

THE LATE ROMAN WALL AT CORINTH

(PLATES 76-78)

FOR MANY YEARS the ruins of a post-classical, almost certainly Late Roman, fortification have been known to exist at Corinth.¹ The best preserved of these remains lie along a north-south line some 1500 meters east of the Central Area, directly west of the Kraneion basilica (Fig. 1). The traces include a so-called "earth dyke", which obviously concealed a construction of considerable size and durability, much hard lime mortar scattered about the area, and several large conglomerate blocks apparently still *in situ*. Other traces of the wall were once visible along the western edge of the city, but the eastern side offered more promise for investigation and it was there that in 1930 Rhys Carpenter and Dorothy Kent Hill undertook a trial excavation in hopes of exploring what was reasonably thought to be the emperor Justinian's fortification of the city. Although this excavation produced important information regarding the history and topography of Corinth in the Late Roman period, its results have not been fully published nor the wall properly studied.²

Excavation of the "earth dyke" revealed a powerful wall *ca.* three meters thick and a tower which extended some four meters beyond (east of) the wall (Fig. 2; Pl. 76: a shows the site as it is today, Pl. 76: c was taken in 1930; cf. Pl. 76: d). The wall was constructed of two parallel faces of cut stone and solid mortar-and-rubble fill. The facing walls were made of rectangular conglomerate blocks of varying size. Most are slightly over 0.40 m. wide and between 0.30 and 0.45 m. high, but in

¹ I would like to express my thanks to Charles K. Williams, II, who gave me permission to study and publish this material and who kindly furnished me with the plans which appear as Figures 1 and 2. In addition, Mr. Williams provided much encouragement and offered me the benefit of his knowledge of the topography of ancient Corinth, which is as sound for this period as it is for any other. I should also like to thank Miss Dorothy Kent Hill, who discussed many aspects of the excavation with me and provided the photograph which appears as Pl. 76: c. Thanks also are due to Ronald Stroud, Nancy Bookidis, Henry Robinson, and Alison Frantz for help and advice on a number of matters. During the preparation of this publication I received financial support from the Graduate School of The Ohio State University.

The earliest mention of the Late Roman Wall seems to be a map published by Andreas N. Skias, *Πρακτικά*, 1906, plate 5, where it is described as a "mediaeval wall". Skias does not, however, discuss the wall in the accompanying article. The Skias version of the map was based on an autograph copy prepared by Artillery Lieutenant K. Mazarakis Ainian in 1902 and now displayed in the museum in Corinth.

² Rhys Carpenter and Antoine Bon, *Corinth*, III, ii, *The Defenses of Acrocorinth and the Lower Town*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1936, p. 127, provided a very brief account of the excavation, rejecting the Justinianic date of the wall, but adding that it "has never been properly studied or investigated." Further references to the wall are to be found in Robert L. Scranton, *Corinth*, XVI, *Mediaeval Architecture*, Princeton 1957, p. 7, and James Wiseman, *Hesperia* 41, 1972, p. 7, who published a photograph of a section of it as plate 2: c.

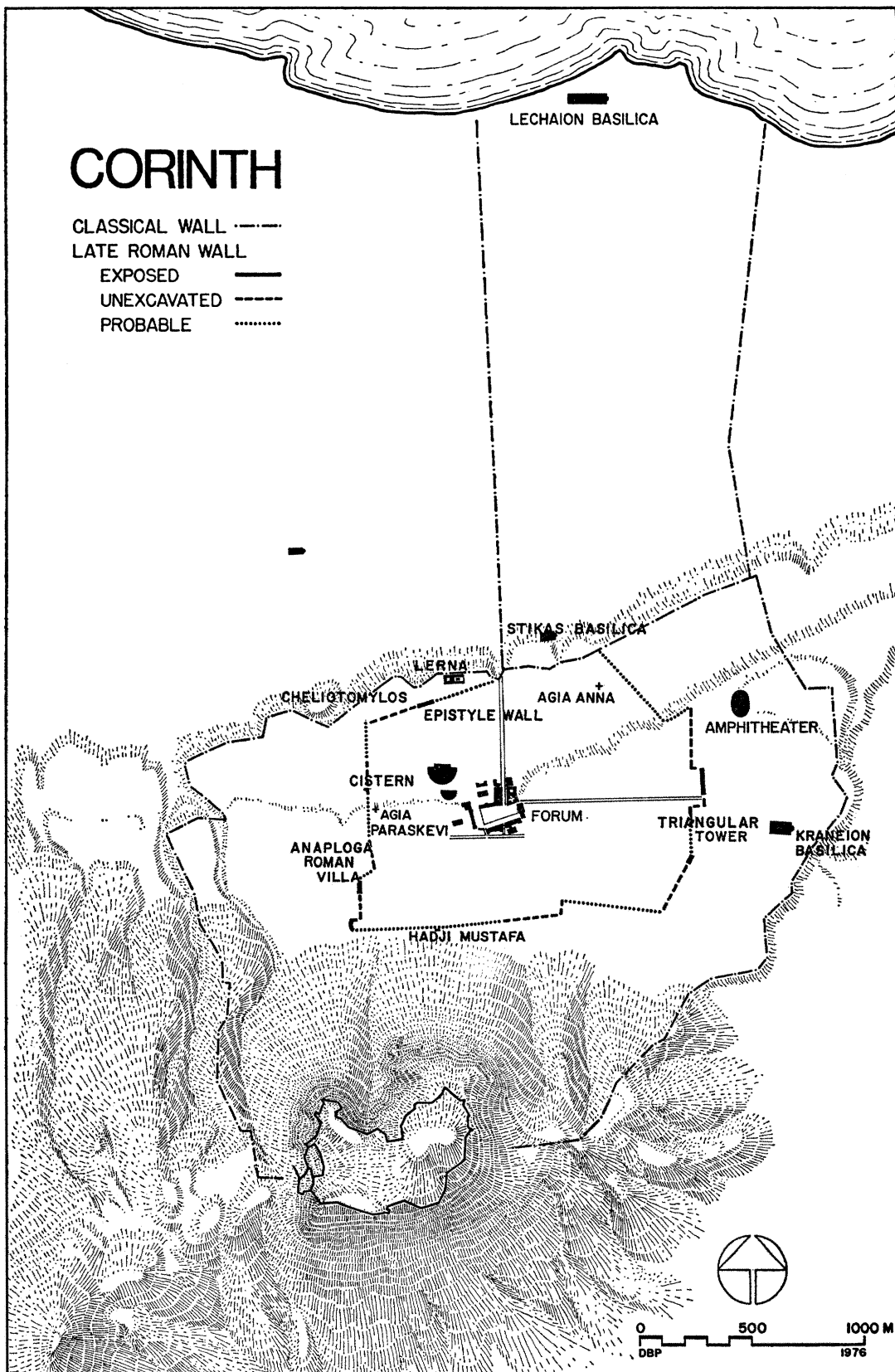


FIG. 1. Plan of Corinth in the Late Roman period.

length they vary from a short block of only 0.23 m. to a huge stone 1.64 m. long (Pl. 76:b). The blocks were set in mortar and arranged in nearly regular courses, in an obvious attempt to imitate ashlar masonry. Where the stones were uneven in height the difference was frequently made up by the insertion of mortar and tiles, something which suggests a concern for appearance as well as mere military necessity. The use of tiles was sparing, however, and this style of construction does not in any way resemble later *cloisonné* technique or any of its derivatives. The mortar used was fine and white, with many blue-gray pebbles of various sizes and a considerable proportion of ground-up pottery or tiles.

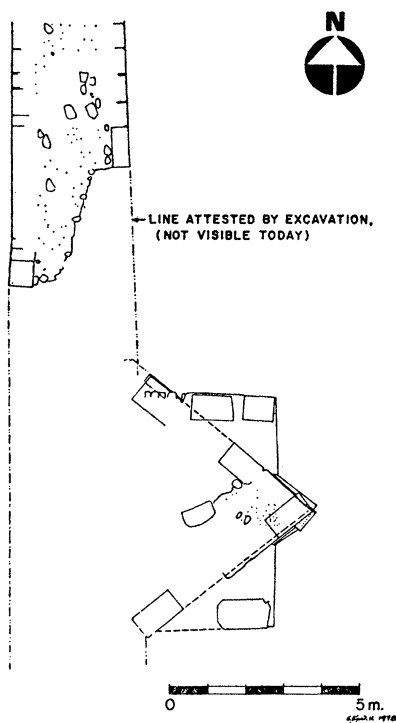


FIG. 2. Plan of tower with triangular projection.

At the time of the excavation the main north-south wall preserved three courses and its outer (eastern) face stood to a height of *ca.* 1.43 m. Excavation at one point revealed foundation blocks sunk below the level of the facing, *ca.* 1.5 m. on the east and 0.6 m. on the west; these foundations were set wider than the visible face by *ca.* 0.2 m. on the east and 0.3 m. on the west. It is impossible to know how high the wall may have risen. There is, however, no reason to think that the preserved sections represent a mere socle, and comparison with other Late Roman fortifications, at Athens, the Isthmus, and Sparta, suggests that the wall probably rose to its full height in exactly the same construction.

The solid fill between the two faces, *ca.* 2.2 m. thick, is particularly hard and well

packed. Apparently the sides of the wall were constructed first, the rubble fill dumped in, and a large amount of mortar poured in as a final step.³ There was no evidence of any tie-pieces used to bond the two sides of the wall together, but since the hard rubble core was only briefly explored, they may well have existed. In addition to the rubble, various pieces of previously used material were thrown into the fill. Among the items removed during the course of excavation were several marble slabs and a statue base. This latter (0.82 m. high and 0.42 m. square) had a notch cut in the top, suggesting that it had already been re-used to support a water pipe before its insertion in the wall. Unfortunately no inscriptions were encountered and none of the re-used material provides any specific assistance in dating the construction of the wall, although the use of such fragments suggests a period of considerable destruction or disuse of earlier monuments.

The main facing blocks of the wall were undoubtedly taken from elsewhere since, as we have seen, they do not always fit exactly where they were placed. Unfortunately it is impossible to say just what structures had been dismantled for this purpose, but some of the larger blocks may have come from the earlier classical wall around the city. Another possible source is the amphitheater, which was located only a short distance northeast of the excavation site. This was an enormous building, probably constructed only in the late 3rd or early 4th century, but left outside the Late Roman wall. As we shall see, the new fortification did not enclose all the habitation area of the city in this period but it may be significant that the amphitheater was the only major pre-Christian structure known to have been outside the new wall. Perhaps it had been destroyed, either by earthquake or the devastation of the Visigoths, and it was an attractive source of material for those who were seeking stones for the new wall.⁴

As it is now preserved, the excavated tower is rectangular (*ca.* 3.6 x 5.9 m.) with a curious triangular projection from its eastern side (Fig. 2, Pl. 76: d). Its foundations were sunk lower than those of the main wall, and at the time of excavation the tower preserved five courses to a height of 2.23 m. To the best of my knowledge, a triangular projection from a rectangular structure is unique in the repertoire of Late Roman construction technique. While the triangular projection was built in the same style as that of the curtain wall, save that heavier, thicker blocks were used

³ This style of construction has been described and discussed in many places. See H. Megaw, *BSA* 32, 1931-32, pp. 69-79, and Lloyd W. Daly, "Echinos and Justinian's Fortifications in Greece," *AJA* 46, 1942, pp. 500-508, which is much too simplistic in its approach to the problem. In fact, much of the surviving fortification at Echinos is late mediaeval or Turkish, and it is still impossible to speak of typical Justinianic construction technique in Greece.

⁴ For the stones used in the construction of the classical wall, see Carpenter and Bon, *Corinth* III, ii, pp. 48-54 and *passim*. For the amphitheater see Harold North Fowler and Richard Stillwell, *Corinth*, I, *Introduction, Topography, Architecture*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1932, pp. 89-91. The amphitheater apparently did not exist in Pausanias' day and it is first mentioned in the early 4th century after Christ. In regard to the siting of amphitheaters, it should be noted that they were frequently constructed outside the walls of the city.

(from 0.62 to 0.72 m. in width), the two eastern rectangular corners of the tower were constructed with smaller irregular stones set in large quantities of mortar with no attempt at regular coursing (Pl. 77:a). This part of the tower does not bond either with the curtain wall or with the rest of the tower, and it must have been a later addition. In its original form, then, the tower as a whole was triangular, and its outer diagonal faces may be traced back to the main wall, where they bond perfectly.

The triangular point of the tower was made by laying rectangular blocks on top of each other to form a rough 45-degree angle (Pl. 77:a). A cursory examination suggests that this was carelessly done, perhaps in the haste of an impending barbarian attack for there is some overlap where the stones did not form a perfect angle. A closer inspection, however, shows that this was deliberately done. In alternating courses one side or the other was allowed to project, but then cut back to produce a decorative effect.

Although the excavation area extended some distance east of the wall, no traces of outworks or secondary walls were detected and the main wall apparently stood as a single defense.⁵

Chronological considerations are naturally of paramount concern, but none of the Late Roman pottery has survived and the area of the excavation was marked by considerable disturbance, both in antiquity and throughout the Middle Ages, since water lines and graves were encountered at every level. In addition, the vast amount of homogeneous material found in the course of excavation suggests that the area may once have served as an enormous dump. These disturbances and anomalies make it extremely difficult to date the construction of the wall with any confidence, but careful work by Professor Carpenter and Dr. D. K. Hill preserved some important evidence.

Before the wall was built the area of the excavation appears to have been occupied by a number of small buildings, perhaps of a residential character. When the wall was erected it cut directly through the ruins of at least two of these structures. One of these, located east of the wall and north of the tower, was a substantial building with a tiled floor and stuccoed walls. At the time of the construction of the wall the diagonal northern face of the triangular tower cut through the floor of this building. Unfortunately, there is no conclusive evidence to date the building, although a coin of Galerius (A.D. 293-311) was found near the structure and at a slightly lower level.⁶ A better indication of date is provided by a building uncovered below the interior of the wall north of the tower. Directly under the packed earth floor of this building was

⁵ In this regard, apparently, the wall at Corinth was different from the wall at the Isthmus. See Megaw, *BSA* 32, 1931-32, pp. 69-79, who argues that the classical three-fold division of *teichos*, *proteichisma*, and *taphros* was Justinianic in date; the classic example, however, is the Theodosian Wall of A.D. 413 in Constantinople. It may also be noteworthy that no trace of a fighting platform was discovered for the wall at Corinth.

⁶ Coin #10 of May 28, 1930, Mattingly, *et al.*, *The Roman Imperial Coinage*, 1923-1967, VI, p. 581, 18 b.

a coin struck in Antioch between A.D. 364 and 375.⁷ This provides a *terminus post quem* for the construction of the building; its destruction and the building of the wall must have occurred some time later.

Throughout the area of the excavation there was a destruction layer of burned material, tiles, and broken marble. This was encountered at various depths (*ca.* 1.25 m. below the surface at the foot of the east facing wall, *ca.* 2.15 m. at the northeast corner of the tower, and *ca.* 2.60 m. at a point some distance east of the tower), but there can be no doubt that this represents debris from the same catastrophe and that it lay about the site when the wall was built.⁸

With a few exceptions, probably to be explained as intrusions or the result of later robbing of the wall, all of the coins found below the destruction level were from the 4th century or earlier; the two latest coins were struck during the reign of Valentinian II (375-392).⁹ Within the destruction layer itself the coins were predominantly of the mid- to later 4th century. The latest coin associated with this level is a bronze of Theodosius I struck in Thessalonika between 383 and 392.¹⁰ The foundations of the wall were sunk into this destruction layer and this provides the best evidence for its date of construction. Almost certainly the destruction is to be associated with the sack of Corinth by Alaric in 396, a disaster which is amply documented in other parts of the city. In many areas of Corinth it is impossible to disentangle evidence of destruction caused by the earthquakes of 365 and 375 from that caused by the Visigoths, but here the coins seem to point conclusively to the end of the century.¹¹

Above the destruction level the excavation encountered a thick layer of apparently dumped material. Although this level was easily distinguished from the burned strosis and the hard-packed soil that lay beneath, it was difficult to differentiate it from upper layers. In most cases, however, this seems to have been half a meter or more in depth. Generally speaking, this level presents the same archaeological context as that of the destruction level: enormous quantities of broken material, lamps, and coins that go up to the very end of the 4th century. Probably this represented a clean-up of the Alaric destruction debris which was used as back-fill for the wall.

Nevertheless, it must be admitted that the numismatic evidence is not such that one can date the construction of the wall very closely, and it is possible that the wall

⁷ Coin #15 of June, struck by Valentinian I, Valens, or Gratian (Carson, Kent, and Hill, *Late Roman Bronze Coinage*, A.D. 324-498, London 1960 [= *LRBC*], 2653-55).

⁸ At the site of the excavation the ground slopes downward gradually from west to east, thus accounting for the different depths of the destruction level.

⁹ Coin #1 of June 3 (*LRBC* 2403) and #1 of June 5 (*LRBC* 1873), both struck between A.D. 383 and 392.

¹⁰ Coin #5 of May 28 (*LRBC* 1852).

¹¹ According to Marcellinus comes (*MGH, Auctores Antiquissimi*, XI, ed. T. Mommsen, p. 64, *s. a.*) there was an earthquake in A.D. 394, although it is not certain that it affected Corinth: *Terrae motu a Septembrio in Novembrium continuo imminente aliquantae Europae regiones quassatae sunt*. Glykas (ed. Bonn, p. 478) says there were severe earthquakes throughout the world in 395 or 396.

was built either immediately before the attack of the Visigoths or in the years soon afterwards. Here we must rely on historical argument and a consideration of the structure of the wall itself. In the first place, it is difficult to imagine a wall such as the one at Corinth being constructed hastily by a terrified populace, even had they been given sufficient warning of the approach of the Visigoths.¹² It was carefully built and, as we have seen in the use of regular courses and the decorative effect of the point of the triangular tower, considerable attention was paid to appearance and style. In fact, everything about the wall gives the impression of solidity and permanence rather than haste and fear. Furthermore, we know that Alaric had an aversion to strongly walled cities and that he was probably unsuccessful in any siege of a well-fortified city in Greece.¹³ Likewise, Zosimus says specifically that in 396 nearly all of the cities of the Peloponnesos were unwallled since they trusted in the natural strength of the Isthmus.¹⁴ Had this wall been in existence when the barbarians attacked Corinth the city would undoubtedly have escaped the considerable destruction wrought by the Visigoths. For all these reasons it is probably safe to date the construction of the wall to the years after the retreat of Alaric and thus to assign it to the first two decades of the 5th century.

The fortification of Corinth was naturally connected with the larger historical currents of the age and developments within the city itself. On the local level the wall was part of a general plan to rebuild and reform Corinth after the devastation of the last years of the 4th century. This program is naturally best known in the Central Area, where the Visigoths and the earlier earthquakes had combined to require a rebuilding of the forum area. Those responsible for the work were guided by earlier foundations and the still surviving buildings, but in some areas they made notable changes. The greatest of these involved the demolition of what was left of the Central Shops and the construction of fountains and a monumental set of steps linking the upper and the lower parts of the forum. As others have pointed out this rebuilding should be understood not only as a response to necessity, but also as a program designed to alter the city in keeping with the new economic, aesthetic, and spiritual realities of the period.¹⁵

¹² A recent estimate has suggested that the wall surrounding a city as large as Sardis could be constructed in a remarkably short period of time (5½ to 11 weeks!), but these calculations are based on so many variables that they are all but worthless. See David van Zantem, Ruth S. Thomas, and George M. A. Hanfmann, *Archaeological Exploration of Sardis. Report 1*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1975, p. 41.

¹³ Zosimus, V. 5. 7 (ed. Mendelssohn, p. 222), says that Alaric did not attack Thebes because it was strongly fortified, but hurried on to Athens, where he expected the inhabitants would be unable to man the dilapidated Themistoklean wall. The construction of the Late Roman Fortification, however, undoubtedly surprised him and it was probably that, rather than the miraculous intervention of Athena and Achilles, which spared the city some of the worst ravages of Visigothic attack.

¹⁴ Zosimus, V. 6. 4 (p. 223): πάντα λοιπὸν ἦν αὐτῷ δίχα πόνον καὶ μάχης ἀλώσιμα, τῶν πίλειως σχεδὸν ἀπασῶν διὰ τὴν ἀσφάλειαν ἣν ὁ Ἰσθμὸς παρέειχεν αὐταῖς ἀτειχίστων οὐσῶν.

¹⁵ Scranton, *Corinth* XVI, p. 9.

In the larger frame of events the wall at Corinth was probably part of a program of fortification involving much of the Balkan peninsula, and possibly directed by the emperor himself.¹⁶ Indeed, the great Theodosian land walls of Constantinople were constructed in A.D. 413, while Thessalonika was apparently fortified closer to the middle of the century.¹⁷ In Greece itself Paul Clement has recently suggested that the traditional Justinianic date for the fortress at Isthmia and the trans-Isthmian wall is incorrect, arguing instead that they were built at the very beginning of the 5th century, a date remarkably close to what we have found for the wall at Corinth.¹⁸

Basing his argument on historical probability and the presence of one or two coins of the mid-5th century on the roadway of the Isthmian fortress, Robert Hohlfelder has recently suggested that the trans-Isthmian wall should be dated later in the century, perhaps in the 440's, as a reaction to the threat of Attila and the Huns.¹⁹ While such an interpretation is plausible, for both the trans-Isthmian wall and the Late Roman wall at Corinth, it is hardly convincing. In the first place, as Clement had shown, the presence of one or possibly two coins of the mid-5th century on the roadway of the fortress only demonstrates that the roadway was in use at that time, and that the structures must have been built earlier. Secondly, as we have seen, both of these walls were carefully constructed and it is difficult to imagine them as the hurried work of preparation for an imminent attack, either from the Visigoths or the Huns. While the strictly archaeological evidence may be taken either way, a date in the first two decades of the 5th century still seems preferable.

The dating of the fortifications at the Isthmus is significant not only because they are physically so close to Corinth, but also because the walls at both sites were constructed in almost exactly the same technique. The use of coursed rectangular blocks and a solid cement-and-rubble core, for example, is to be contrasted with the technique used in the Late Roman Fortification at Athens (built in the last third of the 3rd century after Christ), where the fill between the two facing walls was made of loosely packed material not set in cement. The walls at Corinth and the Isthmus are also different from the contemporary, but distant, walls of Constantinople, which were built of bricks and alternating courses of stone and brick, as were those

¹⁶ Cf. *Codex Theodosianus* XV. 1. 34 (396) and XV. 1. 49 (412).

¹⁷ B. Meyer-Plath and A. M. Schneider, *Die Landmauer von Konstantinopel* II, Berlin 1943; Michael Vickers, "Further Observations on the Chronology of the Walls of Thessaloniki," *Μακεδονικά* 12, 1972, pp. 228-233; *idem*, "The Late Roman Walls of Thessalonika," *Transactions of the 8th International Congress of Roman Frontier Studies*, Cardiff / Birmingham 1974, pp. 253-254. See also J. A. S. Evans, "The Walls of Thessalonika," *Byzantion* 47, 1977, pp. 361-362, who argues that the walls may be even later than Vickers suggests.

¹⁸ See Paul A. Clement, "The Date of the Hexamilion," *Studies in Memory of Basil Laourdas*, Thessaloniki 1975, pp. 98-101. *Idem*, "Alaric and the Fortifications of Greece," *Ancient Macedonia* (Second International Conference August 19-24, 1973), Thessaloniki, Institute for Balkan Studies, forthcoming. *Idem* and Ann E. Beaton, "The Date of the Destruction of the Sanctuary of Poseidon on the Isthmus of Corinth," *Hesperia* 45, 1976, pp. 267-279.

¹⁹ Robert L. Hohlfelder, "Trans-Isthmian Walls in the Age of Justinian," *GRBS* 18, 1977, pp. 173-179.

at Thessalonika and Nikopolis. Fortification walls similar to that at Corinth can be identified at Sparta, (Palaia) Epidauros, Korone (Petalidi), and Hermione. In the absence of other dating criteria, one may tentatively assign these structures to the same period as the wall at Corinth and suggest that this style of construction was characteristic of post-Alaric, early 5th-century fortification in southern Greece.

None of these walls, however, is known to have had a triangular tower. For a parallel to this feature of the Corinthian wall we must go farther afield to Serdica, the modern Sofia, which was apparently first fortified during the reign of Marcus Aurelius in response to the attack of the Costoboci.²⁰ Sometime later, in the middle of the 3rd or the beginning of the 4th century, the wall was rebuilt in a technique similar to that of the wall at Corinth. In the 5th century, apparently after devastation by the Huns in 441/42, the wall was rebuilt again. At this time the earlier round towers were incorporated in the new wall, but a substantial number of triangular towers were added, especially on either side of the important gates. One of these towers is preserved to nearly its full height in the underground walkway below Dondoukov Boulevard in the center of the modern city.

Apparently the wall at Corinth did not maintain its original height for long, since the facing walls began to serve as quarries for local builders. This was the conclusion of the excavators from examination of a section far to the north of the tower where the facing wall "must have disappeared very early, for there is no trace of its preservation in the wall of the trench."

At some later period the wall was reconditioned and again put into service. The workmen dug down to the original foundations and, as we have seen, remodeled the tower to suit the requirements of contemporary military taste. In addition, the robbed-out stone face was replaced in at least one section and in another a whole new structure was raised on the foundations of the earlier wall. Unfortunately, there is no archaeological evidence to suggest a date for this repair. It is tempting to connect it with the efforts of Justinian, although the text of Procopius often cited in this connection actually argues against such an interpretation. In the *de aedificiis* (IV. 2.27) Procopius says specifically that the wall at Corinth was in disrepair because of an earthquake and that the emperor decided to fortify the Isthmus rather than each individual city in the Peloponnesos.

A hoard of some 742 small coins discovered in the course of the excavation apparently sheds some light on the later history of the wall. When briefly publishing this hoard, Katherine M. Edwards noted one monogram of Baduila, a 6th-century Ostrogothic ruler, but cited 148 monograms of Anastasius (491-518) as evidence that the hoard was deposited during the reign of the latter. Bone fragments, perhaps of a skull, were found with the coins and from this Edwards concluded that "this is

²⁰ *Serdica, matériaux et recherches archéologiques* I, Sofia 1964, plate I. Stefan Boyadshijev, "Prinos kjm istorijata no krepostnata stena na Serdika," *Archeologija* 1/3-4, 1959, pp. 34-45, fig. 8. Towers nos. 2, 5, 7, and 12 are triangular.

not a hoard of savings but that the owner of the money, trying to escape from one of the earthquakes which devastated Corinth during this period, lost his life just after he had got safely out of the city: perhaps the wall fell on him.”²¹

The study of imperial monograms and the publication of other hoards from this period, however, necessitates some reconsideration of this evidence. In the first place E. C. Dodd has shown that one of the monograms assigned to Anastasius should be read as that of Justin.²² Secondly, another of the monograms can, with equal likelihood, be assigned either to Anastasius or to Justinian.²³ This is not the place to attempt a full discussion of this particular hoard, but the evidence does suggest that the date of its deposit was either during the reign of Justin I or, more probably, during that of Justinian.²⁴

In addition, the high level of the deposit (only 0.3 m. below the modern surface and within the area turned over in plowing) deprives it of any stratigraphic context and there is no good reason to associate it with the pieces of bone found near by. As mentioned above, the area of the excavation is filled with burials, and the fragments of bone are probably to be explained in this way rather than by the more dramatic reconstruction suggested previously. It is, of course, possible that the deposit of the hoard was connected with an earthquake (perhaps that of 551), but it need have no direct relationship with the history of the wall and its later rebuilding. Probably

²¹ “Report on the Coins found in the Excavations at Corinth during the Years 1930-1935,” *Hesperia* 6, 1937, pp. 248-249. The coin of Baduila is termed an “intruder”.

²² E. C. Dodd, *Byzantine Silver Stamps*, Washington 1961, pp. 13-14. It is true that Dodd identifies this monogram as that of Justin II, but the composition of the hoard suggests that Justin I be represented and he was probably the originator of the monogram.

²³ See Howard L. Adelson and George L. Kustas, “A Sixth-Century Hoard of Minimi from the Western Peloponnese,” *ANSMN* 11, 1964, pp. 159-205, esp. pp. 167-168.

²⁴ The hoard is not in good condition and it has suffered since its excavation: several of the coins have disintegrated including unfortunately that of Baduila. It would, however, repay further numismatic study and analysis. What follows is merely a summary of those coins which had originally been attributed to Anastasius (the numbers refer to those which are used for the records in the museum in Corinth; figures Z1, Z3, Z4 refer to designations by Adelson and Kustas, footnote 23 above).

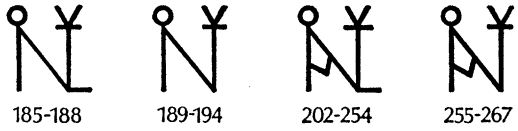
#185-188	Justin I	= Z3	
#189-194	Justin I	= Z1	
#195-201	Justin I, indeterminate monogram		
#202-254	Anastasius or Justinian	= Z1	
#255-267	Anastasius or Justinian	= Z4	
#268-312	Anastasius or Justinian, indeterminate monogram (however, all appear to be Z1 or Z4)		
#313-327	Anastasius, Justin I, or Justinian, indeterminate monogram		

FIG. 3. Coin monograms.

While it is possible that the monograms assigned to Justin I might represent Justin II (see footnote 22 above), it should be noted that the hoard contained none of the more common monograms of Justinian, which were presumably struck later in his reign. This suggests that the hoard was deposited early in his reign.

the rebuilding occurred in the time of Justinian or later, but we cannot say more than that.

Nowhere does the Late Roman wall at Corinth stand above the ground for any appreciable distance; the neat rectangular blocks of the facing wall were too much of a temptation for generations of Corinthians. Nevertheless, it is possible to trace the course that the wall took through most of its length. Stones from the wall lie scattered here and there around the city and the cement-and-rubble core has proved to be remarkably durable, in part because of its strength but also because it was less useful to later builders.

Immediately south of the excavation, for example, the course of the wall may easily be traced as a boundary between the fields. The structure is not visible above the ground, but since the cement core lies just below the surface the farmers have left a clearly defined unplowed strip which is further delineated by a row of recently planted olive trees (Pl. 77: b). About 50 meters south of the tower the fields are littered with large blocks, some with traces of cement still adhering to them, and a short distance farther on the wall begins to make a slight curve to the west (Fig. 1). This turning becomes more pronounced and at approximately 155 meters south of the tower the cement-and-rubble core is visible just above the ground. At this point the core, naturally minus the facing blocks, appears to be just under a meter in width, although deterioration of the structure may be the reason for this. After some 15 meters the wall again disappears, but it is easy to follow the course as it straightens out and follows a cart track until it meets the modern road to Argos. This road approximates the route of the ancient thoroughfare, which left the city through the Southeast Gate in the classical circuit, some 500 meters further on. The large amount of rubble in the area north of the modern road suggests that the Late Roman wall had a gate in this area. Across the road farther south, however, there is no trace of the wall and a single large block, probably *in situ* until recent construction on the site, suggests that the fortification turned westward at or close to the gate.

The wall then probably ran west along or slightly above (i. e. south of) the modern road leading to the fountain of Hadji Mustafa, although no trace of it has survived for some distance. The slope is relatively steep at this point and centuries of runoff from Acrocorinth have undoubtedly combined with the search for building stones to remove all trace of the wall in this area. At a point roughly south of the Central Area, however, the wall again comes into view some 35 meters south of the road. This section, indicated by large quantities of cement and a few blocks probably *in situ*, continues westward for approximately 250 meters until it disappears in a field directly south of the Northwest Shops. Slightly farther west scattered blocks and cement suggest that the wall continued its course directly toward the fountain of Hadji Mustafa.

At this point subsequent building and habitation have made it difficult to follow the direction of the wall. Undoubtedly there was a gate here for the road leading up

to Acrocorinth, and some masonry is *in situ* higher up above the fountain, which may have formed part of the gate. Surprisingly, no trace of the wall survives farther on, either approaching Acrocorinth or continuing west along the ledge above the fountain. Instead, it is probable that the wall maintained a lower course, running approximately west along or just above the modern road.

Finally, one encounters traces of the wall at the southwestern corner of the fortified Late Roman city, approximately 1000 meters from Hadji Mustafa. The wall is represented by a concrete-and-rubble construction which runs north and south along the western edge of a small plateau overlooking the village of Agioi Anargyroi (Pl. 77: c). This is in the area of the Anaploga excavations and it is just south of manhole 12 of the Anaploga water system excavated by Henry S. Robinson in 1962-64.²⁵ This construction is preserved for over twenty meters and to a maximum height of two meters, while cut blocks with cement adhering to them lie strewn about near by. This section, however, is curiously out of line with the rest of the wall as it makes its descent along the western edge of the city.

Whether this represented an integral part of the defensive circuit or was a separate fortress located above the main wall, its function is clear: it was to serve as an upper bastion in the defense of the city and more particularly to deny an enemy access to the southern wall. This stretch of wall, lying on the slopes of Acrocorinth where an attacker would have the advantage of higher ground, must have been the most vulnerable part of the defensive works, and the best strategy was to keep an enemy from making a direct assault against it. With the suggested fortress in place at the southwest corner of the city an enemy would be prevented from reaching the south wall except by making an arduous ascent over steep and rough ground, something which was probably impossible for an army of any size. Naturally one would expect a similar bastion to have been constructed at the southeastern corner of the fortification, but, as we have seen, there is no trace of such a structure there today. The map of Corinth published by Skias in the *Πρακτικά* for 1906, however, shows an unidentified tetragonal structure in the southeastern area of the city, which was probably a bastion in the Late Roman wall designed as a parallel to that on the southwest; the autograph copy of the map describes it as a fortification wall.

From the southwest corner the fortress wall descends to the road. Some 25 meters north of this are two blocks, probably *in situ*, and after another 30 meters the great cement core emerges once again from the hillside for a distance of 10 meters. This stands to a maximum height of 1.70 m. and is approximately 2.30 m. wide. Below this stretch the wall probably continued north another 40 meters and then struck eastward 120 meters before again continuing north down a slope marked by much rubble and cement, taking advantage of a natural eminence along the way. Near the modern church of Agia Paraskevi it is impossible to follow the course of the wall exactly, but there can be no doubt that it passed near by and there was probably a

²⁵ *Hesperia* 38, 1969, p. 2, fig. 1.

gate for the road to Sikyon at this point. The wall then continues in a nearly straight line directly north across the central plateau of the city to a point on the cliff east of Cheliotomylos Hill. A modern rectangular cistern along the way may rest on the foundations of one of the towers (Pl. 77: d).

This represents the northernmost extension of the wall, which turns east at this point, probably striking out in a straight line rather than following the edge of the cliff. There is no certain evidence for such a course, but a line drawn east from the place where the wall reaches the cliff runs directly into the so-called Epistyle or Gymnasium Wall, known from excavations in 1896 and 1966-1970.²⁶

This section of wall differs slightly from what we have been examining, both in style of construction and apparently in date. In the first place, it is much wider, some 8 meters across, and no cement was used in the fill, which consisted in part of large numbers of column drums, apparently rolled there from a nearby building. The chronology of this wall has not been firmly established and several building stages are probably represented, one perhaps as early as the 1st century after Christ. However, a hoard discovered on an exterior projection of the wall strongly suggests that it stood in more or less its final form before the Visigothic sack of the city in A.D. 396.²⁷ Thus, the Epistyle Wall was constructed some short time before the rest of the circuit. Such a situation is unusual since sections of a defensive wall are unlikely to have been built as isolated units; they are valuable only as components of the whole. In this case, however, it can be argued that the Epistyle Wall was constructed as a barricade to slow the charge of an enemy advancing up the natural slope by the Fountain of the Lamps just below the wall. Earlier structures and foundations were plentiful in the vicinity and the barrier might well have been erected quickly just before the arrival of the Visigoths. Later on, when it was determined to enclose the city within a defensive wall, the architects simply incorporated the Epistyle Wall into the new structure. If this was the case, we have further evidence about the demise of the wall as a useful defense, since (as in the eastern area) excavation in this area shows the same robbing-out of the stones followed by the collapse of the wall in a 6th-century earthquake.²⁸

From the area of the Epistyle Wall the Late Roman fortification continued eastward; whether this was directly along the cliff overlooking the plain or whether it ran slightly farther south is impossible to say. Nor can we be certain how far east it went before turning south once again. This whole area has been subject to violent erosion and the stones of the wall are nowhere to be seen. Midway along the northern wall, however, there must have been an important gate, probably to be located where

²⁶ This wall was first investigated by Rufus B. Richardson (*AJA* 1, 1897, pp. 457-458), then by William B. Dinsmoor in 1911 (*Hesperia*, Suppl. VIII, 1949, pp. 104-115), and most recently by James R. Wiseman, *Hesperia* 36, 1967, pp. 410-412; 38, 1969, pp. 87-92; and 41, 1972, pp. 5-7.

²⁷ The hoard is mentioned in *Hesperia* 38, 1969, p. 92, pl. 29: b. It is to be fully published by James A. Dengage.

²⁸ Wiseman, *Hesperia* 41, 1972, p. 71.

the old road to Lechaion still winds its way through the cliff.²⁹ As a possibility, we may suggest that the Late Roman wall followed a line which was later taken by the Venetian fortifications around the city.³⁰ Indeed, these may well have taken advantage of the ruins of the Late Roman foundations and been built directly above them. South from the sea the Venetians constructed a series of earth forts which reached the city just at the point where the Late Roman wall met the cliff east of Cheliotomylos. From there the Venetian fortification ran eastward along the lower cliff above the Baths of Aphrodite, where it is still visible today, until it reached the powerful bastion which stands to the west of the great early Christian basilica excavated by Stikas in 1953. The Venetian rampart probably continued east for a short distance and there are possible traces of Late Roman construction north of the modern church of Agia Anna. Soon, however, both walls seem to have turned southward until they reached the upper plateau. The Venetian structure then moved southeastward to the great earth fort near the Southeast Gate, while the Late Roman wall struck a slightly different course.

At a point on the upper plateau northwest of the Roman amphitheater, we are once again able to trace the ruins of the Late Roman wall with some degree of certainty. From the cliff it moves directly southward; at one point along the way excavation for irrigation pipes has revealed part of the wall preserved in one or two courses. As the wall approaches the modern Kenchrean road, over 300 meters south of the cliff, it makes a turn to the east of some 50 meters before continuing south once again. Rubble lies thickly scattered throughout the area, on either side of the road, probably representing a monumental gate.³¹ In this area the mound of rubble and cement is considerable and spread in a notable "hump" about 10 meters wide. Perhaps the wall at this point was extraordinarily strong or monumentally decorated. Just south of the road are the remains of a structure which probably formed part of the gate (Pl. 78: a). Running north and south, perpendicular to the road, is a platform of cut stones set in mortar, almost one meter wide and over twelve meters long. Along the western edge of the platform are what appear to be rectangular piers, *ca.* 1.25 m. long, 0.80 m. wide, and surviving to a height of *ca.* 0.40 m. At the edge of the platform nearest the road is a large piece of fallen masonry suggesting that the structure originally stood to some height. All of this is built in much the same technique as the rest of the wall and, even in its ruinous state, it reveals the monumentality of the wall and the concern that its builders had for decoration and appearance.

About 120 meters south of the modern road the wall makes a sharp turn, goes west for *ca.* 70 meters, and then turns south once again. Some 50 meters after this turn the wall enters the excavated area, and at 68 meters it reaches the triangular tower.

²⁹ See the discussion in Carpenter and Bon, *Corinth* III, ii, pp. 58-64. Since the roadway through the Isthmian Gate seems to have gone out of use before the Late Roman wall was built (*ibid.*, p. 124), it is difficult to know how traffic moved in this part of the city in late antiquity.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 153-154, 268-271, figs. 96-97, 219-220. Cf. Skias' map mentioned in footnote 1.

³¹ Carpenter, *ibid.*, p. 56, suggests that the road to Kenchreai ran directly toward the Central Area once inside the gate, rather than following the course of the modern road.

Probably the most striking observation about the course of the Late Roman wall is its size and relationship to the classical wall. Although at times the Late Roman fortification runs close to its predecessor, it is never (so far as one can tell—the northern face would be the only opportunity for an exception) built on the foundations of the earlier wall and it encloses an area which is considerably smaller. One of the main reasons for this reduced circuit was undoubtedly that it would thus be easier to man and defend. Nevertheless, caution should be exercised in drawing any direct correlations between the area enclosed within the walls and population size. The fortified area within the classical city was immense, and responsible authorities have always argued that this allowed “no inferences . . . as to the population of ancient Corinth.”³² This would seem to be all the more the case in the Late Roman period, for there is good evidence of heavy habitation in the area of Corinth outside the wall. Ceramic evidence, in particular, suggests that the area east of the wall was inhabited throughout this period, while the three largest and most lavish churches built in Corinth before the Slavic incursions were located in suburbs outside the protection of the wall.

This evidence suggests that the Late Roman fortification at Corinth served two important functions. One of these was to provide protection for the civic and governmental center. The city was, of course, the residence of the governor of the province of Achaia and it was natural that the central part of the city, which must have housed the offices and government bureaus, be fortified. Some of the houses of the people of Corinth were included within the defensive circuit, which is considerably larger than any of the other known later Roman fortifications in southern Greece. The wall, however, must have served a second function in providing a place of refuge for those many Corinthians who lived outside the fortification.

Corinth has, of course, a natural bastion on Acrocorinth and a surprising conclusion of this study is that the new walls did not connect directly with the upper fortress, as they had in the classical period. Because of the poor preservation of the southern portion of the Late Roman wall, it is remotely possible that some stretch of wall connected the two fortresses and that all trace of it has vanished. Repeated investigation of this area, however, has revealed absolutely no evidence of such a connection. The early Byzantine fortifications on Acrocorinth cannot be dated with precision, but none of them employs the same technique as that used in the lower walls, and it may be tentatively suggested that they date not from the early 5th century, but from the age of Justinian or probably even later, when barbarian invasion had become endemic and the nature of the threat had changed considerably.³³ This is not

³² Carpenter and Bon, *Corinth* III, ii, p. 80.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 128-130, 272-274, where the earliest post-classical fortification on Acrocorinth is hesitatingly described as Justinianic. Cf. R. G. Goodchild and J. B. Ward-Perkins, “The Roman and Byzantine Defenses of Lepcis Magna,” *Papers of the British School at Rome* 21 (n. s. 8) 1953, pp. 42-73, where the Late Roman (3rd-4th century) wall was faced, with a rubble core, while the smaller Justinianic fortress was solid, built out of blocks on a concrete foundation.

to suggest that Acrocorinth was ignored in the defensive planning of the 5th century, but it probably held only a secondary place in importance. At this period the threat was, probably correctly, viewed as only a temporary one which might be successfully deterred by a defensive circuit around the lower city. Barbarian invasions were a serious concern and the sack of Corinth and other cities by the Visigoths must have been a severe shock to contemporary Greek society. But such incursions were relatively infrequent. The last barbarians to reach Greece before Alaric had come and gone 130 years earlier and southern Greece was to be spared a repetition for nearly two centuries afterward.

Such an argument, however, should not be pushed too far: obviously it mattered which buildings were enclosed within the wall and which were left outside. As mentioned earlier, it is significant that the amphitheater was not brought within the circuit. Another example is the Roman villa discovered during the excavations at Anaploga in the early 1960's. This building was destroyed in the latter part of the 4th century, either by the earthquakes or by Alaric.³⁴ When the Late Roman wall was constructed it ran a short distance to the east of the villa, leaving it unprotected outside. Significantly, the villa was never rebuilt.

Chance finds and excavation over many years have provided a relatively complete picture of the various areas used for burial in and around Corinth in different periods. In the Late Roman (or Early Christian) era at least seven areas can be identified as cemeteries, or at least as places where a large number of graves have been found. These are the area of the Demeter sanctuary on Acrocorinth, the vicinity of Hadji Mustafa fountain, Anaploga, Cheliotomylos along the limit of the National Road, Lerna Spring north of the Gymnasium, the area around the Stikas basilica, and the cemetery at the Kraneion basilica. All of these areas were located outside the Late Roman wall, and several of them (Hadji Mustafa, Anaploga, Cheliotomylos, Lerna, Stikas basilica) were directly outside. This may have been the result of the location of important Christian churches outside the walls, but such an observation will not explain all of the examples. For whatever reason, the residents of Late Roman Corinth preferred to bury their dead outside the walls of the city and in this regard the fortification may have ultimately been more important in the topographical development of the city than it was as a means of defense.³⁵

In summary, the excavation of 1930 and topographical study in recent years have revealed the nature and the extent of the Late Roman fortifications at Corinth. The main wall was apparently *ca.* 3 meters in width and it was constructed with two parallel faces of coursed rectangular blocks set in mortar and a hard mortar-and-rubble filling. Only one tower is known, although the wall undoubtedly possessed many others. That tower was triangular. The wall more or less followed the shape

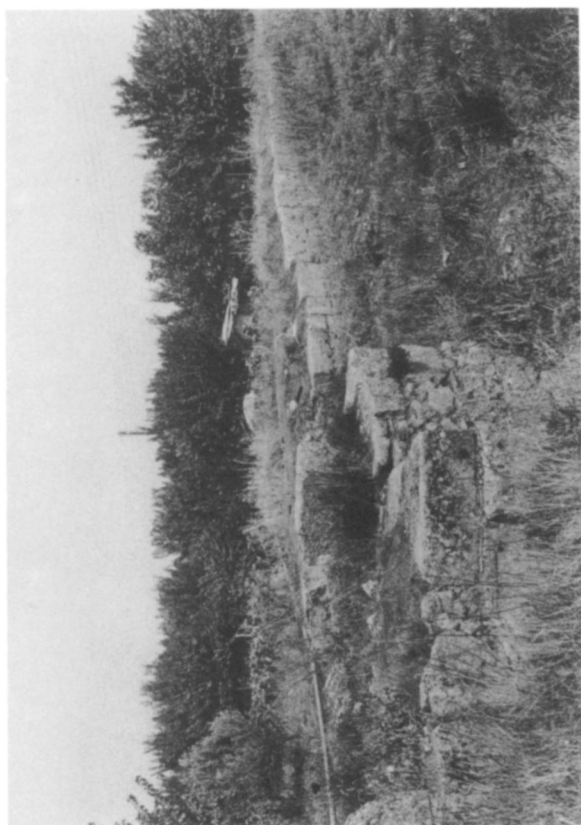
³⁴ Stella Grobel Miller, *Hesperia* 41, 1972, p. 333 and note 6.

³⁵ For a discussion of Late Roman walls and the variety of functions they might serve see Dietrich Claude, *Die byzantinische Stadt im 6. Jahrhundert*, *Byzantisches Archiv* 13, Munich 1969, pp. 15-41, especially p. 41.

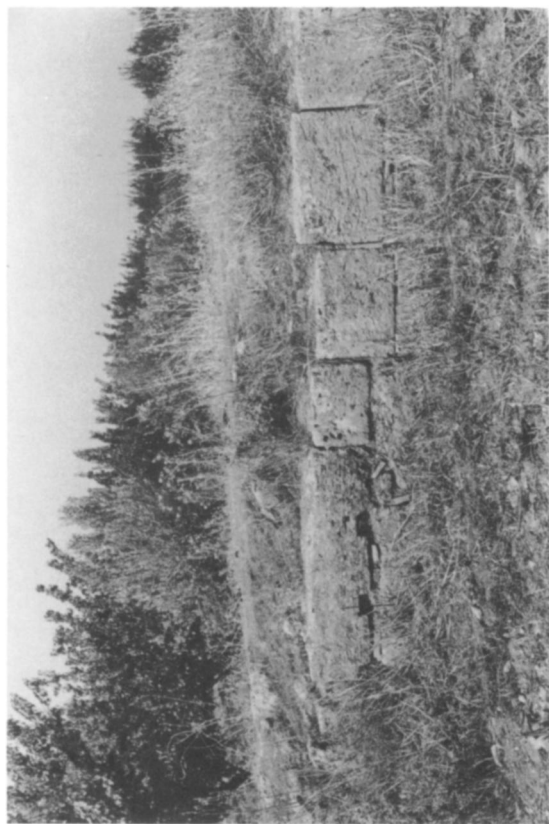
of the classical circuit, except that it was considerably smaller and it never included the fortress of Acrocorinth within the defenses. The wall was constructed in the early years of the 5th century, undoubtedly as a reaction to the sack of the city by Alaric in A.D. 396. Probably within the 5th century the wall had gone out of service and its facing blocks were being plundered for building material. At some later date the wall was reconditioned and the triangular tower assumed its present rectangular shape. About this later history of the wall, and whether it ever served its intended function of defending the city against barbarian attack, there is no evidence.

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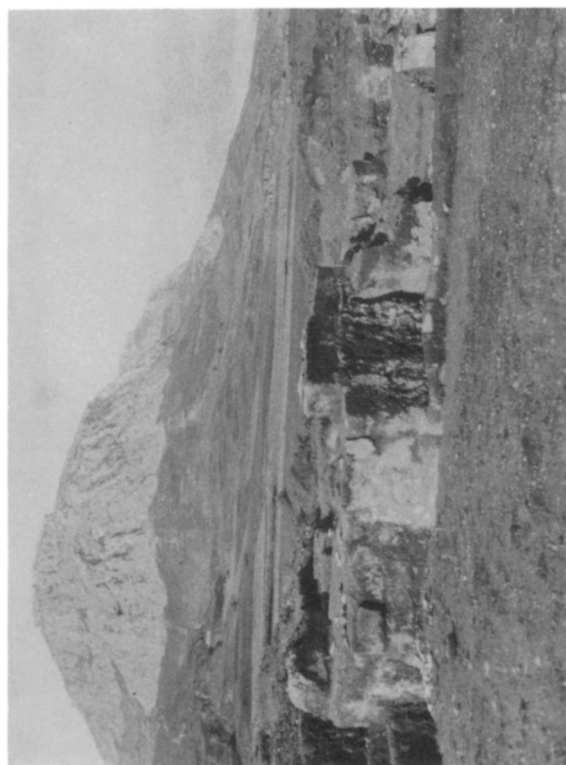
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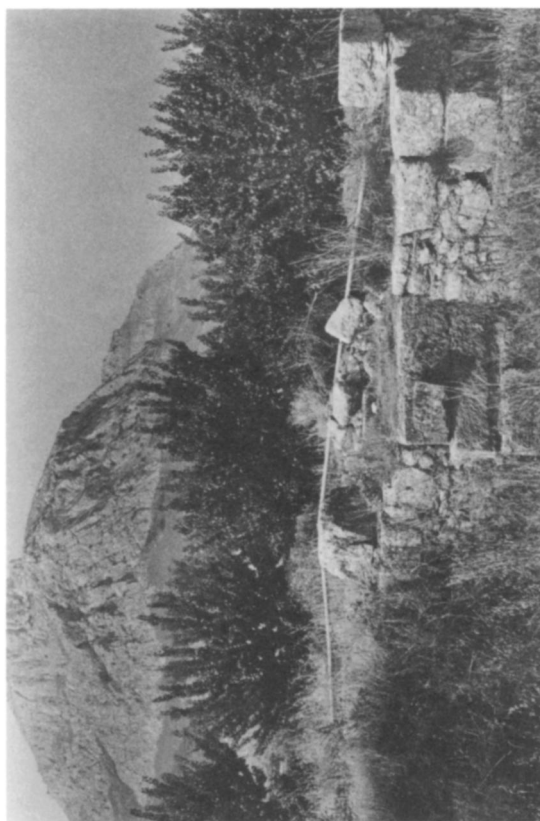
a. East wall and tower



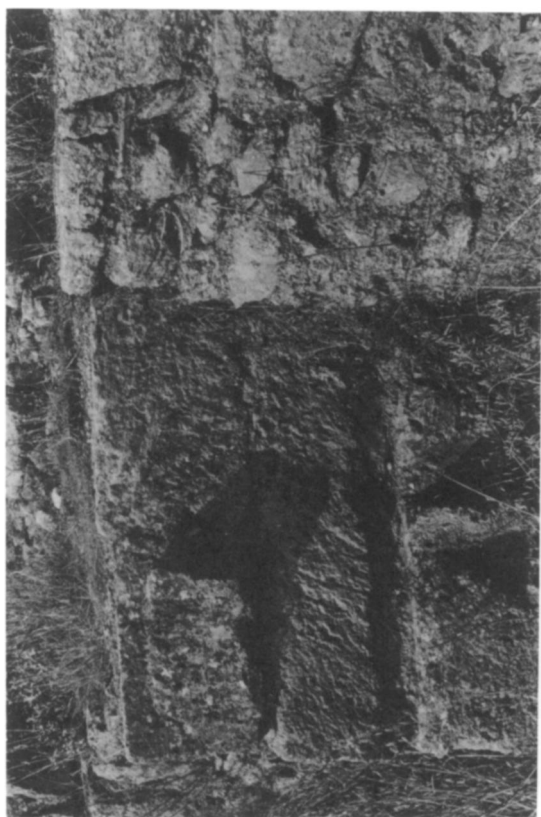
b. East wall north of tower



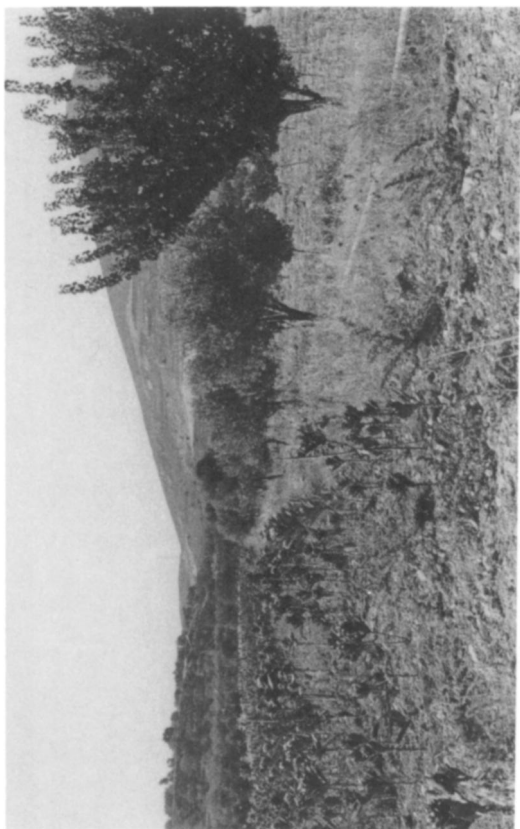
c. Tower in east wall (1930)



d. Tower in east wall (1977)



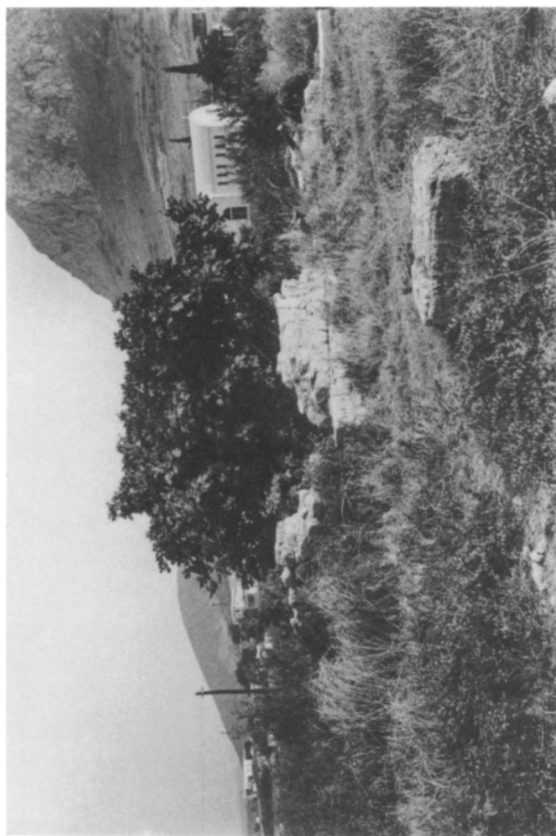
a. Tower in east wall, triangular projection



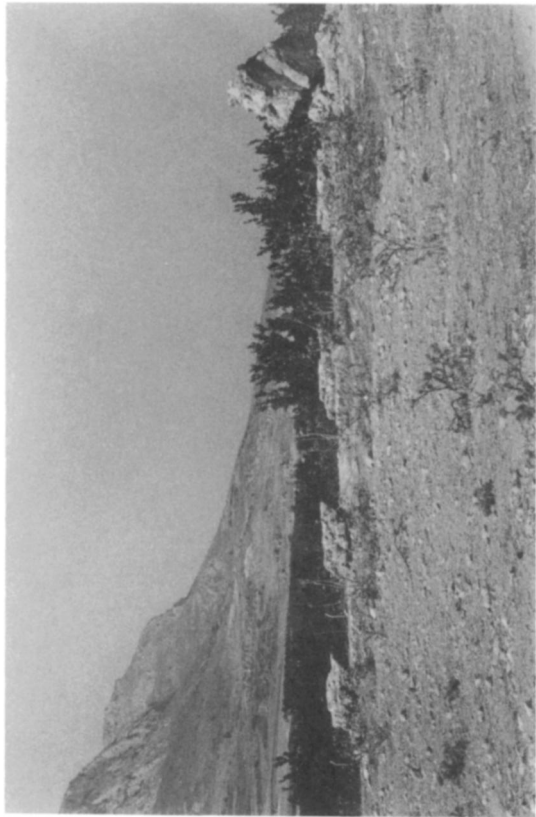
b. Line of east wall south of excavation



c. Southwestern corner of fortification wall



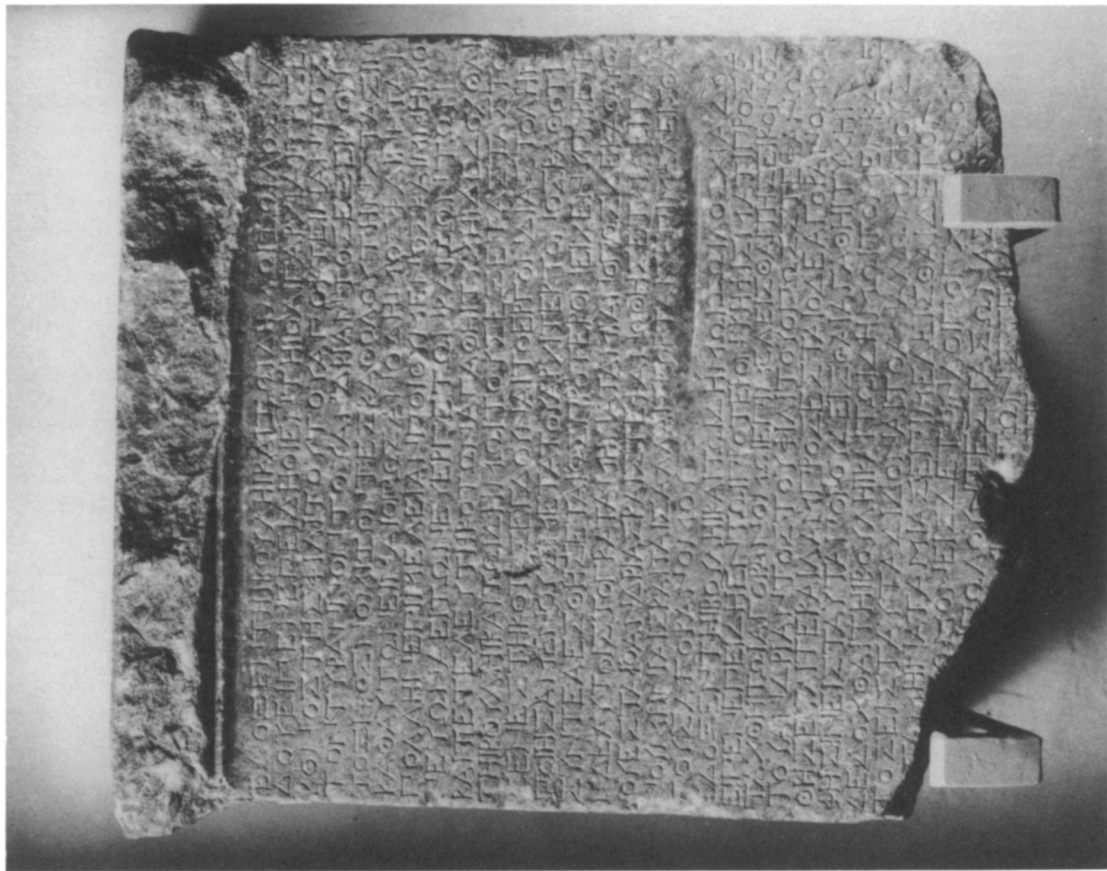
d. Modern cistern possibly on tower foundation



a. Kenchreai gate



b. Corinth 1930: Dorothy K. Hill and George Deleas, foreman



A. J. HEISSERER: THE PHILITES STELE (SIG³ 248=JEK 503)

TIMOTHY E. GREGORY: THE LATE ROMAN WALL AT CORINTH