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LECHAION, WESTERN PORT OF CORINTH: A PRELIMINARY ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY

Summary *Lechaion was the western port of the prosperous city of Corinth, and thus much of the Corinthia, Argolid and Peloponnesos. The position of Lechaion ensured that the port was used for traffic with the western Mediterranean as well as central Greece. Lechaion was separated from the city by agricultural land, but remained a dependent entity; in the classical period the port was connected to the city by long walls. The port contained an outer and inner harbor with a combined area of approximately 150,000 m^2 The outer harbor works consisted of two large moles; the inner harbor was artificially excavated. Multiple periods of construction are suggested by the archaeological remains. The construction phases of the harbor may be related to the expansive economic activity in Corinth at the beginning of the sixth century B.C., c. A.D. 45, and perhaps again c. A.D. 355.*

Corinth was the crossroads of Greece. Land travel from northern and central Greece came through her, and her harbors, combined with the *diolkos* (a causeway for the overland transport of ships across the Isthmus from the Saronic Gulf to the Gulf of Corinth), were a transit point for sea travel (cf. Dio Chrys. 8.4; Thuc. 1.13.5; Sanders and Whitebread 1990). Corinth was, therefore, a vital military and economic nexus for Greece well into the modern period. While the city of Corinth has received much attention, and her eastern harbor, Kenchreai (on the Saronic Gulf), has been excavated and published (if not fully studied), the western harbor of Lechaion (on the Gulf of Corinth) remains unexcavated and largely unstudied (Shaw 1972, 96; Wiseman 1978, 87–8). While the evidence at present is insufficient to provide any synthetic study of the harbor or to support any broad historical analysis, it is not negligible.

M.I. Finley (Finley 1985, 194) has remarked: 'The still prevalent antiquarian procedure of listing all known discrete "facts" is no method at all.' While in full agreement with his *dictum*, I offer this compendium of data, with some trepidation, in the hope that it might be a useful basis to less 'antiquarian' studies. Certainly a more thorough archaeological investigation would be preferable and is called for, but as such work will not be accomplished, much less published, any time soon, it seems best to summarise the present state of knowledge. Figure 1 is a representation of the harbor based on Paris's 1915 plan and my personal observations. Unlike Paris, I have

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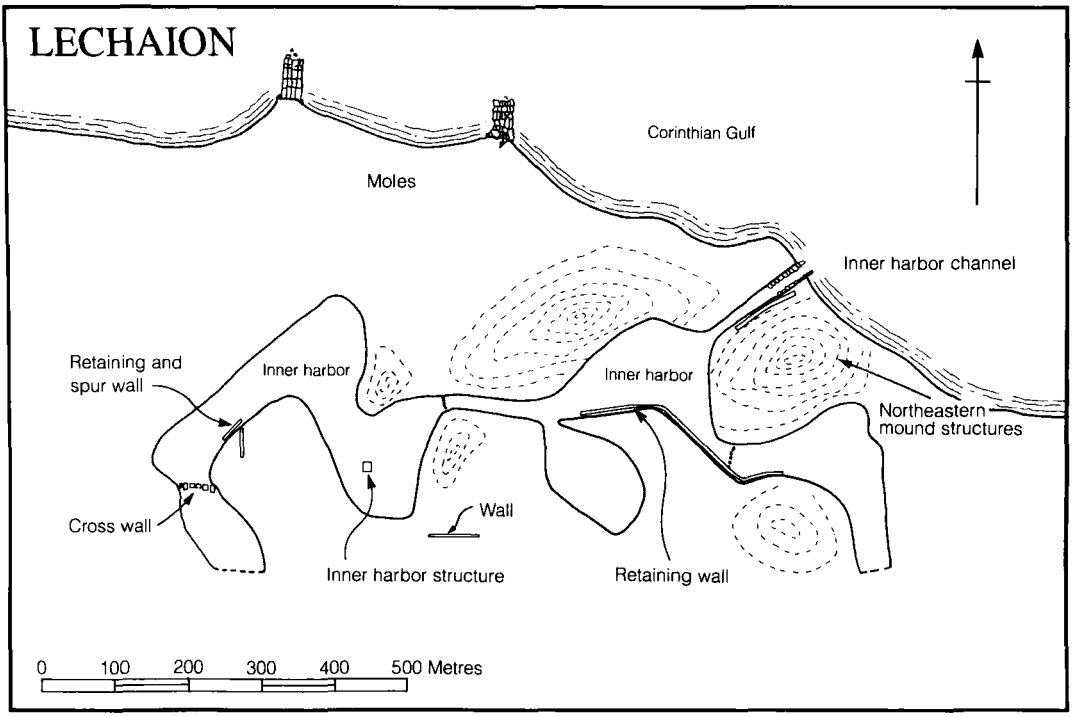

Figure 1
The harbour area of Lechaion (based on Paris 1915 and author's observations)

included only attested features in the plan. The structures atop the most northeastern mound, the moles of the outer harbor, and the structure in the middle of the inner harbor have been measured with varying degrees of accuracy. All other structures appear with reasonable, but not exact, locations and dimensions.

Lechaion, located about 3 kilometers north of Corinth, served as the city's permanent harbor. In addition to her connection to all western ports of call, Lechaion played an important role in the transport of goods to central Greece. The land journey through Megara was long and difficult; the transport of goods by this route would have been prohibitvely expensive. From Lechaion, transport by water to central Greece was relatively simple. In 345–343 B.C. 'poros' stone (a local limestone conglomerate) was exported from Corinth to Delphi. The easiest route was to transport the stone by ship from Lechaion to Krissa, the port of Delphi, and the shipments by water are epigraphically attested (*Fouilles de Delphes* 3.5, no. 23, col. 2, ll. 66–68, no. 25, col. 3C, ll. 10–12, no. 27. col. 1, ll. 7–8, 17–18; Bousquet 1989, nos. 34 (*FD* 23), 59 (*FD*27); cf. no. 31, ll. 20–21). Lechaion's role was not simply to connect Corinth with the western Mediterranean, but also with central and northwestern Greece.

There is no evidence for prehistoric use at Lechaion, and Archaic activity is indicated only by some late (6th century) graves in the region (Eliot 1968). Classical and Hellenistic references to Lechaion are frequent, and Roman and Byzantine sherds near the harbor works demonstrate continued activity in these periods. Wiseman (1978, 88) remarks that a

high percentage of surface sherds date to the first two centuries after Christ. Without a systematic study this can neither be conclusively confirmed nor denied, but the quantities of late Roman and Byzantine coarseware sherds are large, especially between the inner harbor and the coastline. The harbor remained in at least occasional use through the early modern period (cf. Blaquiere 1832, 66), although by this period the trade routes had shifted (cf. Abu-Lughod 1989, 123, 139–40). The harbor, in all probability, was in continual use from the prehistoric to the early modern period, even though the intensity of usage must have fluctuated. In more recent years, the region, now referred to by locals as *Vounolakia* (the hills), a reference to the mounds of sand and pebbles left from ancient harbor dredging, has been largely abandoned. Lechaion is now a bathing spot and recreational area, and Gypsies inhabit it seasonally.

The present topography of Lechaion is, for the most part, a result of ancient harbor construction. At some uncertain period, a marshy area just south of the shoreline was dredged, creating the great mounds of sand and pebble that remain today. These mounds, with elevations in 1907 ranging from 17.5 m (easternmost mound) to 6.5 m (westernmost mound), probably do not represent one single activity, but rather the continuous dredging that would have been necessary to keep the inner harbor clear (cf. Wiseman 1978). This inner harbor formed a *cothon*, an artificially excavated harbor. While such harbors are well-known from Phoenicia, Lechaion is the only *cothon* of the Greek world (Blackman 1982a, 93–4). In its latest form, a narrow channel at the east connected the inner harbor to the Corinthian gulf, and this would have been the obvious arrangement in all periods of use. Paris (1915, 8) and Georgiades (1907) hypothesise another entrance to the inner harbor; while possible, this is not evidenced. The inner harbor was provided with berths, ship houses and other support facilities, but, barring one enigmatic structure and one wall mentioned below, these have not been detected at the present time. Paris (1915, 9) estimates the area of the inner harbor at 100,000 m^2 and the outer at 50,000 m^2; these figures seem correct, but are only estimates, especially for the outer harbor. (cf. Engels 1991, 214 n. 72).

The remains of the harbor works visible today include the two moles or quays that form the outer harbor, and the stone-lined channel from shore to inner harbor. The moles of the outer harbor are constructed of large 'poros' stones laid in rows; these stones range in dimension from 1.9 × 0.9 × 0.4 m to 0.5 × 0.4 m × 0.25 m (Paris 1915, 10). As Paris (1915, 11) noted, there is a substance between some of the stones that appears to be mortar, but more probably is a natural conglomeration; further analysis is needed for positive identification. The upper preserved surface of these moles is near modern day sea level. This surface shows no evidence of any specific construction or functional features and represents a foundation; it was possible in all periods of antiquity to lay foundations under water. One might compare the preserved features to the similar (late antique or mediaeval) construction at Anthedon (Blackman 1973, 124), on the north coast of Boeotia. In analogy to this structure, which preserves only a foundation course but with cuttings evidencing another course upon it, we might assume that the moles of Lechaion were elevated perhaps an additional meter above their present height.

The outer harbor is at present extremely shallow, maintaining a depth of approximately 1–2 m well beyond the preserved end of the moles. A greater depth should be assumed for antiquity. The harbor seems to be a closed basin with no outlet for sediment, and presumably had to be dredged in antiquity

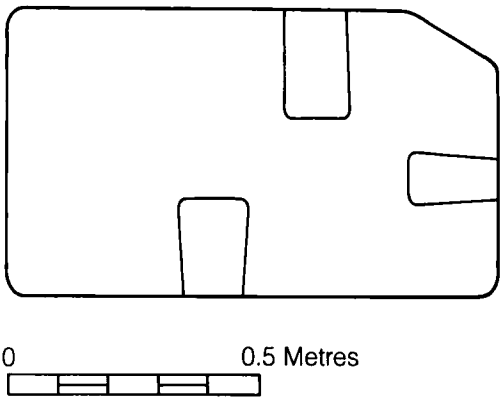

Figure 2
Block with butterfly clamp cuttings, on shore line east of western mole.

(Oleson 1988, 148–51). The specific sedimentary processes cannot be determined without further investigation, but the general process is clear. The shore and the area near the shore line are composed primarily of coarse materials, mostly water-washed stones of various small sizes. Beyond the shoreline the bed is almost exclusively fine material, predominately sand. Alluviation does not seem to be a factor in the area of the harbor. In late spring and late summer, storms are known to push massive amounts of coarse pebbly material up onto the shore, forming small mounds and ridges along the shoreline. This indicates sedimentation by wave action or perhaps wave-induced currents (Evans 1973, 99). Episodic uplift has also contributed to the shallowness of the harbor.

The initial construction date of the moles remains uncertain. The style of construction is not dissimilar to that of the *diolkos*, constructed c. 600 B.C., but given the simplicity of the structures, this similarity may be meaningless. Moreover, our knowledge of Greek harbor construction remains fairly limited, and thus we have very limited comparanda (Blackman 1982a, 80–82). A block not *in situ*, but just east of the western mole, along the shore line, preserves three large butterfly clamp cuttings (Figure 2). Another block along this mole, again not *in situ*, preserves two butterfly clamp cuttings. The clamp cuttings are gently shaped, with a difference in width between end and center of only 0.01 to 0.03 m. The remains of what may be an iron clamp, still attached to a block, have also been noted in the western mole.

The eastern mole is of the same construction as the west, although no blocks with clamp cuttings have been identified. Where the mole meets the present shoreline there are the remains of a rubble and cement construction. This presumably represents a building phase later than the initial construction of the mole, and by its nature must be Roman or later. Most likely these are the remains of some late repair or building sequence along the mole, perhaps undertaken after much of the mole had been dislodged. Other remains include the scrappy remains of a cemented structure at the south end of the eastern mole.

Kenchreai also has such clamp cuttings in a section of the mole underneath the so-called Isaeum (Scranton 1978, 44). A wooden clamp, still preserved at the time of excavation, joined two blocks in this mole. Butterfly clamp cuttings are also known from the enigmatic structure at the center of the inner harbor of Lechaion, which has been tentatively dated to the second or third century of our era (Shaw 1969). The section of pavement uncovered at Kenchreai must date to the second century A.D. or before. C.K. Williams II (1993, 46n. 26) has proposed, from evidence at Corinth, that swallowtail cuttings in 'poros' date generally to the Julio-Claudian period. Given the evidence from Corinth and Kenchreai, it seems certain that the blocks with swallow-tail cuttings, and thus the structure in the inner harbor are Roman, and date to sometime in or before the second century. Most probably they can be assigned to the Julio-Claudian

period. While this provides a date for the inner-harbor structure, it cannot, unfortunately, date the initial construction of the moles. None of the blocks with the cuttings are *in situ*. An upper course of mole masonry at the Sidonian port of Tyre exhibits similar clamp cuttings (Savile 1941, Plate 1) and it is not unlikely that the blocks at Lechaion are from an upper course.

The channel to the inner harbor is composed of 'poros' stones similar to those of the moles, and is lacking in chronological indicators for its construction. The blocks average 1.3 × 0.65 × 0. 42 m in size (Paris 1915, 11). Flemming's (1973, 4) hypothesis that the blocks lining the inner harbor entrance demonstrate a submergence of c. 0.70 m is contradicted. The relative elevation of these and blocks and the presence of *Lithophagos* bore holes indicates uplift at a period yet undetermined. Just east of the entrance of the channel, along the modern shoreline, there is a section of masonry (not *in situ*) composed of small stone blocks cemented together. This masonry is probably the core of a Roman wall, perhaps, but not necessarily, related to the channel of the inner harbor or perhaps the eastern mole. Remains of Roman or post-Roman walls are visible in many places, most noticeably in the modern dirt road following the shoreline, especially west of the entrance to the inner harbor.

At the center of the inner harbor lie the foundations, again of 'poros' (with butterfly clamps), of a small structure, studied by J. Shaw (Shaw 1969) (Figure 3). An unfluted column of green marble was found in association with these foundations. The structure may have been used to support a light, or perhaps statues (cf. Wiseman 1978). One might wish to compare this inner harbor to the one at Cosa (Lewis 1973, 255–57). The inner harbor at Cosa was designed for use by ships with shallow draughts, presumably warships. This may also have been true for Lechaion, although the depth of the inner harbor in its functional period cannot be determined without further investigation.

On top of the northeasternmost mound of dredged material there are two small structures partially visible. The westernmost of these two structures is the largest: 3.6 m in length on its southwest-northeast axis, 3.3 m in length on its northwest-southeast axis. The edges of this structure are clearly defined. The small walls are c. 0.60 m in thickness and are constructed of small stones and tile. The date of this structure is unknown, and the area is complicated by the co-present ruins of a concreted modern structure. Nevertheless, this structure is almost certainly pre-modern and is probably Roman or Byzantine.

The easternmost structure, lying on a slightly different axis and at a slightly higher elevation than the other, is smaller, 3.6 m by 1.0 m. The edges of this structure are not well defined and without excavation the exact dimensions cannot be determined. This structure is constructed in the same manner as the westernmost structure, and the walls are c. 0.60 m in width. The function of these two structures cannot be determined by their material remains. Nevertheless, their location on the top of the tallest debris mound adjacent to the inner harbor suggests that they were small lighthouses or smoke-signaling stations.

Several retaining walls to support the sand and pebble debris mounds and keep them from spilling back into the inner harbor have been located (cf. Paris 1915, 21). These are constructed out of large stones cut from local limestone.The largest of these retaining walls still visible is along the southern edge of the inner harbor, opposite the entrance to the harbor from the Corinthian Gulf. Retaining walls have also been located along the eastern edge of the inner harbor entrance and in the western part of the inner harbor. A spur wall

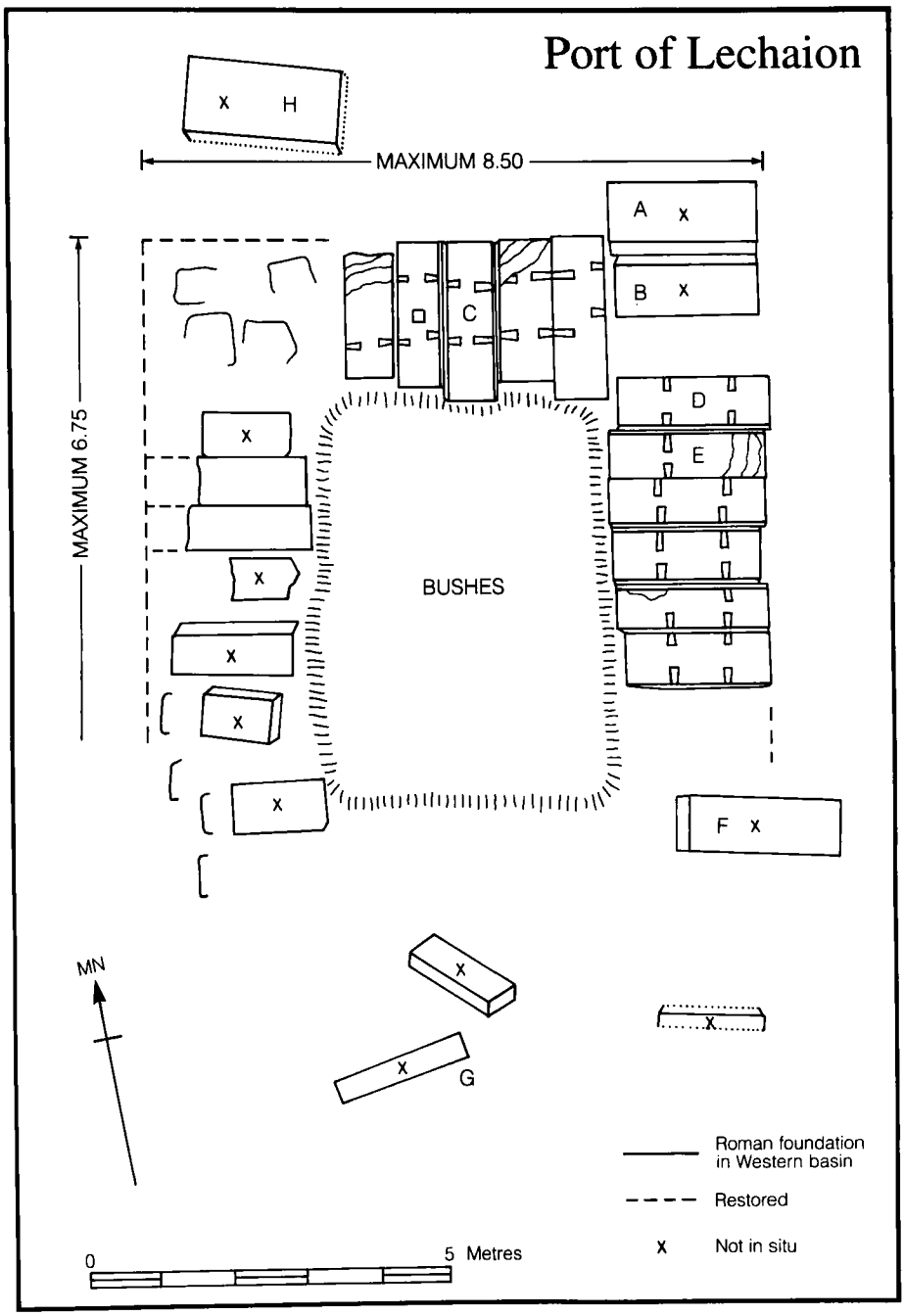

Figure 3
Small structure at center of inner harbor (after Shaw 1969).

juts to the south of the retaining wall in the western portion of the inner harbor and this may, in fact, represent a ship shed or other support building.

Three small cross 'walls' are present in the inner harbor, on the west, east and center. These 'walls' are all made of rough field stones, and none are more than one stone in width. The westernmost 'wall' is the most substantial and this may have been an effort at some period to reduce the size of the harbor. The area of the inner harbor south of this 'wall' is now used for agricultural purposes and the possibility that the 'wall' is of modern construction remains. The other two cross-walls are small and seem to be nothing more than paths made by shepherds to take the sheep across the marsh — a difficult task in the summer, much less the rainy system.

The field south of the inner harbor is full of ceramic and architectural debris. Several columns and buildings blocks have been noted, and one large wall, on an east-west axis is certain. The ceramic debris in the field is mostly Roman, predominately from the second century with limited late Roman material. There can be little doubt that massive harbor works and warehouses once stood in this region.

In summary then, Lechaion was formed by an outer harbor, edged by moles, and an inner, man-made harbor, connected to the Corinthian gulf by a stone-lined channel. A small structure, of uncertain purpose, stood in the middle of the inner harbor. Two possible light or smoke houses have been discovered, and retaining walls for the mounds are preserved in places. Debris and walls south of the inner harbor have been noted, and one of these walls is joined to a retaining wall. It seems likely that this area south of the inner harbor held the support facilities, including those directly related to the needs of maritime travel, and perhaps those designed for the leisure of the traveler.

A late Roman nymphaeum, converted at a late date to Christian use, lies just south-east of the harbor, south of the modern Corinth-Patras railway line (Philadelpheus 1918; Stikas 1957). Between the nymphaeum and the early Christian basilica (discussed below) were several structures that seem to be residential in nature, and a probable bath (Pallas 1961/62, 75–8). While the chronology of these structures remains uncertain, they seem to be late Roman. Whether these structures represent a residential suburb or support buildings for the basilica cannot be determined at this time.

The building sequence of the harbor at Lechaion cannot be established with certainty at this time. I would like, however, to associate major construction phases with two documented upsurges in trade and economic activity: the 'reigns' of Periander and Claudius.

Lechaion presumably was the harbor used as Corinthian trade expanded westward in the seventh century, and a harbor is far more necessary for cargo ships than war ships (Salmon 1984, 132–5, 140–43). Periander's intense interest in trade and shipping (Salmon 1984, 202) might lead one to hypothesise that the harbor at Lechaion was constructed in some form during this period. Salmon (1984, 134, 180; cf. Sakellariou 1971, 78) argues that sherds from the reign of Periander (c. 600 B.C.) found among the stones in the area between the inner and outer harbor provide a construction date in this period (Pallas 1961/62, 75). The sherds, in no particularly important context, only provide a *terminus post quem* for the pile of stones, and carry little weight given the continual digging in the area throughout the antiquity. A cemetery containing burials ranging from the 6th to 4th centuries B.C. has been excavated just east of the harbor, perhaps indicating the boundary of the functioning area during the Greek period (Eliot 1968). It must be noted however that work in progress by David Romano suggests

that the western long wall of the city of Corinth was farther west than previously proposed, and the Greek harbor of Lechaion could, conceivably, be in a different location than the area under discussion here. (Romano 1993, 11)

The construction of the *diolkos* is traditionally attributed to Periander (whether it was really Periander or another ruler of the period is irrelevant here). The similarities in construction style between the *diolkos* and the moles of the outer harbor have been noted, as well as the great emphasis placed on trade in this period. While there is no certainty here, I propose that the first building phase of the outer harbor moles dates to 'the reign of Periander' (*contra* Sakellariou 1971, 151; Blackman 1982a, 97n. 52). The portion of the moles now visible (seemingly the bottom course of masonry) represent this early construction phase. As the use of mortar in underwater construction is not attested before the Hellenistic period, a positive identification of mortar in these structures would immediately dissociate these structures in their present form from Periander (Raban 1980, 759–80, cf. Vitruvius 5.12.2–6). The construction of the inner harbor probably is to be associated with Periander as well, although there is no evidence for this and the inner harbor in its present form seemingly represents Roman dredging.

C.K. Williams II (Williams 1993) has recently argued that the Augustan colony of Corinth rapidly expanded its commercial and trade activity in the Claudian period. This expansion was accompanied by a dramatic increase in building activity in the city. The date of the inner harbor monument and the blocks with swallow tail cuttings found near the western mole can easily date to this period, and its seems likely (as proposed by Williams) that Lechaion underwent a major construction or renovation in this period. Kenchreai, in fact, seems to have undergone a similar development. It is easy to see Claudian officials ordering the rejuvenation and expansion of both trading ports as part of the expansion of the city. I propose that a major renovation of Lechaion took place c. A.D. 40–45. The outer harbor moles were rebuilt on top of archaic foundations, as evidenced by the miscellaneous blocks with swallowtail cuttings scattered around the moles. The monument in the inner harbor was constructed. It seems likely as well that the inner harbor was dredged or re-dredged in this period, and perhaps the masonry lining the entrance to the inner harbor and the inner harbor retaining walls can be likewise dated.

The emphasis here on two construction periods should not only be considered tentative, but must not lead to the assumption that these were the only periods of building activity. As will be shown below, literary evidence reveals substantial activities and buildings in a variety of periods, including the restoration of A.D. 353–358. The two major building phases, however, seem to have been under Periander and Claudian, and most of the visible remains appear to date to these periods. Surely there are more subtle and complicated building sequences present, but they are not discernible at this time.

Given the paucity of the material evidence, it is difficult to paint a specific picture of Lechaion. Its proximity to Corinth, and its incorporation into the Greek fortifications of that city, indicate, however, a dependent harbour rather than an independent entity or city. Its status was probably very similar to that of the Piraeus. Lechaion, however, is much closer to Corinth than Piraeus is to Athens, and there are no signs at Lechaion of any extensive building or inhabitation of the sort evidenced at Piraeus. It seems best to treat Lechaion as a dependent suburb of Corinth, perhaps self-sufficient for the daily needs of the population, but ultimately tied to and reliant upon the city (cf. Blackman 1982b, 193).

LITERARY EVIDENCE

Our knowledge of the history of Lechaion is enhanced by the literary evidence. References in the ancient literature are frequent, but generally are simple remarks of Lechaion's function as a harbor and add nothing to our knowledge. The earliest reference to the site comes in the late 6th or early 5th century B.C., but it is a mythological linking of Corinth and Lechaion under the leadership of Medea (Simonides 545, Page 1962; cf. Scholia Pindarum 13.74g. 1). One could argue, perversely I think, that this indicates the existence of two separate communities at an early point in their history, but given the unclear context of the remark and the lack of other evidence, such an argument would carry little weight.

While there must have been an active harbor in the fifth century B.C., Lechaion is undescribed in the sources. Lechaion is repeatedly mentioned for its military significance in the fourth century B.C. In 392 B.C. Corinth, recently having adopted a democratic constitution, formed an alliance with Argos against Sparta (Salmon 1984, 354–62). The disenchanted Corinthian oligarchs, many of whom were in exile, sided with Sparta and joined the Spartan garrison encamped at Sikyon. Two young aristocrats, Pasimelus and Alcimenes, conspired to gain access for Sparta into the long walls connecting Lechaion and Corinth. Thus the stage was set for a bloody series of battles near Lechaion (Xen. *Hell.* 4.4.7; cf. Diod. Sic. 14.86.1; Andoc. 3.18; Hamilton 1979, 250–1). The Spartans and their allies were admitted into the long walls, and there remained unmolested for a full day. When the Corinthians met the Spartans in battle on the second day, the slaughter carried out by the victorious Spartans was so great that Xenophon (4.4.12) speaks of the heaps of bodies as 'piles of corn' or 'stacks of stones.' The Spartans then turned on the Boetotian garrison at Lechaion and slaughtered them as well. The fighting at the harbor was fierce, and some fought from the roofs of the shipsheds and the walls. As a finale Praxitas, the Spartan commander, had part of the long walls demolished (Xen. *Hell.* 4.4.13; cf. Diod. Sic. 14.86.2–4; Salmon 1984, 362–3). Lechaion was thereafter used as a base for Spartan raids (Xen, *Hell.* 4.4.17, 4.5.19, cf. 4.8.10, 4.8.23; Aelios Aristides, *Pan.* 172.1, 286.18–22. *Tett.* 287.16).

Wiseman (1987, 95 n. 69) uses Xenophon's reference to fighting from the walls to argue that Lechaion had its own city walls. Xenophon, however, makes it quite clear that the Boeotians were seeking postitions of safety, not defensive positions. Wiseman argues that the passage makes no sense if these walls are not city walls; to the contrary, as the Boeotians are seeking refuge, the long walls will serve as well as any. I see no evidence that Lechaion had its own fortification wall beyond the long walls.

The Spartans saw defeat as well at Lechaion in 391 and 390 B.C. While the details are unclear, some time in 391 the Athenians captured the long walls and repaired the damage done by the Spartans in 392. Presumably the Athenians took Lechaion at the same time as the long walls. The Spartans, however, recaptured the long walls and Lechaion that same year (Xen. *Hell.* 4.4.18–19; cf. Hamilton 1979, 251 n. 52). In 390 B.C. the Spartan soldiers from Amyklai, all of whom were stationed at Lechaion, wished to return home and celebrate the Hyacinthia. As the feast day approached, the Spartan commander left the allies to guard the long walls and, taking the hoplites and cavalry, escorted the Amykalians past the city of Corinth. As the Spartan escort returned, the Corinthians set upon them with peltasts. The wounded were taken back to Lechaion, but as the battle

continued the Spartan losses mounted. Finally the Spartan commander gathered his forces on a hill about two miles west of Lechaion, and the men in Lechaion sailed out to help them. All to no avail, for about 250 men, virtually the entire Spartan force, were killed. Nevertheless, the Spartans retained Lechaion through the early 380's (Xen. *Hell.* 4.5.11–18, 5.1.29; cf. Diod. Sic. 14.91.2–3; Salmon 1984, 178).

These events can be gleaned for some information about the harbor at Lechaion. A reference to shipsheds gives us a glimpse of the harbor, confirming what we would have suspected: standard harbor works with sheds to protect ships. More important than this confirmation of the obvious, however, is the relationship of the Lechaion to Corinth exhibited by these events. Lechaion becomes a pawn in the military struggles over Corinth. Corinth herself remained largely secure, but the long walls connecting the city to Lechaion were breached, and the enemy was able to come into possession of the harbor. To risk an *argumentum e silentio*, Lechaion never appears as an independent enemy, but always as a fortification of Corinth. She is connected to Corinth by walls and attacked when Corinth herself cannot be assaulted. Additionally, beyond her role as the western harbor, the long walls of Lechaion become crucial in controlling, in part, east-west passage through the region. The road towards Attica ran past Lechaion and became a point of dispute at a later date. In 368 B.C. Epaminondas, traveling towards Attica along a road near Lechaion, forced his way through a fortification of palisades and deep trenches, reportedly extending across the Isthmus from Kenchreai to Lechaion (Diod. Sic. 15.68.3–4; cf. Paus. 9.14.3; Salmon 1984, 377).

Lechaion served as an important harbor during the Social War. In 218 B.C. the young Philip V used Lechaion as a base to train the phalanxes of the Macedonian and Achaean Leagues (Polyb. 5.2.4). During his Laconian expedition that same year, Philip anchored his ships and disembarked his troops at Lechaion, from whence they marched to Corinth and then Argos (Polyb. 5.17.9; Walbank 1970, 553; cf. Polyb. 5.18.9 and 5.24.12, 25.5, 26.16, 28.4). In 217 Philip, attempting to move against Illyrian pirates, anchored his fleet at Kenchreai, sent half around Cape Malea to Aegina and Patras, and had half dragged across the *diolkos* and anchored at Lechaion.

Slightly more explicit descriptive information is available from the Roman period. Strabo (8.6.22), who visited Corinth c. 44 B.C., described Lechaion as lying beneath the city and possessed of few residences. He mentions that long walls, 12 stadia in length, joined the harbor to the city, and notes that this western port was used for trade with Italy. Strabo (1.3.14) also records the opinion that the sea levels at Lechaion and Kenchreai are not of the same height. The use of the harbor in the first century of our era is attested by Philo Judaeus (*Flac.* 155.1–3)., who reports that Flaccus, prefect of Alexandria, c. A.D. 52, crossed the Isthmus using the harbor at Lechaion.

A much detailed account of Lechaion is given, however, in Plutarch's *Dinner of the Seven Wisemen*. This fictional symposium is set at Lechaion in the days of Periander. Born in Charonea and a student in Athens, Plutarch visited Corinth often, and demonstrates a thorough knowledge of its topography in his *Life of Aratos*. His description is probably a reflection of Lechaion in the first century after Christ. Plutarch (146D.2) mentions a tavern close to a shrine of Aphrodite. Taverns must have been common in all harbors, and there is no reason to doubt that Plutarch's mention of a temple of Aphrodite reflects a real structure. It seems unlikely, rather, than Plutarch would 'create' a temple for literary

purposes at such a well-known and frequented port. Pallas (1965, 163–4) suggests a sanctuary of Asklepios on the basis of an inscribed statue base, but as noted by Wiseman (1978, 87) evidence is insufficient.

As the guests arrive in Corinth for Plutarch's fictional symposium, they are confronted with a long street heading to the edge of the water, choked with bustling people, vehicles and dust (146D–E). This seems a reasonable description of the Lechaion road, which connects the Forum of Corinth to the harbor, and the identification is further strengthened by Plutarch's description of two guests abandoning the road and going through the fields instead. The Lechaion road ran through the fertile coastal plain, and large fields would have bound it on the east and west sides.

When the guests arrive at Lechaion they decide not to bathe, but visit the race-track, the palaistra and the wooded park along the shore (148B.3). If Plutarch's description reflects the actual state of Lechaion, there was a gymnasium, race-course and woodland park at the shore. The bathing, however, probably was meant to occur in a private home, rather than a public bathhouse.

Pausanias' description is of little help. He does, however, mention a sanctuary of Poseidon with a bronze statue at the harbor (2.2.3). While rather generic, Plutarch's description does give us an impression of early Roman Lechaion. The harbor and the road connecting it to Corinth were mobbed and confusing, but the rest of the area between the city and the harbor was largely open field. Indeed, Strabo's report of few dwellings and Plutarch's record of a tavern, temple of Aphrodite, race track, gymnasium and park need not be contradictory. Strabo's remark may have been inspired by the openness of the fields, reserved for agricultural production along the Lechaion road (Rothaus 1993, Romano 1993, 22); moreover, one must not forget that Strabo wrote before our proposed Claudian reconstruction, Plutarch after. The structures mentioned by Plutarch, while not necessarily actual, must have been easily accommodated into his experience in the harbor.

We do know, however, that a major restoration of the harbor was undertaken in A.D. 353–358; the city council and citizens of Corinth honoured Flavius Hermogenes (proconsul of Achaea), 'benefactor and builder' of the harbor, with a monument. The inscription and statue base recording this action were found at Lechaion early in the nineteenth century, and there can be no doubt the monument was erected at the harbor itself (Kent 1966, no. 503). The exact nature of Hermogenes' work remains unknown, unfortunately, and the fate of the harbor works after this period remains obscure. Our final ancient reference, Procopios (*Bell.* 5.15.7.2), in the sixth century, merely remarks that Lechaion marks the end of the Krissaen Gulf and the location of Corinth.

Lechaion may very well have been affected by a series of seismic events in the late fourth century after Christ. In this period numerous buildings suffered damage in Corinth, as did much of the harbor works at Kenchreai. The so-called Isaeum (more probably a Nymphaeum), and much of the moles at Kenchreai were submerged in an episode of subsidence. The subsidence at Kenchreai can be firmly dated to within a couple of decades within A.D. 400, and while there is no direct evidence, Lechaion may have suffered as well (Rothaus 1994; Scranton 1978; Hohlfelder 1976). Incidences of uplift at Lechaion are evidenced and under study by Stathis Stiros of the Institute for Geological and Mineralogical Exploration (Athens), and may be associated with incidences of subsidence at Kenchreai.

In the late antique period, Lechaion certainly

was a place of significance. In the late fifth or early sixth century a magnificent Early Christian basilica was built just west of the harbor works, close to the present-day shoreline (Pallas 1956; 1957; 1958; 1959; 1960; 1961; 1961/62; 1965; 1970; 1977, 95–1101; 1979; 1979/80; 1990, 769–776; cf. Krautheimer 1986, 131–4). The Lechaion basilica was the largest in Corinth and indeed the largest known in the world at the time of its construction. It measured, from atrium to apse, 223 m, as opposed to St. Peter (Rome) at 186 m. and St. Sophia (Constantinople) at 109 m. The basilica probably was dedicated to Leonidas and the seven martyrs who, we are told, perished with him at this location (Halkin 1953).

The basilica itself was constructed at the end of the fifth or early sixth century, as evidenced by a coin of Marcian (A.D. 450–457) found in the foundations of one of the walls, and a coin of Anastasios I (A.D. 491–518) under a section of pavement. The baptistery is of a separate construction, and dates earlier than the basilica; it may have been the earliest manifestation of the cult of Leonidas. After the construction of the basilica, the baptistery was joined to it by two walls. The walls of the atrium do not bond with those of the basilica and seems to date slightly later; a coin of Justin I (A.D. 518–527) was found in association with its construction. The atrium was, therefore, an addition to the basilica in the first quarter of the sixth century. With three-aisles, a tripartite transept, esonarthex, exonarthex and atrium, the Lechaion basilica was extremely ornate and possessed a variety of different marbles and capital types. A huge vaulted apse, pierced with multiple windows, dominated the east end.

The location of this basilica is important. The legend of Leonidas reports, in one version, that the bodies of the martyrs were washed up on shore, and the basilica may have been placed on the supposed location of this event. Nevertheless, such an elaborate structure would not have been placed where no one would have seen it. Its placement at Lechaion was a deliberate step in the Christian monumentalisation of the city. When the visitor arrived at Lechaion, he would be greeted by a massive Christian structure, an unmistakable announcement of the prestigious position of Corinth in the Empire, as well as Corinth's support of Imperial Christianity. The Nymphaeum just south-east of the inner harbor can easily be accommodated into this monumentalisation scheme. For the late Roman period we can be sure that Lechaion remained an important harbor, as well as a showpiece for Corinth.

The Lechaion basilica collapsed in the middle sixth century, almost certainly as a result of seismic activity (Pallas 1990, 749, 793; cf. Bon 1952, 15; Scranton 1957, 7–8). Several ancient sources mention that Corinth suffered earthquake damage in the middle sixth century, and the archaeological evidence confirms series of seismic events (Procop. *Bell. Goth.* 8.25.16–25, *Aed* 4.2.23, *Anecd.* 18.41–44; Evagrius 4.23; Cosmas Indicopleustes 1.22.13–14; Scranton 1957, 7–8). The baptistery of the basilica was not, however, destroyed, and was modified to be used for liturgy. This use continued into the seventh century. Ceramics in the area of the harbor ensure that Lechaion continued to be used, but no structures later than the Lechaion basilica have been discovered and the state of the harbor works in this late period remains unknown.

Given this smattering of evidence, a fair idea of Lechaion can be gained. The Lechaion road proceeded from Corinth to Lechaion through open agricultural fields, and reached its terminus at a small but bustling port, clustered at the edge of the shore and around the inner harbor. The city and port were linked, and

Lechaion played a service role to Corinth. At the harbor one would find various places of amusement and a few sanctuaries: certainly Poseidon, perhaps Aphrodite. Lechaion was a monumentalised aspect of Corinth. As the city was Christianised, Lechaion followed suit and shared in the dramatic re-monumentalisation of the city in the fifth and sixth centuries.

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