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Memory, Tradition, and Christianization of the Peloponnese

REBECCA J. SWEETMAN

Includes Supplementary Content on AJA Online

This work examines the use of memory and tradition in the Christianization of the Peloponnese based on the evidence of the location and topography of churches. The different processes of conversion in the area have already been discussed, and the focus of this work is to show the extent of continuation of religious practice from the Roman to Late Antique periods. A diachronic analysis of the evidence for towns and sanctuaries from the fourth to seventh centuries is presented. It is argued that throughout the different Christianization processes memory and tradition were managed by the church in terms of its location, architecture, and rituals. It is likely that the church consciously maintained certain traditions of place, imagery, and action in order to retain and use memory traces from the established religious structures, which helped situate the Christian church as a central element of community life and identity. Therefore, it is contended that an essential element of the Christianization process was to maintain earlier memories and traditions not only to enable an efficiently unobtrusive conversion for its long-term success but also to ensure the maintenance of existing social structures, which in turn sustained the church.¹

INTRODUCTION

From the late fourth or early fifth century to the end of the seventh century, more than 160 churches were constructed in the Peloponnese (fig. 1; online fig. 1 on AJA online).² Although the origins of the process lay in the fourth century, this monumentalization of Christianity began in earnest in the fifth century, with most churches apparently being constructed in the sixth century.³ The comparative lateness of church building in the Peloponnese

¹I am very grateful for the support of the Memoria Romana project and Karl Galinsky. This project was undertaken during a year of research leave funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and a Royal Society of Edinburgh Caledonian Research Fund European Visiting Research Fellowship. Bill Caraher, Guy Sanders, Nikos Tsivikis, and Yannis Varalis generously discussed this work with me. Thanks to my fieldwork assistants and staff at the British School at Athens for their help with this project. I am very grateful to Swithun Crowe, Birgit Plietzsch, Carol Evans, and Mary Woodcock Kroble for their work on the image database and production of the maps of sites. I would like to thank Editor-in-Chief Sheila Dillon and the anonymous reviewers for the *AJA*, who provided detailed and constructive comments on earlier drafts of this work. Figures are my own unless otherwise noted. Additional figures can be found under this article's abstract on AJA Online (www.ajaonline.org).

²This material is in part based on the survey undertaken of the churches in the Peloponnese in 2012. As many sites as could possibly be located were visited and were geo-tagged and collated on a map (see fig. 1; online fig. 1) and at <http://arts.st-andrews.ac.uk/greekbasilicas/article/>. We are currently waiting for permission from the Ministry of Culture for the full image database to be made live.

³In other areas, such as Cyprus, North Africa, and Asia Minor, churches dating to the fourth and fifth centuries are found more commonly. Very few of the Peloponnesian churches have secure dates, which makes a synthetic study of them in terms of Christianization challenging, but it is not impossible if the broad date range is used.

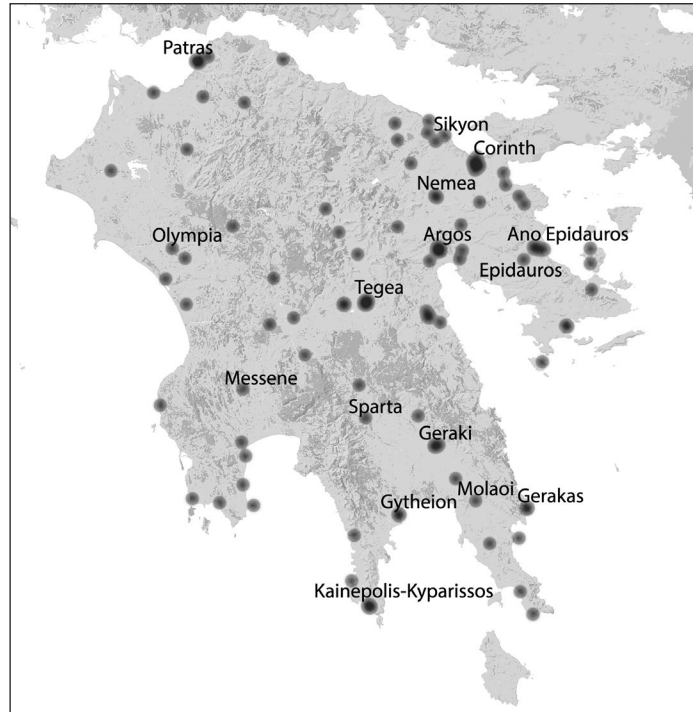


FIG. 1. Map of the Peloponnese, showing church density in heat spot (drawing by S. Crowe).

may in part have been due to the tenancy of the polytheistic governor of Achaia, Praetextatus.⁴ Others argue that it was a result of the limited network connections southern Greece had with the wider Late Antique world.⁵ Archaeological evidence here indicates a largely peaceful process of Christianization with little evidence of tension.⁶ The question remains as to how the church became situated in the landscape so subtly yet ultimately with such dominance that it played a fundamental role in the successful Christianization of the Peloponnese. Construction of churches in the landscape encouraged conversion through a range of processes, including but not exclusively the mediation of power generated through religious belief, the provision of practical facilities for conversion, and widening participation; the church also served as a physical manifestation of the prominence and permanency of the religion.⁷ Although discussion of such processes in

the Peloponnese is rarely found in historical sources, they provide some indication of the nature of and attitude toward change, but not without bias. Furthermore, direct evidence for assessing the scale and progression of conversion, either through baptismal or attendance figures, is minimal.⁸ The physical evidence of the location, architecture, and rituals of the church (such as procession, baptism, and funerary cult) provides an alternative means of understanding Christianization. Through an examination of the location of the churches constructed between the fifth and seventh centuries in the Peloponnese, this work aims to shed light on the use of existing spaces and places as part of the conversion process. This diachronic approach enables the complexity of conversion to be highlighted, particularly in terms of the integration of different religious practices on the personal and community levels.⁹

To establish the context, evidence comprising historical, epigraphic, and mortuary data is outlined first. This allows the agents and participants of change, such

⁴ Some argue that the role of Praetextatus' polytheistic agenda had little impact on church building. E.g., see Foschia (2009) for discussion of issues of attribution of temple restoration to Praetextatus' governorship. See also Sweetman (forthcoming) for further discussion of the relatively late construction of churches in the Peloponnese.

⁵ Saradi and Eliopoulos 2011, 263.

⁶ Sweetman (forthcoming).

⁷ Cameron 1993, 58.

⁸ Pearce 2003, 61.

⁹ More often such discussions are dealt with either from the perspective of "persistence of paganism" or from that of the impact of Christianity, but they are less commonly considered together.

as clergy, communities, and individuals who are Christian and non-Christian, to be highlighted. Christianization is seen on a range of different levels from personal to public and is manifested in different ways in burials, imagery, and architecture over a long period. Just as there seems to be little to suggest segregation of the population based on religious differences, the same is true of the physical space. An earlier study of the topography of the churches has shown how Christianization was a process of strategic and emergent change undertaken by a range of agents.¹⁰ In establishing the impact of Christianization on the Peloponnese, it is necessary to outline this theory of change before examining the evidence for transformations in urban and religious contexts. To analyze different levels of integration, the physical context of the Peloponnese in the fourth century is explored to then highlight continuity and change in Late Antique society with the construction of the churches. The reorganization of urban space is in evidence, and mortuary data reveal further mixed polytheistic traditions and Christian practices. A focus on sanctuaries enables a more detailed analysis of how the church was able to situate itself in the community without tension-based change. For even incremental processes of conversion to be successful, the agents of change (broadly speaking, the church) need a catalyst to orchestrate social movement and community cohesion. To achieve this, various processes can be used, such as social exclusivity, memory manipulation, and tradition, which allow both active and subtle conversions at different periods in diverse places. While not underestimating the sociopolitical and economic agendas behind Christianization, the underlying processes of conversion helped endorse the new church in society. It is argued that the church deliberately used location, architecture, and rituals to create and recall memories from old traditions; in this way, it was able to establish the new religion without creating a significant disturbance to social order and community identity. To this end, three case studies—the sanctuary at Epidaurus (figs. 2–4), the Acropolis Basilica in Sparta (figs. 5–8; online fig. 2), and the city of Corinth—have been chosen to show the roles of memory and tradition in Christianization.

COMMUNITIES IN THE LATE ANTIQUE PELOPONNESE

Although Lives of the Saints do not survive from this period, Christian historians and chroniclers such as Eusebius provide more personal insights, particularly through records of letters. Letters reveal a great variety

of views and even levels of religious stringency, as seen in the late second-century account of the Bishop Dionysius of Corinth urging Bishop Pinytus of Knossos to be a bit more lenient with his congregation, as recorded by Eusebius.¹¹ In the fifth century, more contention is seen in the case of Bishop Perigenes. Perigenes was appointed bishop of Patras by the archbishop of Corinth in 419,¹² but when he was rejected by the people of Patras, he returned to Corinth and became archbishop of the metropolis on his predecessor's death.¹³ Even with the sanction of Pope Boniface I, this was a controversial move, and other bishops tried to call a synod against the appointment, but to no avail.¹⁴ Other than through records of letters and elections, the names of many of the fifth-century bishops are known from the accounts of the ecumenical councils. Bishops from the towns of Sikyon, Asopos, Elis, Koroni, Methone, and Patras are known to have attended the Council of Sardica in 344 C.E., and in 381 C.E. Argos, Tegea, Megalopolis, Sparta, Messene, and Hermione were represented at the Council of Constantinople. It is notable that there is little evidence for churches in the Peloponnese at these early dates. The third ecumenical council at Ephesus in 431 was attended by one Peloponnesian representative, Perigenes, the bishop of Corinth.¹⁵ In the following Council of Chalcedon in 451, however, there were three representatives from the Peloponnese: Peter of Corinth, John of Messene, and Ophelimus of Tegea.¹⁶ It is unclear whether the suburban churches of Kraneion and Kodratos (North Cemetery) at Corinth were actually standing at this point, as the current foundation date suggested is early sixth century based on coins and the association with the martyr, respectively.¹⁷ The dates of the churches at Tegea, such as the Agora Basilica and the Thyrsos Basilica, remain equally difficult to determine, although Asimakopoulou-Atzaka has indicated fifth- and late fifth-century dates for the mosaics in each.¹⁸ The church at Messene is known to have been built in the Late Antique period, but specific dates are not yet forthcoming.¹⁹ There is, therefore, little to link the

¹¹Euseb., *Hist. eccl.* 4.23.

¹²All dates are C.E. unless otherwise stated.

¹³I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.

¹⁴Rist 2011, 525–26.

¹⁵Brown 2008, 105.

¹⁶Price and Gaddis 2005, 128.

¹⁷See Pallas (1970) and Stikas (1962), respectively.

¹⁸Asimakopoulou-Atzaka 1987, nos. 20, 21, respectively.

¹⁹The notorious problems of church chronology are discussed in further detail later in this article.

¹⁰Sweetman (forthcoming).



FIG. 2. Epidauros Basilica, showing the atrium in the foreground. The propylon of the sanctuary is located immediately to the west, surrounded by trees.

presence of bishops at the ecumenical councils with the presence of churches in their diocese.

Epigraphic evidence from church contexts affords further data on individual members of the clergy, such as the reader Ioannis, who donated the decoration of the ambo to the church at Troezen in commemoration of his family.²⁰ Inscriptions in mosaics or on architecture often record the name of the individual donor and sometimes other details. For example, Kyriakos paid for the cost of the floor of the church at Olympia, and according to his donor panel he was a landowner and lector.²¹ The church at Olympia is considered to date to the fifth century.²² A deaconess named Agripiani is recorded as having donated the mosaic of the church on Kanakari Street, Patras.²³ At Tegea, an inscription in the central aisle mosaic records that Thyrsos the priest had the church and mosaics constructed.²⁴ It would be tempting to suggest that the

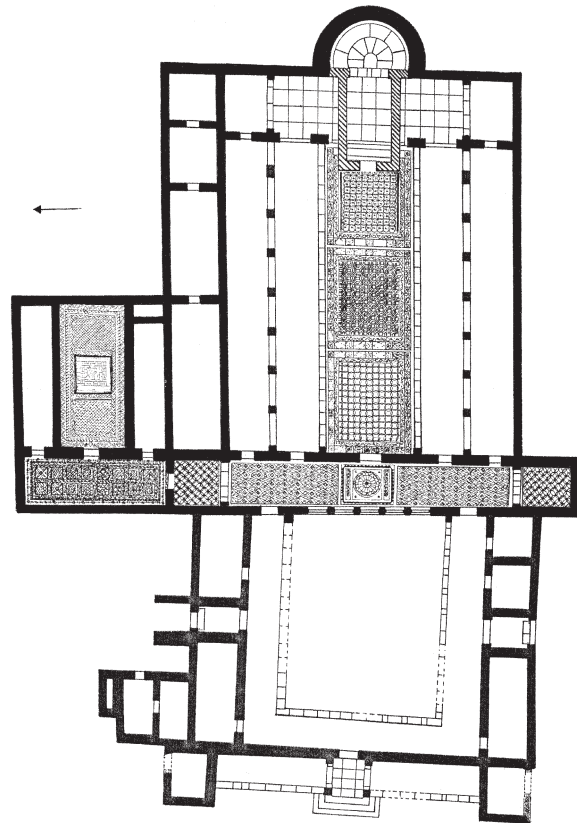


FIG. 3. Epidauros, plan of basilica (Asimakopoulou-Atzaka 1987, fig. 48; courtesy P. Asimakopoulou-Atzaka).

²⁰ *IG* 4 784; Caraher 2003, 317. The standing church remains at this site belong to a Middle Byzantine church and are dedicated to the Dormition of the Virgin.

²¹ Caraher 2003, 322.

²² Adler et al. 1892, 93–105.

²³ Caraher 2003, 315. Asimakopoulou-Atzaka (1987, no. 27) dates the mosaics here from the end of the fifth to the early sixth century.

²⁴ Caraher 2003, 316. Asimakopoulou-Atzaka (1987, no. 21) dates this to the end of the fifth century.



FIG. 4. Epidauros bema, view from the west.

inscription bearing the name of the Holy Ophelimus found at the church at Provantinon, Tegea, refers to the same bishop who attended the Council of Chalcedon in 451. However, the recent excavations there have revealed a triple-apse church, which might indicate a later date for this, possibly even in the eighth century.²⁵ In other cases, the individual donors are not recorded, as seen in the inscriptions in the mosaics at Molaoi I.²⁶ Recent work has made good progress in estimating the numbers of bishops and clerics in the Late Antique period, but figures for Greece and the Peloponnese remain obscure.²⁷ Evidence for other individuals can be gleaned from epigraphic material from mortuary contexts and sanctuaries. In mortuary contexts, the dedication might comprise the name of the deceased and other personal or family details, including occupation and religion. There are numerous instances: examples include the carpet weaver Menas and his wife, Konstantina, from Argos, the sixth-century Argive bishop whose name does not survive, and Maurikios the furrier from Corinth.²⁸ As one might expect, a mixture of traditional forms of names

and conventions continued along with traces of the new ideology of salvation and resurrection.²⁹ Although the formula of including name and occupation with a Christian symbol is fairly standard, there are regional preferences; for example, the Corinthian gravestones include the line “A sepulcher owned . . .” not commonly found elsewhere.³⁰ Hybrid traditions are also notable in the epigraphic record, where curses are found either in the Christian burials or sometimes on the gravestones. There are several examples from Argos, such as one from the fourth century as well as gravestones bearing anathemata from Corinth.³¹

Some excellent work on identifying individuals and regions that tenaciously persisted with polytheistic practice in Achaia has been undertaken to date.³² Two fourth-century taurobolic altars, currently in the National Archaeological Museum, Athens, indicate that the taurobolium was still performed in Athens until at least the end of the fourth century. One of the altars dedicated by Archelaus notes that he was resident in Argos, where he had been initiated into local cults.³³ Personal epigraphic data indicate a somewhat gradual

²⁵ D. Athanasoulis, pers. comm. 2012.

²⁶ Caraher 2003, 329. Asimakopoulou-Atzaka (1987, no. 45) dates these to the second half of the sixth century.

²⁷ Van Dam 2011.

²⁸ See, respectively, *SEG* 53 318; *SEG* 49 362; Walbank 2010, 261.

²⁹ Kourkoutidou-Nicolaidou 1997.

³⁰ Walbank 2010, 261.

³¹ For Argos, see *SEG* 30 369; Feissel 1980, 466. For Corinth, see Walbank 2010, 267.

³² Brown 2006; Foschia 2009; Saradi and Eliopoulos 2011.

³³ Saradi and Eliopoulos 2011, 287.

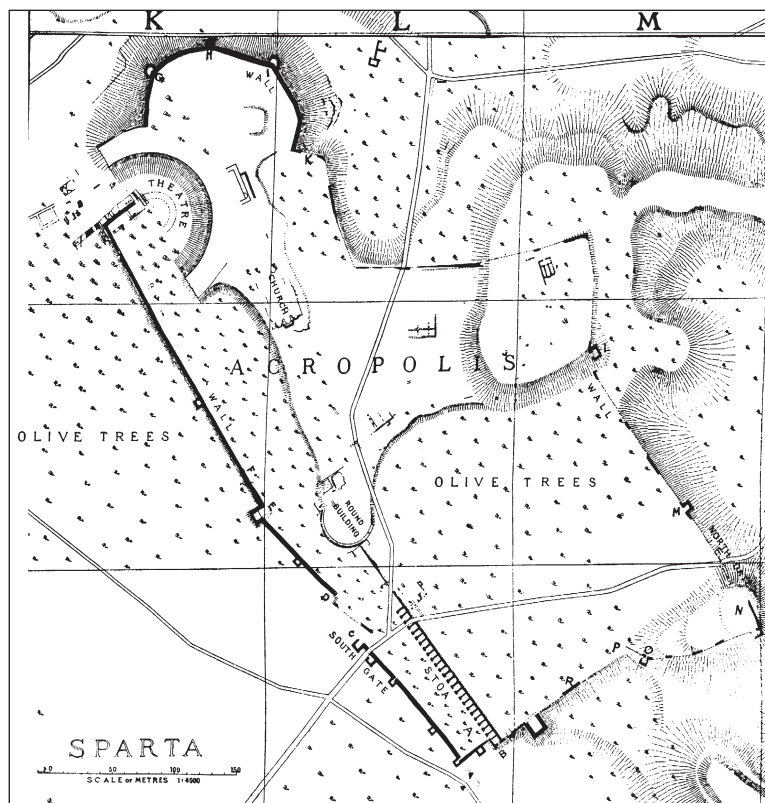


FIG. 5. Plan of the acropolis, Sparta. The Acropolis Basilica is to the east of the theater, marked as “church” (Dawkins 1906–1907, Sejk plan; reproduced with the permission of the British School at Athens).

assimilation of Christianity, with a diversity of impact depending on the local clergy and elite and a range of other factors. Some of the written sources, however, diverge from this picture. Many Christian sources indicate the swift victory of Christianity over a belligerent polytheistic population, while non-Christian sources, such as Eunapius, describe a dark time in the fourth century. In his *Lives of the Philosophers and Sophists*, Eunapius discusses temple destruction by Constantine and the building of churches, the general gloom that descended over the fair earth, specific temple destructions in Alexandria and Canopus, monks who commit unspeakable crimes, the painful end of temples, and, for Greece specifically, the overthrow of temples, all of which ruined the country.³⁴ However, in other sources the impact of Christianization is not so polarized. Threats of temple destruction can be read in the Theodosian Code and through Libanius’ plea in *Pro Templis* to Theodosius for the preservation of the tem-

ples.³⁵ Libanius was a sophist, rhetorician, and friend of Julian, and a broad view of the fourth-century changes can be understood from his orations. For example, in a letter to Theodosius, Libanius notes that he did not close the temples or ban offerings before the year 385, and at the same time he is quite critical of the monks and their ways.³⁶ Furthermore, it is worth noting that the Theodosian code contains suggestions for the upkeep of some temples.³⁷ Hunt also stresses that in practice the interpretation of the code was quite varied.³⁸ Attitudes to conversions can be gleaned from Marinus, a student of the Neoplatonist philosopher Proclus, who in the middle of the fifth century antagonized Christian sensibilities with his steadfast political, philosophical,

³⁵ Lib., *Orationes* 30.

³⁶ Lib., *Orationes* 30.8.

³⁷ E.g., in *Cod. Theod.* (16.10.8, 15, 18) it states that as long as there is no sacrifice, temples may remain undamaged, and even festivals were tolerated without sacrifice rituals (*Cod. Theod.* 10.10.17).

³⁸ Hunt 1993, 143.

³⁴ Eunap., VS 379, 415, 421, 423, 427, 437, 465, respectively.



FIG. 6. Sparta, Acropolis Basilica, view from the west.

and religious views. Marinus' *Vita Procli* gives insights into the diversity of change in the fifth century from a pagan perspective, particularly in Athens.³⁹ The fifth-century historian Zosimus' *Historia Nova* is the only surviving history from this period, and it records an account of the 395 Gothic invasions led by Alaric.⁴⁰ In book 5, Zosimus notes the destruction of Boeotia (with the exception of Thebes), and although it had been Alaric's intention to sack Athens, his will was compromised on seeing it for himself. Although he spared Athens and Attica, he did invade the Peloponnese. It seems that most of the Peloponnesian towns surrendered to Alaric without violence, with the exception of Corinth.⁴¹ Temple destruction in the Peloponnese is often attributed to Alaric and his associated Christian crusaders, but Brown suggests that the destruction may have been more incidental than planned.⁴² While the nature of liturgical practice in the Late Antique churches of the Peloponnese is still difficult to define, the late fourth- and the fifth-century works of Augustine, such as *Confessions* and *City of God*, provide good insights into Christian philosophy, particularly of the West, as well as the complex relationships be-



FIG. 7. Sparta, Acropolis Basilica, view from the northwest, showing north annexes and central apse.

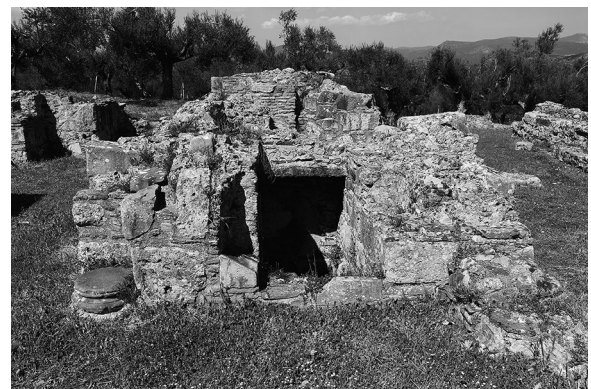


FIG. 8. Sparta, Acropolis Basilica, crypt in West Building, view from the south.

³⁹As noted in Saradi and Eliopoulos 2011, 268.

⁴⁰Zos., *Historia Nova* book 5.

⁴¹Brown 2008, 151. Brown further notes that Corinth may show archaeological evidence for the destructions, but it is not easy to definitely ascribe to Alaric the late fourth-century destructions seen in areas around the city.

⁴²Brown 2008, 149.

tween church and state.⁴³ There is no simple dichotomy between Christian and non-Christian in the Late Antique period. This is seen on an individual as well as state level and is epitomized by Libanius' concern that Theodosius would recognize the intrinsic importance of the temple when formulating his own support for Christianity.⁴⁴ The presence of churches in the Peloponnese is indicative of Christianization endeavors and, ultimately, successful conversion.⁴⁵

CHRISTIANIZATION OF THE PELOPONNESE

Christianization: Theories of Strategic and Emergent Change

Significant numbers of Peloponnesian churches have been excavated and published by archaeologists such as Soteriou, Pallas, Orlandos, and Drandakis.⁴⁶ Their analyses remain fundamental for research on the contextualization of the architecture in terms of the role of the church in society and liturgical practice in the Late Antique period. While work on the epigraphic data is increasing, the chronologies for the foundation of many churches are still difficult to refine, which affects our ability to further scrutinize Christianization methods.⁴⁷ Furthermore, the manner in which conversions happened, in terms of when, how, and by whom, is difficult to establish from the literary and archaeological evidence. However, an analysis of the topographic data in the Peloponnese indicates three different strategic and emergent processes—complexity, social movement, and tipping point—for church construction from the fifth to seventh centuries, which can also be linked to Christianization activities (table 1).⁴⁸ Although they have topographically distinct locations, such as ports and sanctuaries, cities and rural areas, these processes are not chronologically specific. They did not occur in a single linear process, and there is evidence for cultural lag, even within an area as small as the Peloponnese. Consequently, in spite of chronological problems, a broad understanding of the Christianization process can be achieved through an analysis of the location of the churches. While these processes are discussed

in more detail as an argument for Christianization as strategic and emergent change, they can be briefly summarized here (see table 1).⁴⁹

Complexity process is defined as having elements of self-organization, set agendas, and both chaotic and systematic evolution.⁵⁰ It revolves around the sharing of ideas but also mixes elements of planned and emergent changes. It has been argued that processes of complexity are seen in locations that have a high volume of traffic and are occupied by people who are used to experiencing new ideas. Ports such as Kenchreai, Lechaion, and Hermione as well as popular sanctuaries such as Epidauros and Olympia are just such locations. The church at Kenchreai has been dated to the late fourth century by the excavators.⁵¹ But their assessment is based on a combination of broad historical evidence and an insecure end date for the preexisting Sanctuary of Isis. It is possible, as Varalis has argued, that the church was constructed much later in the fifth or even sixth century.⁵² The mosaics in the aisles and narthex would support a later date, but they may belong to a later phase of church construction.⁵³ The Lechaion church was dated to the fifth century by its excavator, Pallas, but more recent work on the ceramics indicates a later date, probably in the sixth century, for its foundation.⁵⁴ The church at Hermione has been dated by the mosaics to the late fourth century, with a later sixth-century reconstruction; an alternative date is the second half of the fifth century, with a second phase in the early sixth century.⁵⁵ The mosaics at the Epidauros church indicate an early fifth-century date.⁵⁶ But this stylistic date is difficult to support without stratigraphic data, of which there is none. Varalis indicates a foundation date of the late fourth century, with a second phase consisting of the compartmentalization of the transept in the mid fifth based on the date of the columns of the transept with Ionic impost capitals that are set on top of the existing floor.⁵⁷ On current, somewhat flimsy, dating evidence, it seems that the churches at the sanctuaries at Olympia and Epidauros and the ports of Hermione and possibly Kenchreai are among

⁴³ See Varalis (2001) for the difficulties with defining Early Christian liturgy.

⁴⁴ See, e.g., Lib., *Orationes* 30.9, 35–9, 42, 44; see also Potter 2004, 573.

⁴⁵ Caraher 2003, 72–3. Caraher (2003, 77) further notes a range of sources, such as Pseudo-Dionysius and Maximus the Confessor, who discuss the importance of the role of church building in the conversion process.

⁴⁶ E.g., Orlandos 1927, 1954, 1973; Soteriou 1937, 1939; Pallas 1956, 1970, 1977; Drandakis et al. 1981.

⁴⁷ Caraher 2003, esp. ch. 5; Foschia 2009.

⁴⁸ Sweetman (forthcoming).

⁴⁹ Sweetman (forthcoming).

⁵⁰ Anderson 1999.

⁵¹ Scranton et al. 1978, 75–7. Evidence for a second church in the form of an apsidal feature at Kenchreai was revealed as part of the excavations of the cemetery on the Koutsongila Ridge (Whitley 2004–2005, 15).

⁵² Varalis 2001.

⁵³ Asimakopoulou-Atzaka 1987, no. 32.

⁵⁴ Pallas 1956, 137–54; 1965; G. Sanders, pers. comm. 2012.

⁵⁵ Asimakopoulou-Atzaka 1987, no. 12.

⁵⁶ Asimakopoulou-Atzaka 1987, no. 10.

⁵⁷ Y. Varalis, pers. comm. 2013.

TABLE 1. Emergent change and Christianization of the Peloponnese.

	Complexity Theory	Social Movement	Tipping Point
Main features	sharing properties	striving to have what others have	power of context
	adapting to survive	tension against dissipating quality of life	outliers creating momentum
Location features	early contact	community cohesiveness	ancestral connections with land
	familiarity with different groups	desire to feed into trade networks socially driven desire for contact	less cohesive groups
Examples	port/sanctuaries	suburbs	rural/city center
		Argos/Corinth	Panariti/Argos center

the earliest in the Peloponnese. The situation of the church in these well-visited locations encourages an open-minded audience to investigate the new religion, while permitting potentially large numbers of people to visit the church and further disseminate Christian ideas. Inclusion of baptismal facilities would have been a more active method. The construction of churches in these locations may follow on from the early Christian tradition when apostles reached cities through ports—for example, Saint Andrew at Patras.⁵⁸ It is likely that some if not all of these churches were built at the behest of imperial or ecclesiastical aspiration, which would be a planned process, while the subsequent spread of churches is likely to have been more of an emergent process.

Diani and Bison have defined social movement as “networks of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups, or associations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity.”⁵⁹ This emergent process follows on from complexity and describes a situation in which groups of people, through contacts and networks, feel compelled to become part of something—in this case, Christianity. Once the first churches were constructed, social movement drew on elements of competition between groups and used the associations of success and elite status that the church had built up. A range of agents, including bishops and local leaders on a lo-

cal rather than state level, may have motivated church foundation in the emergent phase using established networks (see fig. 1; online fig. 1). Many of the suburban churches in towns such as Corinth and Argos are likely to be the result of this process. At Corinth, the peripheral churches of Kodratos and Kraneion have early sixth-century foundation dates with two later phases each in the sixth and early seventh centuries.⁶⁰ The Skoutelas church has been dated to the late fifth/early sixth century, also with two later phases of construction.⁶¹ Suburban churches in Argos are located at Kephalaria Street, Chatzi, Messenias Street, Danos and Seferis, Danos, Parados Theatrou, and Paliopyrga. Of the churches that have been excavated and have had foundation dates proposed, the church at Kephalaria Street is dated to the sixth century on numismatic evidence, Messenias Street to the mid fifth to mid sixth century by lamps, Danos Street to the early sixth century by lamps, and Paliopyrga to the late fifth to early sixth century through mosaics.⁶²

The third and final process, tipping point, is when the quantity of churches has grown so much that they vastly outnumber any other existing religious edifice. Once a critical mass is reached, their construction spills over into areas that have previously had little ex-

⁶⁰ Varalis 2001, nos. 142, 148. The date for the Kodratos church is not secure, but the Kraneion church date was established through coins.

⁶¹ Varalis 2001, no. 143.

⁶² Varalis 2001, nos. 50, 51, 55, 57. For Paliopyrga, see Asimakopoulou-Atzaka 1987, no. 4.

⁵⁸ Saradi 2013.

⁵⁹ Diani and Bison 2004, 282.

perience or evidence of Christian churches. Thus, the tipping point occurs quite late in the Christianization process and is seen in traditionally conservative and less networked places, such as rural locations.

The identification of the three processes allowed for a range of agents to be involved in advocating conversion.⁶³ The importance of understanding the local and individual circumstances of conversion is acknowledged, and the roles different bishops and even sermons had in this has been successfully explored in certain areas, such as northern Italy.⁶⁴ While some literary accounts promote the triumph of Christianity over antagonistic paganism, there seems to have been little evidence for destruction or purging of pre-Christian religious places during the Christianization of the Peloponnese.⁶⁵ The lack of destruction evidence adds weight to the epigraphic and mortuary data indicating a tolerant and organic conversion.⁶⁶ As Rothaus notes, the process was much more complex than one religion in opposition to another.⁶⁷ In addition to simultaneous polytheistic and monotheistic practice, there were also different types of Christian worship. The question remains as to how, without force, people were encouraged to go to new churches and take on a new religion while many sanctuaries were still functioning. A detailed analysis of the evidence, with a focus on church architecture, suggests that the manipulation of memory and maintenance of tradition was a key mechanism used in the successful Christianization of the Peloponnese. The topography and architecture of the churches indicate that tradition played a role in the establishment of rituals, such as procession, and of a visual repertoire for communication and lessons, which helped consolidate community identity and social structures and allowed Christianity to become successfully established in the Peloponnese.

People maintain elements of identity through experience of the past on an individual as well as a community basis. Therefore, to assess the extent of the impact

of change brought by Christianization, it is necessary briefly to outline what is known of the Peloponnese in the fourth century. The emphasis is based mainly on evidence pertaining to sanctuaries, while discussions of the urban and mortuary data provide further context. Burials help define why certain churches are constructed where they are. Furthermore, a study of burials and related mortuary material provides substantiation for the protracted transformation of community customs as a result of religious change on a more personal level than that seen in the large-scale religious buildings. As with the conversion of religious space and place, changes in burial practices are gradual, and in many cases, as Samellas argues, there is significant clouding of Christian and polytheistic practice in the Late Antique period.⁶⁸ With regard to sanctuary evidence, sites that have evidence for continued polytheistic cult practices are discussed, whether or not there were churches built on or near them. Wherever possible, discussion of the rural data is also included. However, such physical evidence is not as abundant as the evidence from the urban context because of the vagaries of archaeological investigation and recovery. Consequently, the discussion concentrates on complexity and social movement processes of conversion. Given that there is little or no evidence for the conversion of rural or extra-urban sanctuaries, there is less focus on tipping point.⁶⁹ This is unfortunate, because in areas where there were destructions, rural temples were among the first to be targeted, yet the most enduring locations for polytheistic cult practice remained in these extra-urban spaces.⁷⁰ However, Bowes' work on fourth-century rural villas has indicated that many of the estate owners built churches on their land for their families and communities, particularly in the West and in North Africa.⁷¹ As yet, there is little evidence for private estate churches in the Peloponnese, which may reflect a bias in the archaeological record made even more acute by the broad use of the term "villa" in defining sites found on archaeological surveys.⁷²

⁶³Sweetman (forthcoming).

⁶⁴Lizzi 1990.

⁶⁵Cameron 1993, 57. In other locations, there were isolated attacks on pre-Christian buildings by particular groups (often difficult to identify) and sometimes on the order of the emperor. E.g., Constantine ordered the destruction of the temple at Aigai in Cilicia (Caseau 2004, 120), and Theodosius ordered the destruction of the Temple of Serapis in Alexandria (Cameron 1993, 64).

⁶⁶Sweetman 2010a. The element of Christianization under discussion here is the monumentalization of the landscape through the construction of churches. The discussions of more personal Christianization (e.g., through baptism) are not under consideration.

⁶⁷Rothaus 2000, 3.

⁶⁸Samellas 2002. She notes that a key reason for the lack of significant differentiation in pre-Christian and Christian mortuary practices was that there was little fundamental change in belief in the afterlife and that eschatology just became part of the existing dogmas (Samellas 2002, 2).

⁶⁹For a detailed discussion of rural temples and their survival and destruction in various periods of late antiquity, see Caseau 2004.

⁷⁰Caseau 2004, 106.

⁷¹Bowes 2008, 125.

⁷²Alcock 1993, 64.

Settlement, Church Construction, and Christianization

Many of the changes in the fourth-century Peloponnese occurred before the construction of churches. In the third century, settlement changed from being largely urbanized to a much wider occupation of rural areas.⁷³ Stewart argued also for increasing land consolidation and in some areas specialization in agricultural practices.⁷⁴ The increased reliance on agricultural production is likely to have made rural cults more important means of legitimizing claims on agricultural land.⁷⁵ Alcock also notes new attention to coastal settlements, particularly around the area of Methana and the southern Argolid, which may help explain the renewed interest in sites around Hermione as well as sites farther north at Ano Epidauros and Palaia Epidauros.⁷⁶ Many of the fourth-century Roman cities in the Peloponnese changed from large sprawling conurbations to more compact cities such as Argos and Palaia Epidauros, and some of them had walls defining them, such as Corinth and Sparta.⁷⁷ In some cases, such as Corinth, the city center may even have moved. Survey evidence from across the Peloponnese has confirmed the increase in large-scale rural villas in the fourth century, particularly areas such as Lakonia, Methana, Asea, and Sikyon, which may indicate a certain ruralization of the elite.⁷⁸ However, the fine fourth-century mosaics found in Sparta, Argos, and Messene and the Corinthian gravestones memorializing a “substantial number of relatively prosperous members of Corinthian society” show that this was not entirely the case.⁷⁹ Furthermore, it is clear that there was a continuation of urban investment; this may have taken the form of repair of significant buildings (such as the theater in Sparta in 375) or town walls, rather than expenditure on new or frivolous construction.⁸⁰

⁷³ Alcock 1993, 218. For survey evidence, see the Laconia survey and also the Argolid survey (Cartledge and Spawforth 1992, 123).

⁷⁴ Stewart 2010, 223–27.

⁷⁵ Alcock 1993, 210.

⁷⁶ Alcock 1993, 219.

⁷⁷ See Gregory (1982, 43–4); Waywell (1999, 5–6), respectively. Ongoing work in some cities, such as Argos (Banaka-Dimaki et al. 1998; École Française d’Athènes 2012, 12 October), Patras (Petropoulos 2009), Tegea (Bakke 2007, 2009), and Sikyon (Lolos 2012), should shed light on the development of these cities’ walls from the Roman to Late Antique periods.

⁷⁸ For Methana, see Mee and Forbes 1997.

⁷⁹ For the mosaics, see Asimakopoulou-Atzaka 1987, nos. 1–3, 6; Panayotopoulou 1998. For those at Messene, see Themelis 2010, 100. The epigraphic data are in Walbank 2010, 257.

⁸⁰ See Waywell (1999, 22) for the theater. See also Cartledge and Spawforth (1992, 121–24) for more general discussion of fourth-century Sparta. Sears (2011, 246) notes evidence for a

Epigraphic evidence indicates repair of the civic basilica in Nauplion after 375.⁸¹

As in the Roman period, Corinth, Argos, Tegea, Sparta, and Patras continued to be relatively large and prosperous cities in the Late Antique period. All these cities had episcopal churches, and Corinth was the capital and seat of the metropolitan of Achaëa.⁸² The ecclesiastical organization did not change until the ninth century with the creation of the new province and metropolitan of Patras.⁸³ The cities and towns made up a network of communication links, which were likely to have been supplemented with the location of other churches; for example, the churches of Apidea and Talanta lie between the major towns of Geraki, Molaoi, and Neapoli (see fig. 1; online fig. 1). These networks functioned to help central imperial administration, economy, and agricultural production.⁸⁴ In addition to historical data, elements of ecclesiastical administration can in part be ascertained from epigraphic data as well as the remains of the churches—for example, the presence of a synthronon in the Sparta Acropolis Basilica or the Aspis Church in Argos.⁸⁵ The sixth-century *Synekdemos* of Hierocles allows reconstructions of some networks and towns, but other than the identification of certain cities as bishoprics, it is difficult to define the function and nature of many of the smaller towns and villages of the Late Antique Peloponnese.⁸⁶ Some of these smaller places, such as Zarax (Gerakas) or Orchomenos, do not feature in the *Synekdemos*, but neither do some of the larger towns, such as Molaoi or Hermione, both of which have evidence for two or more churches.

As Lambropoulou stressed, the Christianization process was slow but steady.⁸⁷ As with other provinces, such as Spain and Britain, the gradual change meant that even while churches were being built or were already

similar issue with prioritization of investment in North Africa in the fourth century.

⁸¹ Avraméa 1997, 123. Feissel and Philippidis-Braat (1985) note a number of epigraphic examples recording imperial and other elite investment in Peloponnesian cities—e.g., from Corinth (Feissel and Philippidis-Braat 1985, cat. no. 6), the remains of the entablature blocks that record the restorations of Valentinian.

⁸² The new province included central Greece and Attica, but these regions, outside the Peloponnese, are not discussed here (Avraméa 1997, 35).

⁸³ Avraméa 1997, 35.

⁸⁴ Avraméa 1997, 35.

⁸⁵ Caraher (2003, 314–37) provides a useful catalogue of relevant Late Antique inscriptions that range from donations to church decor recorded in mosaics to the names of bishops (e.g., that from Thyrsos Basilica in Tegea, which honors a clergyman associated with the church building and decor).

⁸⁶ Avraméa 1997, 109.

⁸⁷ Lambropoulou 2000, 97.

constructed in some regions, life for some may have continued unchanged.⁸⁸ The maintenance of the old and new religions and continuation of investment in some public buildings is reflected throughout the Peloponnese, and it may have lasted well into the fifth century.⁸⁹ Elite investment in cult sites would have maintained their responsibilities in processions and cult organization, which in turn would have reflected their leadership roles in the community. Tradition of investment is likely to have been passed on to the new church buildings, and, in the urban context, elite financing of churches in the suburbs may have been viewed as an original—and conspicuous—investment opportunity in an environment with an already large number of buildings requiring attention.

A building boom is clearly seen with the construction of churches in the fifth century and renewed investment in some urban centers.⁹⁰ A return to some of the Hellenistic cities that had been disused in the Roman period may indicate reoccupation of some, such as Sophiko, Longas, and Zarax (fig. 9). At Sophiko, possible Hellenistic walls survive on the mountain to the northeast above the modern village, and the remains of an earlier church may be identifiable at the same location.⁹¹ Relative to major cities such as Patras, Argos, and Corinth, these are likely to have been smaller towns in the Late Antique period, and none of them is mentioned in the *Synekdemos*.⁹² However, many of these towns have not been explored in detail, yet the visible remains at Zarax (see figs. 9, 10) with its two possible churches indicate it was a settlement of some means.⁹³ In these cases, it may be that the tradition for cult continued in the intervening Roman period even if domestic occupation was not significant.

Church construction in urban space primarily occurs through emergent processes, particularly social movement. Within the urban context, two stages of church building are identifiable. The first is the construction of churches in the suburbs, particularly along routes or in cemeteries. The second is the occupation of the central urban area. The reuse of earlier temples occurred relatively late in the process

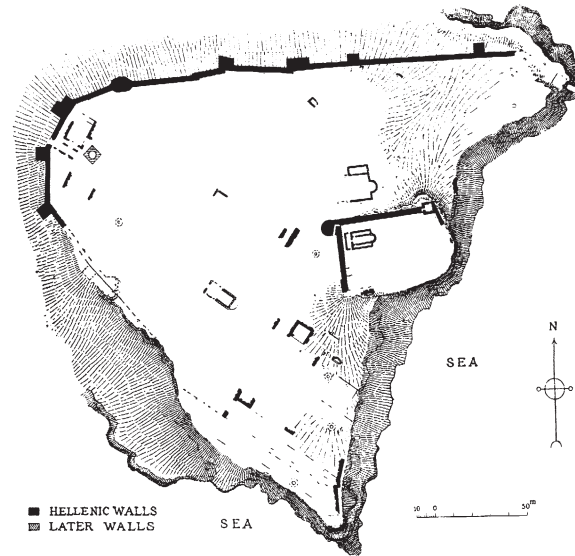


FIG. 9. Zarax (Gerakas), plan of the site (Wace and Hasluck 1908–1909, fig. 4; reproduced with the permission of the British School at Athens).

and only after the suburban churches had been well established. In many cases in the Peloponnese, there is only a single instance of temple reuse per city, and this is normally the temple at the heart of the ancient city (such as the Temple of Apollo, Argos).⁹⁴ In the absence of conclusive proof, which would require further evidence of the Late Antique city walls, it may be surmised that in many of the cities, there was only ever one key church within the city walls in use at any one time, with several others around the periphery. On present evidence, in addition to the examples of Corinth (Temple Hill) and Argos (Aspis Church), this is also true of Sparta (Acropolis Basilica) and may also be the case for Patras and Tegea.⁹⁵ The comparatively late construction of churches within the urban core leads to several reflections. It suggests that there was a lack of available space, no desire to have the Christian church competing with existing buildings, and a certain sentimentality for buildings so fundamental to the city's identity. Although the churches may be in suburban locations, they were not likely hidden away and were positioned on major routes into the town and/or situated by gateways (e.g., the Danos Street

⁸⁸ For Spain, see Kulikowski 2004. For Britain, see Reece 1992.

⁸⁹ Foschia 2009. And possibly later, given the evidence that in some areas the first churches constructed date as late as the sixth century.

⁹⁰ Gregory 1982, 52.

⁹¹ During a recent period of fieldwork, it was not possible to identify the church noted by Asimakopoulou-Atzaka (1987, no. 43), which is apparently located some 2 km east of the village of Sophiko.

⁹² Avraméa 1997, 109.

⁹³ Wace and Hasluck 1908–1909, esp. fig. 4.

⁹⁴ This is not the case in other locations, such as Athens, where numerous temples are reused as Christian churches.

⁹⁵ Recent work in Corinth indicates that the so-called Amphitheater Church, which may have been within the walls, is probably not a church but a freestanding martyrium (Sanders 2005, 440).

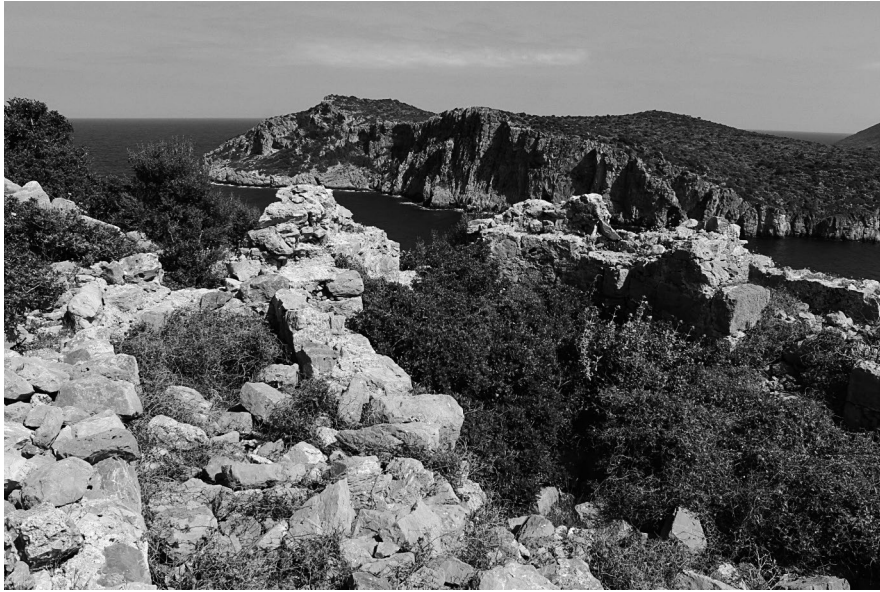


FIG. 10. Zarax (Gerakas), Late Antique church, view from the northwest.

and Messenias Street churches in Argos). The earliest churches may have been situated in suburban cemeteries for several reasons. The open view of many cemeteries and the high volume of visitors would have given churches there good visibility. Some churches may have marked the graves of martyrs. Furthermore, the use of suburban locations may also have been a pragmatic choice in finding enough space for the church building. New Christian cemeteries were often, but not always, established in association with churches, and so Roman and Late Antique burial practices are commonly found together in the same cemetery.⁹⁶ The evidence of the location of the earliest churches around the suburbs of the Roman city, in addition to the Late Antique cemeteries sometimes in former domestic or monumental public space, indicates a steady change in urban topography from the Roman to Late Antique period, as illustrated by the cases of Corinth, Argos, Sparta, and Patras.⁹⁷ In time, it may be possible to specify more precisely the chronology of church construction in suburban areas. It would be enlightening if it could be established that the earliest churches were located along routes first, or in cemeteries, or on virgin ground, the last indicating a benefaction. Such a revelation in turn might help identify the founder of the church, be it a private family or

community, bishop or official. Although a nuanced view like this may be unattainable, it is likely that churches were constructed at the behest of a range of people for diverse reasons, even in the same town.

Burial Practices and Christianization

With the widespread adoption of Christianity, burial practices do not change instantly. Christian and non-Christian burials may be found in the same cemetery (e.g., in Corinth's North Cemetery).⁹⁸ At Kenchreai, even with the addition of the new Christian cemeteries at the churches there, the existing Roman cemetery on the Koutsongila Ridge continued to be used.⁹⁹ Here, some of the existing tombs were reused and Christianized for use with an inscribed crucifix.¹⁰⁰ Extensive work has been undertaken at the cemeteries of Kenchreai and Isthmia, and the results have been providing some valuable contrasts with the Corinthian data.¹⁰¹ The evidence from Isthmia, an extra-urban context, showed continuation of pre-Christian burial practices but also mixed elements in a unitary context.¹⁰²

Grave types did not vary greatly from the Roman to Late Antique periods, but the locations of cemeteries did change over time, indicating a modification

⁹⁶ Kourkoutidou-Nicolaidou 1997, 128–30.

⁹⁷ For burials in monumental and domestic space in Corinth, see Sanders 2005; Slane and Sanders 2005. The change in use of space is also clearly seen in Knossos (Hood and Smyth 1981, no. 183; Sweetman 2010b, 2012).

⁹⁸ Sanders 2005, n. 1.

⁹⁹ Rife et al. 2007, 144–51, fig. 2.

¹⁰⁰ Rife et al. 2007, 153.

¹⁰¹ See Rife et al. (2007) and Rife (2012), respectively.

¹⁰² E.g., the multiple burials in the reused drain, which are typical of the pre-Christian burials in the cemetery except that a lamp with a Christian cross is included (Rife 2012, 223).

in the use of space rather than an ideological shift. At Isthmia, Rife identified the route of the funerary procession in the Roman period, and although it was more difficult to define for the Late Antique period, there seem to have been some modifications.¹⁰³ While many burial traditions continued, there was something of a slow standardization in Christian burials, which took the form of exclusion of grave goods, other than clothing accoutrements, objects using during burial, or items connected with funerary cult, and the east-west orientation of the body.¹⁰⁴ As to grave types, the accustomed forms persisted: marble sarcophagi, inhumations in amphoras, and tile, cist, and barrel-vaulted graves.¹⁰⁵ Graves and sarcophagi were often marked with inscriptions or the presence of a Chi-Rho, a cross, or another Christian symbol. As discussed above, the surviving dedications from mortuary contexts provide good insights into the slow adoption of Christian ideology, and the same is echoed in the decoration of the tombs. Many of the themes in wall paintings were familiar, such as feasts and landscapes, while at the same time perceptible in a Christian context as connoting paradise or life in heaven.¹⁰⁶ Other images—Jonah and the Whale, Daniel in the Lions' Den, the Adoration of the Magi, and the Raising of Lazarus—came more directly from the Old and New Testaments.¹⁰⁷ The tradition of placing a coin on the corpse, to pay Charon, occurred frequently until the sixth century.¹⁰⁸ One of the key changes in burial practices in the Late Antique period, which reflects the changing ideology, was the inclusion of many more children in community cemeteries.¹⁰⁹ Several child burials were excavated in the Asklepeion/Lerna hollow in Corinth.¹¹⁰ Overall, however, burial practices and contexts reveal integration

of Christian practices, within both individual and community mortuary contexts.

PRE-CHRISTIAN CULT SITES AND SANCTUARIES

Sanctuaries and Fourth-Century Destruction

Although it is difficult to show in the Peloponnesian data, some argue for an increase in focus of investment in rural sanctuaries as one consequence of increased ruralization of the landscape.¹¹¹ It is evident that while some cities may have been depopulated in the Peloponnese, the memory of the city and part of its identity continued in the form of extended use of a particular sanctuary.¹¹² Alcock lists several examples, such as Zarax (see figs. 9, 10), Gortys, Helos, and Nauplion, and I will return to them in reference to the construction of the churches there. That these sanctuaries and others were maintained partly reflects the importance of cult sites in relation to land ownership. As well as ownership legitimization, such an investment would have served to reinforce social hierarchies in the new landscape.

Even with survey or excavation evidence, precise chronological data are not easy to acquire for events at sanctuary sites. Excavations of many sanctuaries—the Temple of Poseidon at Isthmia, the Temple of Apollo at Argos, the Sanctuary of Isis in Kenchreai (fig. 11), Temple E, the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore, and the Asklepeion (all in Corinth)—show evidence for late fourth-century destruction. Some attribute this damage to seismic activity, while others suggest Gothic destruction.¹¹³ In many of these cases, evidence suggests that there may not have been repairs to the structures after the damage sustained in the fourth century.¹¹⁴ The demise of the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore at Corinth is ascribed to various destructions as a result of earthquakes, Goths, and the hunt for building materials. The excavators suggest that the Christians exacerbated the ruin of the sanctuary.¹¹⁵ Libanius refers to a rumor concerning Christians colluding with Roman officials to destroy a couple of minor statues in the Sanctuary of Athena Chalkioikos on the acropolis at Sparta, an event that may have occurred in the fourth century, although it is not visible in the archaeological record.¹¹⁶ Other than written indications such as these, there is little evidence of specifically Christian destructions at Peloponnesian sanctuary sites, particularly as the date of the foundation of the church at Kenchreai is still under question. The Temple of Aphrodite Erykine at

¹⁰³ Rife 2012, 165.

¹⁰⁴ Samellas (2002, 282) notes that even elements of feasting, music, and dance continued. The inclusion of jewelry and other personal items became increasingly limited throughout the Late Antique period as burial traditions became gradually more austere and further removed from the pre-Christian origins.

¹⁰⁵ Kourkoutidou-Nicolaidou 1997.

¹⁰⁶ Three of the Roman tombs excavated at Kenchreai had well-preserved wall paintings (Rife et al. 2007, 163–64), and those in Tomb 4 included scenes of birds and foliage as well as marine scenes of dolphins and fish. These images would be familiar in a Christian context, too.

¹⁰⁷ Kourkoutidou-Nicolaidou 1997.

¹⁰⁸ Kourkoutidou-Nicolaidou 1997.

¹⁰⁹ Bourbou 2004, 62. Interestingly, the mortuary remains of Isthmia, which include a strong emphasis on family groups (Rife 2012, 221), might suggest that in rural areas, the inclusion of child burials was more common in the Roman period than in urban areas. Since there was more focus on rural occupation in the fourth century, it may help explain the changes in burial practices concerning children.

¹¹⁰ Sanders 2005, 434.

¹¹¹ Caseau 2004.

¹¹² Alcock 1993, 207.

¹¹³ See Rothaus (1996) and Oikonomou-Laniado (1997, 51), respectively.

¹¹⁴ Rothaus 1996, 109.

¹¹⁵ Bookidis and Stroud 1997, 438–39.

¹¹⁶ Cartledge and Spawforth 1992, 125.



FIG. 11. Kenchreai, Late Antique church, view from the west.

Psophis in Arcadia is said to have been destroyed by Christians, but there is little evidence of church building in the wake of the devastation.¹¹⁷ In Greece, outside the Peloponnese, Christians are supposed to have destroyed the cult statue of Nemesis at her temple in Rhamnous.¹¹⁸ But the church at Paleopolis in Corfu is the only known example of temple destruction immediately preceding church construction in Greece, and the bishop Jovian is recorded as having been responsible.¹¹⁹ Outside Greece, where temple closure is in evidence, it can often be attributed to particularly passionate individuals, such as a local bishop, patron, or Christian group directing their zeal toward neighborhood cult sites. In other cases, imperial decrees targeted specific temples: for example, Aigai in Cilicia and Serapis in Alexandria were targeted by Constantine and Theodosius, respectively.¹²⁰ In some areas, such as Spain, there appears to be little evidence for destruction or conversion of temples.¹²¹ In Africa, there is both epigraphic and archaeological evidence to suggest reuse of some temples for secular activities, such

as the use of the Temple of Apollo at Bulla Regia as a museum of sorts.¹²² There is also literary evidence for the targeted destruction of some temples or cult statues that seem to have been the result of local tension rather than under official sanction.¹²³

Investment and Maintenance of Cult

It is often difficult to determine the extent to which these identifiable destructions signaled final disuse of a site or whether, by contrast, there were further investments or repairs. There is evidence for some being maintained even after suffering damage in the fourth century—for example, the Temple of Apollo at Corinth (fig. 12) or the Temple of Aphrodite at Argos, both of which supposedly went out of use in the first half of the fifth century.¹²⁴ More generally, it is likely that there was continued investment in both urban

¹¹⁷ Kardara 1988. I would like to thank one of the anonymous reviewers for suggesting this reference.

¹¹⁸ Moutzali 1993.

¹¹⁹ Spieser 2001, 4.

¹²⁰ Sears (2011, 253) notes the range in North Africa. Talloen and Vercauteren (2011, 351) also note the indications from Libanius (*Orationes* 49.3) that attacks on temples are likely to have taken place more widely in spite of official decrees making this unlawful.

¹²¹ Arce 2011.

¹²² Sears 2011, 244.

¹²³ Sears (2011, 247) notes the evidence from Augustine (*Ep.* 50), where the destruction of a statue of Herakles led to rioting. In Athens, Marinus (*Vita Procli* 29) notes the removal of a statue from the Asklepeion.

¹²⁴ For the Temple of Apollo, see Robinson 1976, 238; Rothaus 1996. A trench was excavated by Croissant (1975) to get some stratigraphic dating for the temple at Argos. As part of the project, the team excavated some fifth-century walls. In other areas, a sixth-century deposit was noted. However, the sequence of dates established at that point have more recently been revised in Abadie-Reynal 2007, 291. Oikonomou-Laniado (2003, 77) suggests that the temple was destroyed at the end of the fourth century, but she does not mention a repair to it.

and rural sanctuaries, in spite of the fourth-century decline in investment in public buildings. Investment would have necessarily continued, in part because it was such a fundamental element of the social practice of making elite status and land ownership visible. If the benefaction and, consequentially, processional presence stops, presumably a gap in the visible community leadership is likely, resulting in a level of uncertainty about land ownership. Potter notes that Libanius presumed Theodosius understood the importance of the pre-Christian temples as an instrument for community identity, as well as for rural economy (in the form of pilgrimage and donations).¹²⁵ This acknowledgement may explain why in the Theodosian code there is an allowance for festivals and processions to be undertaken, but not sacrifice.¹²⁶ Additionally, there are numerous references to the importance of the upkeep of pre-Christian sanctuaries and temples, indicating that the final abandonment of many cult buildings happened after construction of the first Late Antique churches—in some cases, possibly even in the Byzantine period.¹²⁷ But even this assessment is not straightforward. To illustrate, at sanctuaries such as the Argive Heraion and Bassae, while there are indications that the structures survived without significant spoliation into the Byzantine period, it is unclear how long cult continued to be practiced there.¹²⁸ Because of the central role in the community that sacred sites played, it is reasonable to think that an interest in their maintenance would have been essential, until something else could assume that role. The siting of the church in these cases may be indicative of the practicality of the location, given that it was in the center of town, with plenty of building materials available.

In many cases there would have been little pressure to suddenly end sanctuary use. Cult activity seems to have continued into the fourth century at Artemis Orthia, for example, when Libanius went to see “the festival of the whips,” and there is some indication of use of the site for Christian graves.¹²⁹ Also at Amyclae there is evidence of fourth-century local investment, and current work there may elucidate the continuation of cult into the Late Antique period.¹³⁰ Epigraphic evidence



FIG. 12. Corinth, Temple of Apollo.

from Epidauros indicates cult practice throughout the fourth century.¹³¹ Investment and cult practice continued in the fourth century at the Panhellenic sanctuary of Olympia (fig. 13) and possibly at Nemea (fig. 14).¹³² Sinn suggests that it was only after the second decree of prohibition issued by Theodosius II that cult activity at Olympia came to an end.¹³³ In fact, Brown notes that not only was there evidence for continued cult at the Temple of Zeus in Olympia, but there was also a desire to protect and preserve the temple well into the sixth century, when it seems finally to have succumbed to destruction, possibly by earthquake.¹³⁴ Moutzali argues that there was a Christian presence in Olympia from the early fourth century—nearly a century before the church was constructed in the first half of the fifth century.¹³⁵ It seems likely, then, that while the church at the workshop of Phidias was being built, the temple was still in use and, in fact, still protected up to a century later, even while the former sanctuary became a habitation site.¹³⁶ At Nemea (see fig. 14), the excavators originally thought that the Temple of Zeus was destroyed by earthquake, but it now seems likely the columns were undermined by people looking for building materials as late as the sixth century.¹³⁷

¹³¹ Sweetman 2010a, 209.

¹³² Brown 2006; Sweetman 2010a. The nature of the use of Nemea in the fourth century is difficult to determine precisely. Although the temple had gone out of use and the games had been moved to Argos by the time Pausanias (2.15.2) visited the sanctuary, excavations have shown that there was a strong revival of interest in the site in the fourth century, and the temple is still likely to have been standing.

¹³³ Sinn 2000, 122.

¹³⁴ Brown 2006, 315.

¹³⁵ Moutzali 1994, 265–66.

¹³⁶ Sinn 2000, 122–23.

¹³⁷ Rothaus 1996, 105.

¹²⁵ Potter 2004, 573.

¹²⁶ *Cod. Theod.* 10.10.17.

¹²⁷ *Cod. Theod.* 16.10.15, 16.10.18. See also Sweetman (2010a, 209) for further discussion.

¹²⁸ Other sites that have indications of occupation in the Late Antique period, such as Epidauros Limera, are more mysterious and await further work.

¹²⁹ Lib., *Orationes* 14.8.

¹³⁰ Cartledge and Spawforth 1992, 124; Vlivos 2015.



FIG. 13. Olympia, Late Antique church in the workshop of Phidias. The Temple of Zeus within the Altis is visible at right (east).



FIG. 14. Nemea, church with Temple of Zeus in background, view from the south.

CHRISTIANITY AND POLYTHEISM IN THE EARLY
PART OF THE LATE ANTIQUE PERIOD

Church Construction at Polytheistic Sanctuaries

Altogether, there are approximately 22 examples of churches being constructed on or close to temples within sanctuary sites in the Peloponnese. To Mout-

zali's examples, a further 14 can be added: Isis at Kenchreai, Apollo at Corinth, Asklepios at Corinth, Apollo at Sikyon, Apollo Maleatas at Epidauros, Asklepios at Gortys, Despoina at Lykosura, Apollo at Longas (fig. 15), temples with uncertain dedications at Chotousa, Cleonai, Messene, Tritaia, and Hermione Promontory,



FIG. 15. Longas, Temple of Apollo.

and a possible temple at Panariti near Sikyon.¹³⁸ At Panariti, Lolos had identified the church based on the evidence of reused architecture in the modern church of the Panagia.¹³⁹ Evidence for continuation of cult at sanctuary sites with temples is often easier to identify than those cult sites without such superstructures. However, continued use of the cult site of the Fountain of the Lamps in Corinth during the Late Antique period is indicated by the evidence of the Christian as well as non-Christian lamps that were offered.¹⁴⁰ Churches at Panhellenic and major sanctuaries such as Epidauros, Nemea (see fig. 14), and Olympia (see fig. 13) are situated outside, or just within, the walls of the sanctuary, but in highly visible and frequently populated spaces, and are therefore likely to be constructed through processes of complexity.¹⁴¹ This is also true of many of the churches located in significant sanctuaries such as Delphi and Dodona, where the church is constructed

just within the walls at the gate.¹⁴² In these cases, the termination of a temple can be dated to a period much later in the sixth century, after the churches had been built, and may be attributable to natural disaster—for example, the Temple of Zeus at Olympia or the Asklepeion.

There is little evidence for Christian destruction or for attempts to Christianize architectural elements or sanctuaries through the inscribing of crosses, as seen in the Sanctuary of Demeter at Eleusis.¹⁴³ One of the few examples of this particular evidence of Christianization in the Peloponnese is found in the Acropolis Basilica, Sparta, where crosses have been inscribed on a column currently situated in the north terrace and on another fragment in the nave.¹⁴⁴ It is not possible to attribute a date or even define whether these are ancient or modern interventions. It seems that many of the destructions traditionally attributed to zealous Christians or to those simply carrying out their own interpretation of the Theodosian code cannot be maintained.¹⁴⁵

When churches are constructed on or immediately beside a temple, with the notable exception of

¹³⁸ Moutzali (1993, 26–7) names Aphrodite on Acrocorinth, Zeus at Nemea (see fig. 14 herein), Apollo at Argos, Asklepios at Epidauros (see fig. 2 herein), Zeus at Olympia (see fig. 13 herein), Apollo at Tegea, Demeter or Poseidon at Ayios Andreas, Patras, and possibly Asklepios at Provantinon, Tegea. Early investigations by French scholars led to the suggestion that there was a Byzantine church constructed on the Temple of Athena Alea in Tegea; however, the most recent studies have shown this to be doubtful (Østby et al. 1994).

¹³⁹ Euseb., *Hist. eccl.* 95; Lolos 2011, 479.

¹⁴⁰ Garnett 1975, 186; Karivieri 2010, 417–20. I would like to thank one of the anonymous reviewers for pointing this out.

¹⁴¹ Sweetman 2010a.

¹⁴² Brown 2006.

¹⁴³ Sweetman (forthcoming).

¹⁴⁴ Crosses are also found inscribed in some of the architecture of the settlement at Isthmia (Rife 2012, 222).

¹⁴⁵ While laws may have been set by the emperor, their interpretation or execution differed even from parish to parish (Hunt 1993, 143–44).

Kenchreai (see fig. 11), there appear to have been significant gaps between the final polytheistic use of the temple and the construction of the church.¹⁴⁶ At Kenchreai, if the excavator's late fourth-century date is correct and the church immediately occupied the temple site after its destruction, it may reflect the individual desires of imperial or episcopal officials (as seen at Paleopolis, Corfu).¹⁴⁷ Otherwise, the hiatus in occupation is evident at sites such as the Temples of Apollo at Argos and Corinth, and it is also clear from excavations at such sites as the agora temple (possibly to Apollo) in Sikyon and the temple at Messene.¹⁴⁸ The period of disuse between the Hellenistic temple and the onset of church construction means that the memory of earlier cult may not have been very active. This pattern may also be applied to sites where the detailed data are not as clear—for instance, at Chotousa and Longas (see fig. 15). The same trend is also seen in areas of Greece outside the Peloponnese—such as in the Temple of Asklepios in Athens and the Sanctuary of Hebraiokastro on Kos, as Spieser has argued.¹⁴⁹

In the Peloponnese, most temple reuse can be dated broadly to the sixth century, and these sites are usually located in urban contexts, with some suburban examples. Direct occupation of temples often occurs on hilltops (Apollo at Argos or the temple at Cleonai), where a visibility requirement may be linked to memory manipulation. Absence of Christian destruction at the temple sites indicates less of a focus on active dememorialization of earlier cult and more concentration on encouraging congregations into new places of worship.

There are differences in appropriation of sanctuary space—for example, in large sanctuaries such as Olympia or Epidauros where the churches are built just outside the temenos walls. In those cases, it is likely that pre-Christian cult practice endured in some form. Brown argues that churches were often established as a way of competing with existing sanctuaries: she draws on the example of Olympia.¹⁵⁰ I would suggest another, more practical interpretation: churches are constructed where there is already a tradition of visiting the location—for instance, a natural source of water, a cemetery, or a sanctuary. If there had been a hiatus in the habit of visiting the area—for example, the destroyed Temple of Poseidon at Isthmia—or if the location was insufficiently visible, a more concerted

effort would have been necessary to actively encourage new congregations, particularly in the early part of the Christianization process.¹⁵¹

Construction on temple sites may be viewed as a simple reuse of space and resources rather than as an overt statement of Christianization, and it hence had less of an impact on the manipulation of memory.¹⁵² This pragmatism is further emphasized by the fact that by the time a church occupies preexisting sanctuary space, normally several churches have already been established in the surrounding area.¹⁵³ It may be that it was possible to use the place of a temple only after the community memory had been sidelined away from the traditional community symbols.

In the Peloponnese, Christian churches are constructed on or alongside sanctuaries to Isis at Kenchreai (see fig. 11), Despoina at Lykosura, and Aphrodite on Acrocorinth, and the variety of deity dedication is even more apparent outside the Peloponnese. The only evidence for preexisting cult influencing the presence of a later church is a possible preference for healing sanctuaries (to Asklepios in Epidauros, Corinth, and Gortys) or related healing gods (Apollo in Corinth [see fig. 12], Longas [see fig. 15], Tegea, and Sikyon). It is tempting to think that the church particularly favored these cults because of their association with miraculous healing. However, it more likely relates to the high volumes of visitors at these particular sites: in times of stress, specific sanctuaries (e.g., Apollo/Artemis) were popular, and it is likely that the stress arose from changes in society and economy in these Peloponnesian communities. There is little evidence to suggest ideologically motivated appropriation of particular cults. It seems that either the quantity of visitors or the type of space the temple occupied was more of a draw to construct the church: at busy sanctuaries, such as Olympia and Nemea (see figs. 13, 14); in other highly frequented areas like the agora, as in Cleonai, Sikyon, and possibly Tegea; or on hilltops, such as Apollo at Argos or Aphrodite on Acrocorinth.

Polytheistic Sanctuaries with No Churches

There is good theoretical support for increased investment in extra-urban sanctuaries in the fourth century but little evidence for continuation of the same interest by Christian communities, who focused more on international sanctuaries and suburban and urban

¹⁴⁶Scranton et al. 1978.

¹⁴⁷New work undertaken by J. Rife at the site may produce more refined chronologies.

¹⁴⁸Sikyon: Lolos 2011, 287, 380. Messene: Themelis 2008; N. Tsvikis, pers. comm. 2013.

¹⁴⁹Spieser 2001, 2–4.

¹⁵⁰Brown 2008.

¹⁵¹The Justinianic fortress at Isthmia was constructed some time after the first Christianization process in the Corinthia.

¹⁵²I would like to thank Greg Woolf for discussion of this point.

¹⁵³This is certainly the case for the Peloponnese.

contexts.¹⁵⁴ Examples of extra-urban sanctuaries may be gleaned from Pausanias, who mentions rural sanctuaries around Pellene, Orchomenos, and Tegea, and there is little evidence for Christian investment other than at the urban sites in these locations.¹⁵⁵ In some areas, the lack of encroachment on pre-Christian religious sites in the fourth century was arguably intended to minimize conflict in a period when it was not always clear whether authorities would support the Christians. This is less certain for the Peloponnese, where churches were blatantly situated at major sanctuaries in the earliest period. The only extra-urban example of reuse of temple foundations for the construction of a Christian church is at Panariti in the Corinthia; however, the evidence there for earlier cult is still highly speculative.¹⁵⁶ It is difficult to correlate the fourth-century interest in the rural sphere with the lack of early churches in this context, but it may be that there were heavier traffic and network connections in the urban sphere even at this point.

Integration of Christianity and Polytheistic Cult

Locating a church on the site of a martyr's tomb with relics, or at the site of a miracle, was common.¹⁵⁷ Some have suggested that the celebration of a martyr cult, relics included, at churches was deemed important, particularly in the early stages of church building and conversion, because of its associations with power and access to the divine and also because of the similarities of the celebration to the festivals of the gods at pagan temples.¹⁵⁸ The creation of martyrs and the maintenance of their relics were certainly important enough for Eunapius to get riled about.¹⁵⁹ Unfortunately, it is very difficult to identify martyria of any type. Only a few freestanding martyria have been tentatively identified in the Peloponnese, although a structure near the amphitheater at Corinth, which had been previously considered a church, is now thought to be a martyrium.¹⁶⁰ Several churches, it is speculated, had associated martyria—Lechaion (figs. 16, 17), Kodratos at Corinth (fig. 18), and Thyrsos at Tegea, which are associated with the martyrs Leonidas, Kodratos, and Thyrsos, respectively.¹⁶¹ It has been argued that



FIG. 16. Lechaion Basilica, Corinth, south aisle showing *opus sectile* floor and Proconnesian marble column, view from the east.



FIG. 17. Lechaion Basilica, Corinth, baptistery.



FIG. 18. Corinth, Kodratos Basilica, view from the southeast.

¹⁵⁴Alcock 1993, 207–10.

¹⁵⁵Pausanias 7.27.9, 8.13.1, 8.53.11, respectively; see also Alcock 1993, 207–10.

¹⁵⁶Euseb., *Hist. eccl.* 95; Lolos 2011, 479. New excavations in the interior may help clarify this.

¹⁵⁷Snively (1984, 121) has warned of the difficulties of correctly associating martyr's tombs.

¹⁵⁸Brown 1981; Pearce 2003.

¹⁵⁹Eunap., VS 427.

¹⁶⁰Sanders 2005, 440.

¹⁶¹Pallas (1956) argued that the site of the baptistery at Lechaion was originally the site of a martyrium (Sanders 2005,

the tomb in the west building at the Acropolis Basilica at Sparta was a martyrium or reliquary.¹⁶² Other possible martyria may be identified because of an

439). For Kodratos, see Stikas 1962. For Tegea, see Avraméa 1998.

¹⁶²Sweetman and Katsara 2002.

association with known martyrs, such as Leontion and Ayios Andreas, Patras, which are both associated with Saint Andrew.¹⁶³ Another indication may be architectural form, as seen at Kraneion, for example, and at Skioessa, where the building is of octagonal form. It is perhaps telling that there are no martyria at any of the churches at Panhellenic sanctuary sites.¹⁶⁴ The cult of the martyr may have been too close to the idea of the cult of the god to have two such sites in close proximity.

In the evidence presented above, the extent of the coexistence of Christianity and polytheistic practices in the Peloponnese, in a range of contexts—urban to mortuary to religious—is striking but understandable, as pre-Christian religions pervaded all aspects of life. In addition to some of the structuring principles of society, such as social organization and religion, there is continuous use of artistic media, skills, and iconography—for example, in the adoption of Orpheus imagery.¹⁶⁵ In mortuary evidence, the use of theophoric names continues, and syncretism is clearly seen in the burial record wherever pagan curses are included in Christian burials. At the Fountain of the Lamps in Corinth, the curse tablets and graffiti on the lamps indicate pagan, Jewish, and Christian magic was practiced there.¹⁶⁶ An inscription from Ikaria shows a startling combination of the two traditions: a Pythian oracle refers to the conversion of the Temples of Rhea in Kyzikos and Athena in Athens into Marian churches in the fifth century.¹⁶⁷ A similar combination is seen with the incorporation of the inscriptions to the heroes of Messene, Dioskouroi, and Herakles into the apse of the Late Antique church there.¹⁶⁸

In spite of some level of continuation, the changing nature of investment, from civic to private and from monumental to minor, created a gap that the church was able to fill. With its magnificent buildings, the church provided a new and enticing focus. The regular rituals, the presence of ancestors, and possible martyr associations would also have helped rekindle community identity in instances where the original locations of sanctuaries or civic buildings may have needed attention. In addition to provision of community support and care, the new church also enabled a whole new range of investors and bequests, from large-scale landowners to craftspeople. Judging from inscriptions

and mosaic dedications, such benefits to the church could encompass swaths of land, building investment, sections of mosaic, and benefactions in kind.

Levels of integration rather than segregation are seen through the construction of churches next to sacred buildings of functioning rather than obsolete sites. This continuity reflects a perpetuation of place-tradition and also a careful manipulation of memory—done to encourage adoption of the new religion as much as to maintain the social order's structuring by the prior religious landscape. For associative memory of the roles played and for interaction with the sacred landscape to be maintained, a certain similarity of experience had to be retained.

MEMORY AND TRADITION

Memory, Tradition, and Religious Change

As described above, the approaches to conversion were subtle and often community led. The location of the Late Antique churches in respect to earlier places of cult worship and the very few isolated incidents of violence at pre-Christian sanctuaries indicate a smooth adoption of the new religion. Successful transition is particularly important, as religious practice and buildings play such a critical role in community identity. Alcock noted that “dislocation of cult symbolically violates ‘natural’ territorial boundaries and loyalties.”¹⁶⁹ Presumably with some awareness of this issue, the Christian church worked hard to ensure that the traditions maintaining those older concepts were continued, so as to safeguard roles and identity within the community.¹⁷⁰ Traditions are groups of recurrent acts that are perceived as fundamental cultural models.¹⁷¹ In terms of the Christianization process, tradition was maintained through the continued use of religious space and community organization in the form of rituals, processions, and public display of social hierarchy. To make the traditions relevant to the new religion, memory processes were called upon to ratify the role of the church and new religion in the heart of the community and in the new religious landscape without significant interruption.¹⁷² Participation in traditional rituals associated with a cult site, for example, creates an implicit memory that is triggered by repeated actions. Bell argues that rituals are always subtly changing and that ritualized activities

¹⁶³ Saradi 2013.

¹⁶⁴ Grabar 1972, 336. Snively (1984, 123–24) argues against the identification of martyria in both Kraneion and Kodratos.

¹⁶⁵ Sweetman (forthcoming).

¹⁶⁶ Karivieri 2010, 420.

¹⁶⁷ Chaniotis and Mylonopoulos 2004, 189.

¹⁶⁸ I would like to thank one of the anonymous reviewers for noting this.

¹⁶⁹ Alcock 1993, 211.

¹⁷⁰ As indicated by Libanius' concern for the upkeep of tradition with the Theodosian decrees (see, e.g., *Orationes* 30.9, 35–9, 42, 44).

¹⁷¹ Boyer 1990, 12.

¹⁷² Bell 1997, 210.

can become traditional in a very short time as well as be “flexibly appropriated,” although not always with the awareness of the community involved.¹⁷³ In some respects, practical elements of tradition continue, but the meaning behind them changes, making way for the creation of new memories. As Van Dyke and Alcock note, memory is not monolithic and as such allows for the possibility of religious parallelism rather than straightforward syncretism.¹⁷⁴

Memory, Tradition, and Place

It is possible to transmit religious knowledge from one generation to the next by adopting what is already in the environment, which means that no generation has to start anew.¹⁷⁵ Such reception is critical to the argument that Christianity’s success was in part because the community tradition and social organization was not entirely lost. That the bridging concept of memory and tradition assisted the transition from polytheism to Christianity can also be understood with the help of Giddens’ structuration theory and memory traces. During Christianization, temples and religious practice constitute social structures, and active engagement with these structures leaves memory traces in the minds of communities, which can then be drawn on to undertake other social actions.¹⁷⁶ Coexisting social structures such as different cult practices within a single environment will have bridging elements, and these create the tangible means for the retention of memory. The physical manifestation of bridging elements is seen in the construction of churches at the edges of sanctuaries, such as Epidauros and Olympia, as well as the use of familiar elements of polytheistic practice, such as the use of oracles to ratify something new, even the church.¹⁷⁷ Since old traditions are being used, repeated rites and the actions of priests can orchestrate the creation of a collective memory. Even when no director of events, such as a priest or bishop, is present, social memories may still function through visual triggers. Explicit memory is a conscious process of recall, whereas implicit memory describes the role of memory in shaping actions by previous experience without “any intentional or conscious recollection of those experiences.”¹⁷⁸ Use of implicit memory is identifiable in the Christianization process, and it is partly through the maintenance of tradition that implicit memory can be triggered to

recall particular experiences and emotions.¹⁷⁹ Repeated actions help ensure passive memory formation or implicit memory.¹⁸⁰ The adoption of religious space is further reinforced through the adaptation of familiar architectural and artistic forms, such as the images of Orpheus and the Good Shepherd.¹⁸¹ For example, on entering a church a visitor might encounter an image of Christ in a wall mosaic or the Good Shepherd as a table support.¹⁸² The iconography of both images would have been familiar and previously recognized as Herakles and Orpheus.¹⁸³ There are practicalities involved in terms of the knowledge of craftspeople, but the continued use of particular images is also due to the transgenerational reception of meaning in these media. The familiarity of the images could trigger a range of memories of comfort and security in space and place, which would be compounded by a suite of familiar elements both active (procession) and passive (location). Since memory is progressive, collective memories that retain certain traditional values can be transferred to a new establishment, as long as there are some constants acting as triggers. It is unnecessary for everyone to remember precisely the same thing; it is sufficient that they can remember the overall sense of the event/context. The meaning or myth behind ritual action is not necessarily transposed from one generation to the next, for the meaning is not always the most memorable element, which may instead be an action.¹⁸⁴ That the meaning is not automatically carried on allows the memory of the old religion to fall away incrementally, making way for the new religion to become intrinsically part of the community.

The most successful religious concepts involve agency, and Christianity is no different; its agents range from priests to angels to God.¹⁸⁵ These agents have counterintuitive aspects that make them memorable: the priest performing miracles of sorts, the angels as messengers, God as omnipresent.¹⁸⁶ But they all have a previous familiarity from cult practice, and they possess logical grounding. Wilson expands on this idea by

¹⁷⁹ Schacter 1992, 244.

¹⁸⁰ Schacter 1992.

¹⁸¹ The fuller discussion of the links between civil basilicas and church buildings is entirely relevant to this point but lies outside the remit of the work here. I would like to thank one of the anonymous reviewers for noting this point. See Mathews (1993) for more discussion on the transposition of familiar images into the Christian repertoire.

¹⁸² E.g., see Mathews 1993, figs. 6, 88 (the latter from *Osios David in Thessaloniki*).

¹⁸³ Mathews 1993, figs. 5, 46.

¹⁸⁴ Boyer 1990, 12.

¹⁸⁵ Wilson 2010, 566.

¹⁸⁶ Boyer 1994, xiii.

¹⁷³ Bell 1997, 252.

¹⁷⁴ Van Dyke and Alcock 2003.

¹⁷⁵ Boyer 1994, xiii.

¹⁷⁶ Giddens 1984.

¹⁷⁷ Saradi and Eliopoulos 2011, 269.

¹⁷⁸ Schacter 1992, 244.

remarking that there is a heightened sense of agency under conditions of uncertainty.¹⁸⁷ Even church architecture plays a role in enhancing uncertainty so as to make church events more memorable—for example, by the absence of views to the church interior from outside and particularly within the church itself, where the congregation's view of procedures might be obscured.

As one of the earliest churches constructed in the Peloponnese, the quinquepartite transept basilica on the northern edge of the Sanctuary of Asklepios at Epidauros shows evidence for the use of memory as a bridging element between pre-Christian and Christian religious practice. The church, likely constructed in the early fifth century, occupies a highly visible location just to the east of the sanctuary propylon (see fig. 2).¹⁸⁸ Foschia has already noted the evidence for continued polytheistic religious activity at the sanctuary in the form of libations and dedications to the gods Apollo and Asklepios throughout the fourth century.¹⁸⁹ Geometric mosaics were found in the narthex, nave, and the north annex of the church (see fig. 3).¹⁹⁰ The north annex may have been used as a baptistery, but there is as yet little evidence to confirm this supposition.¹⁹¹ As noted above, edicts in the Theodosian code allowed processions to continue, even when sacrifice was banned.¹⁹² Thus, the location of the church means that the same route to worship continued to be taken. Although details concerning the participants in the procession to the church are lacking, it can at least be postulated that the same kinds of hierarchies would have continued to be expressed, perhaps with the elites being replaced by the clergy.¹⁹³ Such a replacement could be made in part because the memory of the hierarchy in pre-Christian processions was transferred to the Christian one as the traditions of order and route were repeated. The mosaics and the architecture of the interior were divided into ordered space, some of which would have been accessible to different tiers of the congregation (from the clergy to patrons to catechumens). The geometric elements that dominate the mosaics would have been familiar from public and private buildings of the fourth and fifth centuries. The presence of mosaics in the nave but not in the aisles

might indicate the relative importance of this space, and it may be that the congregation gathered in the side aisles and that the nave was kept free for processions by the clergy. The presence of the mosaics in the narthex and north annex may indicate a direct link with the main body of the church through procession, or perhaps it indicates the use of the north annex as an impressive public space, such as a baptistery. Views of the rites practiced within the church would have been obscured by the columns that divided up the space of the nave and aisles and also around the sanctuary area. In the Epidauros church, the altar was located at the back of the holy area in the apse (see figs. 3, 4). The enclosed bema would have made it difficult for the laity to see elements of the rituals involved; however, the extension of the bema into the nave, with a narrow doorway for access, indicates an element of revelation in the liturgy, where a member of the clergy might appear and show the audience salient objects or elements of the ritual. The obscured views and the revelatory elements would have induced a heightened sense of agency, thereby maximizing memory recall. Although the details of the meaning behind the rituals may not have been remembered, the events would have been, and the memory triggers would allow the congregation to feel comfortable with the rituals even if they did not necessarily always understand the reasons for them. The new rites with dramatic elements were more memorable and transmissible even though they were less familiar. The tradition of procession and location, which were old memories, helped create positive memories of the new religion.

As Boyer and Barrett have indicated, Wilson agreed that religion is “natural in the mind,” even if the underlying theory is not.¹⁹⁴ Wilson also notes that a new religion would achieve and sustain popularity if it was “memorable, attention grabbing and easily transmittable to other members of the population.”¹⁹⁵ Christianity was all of these, particularly expressed through the churches. It was memorable in its repeated traditions. It was highly visible through the situation of its churches. It was easy to transmit and to learn owing to the similarities the active elements, not the underlying concepts, had to pre-Christian religions. These elements of similarity were articulated through the location of the church and some elements of ritual incorporating the sacred place, visual prompts, burial traditions, and social hierarchies. Once established, it was critical to maintain the fundamental role of the church in society and to keep the interests of the community.

¹⁸⁷ Wilson 2010.

¹⁸⁸ Avraméa 1997, 177.

¹⁸⁹ Foschia 2009, 211–13; see also *IG* 42 1, 132–34; Nilsson 1945, 68. See also discussion in Sweetman 2010a.

¹⁹⁰ Asimakopoulou-Atzaka 1987, no. 10.

¹⁹¹ Caraher 2003, 381.

¹⁹² *Cod. Theod.* 10.10.17.

¹⁹³ Caraher 2003, 119–20. As with so many of the Peloponnesian churches, evidence for individuals such as clergy members or even patrons associated with this building is virtually nonexistent.

¹⁹⁴ Boyer 1994; Barrett 2000; Wilson 2010.

¹⁹⁵ Wilson 2010, 564.

This was partly done through social exclusivity within the church, architectural and liturgical order, and the use of memorable counterintuitive elements.

Memory, Tradition, and the Organization of Church Space

The church on the Sparta acropolis is likely to have been constructed in the second half of the sixth century.¹⁹⁶ It has close parallels in terms of the triple-apse arrangements with the churches at Tigani and Ayia Sofia, Koroni. Both of these churches are postulated to have been constructed in the seventh century, and I would argue that in their construction they draw on the plan of the Sparta Acropolis Basilica.¹⁹⁷ The Acropolis Basilica represents an example of how memory, particularly in terms of high-sensory pageantry and delineation of space, was used to sustain the popularity of Christianity once it was well-established (see fig. 6; online fig. 2). In 2001, geophysical work revealed a possible road network within which the basilica was well placed.¹⁹⁸ The basilica complex includes a west building made up of a baptistery, a martyrium (see fig. 8), and possible accommodation, and these features are likely to be later additions to the main church.¹⁹⁹ As with Epidauros, a number of memory triggers were used; the tribelon and ambo in the nave suggest a focus on procession in the interior.²⁰⁰ However, the layout of space in the interior, such as the high stylobates and arcades dividing the nave from the side aisles, would have interrupted views of the liturgy and processional elements.

Boyer argues that selective dissemination of information helps convey messages. If everyone shared the selfsame ideas, communicative effects would not be readily achieved; that is, the sense of any individual message would be absent, indeed redundant, and the lack of any nuanced personal experience would militate against memorization.²⁰¹ These observations may contribute to our understanding of why space within the church itself was so carefully organized—differentiated for the congregation as well as tiered. The layout of the Acropolis Basilica at Sparta (see figs. 6, 7; online fig. 2) illustrates the variation in space well, where certain spaces are more private than others (the apses and less so the north and south rooms on the east). The north apse would have been more accessible than the south, and it may be that the external doorway to the north facilitated the donation of

offerings (see fig. 7; online fig. 2). The *taxis* of Christian liturgy and church architecture would have served as a trigger, reinforcing social hierarchies in social and religious contexts.²⁰² The differences between clergy and laity would have been further emphasized through the spatial divisions in the church. The actions of the clergy in procession and in ritual in the bema would have stimulated memory of the meaning or underlying belief for some. Boyer also notes how repetition of particular actions becomes tradition simply because some ideas are easier to store and retrieve.²⁰³

Barrett noted the roles that repeated rituals and other features such as sensory pageantry played in the transmission and success of religion.²⁰⁴ The active elements have more potential to be remembered: the more often something is done, the less resource intensive it needs to be, while less frequent events, such as baptism, funerary rites, and martyr cult, require high sensory pageantry.²⁰⁵ It is evident in the Acropolis Basilica that the bridging elements created by tradition to spark memory triggers were not as critical as they had been for the earlier Epidauros church. However, it is apparent from the evidence of the martyr cult at Sparta that memory is used to consolidate the role of the church in society. The crypt and apsidal feature in the west building are likely to have been a martyrium, and thus counterintuitive elements of memory making could be drawn on particularly if miracles were associated with the grave. If, as I have postulated elsewhere, a viewing platform existed over the martyr's tomb, it could have provided both pageantry and revelatory elements.²⁰⁶ While the familiar, repeated actions, such as procession, rituals, and the maintenance of tiered space within the church itself, helped ensure passive or implicit memory formation, the events of baptism or a visit to the crypt would have created explicit memories used to consolidate the position of the church within the Late Antique society.

Memory, Tradition, and Christianization Processes

At an early stage, undertaking new religious practices inside an unfamiliar building would have been counterintuitive, and yet the building would have been memorable in its location. The consistent order in architecture and ritual and familiar iconography would have provided the triggers for memory recall. Some ceremonial features—baptism and revelation—or stories of martyr miracles must have seemed counterintuitive,

¹⁹⁶ Sweetman and Katsara 2002, 467.

¹⁹⁷ Sweetman 2008.

¹⁹⁸ Sweetman 2008.

¹⁹⁹ Sweetman and Katsara 2002, 467.

²⁰⁰ Sweetman 2010a.

²⁰¹ Boyer 1990, 22.

²⁰² I would like to thank one of the anonymous reviewers for this suggestion.

²⁰³ Boyer 1990, 17–18.

²⁰⁴ Barrett 2000, 32.

²⁰⁵ Barrett 2000, 32.

²⁰⁶ Sweetman 2008.

yet they were situated in familiar circumstances and for that reason became memorable.²⁰⁷ Some scholars have suggested that Christian worship of martyrs would have been a familiar development from the assumed presence of gods and goddesses at temples.²⁰⁸ If this suggestion is correct, then it is an example of inferential reasoning arising from association with the location of the martyr or relics.

It has already been noted that Christianization was a process undertaken at a local community as well as state level. The latter was somewhat more planned and less organic than the former. These differences are reflected in the Christianization processes of complexity and social movement as well as in the use of memory in the establishment of the new religion. Collective memory is normally controlled and is, as Aguilar notes, “given a single authoritative narrative,” whereas social memory is much more fluid and includes a range of memories that do not necessarily conform to this model of a single narrative.²⁰⁹ Collective memory is not simply cognitive: it is also normative, transmitting information as well as responsibilities.²¹⁰ In the absence of intention to create a collective memory, a disparate group of individual or social memories might result. Agents are involved in orchestrating elements of collective memory—for example, in the process of deciding where a church is built or the choice of interior imagery—and in more regular active elements such as organization of processions and liturgical practice. Such a planned process may apply to some of the earlier church foundations in particular but also perhaps to some of those with Constantinopolitan connections, such as Lechaion. Social memory can have multiple views or interpretations from one individual to another within the same community. For example, individuals may have discrete interpretations of the meaning behind the same action, and personal understandings are elements that cannot be controlled. Individuals may well remember things differently, and yet there are stories and actions that will prove collectively memorable.²¹¹ Although everyone experiences the same process (collective memory), participants may have different memories, as certain prompts may be more meaningful to some than others (social memory). Gregersen suggests that religion appears spontaneous and that it can be perceived as effortless.²¹² In my own view, the phenomenon of the

naturalness of religion belongs to a later phase, once a conversion process has already occurred.²¹³ In this respect one might consider the construction of some of the urban churches—for example, at Corinth and Argos—once the suburban churches have already been in use.

In the Corinthia, evidence for strategic and emergent change and the use of collective memory in the Christianization process is identifiable. The earliest churches are found on the coast in busy port locations such as Kenchreai and probably Kiato, and their foundations indicate elements of strategic and emergent change.²¹⁴ At this point, it is likely that processes of collective memory were used in terms of the location and integration of the church in the community. The construction of these churches is then followed by those in the major cities of Sikyon and Corinth through processes of social movement. In Corinth, the phasing of the church construction is clear. The earliest churches are constructed, for example, in the existing cemeteries; the three-aisled Kodratos Basilica is dated to the early sixth century in part because of its association with the martyr (see fig. 18).²¹⁵ A tradition of visiting these locations would have been well established, and memories of the importance of the place would have been triggered through the ritual actions undertaken at the site, often in community groups. The adoption of the tradition of visiting is similar to the adoption of place already seen in the construction of churches at the edges of sanctuaries. Other churches were also constructed outside the city walls around the same time, such as Kraneion (sixth century) and Skoutelas (late fifth to early sixth century).²¹⁶ Visits from the urban centers to these locations would have helped consolidate the sense of community and ownership with the church at the apex. As in other Late Antique Peloponnesian towns, one of the latest church constructions occurred on the hill in the old urban center of Corinth (in the late sixth or early seventh century), close to the former central cult site, the Temple of Apollo.²¹⁷ At this point, Christianity had already taken a firm hold; several churches in the suburbs had been in existence for at least 100 years. The construction of the church at the temple site and in the center of town is representative of the phenomenon of tipping point, but at this stage in the Christianization process

²⁰⁷ Barrett 2000, 30–2.

²⁰⁸ E.g., Brown 1981.

²⁰⁹ Aguilar 2005, 60.

²¹⁰ Poole 2008, 149.

²¹¹ Barrett 2000, 30.

²¹² Gregersen 2003.

²¹³ Boyer 1994; Barrett 2000.

²¹⁴ The date of the church at Kiato may be late fifth/early sixth century, according to the excavator (Orlandos 1969).

²¹⁵ Stikas 1962.

²¹⁶ Pallas 1976, 1955, respectively.

²¹⁷ Robinson 1976, 222. The date is based on belt buckles found in the associated cemetery.

the memory of the polytheistic religion would have been weak at best. Memories concerning ritual processes would have now been more firmly grounded in the tradition of Christian religious practice connected with the churches constructed throughout the sixth century, allowing the memory of past rituals associated with the temple to be sidelined.

Evidence for those churches that have identified martyria and baptisteries should theoretically be helpful in analyzing the role that church function played in Christianization processes. Yet as discussed above, very few Peloponnesian churches have definitively identified martyria.²¹⁸ Furthermore, Caraher observes that in many locations, the identifiable baptisteries do not conform to the established systems elsewhere, in which baptism appears to be exclusively in the hands of bishops.²¹⁹ The evidence for baptisteries is also inconsistent. It might be expected that baptisteries would be found in the earliest churches built in the Peloponnese. But while they exist at Kenchreai (see fig. 11), Nemea (see fig. 14), Epidauros (see fig. 3), and Kiato, they do not at Olympia. Given the Olympia church's location on the riverbank, it is possible that here as elsewhere, such as Gortys and Ayios Ioannis, the river was used for baptism. Bayliss has defined conversion as consisting of indirect and direct processes, and it is possible to identify both tendencies in the church building—for example, in the use of baptisteries and the construction of the church in highly visible locations.²²⁰

CONCLUSION

In both strategic and emergent Christianization processes, it is likely that the church actively used memory to encourage the adoption of Christianity, to ensure a peaceful transition, and to maintain fundamental social structures. While historiography is problematic owing to its multiple interpretations and because its narrative is inevitably linear, memory is by contrast nonlinear, unpredictable, and recoverable with varying degrees of vividness, depending on which individuals and communities are doing the remembering. The physical presence of the church provided a single reference point; essentially it was visible to the general public to maximize its sustained impact on memory. The edifice of the church facilitated the transmission of Christianity to as broad a community group as possible.²²¹ Talloen and Vercauteren stress the importance of the sacred landscape for preserving

social order.²²² As argued here, memory can play a critical role in transmitting knowledge of this social order.²²³ Memory provides us with a key reason why polytheistic sanctuaries were preserved and sometimes used in parallel with Christian religious practice in late antiquity: to destroy the temples would have been tantamount to extinguishing social memory, obviating thereby the well-entrenched social order as reiterated through procession and cult practice. As Hareven indicates, transgenerational memory can only really be sustained through conscious effort, and it is arguable that the purveyors of Christian faith also became the memory keepers.²²⁴ Belief alone could not be relied on to sustain the church, so rituals and liturgies were used to provide guidance and to maintain consistency. New and shared memories help shape a new community's identity and further entrench its power.²²⁵ As argued above, memory can be controlled, and while some members of the community may have been conscious of the changes, others may not have been so sensitive to them.

In the Peloponnese, evidence for specifically Christian destruction of cult sites is limited. The lack of destruction may be because of the need to maintain a sense of stability, in view of the way in which religious practice helped consolidate social stratification. The location of a church on the coast or on the periphery of the urban center or sanctuary is arguably a manipulation of memory, meant to encourage new community cohesion centered around the church while also drawing on the strengths of past identity and tradition.²²⁶ The use of the past is particularly obvious in Christianization processes of complexity and social movement. New foci are created in locations that had not been previously used as religious areas. The use of new places indicates a manipulation and sidelining of earlier social memory so as to create new community memory—particularly through visibility in the first instance, through social exclusivity, and finally through the consolidation created by repeated ritual acts, as seen in the Epidauros Basilica, Sparta Acropolis Basilica, and Corinth. The tradition was to walk in procession to sanctuaries or to walk out to cemeteries in communities, either in groups or individually.²²⁷ Procession to these peripheral locations symbolically defined the region as visually experienced while giving the community a shared identity tied to ownership of

²¹⁸ Snively 1984.

²¹⁹ Caraher 2003.

²²⁰ Bayliss 1999.

²²¹ Caraher 2003, 3.

²²² Talloen and Vercauteren 2011, 352.

²²³ Poole 2008.

²²⁴ Hareven 1978, 137.

²²⁵ Aguilar 2005.

²²⁶ Aguilar 2005.

²²⁷ For more discussion of this point, see Sweetman 2010a.

the landscape. As well as having mortuary functions themselves, many of the new churches were located in the regions of pre-Christian cemeteries or above agricultural land—a fact that emphasized kinship connections and gave credibility to the church by association. By locating the churches in the same areas, it was possible therefore to draw on earlier pre-Christian religious memory rather than be in conflict with it. Arguably, in the early part of the Christianization process, there was little value in building churches at defunct temples, as the requisite memory and tradition on which to draw were simply absent. It made better sense primarily to use sites of well-occupied places until Christianity had taken a firm hold.

In this article, I have set the process of Christianization and the changes in the roles of sanctuaries and churches against a background of multiple and linked social transformations in the Late Antique period. In the early part of the Christianization process, cities did not really lose their identities or their roles, in part because of conscious efforts made to maintain them through memory and tradition. However, once the church was well established, as Gregory noted, large urban-based communities refocused around the churches.²²⁸ Christian monuments and associated burials became community identifiers, and investment was moved to these buildings.²²⁹ It is possible to see a decline in the intrinsic importance of the cities' architectural icons in the sixth century—for example, the Temple of Apollo at Corinth (see fig. 12). This decline may have been sensitive to communal identity in the early part of the Christianization process irrespective of religious factors, as individuals and communities sought their origins and antecedents. Over time, the memory of pre-Christian practices faded, new memories were created, and modifications to the location, social structures, iconography, and rituals were made. Memory and history can be selective, although tradition may not be quite as open to contestation: it is the combined use of all three elements that made Christianity so successful.

By examining the evidence of church, community, memory, and tradition diachronically, I have attempted to contribute to a broader view of the socioeconomic context of the Late Antique Peloponnese. Although the increased focus on rural occupation changed settlement patterns in the fourth century, during the fifth century the building of the churches contributed to a further change in the Peloponnese. Initial organization may have come from outside to contribute to the original church buildings at Kenchreai (see fig. 11),

Epidauros (see fig. 3), and Lechaion (see figs. 16, 17), and some of these churches may have been imperial donations. Sanders suggests that this may be the case for the Lechaion church, which also had architectural elements in Proconnesian marble (see fig. 16).²³⁰ Notably, while interior luxuries, such as imported marbles or even *opus sectile*, are seen in the Lechaion church, they are otherwise quite limited in Peloponnesian churches.²³¹ The mosaics and other architectural elements used in the churches were primarily available locally. Whether the interior decor was local or not, meaningful resources were required to build a church. Building would have provided long-term employment and a revival in the areas where the churches were located. The new churches were quickly seen as prestigious. So, too, were those who donated to them; in this way, the cyclical system of donation and status was reinstated. The communal process of building the church would have facilitated a sense of unity. While donation and investment in the church were more inclusive and accessible to a wider range of the population, there were certainly divisions in society that the church helped reinforce.²³² Elite display of wealth and tiered space within the church for the living would have played to these divisions, and the desire to be so privileged would have encouraged participation. Further, the location of burials with degrees of closeness to or axial arrangements relative to holy spaces within the church would have further entrenched social divisions based on wealth rather than piety. Bowden suggested that the church encouraged society's polarization into the very rich and the very poor, as reflected by high-quality churches co-existing with low-quality housing.²³³ Not only did this situation reinforce perceptions of the benevolence of the church, it also helped maintain the elite. In defining the Late Antique rural religious landscape, it is a great pity that not more is known about the villas and domestic space in the area in this period. Such insight would surely help define the reasons for the locations of some of the churches, particularly if property was being marketed or if it was possible to see how a church was being maintained.

It is clear from this study that location and function enabled the use of new and shared foci, and that traditions and memory helped consolidate the role of the church in the economic and sociopolitical life of Peloponnesian communities. The lack of evidence

²²⁸ Gregory 1982.

²²⁹ Saradi 2008.

²³⁰ Sanders 2004, 187.

²³¹ Conversely, Caraher (2008) notes extensive use of *opus sectile* in the Late Antique churches of Cyprus.

²³² Bowden 2001, 66. Inscriptions in particular reveal the range of donations from bishops to parishioners and their value (as discussed above for Troezen and Olympia).

²³³ Bowden 2001, 67.

for any systematic destruction of pre-Christian sanctuaries, whether or not they had churches built near them, is an indication of the importance of community tradition and memory. For the Late Antique period, the evidence for continuity rather than change is in many senses more profound for an understanding of the nature of Christianization.

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