκα τὸν τίτλον. ἐτελεύ-
 10 τησεν δὲ ἡ <u>μακαρία τῇ</u>
      <u>πρ(ὸ) ῑα̅ καλανδ(ῶν) Σεντενβρ(ίων)</u>.

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The inconsistencies in the lettering can easily be explained if one reads and understands the text as a whole.

Lines 1–3: The underlined words are the name of the deceased and the name and occupation of her spouse, the former in the nominative, the latter in the genitive.

Line 4: The underlined word is the name of the spouse, now in the nominative.

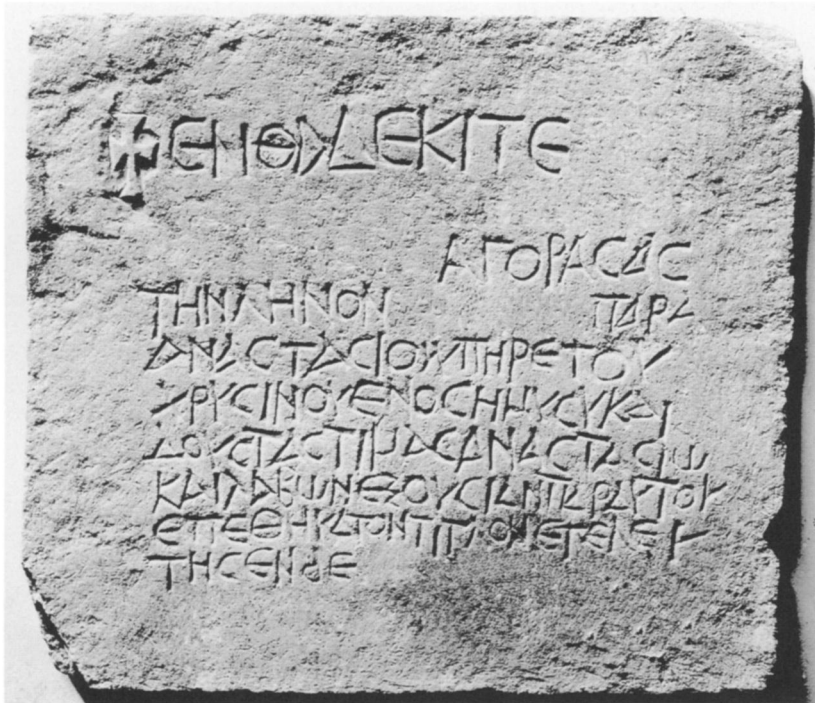*Lines 10–11:* These lines contain the date of death of the deceased.

Figure 5. Proposed reconstruction of the precut plaque in its original state. Reconstruction by J. Herbst

We have avoided making gender distinctions, in the belief that in these descriptions lies the cause of the "appalling incompetence" that so exercised Kent. The relevant words of lines 1–3 and 4 are cut in a cramped and rather awkward style, albeit one that clearly attempts to emulate the bulk of the text; the letters have been cramped because there is insufficient room for these words in the spaces allotted to them. In contrast, the redundant relative in line 3 (ὅς) is quite widely spaced. The underlined words in lines 10–11 are also cut in a style that is different from the bulk of the text, but they are much less cramped and awkward.

The implication of these inconsistencies is that Maria's epitaph was a "precut" plaque and that the names and occupations of lines 1–3 and 4, as well as the dating information in lines 10–11, were added later, after the plaque along with the grave plot had been sold to Euplous by the *hyperetes* Anastasios (line 5). Anastasios, presumably, was responsible for having the stele prepared, since his name and occupation are competently cut and spaced. Because the plaque had been cut for a future, unknown purchaser, it was laid out with gaps left for the relevant names, occupations, and date of death; see the reconstruction of the precut plaque in Figure 5. Unfortunately, the space left in line 1, although sufficient for a four-letter name, such as Anna, was too small for the five-letter name Maria, so the final alpha was represented only by the left diagonal and the beginning of the sloping crossbar, thus preserving the right margin. The deceased's occupation (γυνή) has properly spaced letters; it presented no problems since the alternative entry (ἀνήρ) would be of the same length. The conventional adjective σώφρων is satisfactorily sexless and could apply to either husband or wife.[15]

The mason created an additional problem for himself by maintaining syllabic division, so that the wife's and the husband's names each could

15. The blank spaces on the stone would have offered the mason some flexibility. For example, a longer name, such as Μακε|δονία (*Corinth* VIII.3, p. 197, no. 644), Εὐτυ|χιανή (*Corinth* VIII.3, p. 198, no. 650), or Φιλο|στράτη (*Corinth* VIII.3, p. 199, no. 658), could have been continued on the next line, replacing σώφρων. Γεωρ|γία ἡ θυγάτηρ (*Corinth* VIII.3, p. 197, no. 646) might have been cut instead of Μαρία | σώφρων γυνή.

be written entirely in one line (this decision may even have been made by Euplous). As a result these names are cramped and the redundant relative ὅς in line 3 is explained; it was clearly added to fill up the awkward space remaining after ἡνιόχου.[16] It is also worth noting that on this stone Euplous's name in the genitive occupies almost exactly the same space as it does in the nominative, although the genitive is one letter shorter. One assumes that Anastasios (or his mason) allowed spaces for standard-length names and descriptions, spaces that did not quite fit with the actual names and occupations engraved here. In other words, this plaque is the lapidary equivalent of today's standard printed legal form, such as a will, in which gaps are left for names, dates, and personal details.[17] The somewhat tidier condition of lines 9–11, giving the date of death, can be explained in the same way, since this was a standard formula, beginning with ἐτελεύτησεν δέ and followed by the date, which could be written out in full or contracted, as it is here, to suit the occasion.

The script of the original inscription is somewhat cramped and the letters are close set—indeed, almost joined—but they are carefully engraved. The lettering added to this original inscription was the work of a different mason, but he took some pains to copy, within the constraints of the available spaces, the style of his predecessor. He attempted, for example, to maintain a fairly regular right margin, while at the same time preserving an uneasy syllabic division, with the result that lines 7, 8, and 9 are extended into the right margin, while lines 10 and 11 are contracted to the left.

There is also evidence on the stone itself that the plaque had been prepared with some care: there is a very faint and intermittent vertical guideline to mark the left margin, and an equally faint and intermittent horizontal guideline to mark the middle of the plaque (below line 5). In line 1 the original mason inscribed the three syllables at the center, ΔΕΚΙΤΕ, in taller lettering, so that this line forms a shallow arc roughly centered on the cross carved above it.

The second mason attempted to inscribe in the space at the end of line 1 the five letters of Maria's name, but failed to observe that the original mason's design called for these letters to be on the same scale as the first four letters (ΕΝΘΑ); instead, he continued to make his letters on the same scale as the central six letters (ΔΕΚΙΤΕ) and thus found, when he came to inscribe the final alpha, that this letter would impinge upon the right margin of the plaque. To correct this, he used the penultimate iota as the left diagonal of alpha, and joined this to the original left diagonal by a new and shallower, downward sloping diagonal stroke, so that the original diagonal became the crossbar, but with an upward extension into the right margin. Kent remarks that "the rho has been added later in a clumsy attempt at a ligature."[18] In fact, the later addition was an iota, not a rho, inserted into the space between the rho and the new alpha. It is possible that the letters of the entire epitaph were intended to be painted, both to make them more readable and also to conceal errors of the sort described here, but no trace of paint remains today.

The large, well-cut, serifed cross, carefully positioned at the beginning of line 1, and extending into the margin rather like the illuminated letter at the beginning of a manuscript, is clearly part of the original, precut

16. If Euplous had been a pickle merchant (σαλμαγαρίου, *Corinth* VIII.3, no. 551), a bath attendant (βαλνικαρίου, no. 534), a poultryman (σιτευταρίου, no. 542), or identified by the ethnic Ἀνατολικοῦ (no. 522), there would have been no need to add the redundant ὅς after ἡνιόχου.

17. Compare the practice whereby marble sarcophagi for export were roughed out in the quarries and finished according to the purchaser's wishes; blanks were left for funerary scenes or inscriptions, and sometimes spaces for portraits of the deceased. See Ward-Perkins 1980, pp. 41–48.

18. *Corinth* VIII.3, p. 174.

text. The upper and lower margins of the text are marked by two smaller crosses. The upper, centrally placed cross may also have been a feature of the original preparation since it is more deeply cut and placed directly above the midpoint of line 1. The lower cross is both shallower and off center, and it was probably engraved as a means of delineating the bottom of the plaque, to prevent later, unauthorized additions to the text. The lightly engraved letters contrast well with the dark, semimatte finish of the marble. (Figure 4 is somewhat misleading, in that the photographic process highlights the tiny flaws on the surface, which are less apparent in reality.) Finally, the decorative border of tiles in which the plaque was set would have concealed the irregular edges of the stone, thus improving the overall appearance of the inscription.[19]

Given all these features, we conclude that this inscription is not "incompetent" or "decadent" at all. The original, precut text looks very different from earlier texts and inscriptions, but reflects the style of the Justinianic era, when renewed attention was being paid to literary and other manuscript texts. On epigraphic grounds, therefore, Maria's epitaph may now be placed in the first half of the 6th century. The evidence of the lamps above and near the grave does not conflict with this dating, although it would also allow for a later date.

THE STONE OF THE PLAQUE

Further evidence for a 6th-century date can be deduced from the type of stone used for the plaque and its likely provenance. Kent describes the plaque as "blue-green schist" (a more accurate description is "schisty marble").[20] This stone is not native to Corinth, and similar fragments are sometimes described in the inventories as "Karystos stone," although the authority for this statement is uncertain. Many other grave plaques from Late Roman and Byzantine Corinth are made of a similar schisty marble, usually green, but in some cases gray or blue. It seems likely that this attractive material was not imported initially to be used for gravestones, but for some other, more specific purpose, such as the decoration of the floors or walls of churches or well-appointed houses. Very few of these slabs bear mortar incrustations, which suggests that they were not recycled from collapsed or demolished buildings, but were builder's surplus—"offcuts" in modern parlance—sold when the project or projects for which they were destined were completed. Most of these grave plaques are between 0.015 and 0.03 m thick, which further indicates that they were intended originally for use as decorative paving or wall revetment.[21]

The findspots of most of these plaques are in the Fountain of the Lamps or at Kokkinovrisi, west of the city, but the dates given in the publications

19. From the careful sketch made by the excavator (Corinth Notebook 555, p. 67), it appears that broken tiles were set with the straight edges (each ca. 0.10 m in length) forming a neat line around the plaque.

20. See *Corinth* VIII.3, p. 174.

21. The thickness of the slabs used for funerary inscriptions at Corinth in this period varies, but, with the exception of these schisty marble plaques, it is very rarely less than 0.04 m. The description of colors is subjective, since here there is no equivalent on the Munsell chart.

are vague and imprecise.[22] A rough census of published and unpublished examples in the storeroom of the Corinth Museum shows that there are approximately 115 plaques or fragments of plaques of schisty marble, and of these, 70 are green, 25 gray, 5 blue, and 15 in other colors. If we are correct in regarding these plaques as builder's surplus, we should look for public or private buildings in which such stone was used. Two notable examples are the great Lechaion basilica and the richly decorated bath in the Panayia Field, both dated by their excavators to the first half of the 6th century. The Lechaion basilica was largely completed by the early 6th century, with some additions made during the reign of Justin (518–527) or shortly after, and the Panayia bath has now been firmly dated in the mid-6th century. The rubble-and-cement construction of the two buildings is similar and in each building the same types of schisty marble slabs were used in floors and wall decoration: many colors were employed, but mostly pale green, gray, or blue.[23] We consider it highly likely that the basilica and the bath projects were the sources of these "offcuts," and that the dates of these grave plaques are thus not earlier than the end of the 5th or the first half of the 6th century.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE INSCRIPTION

The wording of the inscription provides some additional, indirect information.[24] Most of the Christian epitaphs at Corinth that can be read or restored are dated either by reference to the traditional Roman calendar or, more frequently, to the month; often the year of the current indiction is added.[25] In Maria's epitaph the date is given simply according to the older calendar—she died on the 11th day before the Kalends of September—with no mention of the indiction. The buying and selling of tombs and burial spaces was a long-accepted practice in the Roman world and the funerary inscription was used to confirm ownership as well as commemorating the dead.[26] Inscriptions that gave details of the item being transferred and its

22. For published examples, see *Corinth* VIII.1, pp. 92–118, nos. 135–197; VIII.3, pp. 172–209, nos. 522–720; Pallas and Dantis 1977, pp. 62–83, nos. 1–30 and Appendix; Clement 1980; Robinson 1962, p. 117 (I-2543); Wiseman 1967b, pp. 422–424 (I-2680). Unpublished examples are listed in the Corinth Museum inventories. Current analysis of associated materials such as pottery, lamps, and coins is resulting in revised and later dating; see n. 11, above.

23. Lechaion basilica: see Pallas 1977, pp. 165–171, where references to the excavation reports from 1953 to 1965 are also given. Panayia bath: see Sanders (1999), who points out (p. 475) that the plan of the bath is very close to

that of the baptistery of the Lechaion basilica. We are grateful to him for drawing our attention to the similarity between Maria's plaque and the revetment slabs used in the Lechaion basilica and the Panayia bath. The white lime mortar with which the schisty marble revetments of the Panayia bath were held in place is not found on the grave plaques.

24. For the formulae employed in Early Christian epitaphs in the Corinthia, see Sironen 1997a, p. 34 (summarized in *SEG* XLVII 289) and 1997b, pp. 741–745. For Christian epitaphs from Attica, see Sironen 1997a (summarized in *SEG* XLVII 38).

25. The indiction cycle of 15 years was originally set up in 312 for tax

assessment, but later used for general dating purposes. Since the cycles were not numbered, they cannot in isolation be related to another dating system.

26. The need to include essential information is particularly clear from the epitaph of Nikostratos, the marble worker, found at Stimanga in the Corinthia (*IG* IV 437; Pallas and Dantis 1977, pp. 82–83). It is a long, nicely cut, and well-spaced inscription with regular margins, perhaps the work of Nikostratos's father or brothers whom he predeceased, but the last line and a half, recording that the plot was bought from Theodoros the muleteer for one and a half gold pieces, are very small and cramped, clearly an addition.

cost were legal documents; the sum of money sealed the transaction publicly and established ownership.[27] In this respect a grave plot was no different from any other possession. A law of Justinian passed in 537 (*Novel* 47) made reference to the current indiction obligatory for the dating of documents and for all financial transactions. It cannot be assumed that such a law would have been applied immediately or rigidly in the private sphere, but the absence of the indiction from the dating formula in Maria's epitaph, combined with the reference to the Kalends, the traditional method of dating, does suggest a date before or not long after 537, rather than later in the 6th century.

A few Corinthian epitaphs can now be dated to a specific year:

1. Selene died on ___ June in the sixth consular or postconsular year of Valentinian III (no indiction given) = year 445/6.
2. Person unknown aged 24 years died on ___ in the third year of the indiction in the second consulship of Justin I = year 524.
3. Euphrasia of pious memory died on September 17 in the 12th year of the indiction in the third consulship of Justinian = year 533.

In two other epitaphs the chronological indicators provide a way to determine the year or possible years of death:

4. Polychronios the *singoularios* died on the Monday before the Kalends of June (May 18) in the 14th year of the indiction, and his death can thus be dated to the year 431.
5. Elias died on Monday, July 8, in the 15th year of the indiction, which could be either 552 or 597.[28]

One cannot draw firm conclusions from such a small sample; Polychronios, for example, was a clerk on the governor's staff dealing with financial matters, which may account for the reference to the current indiction, rather than a consular year, long before it became obligatory. Even so, it does appear from the wording of these epitaphs that the indiction was being

27. In addition to Maria's inscription, 18, perhaps 19, epitaphs refer to the purchase of the grave or grave plot. Six epitaphs include a purchase price of one and a half gold pieces, but with minimal dating: Andreas the pickle merchant, bought from Geryon on April 20—this is certainly the purchase date, since Andreas refers to having restored the grave (*Corinth* VIII.3, pp. 179–180, no. 551); Georgios the gravedigger, bought from Tryphon, the goatskin and cloth merchant, in the 11th year of the indiction (*Corinth* VIII.3, pp. 180–181, no. 556, revised by Feissel [1985, p. 363, no. 40]); in the remaining four epitaphs neither

names nor date can be restored (*Corinth* VIII.3, pp. 186, 196, 201–203, nos. 584, 639, 669, 675). The epitaph of Polychronios the *singoularios* (Pallas and Dantis 1977, pp. 63–64, no. 2) is complete. His grave plot, bought from Andreas the gravedigger, cost two gold pieces—perhaps its proximity to the (unexcavated) basilica near the amphitheater increased the price.

28. Contra Kent (*Corinth* VIII.3, p. 173), who thought that no epitaphs could be dated. Selene: *Corinth* VIII.1, pp. 96–97, no. 145, revised by Feissel (1981, pp. 491–493). Person unknown: *Corinth* VIII.3, pp. 178–179, no. 548, heavily restored by Feissel (1981,

pp. 493–494). Euphrasia: Pallas and Dantis 1977, pp. 67–68, no. 6, revised by Feissel (1985, pp. 277–279, no. 15). Polychronios (see n. 27 above): the editors thought 581 the most satisfactory date, but Feissel (1985, p. 368, no. 96) pointed out that May 18 was a Sunday in 581, and that the only year in which May 18 fell on a Monday was 431. Elias: Wiseman 1967b, pp. 422–424 (I-2680). Years 642 and 687 are also possible for Elias, but since the pottery found in the vicinity of the grave was late 6th, or possibly early 7th, century, we have preferred the earlier dates. See the appendix below for the problems involved in establishing dates.

adopted informally before 537 and that later in the century the indiction alone, combined with the day of the week or the month, rather than the old Roman calendar, was the accepted method of dating.

THE IDENTITIES OF MARIA, EUPLOUS, AND ANASTASIOS

There are two more points to be made regarding Kent's edition of this text. First, he translates Euplous's occupation (ἡνίοχος) as "teamster," a term that accords with his feeling that this inscription is a crude, semiliterate production, which would be appropriate for a lowly carter. The more usual translation of the word is "driver." The word ἡνίοχος is connected with horses and includes the much grander meaning, going as far back as Homer, of "charioteer."[29] Both the noun and the verb ἡνιοχεύω occur frequently in inscriptions relating to chariot races in Panhellenic and local agonistic festivals of both Greek and Roman date in the East.[30] During the Roman period chariot racing changed in character and by the late 5th/early 6th century it had became a mass spectator sport, on a par with football or ice hockey today.[31] In this context the ἡνίοχος was no longer a wealthy amateur of good family, but an expert performer who often acquired a devoted following and earned large sums of money.[32]

The funding of such civic entertainments had also changed in that there were fewer local individuals who could afford the considerable expense of putting on shows. The sport was largely financed by the state, and charioteers, like other professional performers, were paid a salary out of public funds. The outstanding example in our period is the famous charioteer Porphyrius, who was winning races and gaining exceptional honors at Constantinople and elsewhere for most of the first half of the 6th century—and changing teams as often as a modern hockey player. There were many other well-known drivers, some of whom would have come quite high on the social scale by virtue of their success. This is not to suggest, of course, that Euplous moved in such circles, but by this time chariot

29. Ἡνίοχος is also an occupational name and the related verb ἡνιοχεύω is frequently used in a philosophical or metaphorical sense, but these usages are not relevant here.

30. Horses were expensive to maintain and not normally used as draft animals. Mules pulled vehicles and were used as pack animals, as were donkeys: μουλίων—muleteer—appears in a Corinthian funerary inscription (Pallas and Dantis, 1977, pp. 69–70, no. 8) and also in the epitaph of Nikostratos (n. 26 above). For the equation of ἡνίοχος with charioteer, see also Diocletian's Price Edict 11.119:

χορηγία ἡνιόχου = *corigiam aurigalem* = charioteer's reins.

31. Chariot racing in the Classical and Hellenistic periods: Bell 1989. The differences between Greek and Roman chariot racing: Humphrey 1986, pp. 1–24. Chariot races in the 1st and 2nd centuries at the Isthmian festival and the Caesarea: *Corinth* VIII.1, pp. 14–25, nos. 14–16, updated by Biers and Geagan 1970.

32. Alan Cameron points out that chariot racing as a sport became popular in the cities of the Greek East in the 3rd century, following the disappearance of the gymnasium and

the gladiator, as well as the sacred festivals, from civic life. Cameron's books (1973 and 1976) are a mine of information and source material on charioteers, their social status, and their organization in late antiquity. See, in particular, Cameron 1976, pp. 201–222, on chariot racing in the eastern cities. Liebeschuetz (2001, pp. 204–210) provides a valuable discussion of public spectacles in the 5th and 6th centuries, the empire-wide reorganization and funding of the shows, as well as their political significance.

racing had become a regular feature of city life, and not only in the metro-politan centers. To take the hockey analogy further, Euplous may well have been a minor-league driver competing at entertainments in the smaller cities of mainland Greece, which would surely have included Cor-inth, the capital of Achaea and the seat of the provincial governor. If this were the case, Euplous would have had a regular income as well as a certain social status.

Corinth had a long history of chariot racing, but no evidence of a hip-podrome has yet been found. It is probable that, as elsewhere in Greece, a temporary structure on open ground was used for races.[33] Another epitaph gives credence to the idea that there was at least one equestrian establishment of some kind at Corinth: a small funerary plaque records that Korinthas the horse doctor died in November in the fifth year of the indiction.[34] The size of the plaque and the schisty marble are very similar to Maria's epitaph, as are the layout of the inscription, the lettering, and the cutting of the serifed crosses, which include a large initial cross and two centrally placed crosses, one above and one below the text. The two plaques must have been produced at approximately the same time. A veterinary surgeon might have been employed by a wealthy local Corinthian, or even the governor, but he could also have been on the staff of a professional racing stable; the two are not incompatible.

It is worth bearing in mind that, when Maria's grave was excavated, the large, coarse stamnos carefully cemented at the head of the grave contained the bones of a horse. It is tempting to think that there is a connection between these remains and Euplous's occupation. Horses, especially race-horses, were credited with anthropomorphic feelings, and they were often known by name to the crowds in the arena, so it is quite possible that the remains of a favorite animal were given special burial, although this may not have been the original purpose of the stamnos on Maria's grave.[35] It seems clear that the stamnos and inscription were cemented in place at the same time and that the former was part of the original grave. The stamnos may have been just a marker, but it was more likely to have been intended to be a funerary urn.[36] The normal Christian burial rite was inhumation, but Euplous himself was not necessarily a practicing Christian, even if Maria was, and he may have preferred to be cremated. Since he was in a peripatetic and sometimes dangerous occupation, he could also have made provision, in the event of his death elsewhere, for his ashes to be returned to his wife's grave in Corinth. The Christian community generally favored multiple burial, but Maria was the sole occupant of this grave, which was sealed by the layer of cement after her inhumation; there does not seem to have been any other provision for the burial of Euplous or members of their families.[37]

Euplous's proposed status as a professional and salaried driver puts the purchase price of Maria's grave in a different light. The sum of one and a half nomismata, or gold pieces, paid by Euplous appears to have been the normal price of a decent grave plot at Corinth—when it was bought by a person of some substance, who could also afford to record his purchase in the funerary inscription. It is notoriously difficult to estimate the buying power of money in the ancient world, given that the sources cover such a wide geographical area and different circumstances. The most helpful

33. A site near the Isthmian sanctu-ary was identified by Broneer (*Isthmia* II, pp. 117–122) as a hippodrome of the Classical period, but its size has not been determined, nor whether it was used for Roman-style chariot racing. On provisions for chariot racing in the eastern provinces, see Humphrey 1986, pp. 438–539, esp. pp. 525–528. See also Romano 2005, where the author postulates the existence of a circus in the northwest quadrant of Corinth; his hypothesis, however, remains unproven.

34. Clement 1980 (= *SEG* XXXV 256). The plaque was found in the southwest forum, but not in situ. Clement's description is inaccurate; there is no space for another cross in the upper left corner of the plaque to balance the cross carved in the upper right corner.

35. Toynbee (1973, pp. 177–183) gives a selection of the hundreds of known names of racehorses and the many representations in art, which testify to the special regard in which horses were held.

36. No other details of the vessel were recorded. "Stamnos" has been used by Corinth excavators for different types of containers used for Roman-period cremation burials.

37. It is speculation, of course, but Euplous could also have bought the plot beside Maria's grave in the tomb entrance (see Fig. 1), where there is a wide unused space. Without an inscrip-tion it is impossible to know.

discussion of prices and salaries in the 5th and 6th centuries is by Cécile Morrisson; the following examples, which can reasonably be applied to Corinth, are taken from her study.[38] Between 494 and 541, in a time of good harvests, a nomisma would buy 30–40 modii of wheat; in 531 an untrained slave under 10 years of age cost 10 solidi; in the 6th century a pig cost one solidus; a donkey three solidi. At the end of the 5th century a skilled artisan earned a quarter solidus per month; during the 6th century his wage went up to a third of a solidus per month; in 505–507 a worker alone earned four carats a day, but a worker with a donkey earned double—eight carats. These figures make it unlikely that the cost of a good grave plot and inscription would have been within Euplous's means if he had been a mere carter.

It is not surprising that grave plots costing one and a half or two gold pieces should belong to moderately prosperous individuals. We have little to go by, but most of those who could afford a grave with an epitaph mention a trade or occupation.[39] Andreas, the pickle merchant, and Tryphon, the trader in goatskin and cloth, presumably had their own businesses. Georgios, the gravedigger or sexton who bought from Tryphon, would have been employed by the church. The only grave plot at Corinth known to have cost two gold pieces belonged to Polychronios, a *singoularios* on the governor's staff, but at Argos, the same price of two gold pieces was paid by a tribune and also by someone called Aspar, otherwise unknown.[40] This suggests that government employees—civil or military—could afford the higher price. There is also the grave of Nikostratos, the marble worker, found at Stimanga in the Corinthia, to be considered; this was sold for one and a half gold pieces by Theodoros the muleteer.[41] At first glance it may seem strange that someone in such an apparently menial occupation should be in a position to sell a grave plot for one and half gold pieces. However, occupation need not automatically define status. Louis Robert concluded that the term μουλίων—muleteer—could also refer to those in charge of a section of the *cursus publicus* (the state-maintained transport system), which was responsible for the transport of heavy baggage.[42] Stimanga was on an important ancient road to the coast that was part of the major road nexus centered on Corinth, the provincial capital, so it is possible that Theodoros the muleteer was also in government service. But whatever the status of Theodoros, it is in the milieu of people with a reliable source of income that Euplous, as a salaried performer, should be placed.

38. Χρύσινος or νόμισμα χρυσίνου was the standard gold coin (*solidus* in Latin) introduced by Constantine I, which became the unit of account in the Byzantine period. There were 72 nomismata or solidi to a Roman pound of gold and 24 carats to a solidus. Morrisson (1989, pp. 239–264) provides a detailed analysis that includes a table (pp. 252–256) of prices and salaries with conversion values and sources. For a more general discussion, see Jones 1964, pp. 841–872.

39. A substantial number of epitaphs mentioning trades and occupations have been found at Corinth. They have been classified and discussed briefly by Avraméa (1997, pp. 134–136), but she has not taken all the discussion of earlier commentators into account. She translates Euplous's occupation as "cocher."

40. Tribune: Vollgraff 1903, pp. 266–267, no. 19. His epitaph, like that of Polychronios, was found near a church, a desirable and no doubt more expensive location. Aspar: Mitsos 1937 (= *SEG* XI 350). The name Aspar is so unusual that he must be connected with (perhaps descended from a freedman of) the renowned general Aspar, or his family.

41. See n. 26, above. The inscription was found near a large church of Byzantine date. A grave plot at Corinth located in a cemetery to the east of the city was also sold by a "Theodoros the muleteer" (Pallas and Dantis 1977, pp. 69–70, no. 8); this may well be the same person, but one cannot be sure.

42. Robert 1955, pp. 46–54.

The final point to be made about Kent's edition concerns his translation of the occupation of the seller, Anastasios, as "servant." This is correct, but in a Christian context ὑπηρέτης also means a minor ecclesiastic official, such as a deacon or a subdeacon.[43] In selling off burial spaces Anastasios must surely have been acting as a representative of the church. No basilica or Christian cult place, which would naturally have come under ecclesiastical jurisdiction, is known to have existed in the vicinity of Maria's grave, but there is substantial evidence of Christian burial in the neighboring group of traditional Roman chamber tombs, which had probably been built in the 2nd century.[44] This area is good agricultural land well outside the city; the tombs in the cliff above the ravine are somewhat removed from the important cemetery in the plain below and on the slopes of Cheliotomylos, and they are not particularly easy to access. We wonder whether these family tombs had originally been built on the boundary of an estate that was later bequeathed to the church. By the 6th century much of the church's wealth and income came from such endowments, which were administered by the local bishop.[45] The bishop of Corinth, a metropolitan under Thessalonike, was resident at Lechaion several miles away; it would have been normal for a member of his staff, Anastasios, to supervise church property in Corinth and in that connection to sell grave plots there, as well as, in this case, providing the precut plaque for the buyer—whoever he or she might be.[46] Guy Sanders has remarked upon the general lack of activity at Corinth during the first part of the 6th century, perhaps due to earthquake damage. For this reason, too, we suggest that Anastasios was answerable to the authorities at Lechaion.

CONCLUSION

Euplous the lowly carter at the end of the 4th century has become a professional charioteer of the late 5th or early 6th century, a man of some substance. He may not have been a practicing Christian himself, but he cared enough for his wife to bury her well in her own grave in a good location with a suitably worded inscription that he bought from the church, after which she received the customary offerings of lighted lamps. Maybe she died in one of the earthquakes or during the plague that devastated Corinth in the first half of the 6th century. Were Euplous's ashes placed in the container? Was it Euplous himself who added the bones of the horse—or someone else who thought it appropriate? We shall never know.

43. Lampe 1961, p. 1444, s.v. ὑπη-ρέτης E. 1–3; see also Ivison (1996, pp. 105–106), who follows Lampe and calls Anastasios "probably a member of the local lesser clergy."

44. Shear 1931. The tombs excavated in 1930–1931 are being restudied and Shear's dates are under revision. Many of the lamps in the tombs have Christian symbols and should now be dated in the 5th or early 6th century.

45. For a discussion of church finances in the 6th century, see Jones 1964, pp. 904–914. It is sometimes assumed that the Corinthian church was wealthy because of the number of large basilicas in the diocese; such buildings may not reflect a general prosperity, but rather the ostentatious display of wealth by a few individuals.

46. It is tempting to think that the owner or contractor responsible for building the bath in the Panayia Field also had connections with the episcopal establishment in Lechaion, but there is no evidence to support the idea except the similarity of the plans of the bath and the Lechaion basilica (see n. 23, above) and the fact that the same expensive, imported marble was used in the decoration of both buildings. Perhaps the marble used in Corinth fell off the back of a mule cart.

APPENDIX

CRITERIA FOR THE DATING OF EARLY CHRISTIAN EPITAPHS AT CORINTH

Because private inscriptions use a wider range of scripts than do official inscriptions, they are more difficult to date, and at Corinth the paucity of datable public inscriptions adds to the problem. In this article we have used other features, in addition to the script, to help determine the approximate date. These criteria may be useful to other scholars. The analysis is based on 341 complete or fragmentary gravestones.

Script

Three styles of lettering occur: the first, the "angular" style, has no rounded letters;[47] the second, the "rounded" (or "cursive") style, employs rounded forms wherever possible;[48] and the third, the "mixed" style, is generally rounded, but uses some angular letters (i.e., alpha, epsilon, mu, sigma, and omega).[49] These distinctions alone, however, cannot be used to provide a secure date since the styles do not have a chronological progression. The rounded and mixed styles appear to be contemporary, whereas the angular style, which had come in earlier, either persists or is reintroduced in the second half of the 6th century. The epitaphs of Polychronios and Maria are entirely in the rounded or cursive style, that of Euphrasia is mixed, and that of Elias is entirely angular. However, several epitaphs that are dated only by the indiction are probably late 6th century and are mixed.

Summary

Angular style:	38 published	+ 3 unpublished
Rounded style:	176 published	+ 9 unpublished
Mixed style:	107 published	+ 8 unpublished
Not analyzed:		40 unpublished[50]

Style and Layout of the Epitaph

The gravestone of Maria exhibits a phenomenon that may also be an aid to dating her epitaph. This is the way in which the first line of the text is inscribed: the central letters are made a little taller than those at each end of the line, as if to draw the viewer's attention. It is fairly common for the first line of such inscriptions to be engraved on a larger scale, but

47. An example of the "angular" style is *Corinth* VIII.3, pl. 50, no. 585.

48. See *Corinth* VIII.3, pl. 46, no. 542.

49. See *Corinth* VIII.3, pl. 46, no. 541.

50. These fragments are chance finds or come from excavations of the latter half of the 20th century, and were not available for study.

there are not many examples in which only centrally placed letters are on a larger scale.

Completely preserved examples of this phenomenon are the epitaphs of Euphrasia, Korinthas, and Elias;[51] the unpublished I-71-42 is another. Each of these is further distinguished by a large cross inscribed at the beginning of the first line, occupying one letter space; Maria's epitaph is the most elaborate example of this practice. Gravestones lacking this initial cross are the epitaphs of Iulianos and Polychronios[52] and the unpublished I-2849. Further possible instances with an initial cross are the epitaphs of Dem[- -], Andreas, Ammiane, Poul[- -], two unknown persons, and Venenatos;[53] possible examples lacking this cross are an unknown person and Nikeas.[54] This arrangement may be an attempt to make this and similar gravestones resemble an ogival stele, but no examples of such stelai survive at Corinth.

TYPE OF STONE USED

A substantial number of epitaphs (ca. 111 examples) are inscribed upon thin, schisty marble plaques, similar in thickness to Maria's gravestone; the colors are green, blue, or gray. One of these, the epitaph of Euphrasia, is securely dated to A.D. 533.[55] The remainder lack secure external dates, but many of them are dated by the year of an indiction.

There are also a few instances (ca. 31) of thin plaques of ordinary marble or other stone. Two of these plaques, both of white marble, have been assigned dates that bracket the above group. Of these, the earliest is Polychronios, in 431, and the latest is Elias, in 552 or 597.[56] The use of white, rather than schisty, marble suggests that the stock of schisty marble plaques was not yet available in 431 and had been exhausted by the second half of the 6th century.

EXTERNAL DATING INDICATORS

Of the 341 fragments of grave monuments used in this analysis, 74 are dated by the year of the indiction (without identifying which indiction is meant) and 21 are dated by month alone, without an indiction date; of these 21, 8 are in the older Roman calendar style (mentioning the Kalends, Nones, or Ides of the month) and 13 in the new calendar style (giving the numerical day of the month and, in one case, the day of the week). Thus, a total of 95 fragments bear some kind of date, but, of these, in only seven cases is there any reference to another, external system of dating, that is, to consular or regnal dates. The remaining 246 fragments are undated.[57]

Summary
No date of any kind: 246 fragments (all published)
Date by indiction: 74 fragments, including two in the old style and 72 in the new style of calendar (70 published and four unpublished)
Date by month alone: 21 fragments, including eight in the old style and 13 in the new style of calendar (all published)
Date by indiction and/or month, with consular or regnal dates: seven fragments (all published)

51. Respectively, Pallas and Dantis 1977, pp. 67–68, no. 6; Clement 1980 (= *SEG* XXXV 256); and Wiseman 1967b, pp. 422–424 (I-2680).

52. *Corinth* VIII.3, p. 187, no. 587, and Pallas and Dantis 1977, pp. 63–64, no. 2.

53. *Corinth* VIII.1, p. 100, no. 152; VIII.3, pp. 180, 187, 192, 202, nos. 552, 588, 621, 673; and Wiseman 1969, pp. 92–93 (I-2708, I-2709).

54. *Corinth* VIII.1, pp. 99–100, no. 151, and VIII.3, p. 179, no. 550.

55. See n. 28, above, for precise date.

56. Pallas and Dantis 1977, pp. 63–64, no. 2, and Wiseman 1967b, pp. 422–424 (I-2680).

57. Our numbers differ slightly from those published in Sironen's analysis (1997b) of the formulae employed in the Early Christian epitaphs from the Corinthia. His study overlaps with ours in that these formulae include the names and occupations of the owner and of the occupant of the tomb, the purchase price, the date of purchase, and the date of death. He does not discuss the materials used for these epitaphs nor the script of the inscriptions. He includes monuments other than the thin plaques to which our study is largely confined, but, because of the fragmentary nature of so many of these inscriptions, he limits himself to the 58 most complete examples (from a total of ca. 360).

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