

## ‘CITIZEN CEMETERIES’ IN CLASSICAL ATHENS?

In 1987 Ian Morris proposed that formal burial, in Greece in general and specifically in Athens, was a privilege indicating (and dependent upon) social and political status, that is, citizenship: ‘burial in the family plot was proof of descent, and burial elsewhere ground for denying it. Descent . . . meant membership of the citizen estate and with it access to landholding, political rights and more.’ ‘Citizen cemeteries’ in classical Athens are ‘powerful symbols of descent and citizenship’.<sup>1</sup> In 1991 Morris repeated the claim, emphasizing again the significance of the ‘citizen cemetery’: ‘classical Athenians put great emphasis on formal, bounded cemeteries as symbols of membership of the citizen body as a whole’ and ‘cemeteries were a core element in the community’s rituals of self definition’.<sup>2</sup> The idea of a connection between citizen status and burial continues to underlie arguments in his subsequent publications discussing a broader range of burial issues from a wider geographical area of the Greek world.<sup>3</sup> According to Morris, bounded, reserved, ‘extramural’ and ‘citizen’ cemeteries were part of the new social order of the eighth century B.C., ‘emphasizing a community of adult male citizens’.<sup>4</sup> Citizen now is at times qualified in some way with quotation marks,<sup>5</sup> but the assertion that eighth century burials reveal the new polis as the ‘community of citizens’ that is the ‘recognizably “classical Greek” form of society’ sums up a continuous line of argument repeated on numerous occasions.<sup>6</sup> With the publication of the third edition of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, assertion became fact (at least for Athens). A new entry written by Morris on ‘cemeteries’ states, ‘Burial in a recognized cemetery was a primary symbol of citizenship in Athens.’<sup>7</sup>

But is the entry true? Was burial a citizen privilege in Athens and were there exclusive citizen cemeteries? Although it is too late to emend the ‘ultimate reference work for the classical world’,<sup>8</sup> I submit that Morris has misinformed his readers by persistently misreading Athenian evidence on family burial and citizenship and by dismissing contrary evidence as ‘cultural subversion’, ‘competing construction’, and the like.<sup>9</sup> It is simply not the case that burial was ever an exclusive privilege of

<sup>1</sup> Ian Morris, *Burial and Ancient Society: The Rise of the Greek City-state* (Cambridge, 1987), 54 and 210.

<sup>2</sup> Ian Morris, ‘The archaeology of ancestors: the Saxe–Goldstein Hypothesis revisited’, *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 1 (1991), 157, 158.

<sup>3</sup> Ian Morris, *Death-ritual and Social Structure in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge, 1992); ‘Poetics of power,’ in L. Dougherty and L. Kurke (edd.), *Cultural Poetics in Archaic Greece* (Cambridge, 1993); ‘Everyman’s grave,’ in A. Boegehold and A. Scafuro (edd.), *Athenian Identity and Civic Structure* (Baltimore, 1994); ‘Burial and Ancient Society after ten years,’ in *Necropoles et Pouvoir* (Lyon, 1998); *Archaeology as Cultural History* (Oxford, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> Morris (n. 3, 1992), 27.

<sup>5</sup> Morris (n. 3, 1993), 34.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* The argument in 1987 (n. 1) applied specifically to the early polis but used evidence from later eras; in the 1994 publication (n. 3) Morris focused on classical Athens—and by and large assumed that Athenian graves belong to Athenian citizens (see e.g. 82 last paragraph).

<sup>7</sup> *OCD*<sup>3</sup> (Oxford, 1996) s.v. cemeteries (307).

<sup>8</sup> So the *OCD*<sup>3</sup> describes itself on its front cover.

<sup>9</sup> See below, pp. 52–3.

citizenship in Athens nor is there any evidence for reserved 'citizen cemeteries'. To what extent this particular historical mistake affects the larger arguments of Morris' substantial body of work I leave to the reader to decide.<sup>10</sup>

Morris's approach in 1987 to the interpretation of ancient Greek burial was to start with an anthropological/ethnographic model—or, that is, one particular element of a model, the 'Saxe–Goldstein hypothesis number eight':

To the degree that corporate group rights to use and/or control crucial but restricted resources are attained and/or legitimized by lineal descent from the dead (i.e. lineal ties to ancestors), such groups will, by the popular religion and its ritualization, regularly reaffirm the lineal corporate group and its rights. One means of ritualization is the maintenance of a permanent, specialized, bounded area for the exclusive disposal of their dead.<sup>11</sup>

This description of burial as a ritual privilege of an élite group reminded Morris (it seems) of the importance placed on family tombs in some fourth-century Athenian writers, so suggesting that the variability in burial data from Athens might be interpreted as indications of changes not in population level but rather in membership in the burying group. So we see 'the rise of the polis' revealed in a dramatic extension of formal burial rituals from the élite *agathoi* to the 'citizen community' as a whole (now including the formerly excluded *kakoi*)—in Athens at first only temporarily in the second half of the eighth century and then more securely at the end of the sixth century.

Others have offered critiques of the historical 'rise of the polis' thesis;<sup>12</sup> I have summarized it here only to provide the context for the introduction of the notion of 'citizen cemeteries'. The 'Saxe–Goldstein hypothesis' offered Morris what he thought was a useful model, but his use of that model is problematic and in the end historically misleading. As Sally Humphreys pointed out,<sup>13</sup> the model does not in fact fit the Athenian data: the Athenian inheritance system was bilateral not patrilineal, and Athenian families were not corporate groups of the type described in the anthropological literature of which the 'Saxe–Goldstein hypothesis' is a part. To this Morris responded that Humphreys 'misses the point'.<sup>14</sup> 'The fact', he says, 'that the *anchisteiai* who made up individual grave plots were not corporate lineages is irrelevant; what the literary sources show is that graves had symbolic significance as indicators that a man belonged to the *citizen* body as a whole. Those who had access to Athenian cemeteries were, *a priori*, members of this corporate group.'<sup>15</sup> 'The

<sup>10</sup> Morris's 'exclusion model' for interpreting burial evidence (i.e. at certain times some members of society are excluded from formal burial) might of course still be tenable, but citizenship cannot be assumed as the principle of exclusion. See S.-H. Houby-Nielsen (*Proceedings of the Danish Institute at Athens* 1 [1995], 129–91) for alternative readings of the quantitative burial evidence from the Athenian Ceramicus—including the dramatic increase in child burial in the fifth century.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted by Morris (n. 1), 53; (n. 2) 148.

<sup>12</sup> See especially the reviews of R. Garland (*CR* 39 [1989], 66–7), S. C. Humphreys (*Helios* 17 [1990], 263–8), J. Bintliff (*Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 2 [1992], 286–9), and B. D'Agostino and A. M. D'Onofrio (*Gnomon* 65 [1993], 41–51). J. Papadopoulos (*Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology* 6 [1993], 175–206) provides a survey of the critical response primarily from the archaeological perspective. See also Houby-Nielsen (n. 10). For his part, Morris has acknowledged some of the criticism, rejected some—and in general stuck to his argument. 'If I were to write *Burial and Society* again I would certainly do it differently', he wrote in 1998. 'But I would not change the central arguments very much' (n. 3, 2000), 31.

<sup>13</sup> Humphreys (n. 11), 263–8.

<sup>14</sup> Morris (n. 2), 158.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* To my knowledge *anchisteia* (feminine singular) is not used in the plural in this way.

Athenians', he thinks, 'consistently identified rights of burial in recognized cemeteries with membership of the most important corporate descent group, the citizen body itself.'<sup>16</sup> With these comments Morris leaves his model even further behind—and goes 'from the frying pan into the fire' in his attempt to deflect Humphreys's criticism. The Athenian citizen body cannot be called a corporate descent group, despite their habit of using the language of family membership in describing polis membership. Morris may be himself using the term 'descent group' metaphorically, but his use of the term (together with the nonsensical 'double endogamy'<sup>17</sup>) does not provide a serious defence against Humphreys's charge of 'very sloppy and confused thinking about kinship'.<sup>18</sup>

Morris's response to Humphreys (quoted above) lays bare an essential flaw in his argument on citizenship and burial that undermines further his use of the ethnographic model. The 'literary sources' he cites to back up his claim *do* (at least some of them) connect having a family tomb with being a citizen but *do not* imply that only citizens could have such tombs. The texts are perhaps worth quoting in full, since Morris frequently cites the same texts but on no occasion provides context or full quotation. The texts regularly cited are the following five:

1. *Ath. Pol.* 55.3:

When the archons are scrutinized, they are asked first, 'Who is your father, and from which deme? Who is your father's father? Who is your mother? Who is your mother's father, and from what deme?' Then the archons are asked whether they have a cult of Apollo of ancestry (*πατρῶος*) and Zeus of the Courtyard, and where the sanctuaries of these are; whether they have family tombs (*ἡρία*), and where these are; whether they treat their parents well; whether they pay their taxes; whether they have performed their military service. (trans. Rhodes)<sup>19</sup>

2. In [Demosthenes] 43 *Against Macartatus*, the speaker, Sositheus, argues for the inheritance rights of his son in the complicated case of the estate of Hagnias, asserting that

there is a tomb (*μνήμα*) common to all those descended from Buselus (it is called the *μνήμα* of the Buselidae, a large area, enclosed, after the manner of the men of old). In this tomb lie all the other descendants of Buselus and Hagnias and Euboulides and Polemon, and all the rest of the host of those descended from Buselus, all these hold in common this place of burial. But the father of the defendant Macartatus and the grandfather have no share in it, but they made for themselves a tomb apart, at a distance from that of the Buselidae. Do they appear to you, men of the jury, to belong in any sense to the house of Hagnias, except that they have seized and hold what does not belong to them? (79–80—Loeb trans. modified)<sup>20</sup>

*Anchisteia* refers to 'close kinship' or 'rights of kin' (see LSJ who cite Pl. *Leg.* 942D and for plural Isae. 7.44). Note the related use of *anchisteia* in neuter plural, in the phrase *κατ' ἀγχιστεία γένους* (e.g. *Soph. Ant.* 174).

<sup>16</sup> Morris (n. 2), 158.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* 157.

<sup>18</sup> Humphreys (n. 11), 263. Morris's use of kinship language also puzzles D'Agostino and D'Onofrio (n. 11) for a somewhat different reason. His use of 'hypothesis number eight' leads them to expect that he would see Athenian society as historically built upon patrilineal lineages (as they do), but in fact he follows the now generally accepted view that such lineages were relatively late and artificial in their creation (42–3).

<sup>19</sup> Morris seems to intend to refer to this passage rather than 42.1 as cited: (n. 1), 54; (n. 2), 158.

<sup>20</sup> For this kind of multiple family tomb enclosure, called a 'peribolos tomb' by modern scholars, see R. Garland, 'A first catalogue of Attic peribolos tombs', *BSA* 77 (1982), 125–76; and most recently W. Closterman, *The Self-presentation of the Family: The Function of Classical Attic Peribolos Tombs* (Diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1999). On the relationship and possible similarities between the public tomb of the war dead and the private 'peribolos' tombs, see Closterman, 120–6 (with references to earlier discussion).

3. In Demosthenes 55 *Against Callicles*, the speaker, the 'son of Tisias', protests against his opponent's (and neighbour's) claim—that he has built a wall along the road dividing their properties and so caused flooding—by arguing among other things that the wall was built on private property (*ἰδίον*). Then, he says

if it were not admitted to be our private property, we should perhaps be guilty of this wrongdoing, if we had fenced off a piece of public land (*τι τῶν δημοσίων*); but as it is, they do not dispute this, and on the land there are trees planted, vines and figs. Yet who would think of planting these in a watercourse? Nobody, surely. Again, who would think of burying their own ancestors (*προγόνους θάπτειν*) there? No one, I think would do this either. Well, both these things have been done. For not only were the trees planted before my father built the wall, but the tombs (*μνήματα*) are old, and were built before we acquired the property.

(13–14—Loeb trans.)

4. In Demosthenes 57 *Against Euboulides*, the speaker, Euxitheus, appeals against his exclusion from the deme citizen list, saying (among other things) that

my father had four sons born of the same mother as myself, and when they died he buried them in our ancestral tomb (*πατρῶα μνήματα*), which belongs in common to all members of the family (*γένος*). And no one of these ever made protest or prevented it or brought suit. And yet, who is there who would have permitted persons having no connection with the family to be placed in the ancestral tomb? (28—Loeb trans. modified)<sup>21</sup>

5. Plutarch, *Themistocles*: although Themistocles' family was generally thought to have been obscure, Plutarch notes that

it is said that he was connected with the family of the Lycomidae, for he caused the *telesterion* at Phlya, which belonged to the Lycomidae and had been burned by the barbarians, to be restored at his own cost and adorned with frescoes, as Simonides has stated. (1.3—Loeb trans.)

The passages from the *Ath. Pol.* and Demosthenes 57 do in fact show that being able to produce a family tomb was important for the establishment of citizen status; the other texts seem to be making quite different points (and I quote them in full here simply to underline the unsubstantial character of the argument). In any case, it does not follow from the fact that citizenship required being able to show family burial that family burial or burial of any kind required being able to show citizenship. These texts do not prove that burial was a citizen privilege in Athens.<sup>22</sup> The logical error is the fallacy of 'affirming the consequence'—but the historical error is that of ignoring or discounting the many references to, and examples of, burial of non-citizens in Athens—whether highly honoured burial of Pythagoras of Selymbria in the Ceramicus or the public service burial of unclaimed corpses (see *Ath. Pol.* 50.2 and [Demosthenes] 43.57–8, quoted below).

Indeed, Morris is very aware of the existence of non-Athenian tombs and burials in

<sup>21</sup> Cf. the speaker's claim later in the speech that his mother's brother died in the Sicilian campaign and 'lies buried in the public tomb' (*τέθαπται ἐν δημοσίοις μνήμασι*, 37). For the 'public tomb' of the war dead see further below. Athenian usage seems to have allowed some flexibility in the use of the singular or plural in reference to a group of tomb monuments.

<sup>22</sup> In contrast to Morris, Elizabeth Meyer ('Epitaphs and citizenship in classical Athens', *JHS* 113 [1993], 99–121) does not claim that burial *per se* was a privilege of citizenship, but rather that citizenship is the key to understanding the character of commemoration of the dead in Athens. An increased use of the demotic in the fourth century reveals, she suggests, the highly prized and distinctive character of Athenian citizenship 'from the bottom [i.e. the deme] up' (110). Meyer also emphasizes the way in which denial of burial was considered the extreme form of *atimia* (e.g. 114), but again does not conclude that burial itself was reserved for citizens.

Attica. He duly acknowledges that many non-Athenians did receive formal burial in Athens—but explains that ‘like any ideology, Athenian funerary discourse was complex and contradictory’.<sup>23</sup> In this case, however, contradictions are produced not by Athenian ideology but by the flawed historical argument and interpretation of evidence. One of the most important texts for the treatment of the dead in Athens is the law quoted by the speaker of *Against Macartatus* (see above no. 2) on the burial responsibilities of the demarch:

And when persons die in the demes and no one takes them up for burial, let the Demarch give notice to the relatives to take them up and bury them, and to purify the deme on the day on which each of them dies. In the case of slaves he shall give notice to their masters, and in the case of freemen to those possessing their property; and if the deceased had no property, the Demarch shall give notice to the relatives of the deceased. . . . (57–58)<sup>24</sup>

In discussing the ‘exceptions’ to the rule of citizen burial, Morris speaks of such burials as ‘subverting’ the idea of a ‘unified citizen state’.<sup>25</sup> It would seem somewhat perverse to argue that Athenian law routinely ‘subverted’ Athenian ideology.<sup>26</sup> Rather, our understanding of Athenian ideology ought to proceed from Athenian law and custom.

The argument from ‘subversion’ just cited was made with reference to the traditions of the Athenian funeral oration. According to Morris, ‘the burial/citizenship link was most strongly stated in the public funeral orations for the war dead’ and here the ‘explicit statements of ancient authors make us expect that those of non-citizen descent should be denied access to the formal cemeteries’.<sup>27</sup> But where are these explicit statements? Pericles’ funeral speech celebrates the city of Athens and the Athenians who died in their city’s behalf, and Thucydides emphasizes the formal public burial of the dead from the ten Athenian tribes (Thuc. 2.34). But neither this most famous speech nor any of the other funeral orations surviving from the fourth century supports—explicitly or implicitly—the idea that burial was considered an exclusive privilege for Athenians. Indeed in his ‘Funeral Oration’ Lysias celebrates the legendary Athenian burial ‘in their own land of Eleusis’ of the foreign Argive dead and asserts in his historical survey of patriotic death that

it is right that we should also praise the *xenoi* who lie here; they came to the support of the people and fought for our salvation; they regarded valour as their native land, and with this noble end they closed their lives. In return the city has not only mourned them but given them a public funeral (*δημοσίαι*) and has granted them in perpetuity the same honours as it gives to its own people (*τοῖς ἄστοις*).<sup>28</sup>

Before excluding this as special pleading about a special circumstance (the civil war of 403 B.C.E.) by a speaker who was himself a foreigner, we ought to consider the possibility that foreigners were regularly so treated in Athens.

Although Thucydides’ account does not mention them and might not lead us to

<sup>23</sup> Morris (n. 2), 158.

<sup>24</sup> The law continues to outline the demarch’s responsibility for burial (and the costs of burial) with details that are of significance for both deme administration and Athenian attitudes towards the dead. For present purposes the section quoted above in the text is probably sufficient.

<sup>25</sup> Morris (n. 3, 1992), 132.

<sup>26</sup> Another way in which Morris might argue away this evidence would be to say that these were not ‘formal’ burials. The use of *θάπτειν*, however, and the attention to purification would speak against such a distinction.

<sup>27</sup> Morris (n. 2), 158.

<sup>28</sup> Lys. 2 (‘Funeral Oration’) 10 and 66 (Loeb).

expect them, stone stelae (of which fragments of some thirty have survived) inscribed with the names of the war dead from each Athenian tribe include in a number of cases the names of foreigners and even an occasional slave.<sup>29</sup> Again, such evidence is generally read as complicating but not challenging the exclusive citizen ideology of Athens.<sup>30</sup> As Morris sees it, 'the Saxe/Goldstein hypothesis only "works" as a description of ideological structure'. And, he asserts, 'the official message of Athenian burial was very close to Saxe's eighth hypothesis, but other parts of the funerary system gave expression to competing constructions of Athens'.<sup>31</sup>

Let us then return to the 'Saxe–Goldstein hypothesis' one last time and to the notion of 'a permanent, specialized, bounded area for the exclusive disposal of their dead'. In Morris's analysis this translates, *mutatis mutandis*, to 'citizen cemetery', and the existence (or creation) of such formally defined and bounded cemeteries is a fixed feature of his analysis of the transformation of Greek society in the eighth century B.C.E. The emergence of the polis in Argos, Corinth, and eventually in Athens, he asserts, was characterized by the distancing of both the dead and the gods, with the creation of walled, extra-mural cemeteries and separate *τεμένη* of the gods (sometimes with stone temples).<sup>32</sup> Just what is meant by a cemetery, let alone a reserved cemetery, is never explained. Rather, the term is used quite loosely, for groups of graves or for the Ceramicus in general; no evidence for walled Athenian cemeteries, as distinct from bounded or reserved plots (see, for example, the passage from [Demosthenes] 43 above), is provided. Further, the use of 'extra-mural' is itself problematic since the Athenian city walls were only built in 479 B.C.E. and would seem to have been built with a view to defence of the city core (or *astu*) rather than the organization of burial.<sup>33</sup> Such vagueness presents significant problems for Morris's argument and for his use of the Saxe–Goldstein model, and is a weakness that he did to some extent acknowledge in the conclusion of *Death Ritual and Social Structure* with the comment 'Looking back over this book I am more struck by what I have left out than by what I have said. I offer no extended discussion of spatial factors like the placement of cemeteries relative to settlements'.<sup>34</sup>

The spatial organization of burial in Athens is a larger topic than I can undertake in this short note, but I will conclude with a comment on one purported Athenian 'cemetery' to which Morris often refers—the *δημόσιον σῆμα* of Thuc. 2.34. In his well-known description of the Athenian public funeral for the war dead, Thucydides says:

<sup>29</sup> See D. Bradeen, 'The Athenian casualty lists', *CQ* 19 (1969), 45–159; and also now P. Low, 'Remembering war in fifth-century Greece: ideologies, societies, and commemoration beyond democratic Athens', *World Archaeology* 35 (2003), 98–111, who challenges the prevalence of 'univocal' readings of Greek (Athenian, Megarian, and Boeotian) commemoration of the war dead.

Finally, in a posthumously published article David Lewis called attention to a number of puzzling aspects of the lists, including the lack of such monuments from the fourth century ('Κατάλογοι θανόντων ἐν πολέμῳ', *Horos* 14–16 [2000–2003], 9–17).

<sup>30</sup> Nicole Loraux, *The Invention of Athens*, trans. Sheridan (Cambridge, 1986), 24: 'between the ergon of the funeral and the logos epitaphios, there is all too evident a gap'.

<sup>31</sup> Morris (n. 2), 158.

<sup>32</sup> Morris (n. 3, 1993), 32–7; Cf. (n. 3, 2000), 306: 'In reordering their sanctuaries and cemeteries, they fixed the gods and the dead ancestors at safe distances.'

<sup>33</sup> Morris's plans of pre-fifth century Athenian burials regularly include the line of the fifth-century walls. This is misleading to say the least. See the comments of D'Agostino and D'Onofrio (n. 11), 48, on this problem among archaeologists in general.

<sup>34</sup> Morris (n. 3, 1992), 203.

τιθέασιν οὖν ἐς τὸ δημόσιον σῆμα, ὃ ἔστιν ἐπὶ τοῦ καλλίστου προαστείου τῆς πόλεως καὶ αἰεὶ ἐν αὐτῷ θάπτουσι τοὺς ἐκ τῶν πολέμων πλὴν γε τοὺς ἐν Μαραθῶνι.

they put [the dead] into the *demosion sema* which is in the most beautiful suburb of the city, and always in it [the *sema*] they bury those from the wars, except for those in Marathon.<sup>35</sup>

On the basis of these lines, the *Demosion Sema* (now often capitalized as a proper name) has found a place in the topography of Athens and been generally taken to be a ‘national cemetery’ reserved primarily, if not exclusively, for the honoured Athenian war dead.<sup>36</sup> Relying on Pausanias’ statement that outside the city there was a *μνήμα* for the Athenians who fell in battle on land or sea, together with his subsequent listing of the specific *τάφοι* that ‘lie along the road to the Academy’ (*Guide to Greece* 19.2–4), Christoph Clairmont produced in 1983 a reconstruction of the *Demosion Sema* as the public burial ground for the honoured dead (not simply the war dead or only Athenians).<sup>37</sup> Pausanias’ *mnema* is taken by Clairmont and others as referring to Thucydides’ *sema* (or *Sema*), and, accordingly, plans of Athens generally place the ‘*Demosion Sema*’ along the main road leading out of Athens through the Dipylon gate towards the Academy.<sup>38</sup> Morris seems to follow the conventional view, despite referring on one occasion to the ‘state graves . . . lining the *Demosion Sema* leading out of the city’.<sup>39</sup>

There are at least two good reasons, however, to dispute this standard interpretation of Thucydides’ text and challenge the existence of a ‘national cemetery’ known as the *Demosion Sema*. First, *σῆμα* generally refers to a tomb not an area or location (cf. Thucydides use of the word at 1.93 as well as Hdt. 4.72); the Athenians are said to put the bones ‘into’ the *σῆμα*, which is then said to be in the *προάστειον*. Second, the

<sup>35</sup> Thucydides does not provide a direct object for *τιθέασιν*. Is it the bones or the *larnakes*? Nor is it entirely clear what he intends with *καλλίστον*. Perhaps the beauty he has in mind is man-made, as in the monumental beauty of Edinburgh’s Princes Street or New York’s Fifth Avenue, rather than scenic (as imagined for example by the authors of *The City Beneath the City* [Athens, 2000], 265). Many of the monuments now standing, however, post-date Thucydides.

<sup>36</sup> For the topographical identification see J. Travlos, *A Pictorial Dictionary of Ancient Athens* (London, 1971), fig. 417, with discussion and reference to earlier scholarship on 299–301. Examples of the use of the term ‘national cemetery’: ‘on the road to the Academy was the *demosion sema*, the national cemetery’ (R. E. Wycherly, *The Stones of Athens* [Princeton 1978], 257); ‘Kerameikos extended beyond the Themistoklean wall and included the national cemetery (*demosion sema*)’ (J. W. Roberts, *City of Sokrates* [London 1984], 20). See also R. Parker, *Athenian Religion: A History* (Oxford, 1996), 131, where Thucydides is quoted as saying ‘they deposit the bones in the public cemetery’. John Camp speaks of ‘the most important burial ground of ancient Athens, the *Demosion Sema*’, noting that ‘this was where individuals of note and those who had died in battle were buried at state expense’ (*The Archaeology of Athens* [New Haven, 2001], 263). A example of the way in which the notion of a ‘national cemetery’ has intruded into interpretations of the archaeological record can be found in A. Matthaiou’s epigraphical argument for the existence in Athens of a cenotaph for the Marathonian dead, in front of which funeral contests were held. Matthaiou distinguishes the *πολυάνδρειον* (said in an inscriptions from the second century B.C.E. to be *πρὸς τῷ ἄστει*) from the *Demosion Sema*: ‘it becomes clear that the word *πολυάνδρειον* in these inscriptions does not refer to the *Demosion Sema* in general, but to a specific monument, the cenotaph of Athens’ (P. Derow and R. Parker [edd.], *Herodotus and his World* [Oxford, 2003], 190–202, quotation on 198). I suggest that Thucydides’ *δημόσιον σῆμα*, at least, was such a specific monument, *into which* the Athenians are said to have put the war dead.

<sup>37</sup> C. Clairmont, *Patrios Nomos: Public Burial in Athens during the Fifth and Fourth Centuries B.C.* (Oxford, 1983), esp. 29–45.

<sup>38</sup> Judith Binder, however, maintains a minority oral tradition that the ‘cemetery’ was in fact along the road exiting the city wall from the Erion’ gate just to the east of the Dipylon.

<sup>39</sup> Morris (n. 3, 1994), 81; cf. (n. 1), 232, fig. 62.

phrase '*demosion sema*' is used, to the best of my knowledge, only by Thucydides and only this once. If it were in fact the name of an official 'national cemetery' certainly someone else would use the term. Pausanias' *mnema*, however, is the term in general use for 'tomb' in literary accounts of the commemoration of the war dead (see Lys. 2.63; Pl. *Menex.* 242C, cf. Demos. 57.37: δημοσίοις μνήμασι, making explicit the analogy with private or family tombs). Clairmont wanted to see a series of terms, 'μνήμα, σήμα, πολυανδρείον, even τάφος' as referring to the 'area as such, irrespective of the number of tombs';<sup>40</sup> although many have followed him in this usage as well as in the now traditional application of Thucydides' phrase to the roughly mile-long stretch of road-side tombs described by Pausanias, the Demosion Sema as 'national cemetery' should be recognized for the modern invention it is. Further, like σήμα, μνήμα is in the first instance a tomb, and the expansion of the term, in singular or plural, to include a burial plot (e.g. in [Demos.] 43.79) retains the emphasis on the monuments themselves and argues against the idea of a cemetery in the modern sense.<sup>41</sup>

Thucydides himself does not identify here the area in which his *sema* stood, other than to say it was in the '*kalliston*' suburb of the city, but a passage in Aristophanes' *Birds*,

- EU. . . ἦν δ' ἄρ' ἀποθάνωμεν,  
κατορυχησόμεσθα ποῦ γῆς;
- PI. ὁ Κεραμεικὸς δέξεται νῶ.  
δημοσία γὰρ ἵνα ταφῶμεν,  
φήσομεν πρὸς τοὺς στρατηγούς  
μαχομένω τοῖς πολεμίοισιν  
ἀποθανεῖν ἐν Ὀρνεαῖς.

EUELPIDES. If we are killed, where on earth will we be buried?

PISETAERUS. Ceramicus will receive us; we'll tell the generals that we died fighting the enemy at 'Birdville' and then be buried at public expense.<sup>42</sup>

supports the idea that the suburb was part of the area known as the Ceramicus (including but not coterminous with the area of modern excavation known by the same name), immediately outside the Dipylon gate in the north-west city walls.<sup>43</sup> To sum up, it seems best to keep *demosion sema* just what it is— Thucydides' own idiosyncratic term, perhaps meant to evoke a heroic or poetic model, for the public (paid for with public funds) tomb of the war dead.<sup>44</sup> The character (construction, form, use, and reuse) of the tomb is frustratingly unclear in this and other texts;<sup>45</sup> but

<sup>40</sup> Clairmont (n. 37), 29

<sup>41</sup> *Horoï* found in the Ceramicus and elsewhere, inscribed ὄρος μνήματος (see Garland [n. 20], Closterman [n. 20]) show that the enclosure so marked is thought of as having spatial boundaries, but none of these enclosures of usually less than ten burials can properly be called a cemetery rather than a tomb.

<sup>42</sup> Ar. *Av.* 393–9 (my translation).

<sup>43</sup> It should be noted, however, that part of the Ceramicus was within the city wall (U. Knigge, *The Athenian Kerameikos*, trans. J. Binder [Athens 1991]); the name pre-dated the Themistoclean city walls (cf. Thuc. 6.56).

<sup>44</sup> Simonides' epigram for the dead at the Euripus river (Page p. 9, lines 85–88) speaks of the σήμα . . . δημοσία built over the dead. An older heroic *sema* is that of Eetion at *Il.* 6.119.

<sup>45</sup> In the *Menexenos*, dramatic date 386?, Plato speaks of those who fell at Oenophyta in Boeotia (in 457) as the 'first to be honoured by the city and laid in this tomb (ἐν τῷδε τῷ μνήματι, 242C)', a statement that adds further complication to the ongoing debate over what Thucydides called *patrios nomos*, and also raises questions of the use and reuse of the tomb. As



there is, in any case, no justification for the notion that Thucydides refers to a specific area marked out as a public or citizen cemetery in the Athenian Ceramicus and extending along the road from the Dipylon to the Academy. The Ceramicus itself was known in antiquity, as it is today, as the repository of many tombs, but it was not a cemetery. Both ancient evidence and modern archaeology establish that the area outside the city walls called the Ceramicus (and in the fourth century so marked by boundary stones) was a multi-use area, notable especially for the prevalence of tombs (Athenian and non-Athenian) and pottery workshops (as well as prostitutes and public gatherings).<sup>46</sup> The dead, it can be noted, were hardly distanced here; rather, they (or their monuments) seem to have been prominently placed to keep their memory alive among the living, Athenians and non-Athenians, who spent their time in their company. To say that the dead were ‘safely set apart . . . in their cemeteries’<sup>47</sup> misrepresents the historical and archaeological evidence.

My argument in this short note has contested the accuracy of one entry in the latest edition of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, but its aim is not simply negative or polemical. If we clear away from the table the inappropriate and unsupportable ideas of ‘citizen cemeteries’ and an Athenian ideology of exclusive citizen burial, then we can more successfully bring to the table important questions about the ways in which Athenians took care of the dead and the place that the dead, their burial, and their monuments, held in the Athenian community. For example, who owned the land in which burials were made or on which monuments were erected? How did non-Athenians gain the use of land for these purposes? Was public or private land used differently for burial? To what extent were burial monuments protected?<sup>48</sup> The discussion could be important.

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noted above, Clairmont (n. 37), 29, posited a lines of tombs extending out along the road to the Academy, arguing that Pausanias’ *mnema* should be taken as referring to the ‘area as such, irrespective of the number of tombs’. In a footnote, however, Clairmont acknowledges that two manuscripts of Pausanias have the plural *mnemata* in this passage. Although there is some murkiness here, I am not convinced that either Thucydides or Pausanias refers to a cemetery rather than a tomb or tombs. In 1997 the Greek archaeological service announced that the *Demosion Sema* had been found at 35 Salaminos Street—just outside of the area of the German excavations, and the discovery was duly reported in the popular press and in *Archaeology* 53 (2000), 42–5; J. Oakley (*Picturing Death in Classical Athens* [Cambridge, 2004]) accepts the identification with some qualification: ‘excavations at 35 Salaminos Street uncovered remains of an ancient cemetery that have been identified as part of the *Demosion Sema*’ (215). Full publication of the monument (and analysis of its contents) is yet to come. For comments on the recent discoveries—with some scepticism on the *demosion sema* as a cemetery or ‘coherent island of commemoration’, see P. Low, ‘The commemoration of the war-dead in classical Athens: nature, meanings, contexts’ (unpublished paper presented at ‘Cultures of Commemoration’, British Academy, July 2004).

<sup>46</sup> Alexis, fr. 206 (Arnott 1996 with commentary). See also Ar. *Ran.* 129, *Eq.* 772; Cf. George Karo’s comments on the ‘curious insouciance with which the Greeks left ordinary private buildings standing close to fine official monuments’ (*An Attic Cemetery: Excavations in the Kerameikos at Athens* [Philadelphia, 1943], concluding sentence of ch. 5).

<sup>47</sup> Morris (n. 3, 2000), 306.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Robert Garland, *The Greek Way of Death* (Ithaca, NY, 2001<sup>2</sup>), ix–xvii, and Graham Oliver, ‘An introduction to the epigraphy of death: funerary inscriptions as evidence’, in id. (ed.), *The Epigraphy of Death* (Liverpool 2000), 1–23, who call for consideration of a number of these issues. See also Low (nn. 29 and 45).