

# Burial Practices and Social Hierarchy in the Decapolis

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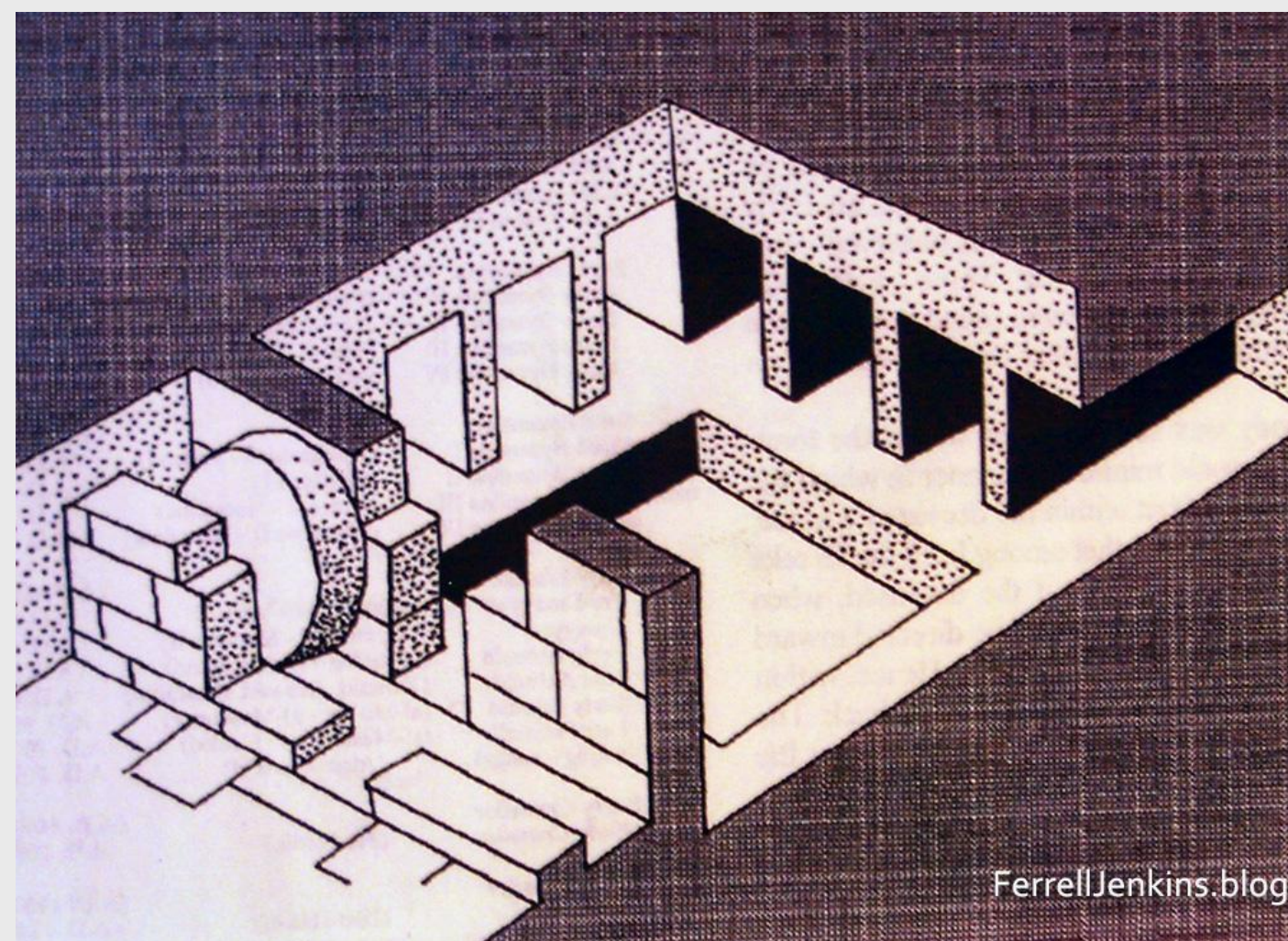
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## Introduction

This study focuses explicitly on the Decapolis, asking the question: To what extent can social hierarchy be inferred from graves in the cities of the Decapolis? Because we rarely have a full view of ancient societies, it can be difficult to tell what social stratification occurred there. However, by looking at tombs and their context it is possible to gain a better insight into what status certain people may have held and therefore get a better view of life during those times.



## Materials

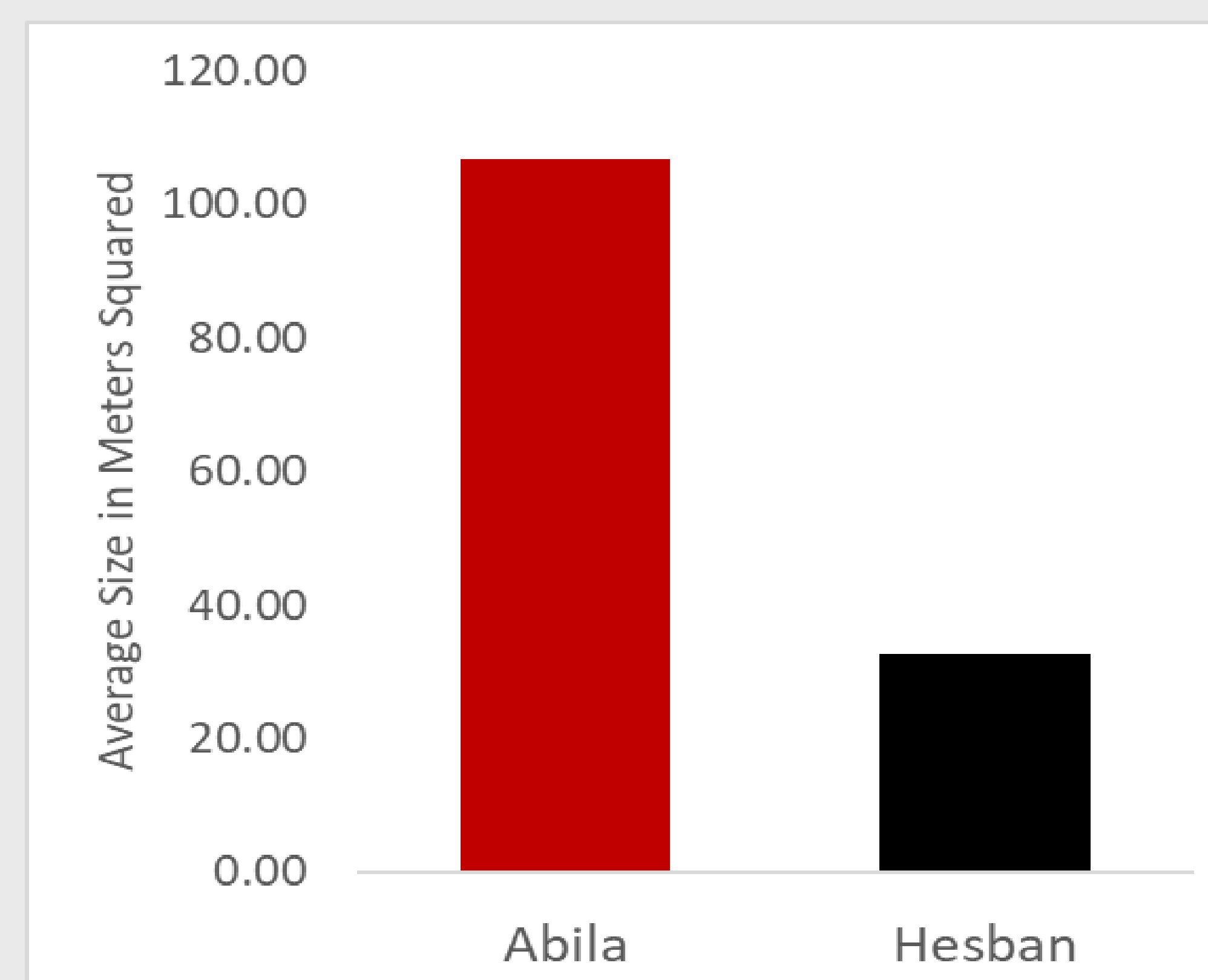
A coding scheme was used to organize the data. It was sorted based on the size of the tomb and the number of loculi. The type of tomb and what city it is from will be used as demographics. All of the tombs studied were rolling stone tombs. Each tomb's name was listed, and its findings categorized accordingly. Unfortunately, most of the tombs have been robbed, not much can be inferred from the grave goods, leaving the structure of the tomb as the best source of information.

## Methods

After sorting the data, I used the information to observe patterns regarding spatial organization, and how that may apply to social hierarchy in Abila and Hesban. The tomb sizes were visualized using graphs. Differences between the tombs in both cities were compared to infer how wealth may have been distributed between the two cities.

## Results

Tombs in Abila were shown to be noticeably larger, with the mean being 106.6 meters squared and an average of about 9 loculi per tomb. The tombs in Hesban were decidedly smaller, with a mean size of 32.6 meters squared and an average of 11 loculi per tomb. This pattern suggests that wealth was more prominent in Abila, allowing individuals to build more spacious tombs.



## Discussion

This study shows that tombs in Abila display more wealth in the city than those of Hesban. The results of this study align with a study by Goldstein (1981) in which he posits that use of space in funerary remains is important because it shows how much access a group had to either wealth used to buy a tomb, or land in order to build one. Furthermore, the results presented no outliers that might point to unknown circumstances affecting the integrity of the tombs. This being the case, additional study of burial practices in the Decapolis would be beneficial in order to better understand the social hierarchies of this region and how they may relate to each other.

## References

