

KEMTE 3

**Stefan Ardeleanu and
Jon C. Cubas Díaz (eds.)**

Funerary Landscapes of the Late Antique *oecumene*

Contextualizing Epigraphic
and Archaeological Evidence
of Mortuary Practices



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Edited by
Stefan Ardeleanu and Jon C. Cubas Díaz

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Preface

This book goes back on a conference “*Funerary Landscapes of the Late Antique oecumene. Contextualizing Epigraphic and Archaeological Evidence of Mortuary Practices*” held from 30th May to 1st June 2019 in Heidelberg, Germany. The conference at Heidelberg housed 25 presentations, 15 of which were submitted in 2020 and are presented here in published form. For various reasons, some papers are not part of our proceedings. Nevertheless, we would like to thank the conference authors Youssef Bokbot, Moheddine Chaouali, Lidewijde De Jong, Ina Eichner, Corisande Fenwick, Jorge López Quiroga, Emilio Marin, David Mattingly, Evelien Roels, Martin Steskal, Laura Willer and Wolf Zöllner, since the discussions of their papers in Heidelberg and their constant help during the process of publication contributed largely to the emergence of this volume.¹ In order to cope with our goal of a Mediterranean-wide overview, we invited additional scholars not present in Heidelberg to contribute to our proceedings. We are very thankful that Claudia Nauwerth and Donatella Nuzzo accepted our invitation to write contributions on two important regions of the Late Antique world.

This volume is deeply rooted in the methodological and theoretic framework of the ‘Sonderforschungsbereich (SFB) 933’, a collaborative research center based at the University of Heidelberg with the programmatic name ‘*Material Text Cultures – Materiality and Presence of Writing in Non-Typographic Societies*’.² This SFB, which is financed by the ‘Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft’ (DFG), particularly focusses on written artefacts from societies in which means of mass production of written texts were unknown or not available. The book is published as the third volume of the newly-established KEMTE-series, edited by the SFB 933 and the Heidelberg Center for Cultural Heritage (HCCH). It appears both as printed book on demand with Heidelberg University Press (heiUP), as well as digital open-access volume in PDF and HTML-format. From the beginning of the publication process onwards, we were willing and happy to exploit – for the first time within this series – the potential KEMTE provides, by cross-linking digital permanent data in the open access-versions of the book. This book contains well over 1000 cross-linked data-entries of inscriptions and funerary monuments from all over the Late Antique world. With this powerful tool, we hope to serve readers with valuable complementary information about the respective discussed artefacts, such as bibliographical notes, find circumstances, pictures, current location, and materiality of

- 1 A comprehensive résumé of all papers of the conference including their titles is available here: <https://www.hsozkult.de/conferencereport/id/tagungsberichte-8375> (accessed 10/06/2021).
- 2 ‘Materiale Textkulturen – Materialität und Präsenz des Geschriebenen in non-typographischen Gesellschaften’; for a broader overview and all projects embedded within this research programme, see: <https://www.materiale-textkulturen.de/> (accessed 11/06/2021).

the inscriptions' supports. We are fully convinced that this kind of *enhanced* publication will considerably enrich scholarly documentation and discussion in the nearer future.

Without the help of many people, it would never have been possible to realize this conference and the publication of its proceedings. First and foremost, our thanks go to all of our speakers, who were willing to put up with long distances as well as time and effort to come to Heidelberg and to present their projects. Secondly, we would like to thank our two former project directors, Stephan Westphalen and Christian Witschel, who supported the idea of a conference on this topic from its very beginning. The SFB 933 provided us with full financial support, so we would like to express our deep gratitude to the scientific board and the SFB's director, Ludger Lieb, who considered this conference to be an important event. Subsequently, Christiane Brosius, Ludger Lieb and Christian Witschel as editors of the KEMTE-series, always supported the idea of publishing our proceedings in this new series. We would like to thank the two anonymous peer reviewers for their worthwhile comments and especially Nele Schneidereit, but also Ute von Figura, Max Sieckmeyer and Silke Engelhardt, from the SFB 933 for their constant organizational help, and Nicolai Dollt as well as Frieda Fiedler for their support in the editorial processing of the volume. Raphael Hunsucker provided careful and excellent proofreading of several articles and abstracts, for which we are very thankful. A special thanks goes to Kate Cooper, who brilliantly concluded the conference. We would like to thank all members of the conference's organization and moderation team: Hanna Berger, David Betzing, Katharine Cubas Díaz, Fabian Göker, Christian Grünert, Lea Hegemann, Nathalie Kettner, Nicolas Jaspert, Solvejg Langer, Ludwig Meier, Yasmin Nachtigall, Arne Reinhardt, Anna Sitz, Kai Trampedach. During the publishing process we were greatly supported by the student assistants Malte Feldbrügge (Göttingen), Don Jansen (Osnabrück), Leon Nicholas Lorenz (Heidelberg), Yasmin Nachtigall (Heidelberg) and Louisa Rebmann (Göttingen). Image permissions were generously granted by the British Museum, Museum of Louvre, Irina Achim, Jelena Anđelković, Francois Baratte, Katharina Bolle, Robert Born, Moheddine Chaouali, Lidewijde De Jong, Ina Eichner, Carlos Machado, Fatma Naït Ygil, Ammar Othman, Philipp Pilhofer, Vanessa Rousseau and Christian Witschel. We are very thankful for this crucial support that largely contributed to the abundant illustration of evidence within this book.

Finally, we thank the publisher of our book, Heidelberg University Publishing (heiUP) and particularly Frank Krabbes, who generously supported the publication process. Our sincere gratitude goes to Christian Kolb, who prepared and typeset the manuscript with great care and high professionalism, as well as with steady collegial and pragmatic exchange with the editors.

Hamburg and Göttingen, January 2023



Group foto of participants at the international conference in Heidelberg, June 2019.

Abbreviations of Regional Epigraphic and Archaeological Corpora, Databases

AE	<i>L'Année épigraphique</i>
Alexander	Alexander, Margaret A. (1985), <i>Early Christian Tomb Mosaics of North Africa</i> , New York.
BE	Bulletin épigraphique, in: <i>Revue des études grecques</i>
BritRom	Tomlin, Roger S. (2018), <i>Britannia Romana. Roman Inscriptions and Roman Britain</i> , Oxford/Philadelphia.
CChrSL	<i>Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina</i>
CIG	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum</i>
CIIP	Cotton, Hannah/Ameling, Walter/Eck, Werner (eds.) (2010–), <i>Corpus inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae. A Multi-Lingual Corpus of the Inscriptions from Alexander to Muhammad</i> , 6 vols., Berlin et al.
CIL II²/5	Stylow, Armin U./Atencia Páez, Rafael/González Fernández, Julián/González Roman, Cristobál/Pastor Muñoz, Mauricio/Rodríguez Oliva, Pedro/Gimeno Pascual, Helena/Ruppert, Monika/Schmidt, Manfred G. (eds.) (1998), <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum. Vol. II²/5. Inscriptiones Hispaniae Latinae. Conventus Astigitanus</i> , 7 vols., Berlin.
CIL III	Mommsen, Theodor (ed.) (1873), <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum. Vol. III: Inscriptiones Asiae, provinciarum Europae Graecarum, Illyrici Latinae</i> , 4 vols., Berlin.
CIL V	Mommsen, Theodor (ed.) (1872–1877), <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum. Vol. V: Inscriptiones Galliae Cisalpinae Latinae</i> , 2 vols., Berlin.
CIL VIII	Wilmanns, Gustav (ed.) (1881), <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum. Vol. VIII: Inscriptiones Africae Latinae</i> , 7 vols., Berlin.
CIL X	Mommsen, Theodor (ed.) (1883), <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum. Vol. X: Inscriptiones Bruttiorum, Lucaniae, Campaniae, Siciliae, Sardiniae Latinae</i> , 2 vols., Berlin.
CIL XIII	Hirschfeld, Otto/Zangemeister, Karl (eds.) (1899–1933), <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum XIII. Inscriptiones trium Galliarum et Germaniarum</i> , 9 vols., Berlin.
CIL XV	Dressel, Heinrich (ed.) (1891–1899), <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum. Vol. XV: Inscriptiones urbis Romae Latinae. Instrumentum domesticum</i> , 2 vols. Berlin.
CIPTP	Alves Dias, Maria M./Sousa Gaspar, Catarina I. (2006), <i>Catálogo das inscrições paleocristãs do território português</i> , Lissabon.
Conrad	Conrad, Sven (2004), <i>Die Grabstelen aus Moesia Inferior. Untersuchungen zu Chronologie, Typologie und Ikonografie</i> , Leipzig.
Crum	Crum, Walter Ewing (1975), <i>Catalogue général des Antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire. Coptic Monuments</i> , Reprint Osnabrück.
CSIR II,5	Boppert, Walburg (1992), <i>Militärische Grabdenkmäler aus Mainz und Umgebung</i> (Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani II,5), Mainz.
CSIR II,10	Boppert, Walburg (1998), <i>Römische Steindenkmäler aus Worms und Umgebung</i> (Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani II,10), Mainz.
DACL	Cabrol, Fernand/Leclercq, Henri/Marrou, Henri Irénée (eds.) (1907–1953), <i>Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie</i> , 26 vols., Paris.

Ditsch	Ditsch, Steven (2011), <i>Dis Manibus. Die römischen Grabdenkmäler aus der Pfalz</i> (Archäologische Forschungen in der Pfalz C 3), Neustadt an der Weinstraße.
EDB	<i>Epigraphic Database Bari. Inscriptions by Christians in Rome (3rd–8th Cent. CE)</i> (http://www.edb.uniba.it) (accessed 14/10/2022).
EDR	<i>Epigraphic Database Roma</i> , http://www.edr-edr.it/default/index.php?lang=en (accessed 14/10/2022).
Espérandieu VII,1	Espérandieu, Émile (1918), <i>Recueil général des bas-reliefs, statues et bustes de la Gaule Romaine. Vol. 7, 1: Gaule Germanique. Germanie supérieure</i> , Paris.
Espérandieu XIV	Espérandieu, Émile (1955), <i>Recueil général des bas-reliefs, statues et bustes de la Gaule Romaine. Vol. 14: Suppl. suite</i> , Paris.
ETAM 22	Hagel, Stefan/Tomaschitz, Kurt (1998), <i>Repertorium der westkilikischen Inschriften. Nach den Scheden der kleinasiatischen Kommission der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften</i> (Ergänzungsbände zu den Tituli Asiae Minoris 22), Vienna.
Faust	Faust, Wilfried (1998), <i>Die Grabstelen des 2. und 3. Jahrhunderts im Rhein-gebiet</i> (Bonner Jahrbücher Beihefte 52), Cologne.
FIM	Boppert, Walburg (1971), <i>Die frühchristlichen Inschriften des Mittelrheingebietes</i> , Mainz.
Gabelmann	Gabelmann, Hans (1987), "Römische Grabbauten in den Nordprovinzen im 2. und 3. Jh. n. Chr.?", in: Henner von Hesberg and Paul Zanker (eds.), <i>Römische Gräberstraßen. Selbstdarstellung – Status – Standard</i> (Kolloquium München, 28.–30. Oktober 1985) (Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-Historische Klasse. Abhandlungen N. F. 96), Munich, 291–308.
HD	<i>Epigraphische Datenbank Heidelberg</i> , https://edh-www.adw.uni-heidelberg.de/home (accessed 14/10/2022).
IBC	Hübner, Emil E. W. (1876), <i>Inscriptiones Britanniae Christianae</i> , Berlin.
ICERV	Vives, José (1969 ²), <i>Inscripciones cristianas de la España romana y visigoda, 2.ª edición offset de la edición 1.ª de 1942 con un suplemento</i> (Monumenta Hispaniae Sacra. Serie Patristica 2), Barcelona.
ICG	Le Blant, Edmond F. (1856–1865), <i>Inscriptions chrétiennes de la Gaule antérieures au VIII^e siècle, 2 vols.</i> , Paris.
ICI VIII	Felle, Antonio E. (1993), <i>Inscriptiones christianae Italiae septimo saeculo antiquiores. VIII, Regio II. Hirpini</i> , Bari.
ICI XIII	Nuzzo, Donatella (ed.) (2011), <i>Inscriptiones christianae Italiae septimo saeculo antiquiores. Nova series. XIII, Regio II. Apulia et Calabria</i> , Bari.
ICI XVII	Aimone, Marco/Besana, Elena/Mennella, Giovanni (eds.) (2016), <i>Inscriptiones christianae Italiae septimo saeculo antiquiores. Nova series XVII, Regio XI. Transpadana usque ad Ticinum. Augusta Praetoria, Augusta Taurinorum, Eporedia, Forum Vibii Caburum, Novaria, Vercellae</i> , Bari.
ICNapoletana	Liccardo, Giovanni (2008), <i>Redemptor meus vivit. Iscrizioni cristiane antiche dell'area napoletana</i> (Oī christianoi 8), Trapani.
ICS	Corda, Antonio M. (1999), <i>Le iscrizioni cristiane della Sardegna anteriori al VII secolo</i> (Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana), Vatican City.
ICVR	Silvagni, Angelo/Ferrua, Antonio/Mazzoleni, Danilo/Carletti, Carlo (1922–1992), <i>Inscriptiones Christianae Urbis Romae septimo saeculo antiquiores. Nova series, 10 vols.</i> , Rome.
IG II	Ulricus Koehler (1877–1895), <i>Inscriptiones Atticae aetatis quae est inter Euclidis annum et Augusti tempora</i> , Berlin.

- IG IV** Fränkel, Max (ed.) (1902), *Inscriptiones Graecae. Vol. IV: Corpus inscriptionum graecarum Peloponnesi et insularum vicinarum. Vol. I: Inscriptiones graecae Aeginae, Pityonesi, Cecryphaliae, Argolidis*, Berlin.
- IG IV²** Sironen, Erkki (ed.) (2016²), *Inscriptiones Graecae. Vol. IV: Inscriptiones Argolidis. Fasciculus 3: Inscriptiones Corinthiae saeculorum IV. V. VI*, Berlin.
- IGCVO** Wessel, Karl/Ferrua, Antonio/Carletti, Carlo (1989), *Inscriptiones Graecae Christianae veteres Occidentis* (Inscriptiones Christianae Italiae, Subsidia 1), Bari.
- IGLS** Jalabert, Louis/René Mouterde/Mondésert, Claude/Rey-Coquais, Jean-Paul/Breton, Jean-François/Sartre, Maurice/Gatier, Pierre-Louis/Aliquot, Julien/Bader, Nabil/Sartre-Fauriat, Annie/Yon, Jean-Baptiste (1929–), *Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie, 20 vols.* (Bibliothèque archéologique et historique 12, 32, 46, 51, 61, 66, 78, 89, 104, 113, 114, 115, 183, 187, 194, 195, 204, 207, 219, 220), Paris/Beirut.
- IHC** Hübner, Emil E. W. (1871–1900), *Inscriptiones Hispaniae Christianae*, Berlin.
- ILJug** Šašel, Anna/Šašel, Jaroslav (1963–1986), *Inscriptiones Latinae quae in Iugoslavia inter annos MCMII et MCMXL repertae et editae sunt, 3 vols.* (Situla 5, 19, 25), Ljubljana.
- IIFDR** Popescu, Emilian (1976), *Inscriptiones intra fines Dacoromaniae repertae Graecae et Latinae anno CCLXXXIV recentiores = Inscriptiile grecești și latine din secole IV–XIII descoperite în România* (Inscriptiile antice din Dacia și Scythia minor. Academia de Științe Sociale și Politice a Republicii Socialiste România), Bucharest.
- ILLPRON** Hainzmann, Manfred/Schubert, Peter (eds.) (1986–1987), *Inscriptionum Lapidarium Latinarum Provinciae Norici usque ad annum MCMLXXXIV repertarum indices, 3 vols.*, Berlin.
- ILCV I–III** Diehl, Ernst (ed.) (1925–1931), *Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae Veteres. Vol. 1–3*, Berlin/Dublin/Zürich.
- ILCV IV** Moreau, Jacques/Marrou, Henri-Irénée (eds.) (1967), *Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae veteres. Vol. IV: Supplementum*, Berlin.
- ILAfr** Cagnat, René/Merlin, Alfred/Chatelain, Louis (1923), *Inscriptions latines d'Afrique (Tripolitaine, Tunisie, Maroc)*, Paris.
- ILAlg** Gsell, Stéphane/Pflaum, Hans-Georg (eds.) (1922–2003), *Inscriptions latines d'Algérie, 4 vols.*, Paris.
- ILA** Fages, Brieuc/Maurin, Louis/Rémy, Bernard/Fabre, Georges/Sillières, Pierre/Bost, Jean-Pierre/Navarro Caballero, Milagros/Rodriguez, Laëticia/Lapart, Jacques/Thauré, Marianne (1991–), *Inscriptions latines d'Aquitaine, 11 vols.*, Agen et al.
- ILA Bordeaux** Maurin, Louis/Navarro Caballero, Milagros (2010), *Inscriptions latines d'Aquitaine. Vol. 7: Bordeaux*, Bordeaux/Paris.
- ILA Landes** Bost, Jean-Pierre/Fabre, Georges/Rodriguez, Laëticia (2015), *Inscriptions Latines d'Aquitaine. Vol. 8: Landes et Pyrénées-Atlantiques*, Bordeaux.
- ILTG** Wuilleumier, Pierre (1963), *Inscriptions latines des Trois Gaules (France)* (Gallia, Suppl. 17), Paris.
- ILTun** Merlin, Alfred (1944), *Inscriptions latines de la Tunisie*, Paris.
- IMS** Mirković, Miroslava/Dušanić, Slobodan/Petar Petrović/Dragojević-Josifovska, Borka/Papazoglu, Fanula (1976–), *Inscriptions de la Mésie Supérieure, 5 vols.* (Centre d'études épigraphiques et numismatiques de la faculté de philosophie de l'Université de Beograd), Belgrade.
- IScM** Pippidi, Dionisie M./Stoian, Iorgu/Suceveanu, Alexandru/Avram, Alexandru/Popescu, Emilian/Dorutiu-Boilă, Emilia/Bărbulescu, Mariana/Buzoianu, Livia (eds.) (1980–), *Inscriptiones Scythiae Minoris Graecae et Latinae*, Bucharest.

- I.Antioche Pisidie Ramsay** Byrne, Maurice A./Labarre, Guy (2006), *Nouvelles inscriptions d'Antioche de Pisidie d'après les Note-Books de W. M. Ramsay* (Inscripfen griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien 67), Bonn.
- I.Aphrodisias Late Ant.** Roueché, Charlotte (1989), *Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity. The Late Roman and Byzantine Inscriptions Including Texts from the Excavations at Aphrodisias Conducted by Kenan T. Erim* (Journal of Roman Studies, Monographs, 5), London.
- I.Byz.Attica** Sironen, Erkki (1997), *The Late Roman and Early Byzantine Inscriptions of Athens and Attica: An Edition with Appendices on Scripts, Sepulchral Formulae and Occupations*, Helsinki.
- I.Byzantion** Łajtar, Adam (2000), *Die Inschriften von Byzantion. Vol. 1: Die Inschriften* (Inscripfen griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien 58,1), Bonn.
- I.Cilicie** Dagron, Gilbert/Feissel, Denis (1987), *Inscriptions de Cilicie*, Paris.
- I.Chr.Asie Mineure** Grégoire, Henri (1922), *Recueil des inscriptions grecques chrétiennes d'Asie Mineure*, Paris.
- I.Chr.Bulgarien** Beševliev, Veselin (1964), *Spätgriechische und spätleinische Inschriften aus Bulgarien* (Berliner byzantinistische Arbeiten 30), Berlin.
- I.Chr.Crete** Brandy, Anastasius C. (1970), *The Greek Christian Inscriptions of Crete. Vol. 1: VI–IX A. D.* (Christianikai epigraphai tēs Hellados 10), Athens.
- I.Chr.Cyclades** Kiourtzian, Georges (2000), *Recueil des inscriptions grecques chrétiennes des Cyclades de la fin du III^e au VII^e siècle après J.-C.* (Centre de Recherche d'Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance, Monographies 12), Paris.
- I.Chr.Egypte** Lefebvre, Gustave (1907), *Recueil des inscriptions grecques-chrétiennes d'Égypte*, Cairo.
- I.Chr. Macédoine** Feissel, Denis (1983), *Recueil des inscriptions chrétiennes de Macédoine du III^e au VI^e siècle*, Paris.
- I.Ephesos** Wankel, Hermann/Börker, Christoph/Engelmann, Helmut/Merkelbach, Reinhold/Merič, Recep/Nollé, Johannes (1979–1984), *Die Inschriften von Ephesos, 10 vols.* (Inscripfen griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien 11–17), Bonn.
- I.Gerasa** Welles, Charles B. (1938), "The Inscriptions", in: Carl H. Kraeling (ed.), *Gerasa. City of the Decapolis. An Account embodying the Record of a Joint Excavation conducted by Yale University and the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem (1928–1930), and Yale University and the American Schools of Oriental Research (1930–1931, 1933–1934)*, New Haven, 355–494.
- I.Hierapolis Judeich** Judeich, Walther (1898), „Inscripfen“, in: Carl Humann, Conrad Cichorius, Walther Judeich and Franz Winter (eds.), *Altertümer von Hierapolis* (Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts. Ergänzungs-Heft 4), Berlin.
- I.Jordanie** Gatier, Pierre-Louis/Sartre, Maurice/Bader, Nabil (1986–), *Inscriptions Grecques et Latines de la Syrie. Vol. XXI: Inscriptions de la Jordanie, 3 vols.* (Bibliothèque archéologique et historique 114, 115, 187) (IGLS 21), Paris/Beirut.
- I.Kyzikos** Schwertheim, Elmar (1980), *Die Inschriften von Kyzikos und Umgebung. Teil I: Grabtexte* (Inscripfen griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien 18), Bonn.
- I.Milet** Rehm, Albert/von Graeve, Volkmar/Herrmann, Peter/Feissel, Denis/Günther, Wolfgang (1908–2017), *Inscripfen von Milet, 4 vols.* (Milet VI), Berlin.
- I.Miletupolis** Schwertheim, Elmar (1983), *Die Inschriften von Kyzikos und Umgebung, Teil II: Miletupolis. Inschriften und Denkmäler* (Inscripfen griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien 26), Bonn.
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STEFAN ARDELEANU & JON C. CUBAS DÍAZ

Reconsidering Late Antique Funerary Habits

Trends, Debates and Perspectives

The Emergence of a New Funerary World: Continuities and Late Antique Innovations

In current scholarship on the ancient world, Late Antiquity can certainly be labeled as a thriving research field. The past 50 years saw an ever-increasing number of projects, conferences, publications and several voluminous compendia dedicated to the period. More recently, the scale of projects about Late Antique necropoleis has increased dramatically.¹ It is not hard to understand why a considerable proportion of material culture known from Late Antiquity derives from funerary contexts. The total number of Late Antique epitaphs reaches several tens of thousands, even though it is impossible to determine the exact number more precisely.² As in the Classical Greek, Hellenistic and Roman Imperial periods, epitaphs by far make up the majority of all inscriptions, but the disproportional dominance of (predominantly) funerary over honorific or dedicatory inscriptions even increased in Late Antiquity.³ There have been attempts to link this phenomenon, as well as

- 1 This volume originated in Collaborative Research Centre 933 “Material Text Cultures. Materiality and Presence of Writing in Non-Typographic Societies” (subproject A01 “Lettered and Inscribed. Inscriptions in Urban Space in the Greco-Roman Period and Middle Ages”), funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG). On the growing number of projects about the period from the mid-1st millennium AD: PEARCE 2015, 445–450, 472. Cross-references to contributions within this volume are by author’s name only, in bold.
- 2 Rome alone provides a body of ca. 42 000 ‘Christian inscriptions’, most of which are clearly funerary: <http://www.edb.uniba.it> (accessed 03/02/2023); a query in the Clauss-Slaby (EDCS) database for ‘Christian’ funerary inscriptions (though not only funerary and only Latin texts, doublets are not extracted) results in a total amount of 60 000 hits: <https://db.edcs.eu/epigr/> (accessed 03/02/2023); MERKT 2012, 17 mentions an number of over 60 000 Early Christian epitaphs. Late Antique epitaphs from the Greek provinces are impossible to count as similar databases do not exist so far or do not allow such search queries, such as the database of the Packard Humanities Institute Greek Inscriptions (PHI: <https://inscriptions.packhum.org/> [accessed 03/02/2023]); the amount of Greek Late Antique funerary inscriptions should nonetheless reach a five-digit-number based on the published corpora.
- 3 Already observed by DE ROSSI 1862, 370 and GALVÃO-SOBRINHO 1995; see also SMITH/WARD-PERKINS 2016; BOLLE/MACHADO/WITSCHERL 2017a and several regional case studies in NAWOTKA 2021. It should be noted that in some specific urban cases (e.g. in Carthage, the cities of *Histria et Venetia*, *Salona*, *Leptis Magna*, *Sagalassos* and *Aphrodisias*), the number of civic inscriptions remained proportionally high throughout the 4th and

the change from cremation to inhumation during the 2nd–3rd c. AD,⁴ ‘respectful’ neonate and infant burials,⁵ the shift towards West-East alignment of tombs in the 4th c. AD and the increasing paucity of grave goods⁶ to the spread of Christianity. However, the process of ‘Christianization’ was certainly not the only reason for those transformations. There must have been a wide range of other factors of a social and economic nature that promoted these changes.

It is well-known today that Late Antique city- and landscapes underwent a wide range of transformations: maintenance of monumental urbanism and central administrative functions, urban extension and agricultural/economic peaks often occurred at the same time as urban contraction, abandonment of civic life, urban destruction and collapse of *villa* systems.⁷ These shifts had major consequences for the development of burial patterns. In many towns, new city walls reframed the urban fabric and significantly affected traditional burial zones, e.g. by reusing their monuments as spoliation material, but also by destroying and reshaping the delimitation patterns of burial grounds. The *cura pro mortuis*, a genuine Late Antique innovation requiring the burial of all dead within a community at any cost, added a profound mental change to traditional ideas of death and afterlife. The phenomenon of intra-urban burials created a permanent presence of the dead amongst the everyday spaces of the living. Burial in churches and the cult of martyrs, often linked to the debated phenomenon of burial *ad sanctos*, were other new funerary characteristics, which spread across the *oecumene* from the late 4th c. AD onwards. As also urban epigraphy radically changed in nature,⁸ mortuary landscapes had seen a radical shift in many places by the 8th c. AD.

5th c. AD: see several contributions in DONATI 1988, GAUTHIER/MARIN/PRÉVOT 2010 and BOLLE/MACHADO/WITSCHERL 2017a.

4 KOLLWITZ 1954, 216; critical: VOLP 2002, 186–195; THOMPSON 2015.

5 WATTS 1989; HUBER 2018; critical PEARCE 2001; for a diachronic overview, see: NENNA 2012.

6 The scarcity of grave goods and East-West alignment as putative signs of ‘standard Christian burial practices’ were long accepted (KOLLWITZ 1954, 216f.) and are still repeated in recent years: MION et al. 2016, 3; HUBER 2018, 223; SWEETMAN 2019, 520; for more differentiated interpretations see: SCHMIDT 2000, 274, 282; VOLP 2002, 118f., 198–202; THEUWS 2009; FOX/TRITSAROLI 2018; BRATHER 2016, 35 has recently stated that Late Antique grave furnishing was more common in the “periphery” (Northern Italy, Northern Gaul, *Pannonia*, Iberian Peninsula), from the point of view of the Italian peninsula as the centre.

7 CHRISTIE/LOSEBY 1996; WEBSTER/BROWN 1997; BROGILOLO/WARD-PERKINS 1999; LAVAN 2001; LIEBESCHUETZ 2001; CANTINO WATAGHIN 2003; HAUG 2003, esp. 273–288 (on necropoleis); KRAUSE/WITSCHERL 2006; LOSEBY 2009; SAMI/SPEED 2010; SCHATZMANN 2011; JACOBS 2013; TABBERNEE 2014; PARELLO/RIZZO 2016; CARNEIRO/CHRISTIE/DIARTE-BLASCO 2020; on new foundations: RIZOS 2017; on urban religion: BAUER 2008; LÄTZER-LASAR/URCIOLI 2021; on transformations of public spaces, see now: LAVAN 2020; a good recent overview of studies on urbanism in Late Antiquity is HUMPHRIES 2019.

8 On ‘classical’ urban epigraphy CORBIER 1987; SEARS/KEEGAN/LAURENCE 2015; on shifts during Late Antiquity: EASTMOND 2015; BOLLE/MACHADO/WITSCHERL 2017a.

At the same time, each region and even each city preserved some of its previous funerary traditions, and there are many examples that prove how local funerary habits were conservatively maintained until and even beyond the end of Antiquity. The cemeteries and churches equipped with the relics of saints, of local or transregional significance, became new central focal points of many cityscapes. These new *public* centers took over many traits of the former sanctuaries and *fora*, since they were regularly frequented at the *dies natales* by significant parts of the local communities and, in some cases by massive amounts of pilgrims from outside. We know of spectacular funeral processions for distinguished personalities crossing entire cityscapes and therefore staging the sepulchral acts as highly public events.⁹ In many areas, the *cura pro mortuis* also led to calendrical frequentation and commemoration of individual or collective burial places not associated to saints.¹⁰ Social status and representation were often negotiated in those new *topoi epiphane-tatoi* or *loci celeberrimi*. Also, burial places in rural areas could gain transregional importance, as is shown by many remote pilgrim complexes (often with central burials for one or more saints), but also by monuments for families, clans or small-scaled communities. These nuclei reshaped the *funerary landscapes* of entire cities and regions, which is why we chose this programmatic term for the title of our volume. As recent work on landscape archaeology has stated, we understand *landscape* (not only rural, but also urban spaces) as an area of human interaction, deeply rooted in social or human practices.¹¹ This means that also a funerary basilica or a catacomb can be labelled as funerary landscapes. As in former periods, tombs and necropoleis, and the social and religious practices performed within/around them, actively shaped the various townscapes, but also their wider landscapes as markers of territorial claims, of commemoration, of ancestry, of kinship, of economic and social status.¹² We chose the term *funerary* (and not burial) *landscapes* in order to acknowledge such human activities linked to burial, and to emphasize the social construction of funerary landscapes, their perception within various surroundings

9 See e.g. Imperial and bishop burials: VELKOVSKA 2001; JOHNSON 2009; but also senatorial burials, such as that of Junius Bassus described in his proper epitaph: GRIG 2017, 440 f.; for eventually numerous participants in funerary processions, see VOLP 2002, 101–184.

10 GRIG 2018; fortunately, there are also excellent contemporary metatexts reporting these commemorative mechanics: NTEDIKA 1971; KOTILA 1992; REBILLARD 2003; REBILLARD 2009.

11 UCKO/LAYTON 1999, esp. 86 and DARÓCZI 2012, esp. 200–202; on the role of burials within rural landscapes; for Late Antique landscape studies, partly with integration of funerary evidence: CHRISTIE 2004; EBANISTA/ROTILI 2016; DIARTE-BLASCO/CHRISTIE 2018; on ideological implications of Late Antique urbanism: BROGIOLO/WARD-PERKINS 1999; for the perception of Late Antique architecturally structured spaces as ‘activity spaces’ or ‘human spatiality’ (though with little reference to burial contexts), see: LAVAN/BOWDEN 2003; HAUG 2003; on urban ‘aesthetics’ during Late Antiquity, see: JACOBS 2013, esp. 4–6.

12 See e.g. for the occupation of deserted landscapes by burials with hunting weapons in 4th to 7th c. AD-Northern Gaul: THEUWS 2019, 128–132.



Fig. 1: Map of the Late Antique *oecumene* with regions discussed in this volume highlighted.

(including townscapes) over the *longue durée*, their commemorative character and their perpetuated ritualization.¹³ Funerary landscapes were not only used for the dead, but also frequented, framed and manipulated by the living. As in earlier periods, death, afterlife, burial and *memoria* remained important topics of daily life performed in essential spaces of human interaction.

Questions and Aims, Chronological and Geographical Scope of This Volume

This volume aims to offer a first *transregional panorama* of Late Antique funerary epigraphy and archaeology, with the explicit purpose of showing the high diversity of general, regional and local developments (Fig. 1).¹⁴ As the title suggests, we wanted to bring together archaeologists and epigraphists working on different themes within Late Antique funerary culture, in order to show the high potential of such interdisciplinary approaches to the materiality, spatial context and perception of tombs and epitaphs. Therefore, our first priority was to bring together a representative range of regional case studies from the Late Antique *oecumene*; the regions and settlements discussed are shown in fig. 1. It will become obvious at once that a holistic synopsis is, for several reasons, impossible. If our geographical selection is necessarily arbitrary, this is primarily due to the uneven state of documentation and availability of data (see below). This imbalance becomes strikingly evident when comparing the two dominating centers of the Late Antique *oecumene*, Rome and Constantinople. Rome alone would present enough published material for a week-long conference on this topic, while the re-contextualization of Late Antique funerary monuments and epitaphs is particularly challenging for Constantinople.¹⁵ Another example of such an imbalance is Britain, which counts among the best-studied regions in Late Antique funerary archaeology (with chronologies based on substantial sequences of radiocarbon dating), but on the other hand only

13 On the social experiences and emotions linked to death and burial, see CHAPMAN 2003, esp. 311.

14 Preliminary approaches on micro-regional developments – including also non-funerary material – are presented in DONATI 1988; TABBERNEE 2014; BOLLE/MACHADO/WITSCHERL 2017a; PETTEGREW/CARAGHER/DAVIS 2019.

15 The epigraphic syntheses I. Byzantion and RHOBY 2015 contain only few Late Antique epitaphs from Constantinople and there is still no updated corpus of Late Antique inscriptions from the capital; the particular preservation conditions in modern Istanbul have led to very few excavations in burial spaces; on Late Antique urbanism of Constantinople, with special references to burial zones, see: FIRATLI 1966; MÜLLER-WIENER 1977, 219–222; MANGO 2004², 47 f, 57f.; on Late Antique sarcophagi: Rep. V; on Imperial burials: VELKOVSKA 2001; JOHNSON 2009; FIOCCHI NICOLAI 2016, 633; on first anthropological analyses: FOX/TRITSARIOLI 2018.

produced small numbers of 5th–7th c. AD epitaphs.¹⁶ By choosing a non-conventional order, starting our journey in the Westernmost region of the *oecumene* (the Iberian Peninsula) and moving counter-clockwise from the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean to the Balkans, the central Mediterranean and, finally, the North-western provinces, we deliberately want to break free from centrist approaches that are common even to most recent syntheses (see below). Late Antique funerary inscriptions and mortuary practices did not spread from the Imperial centers to the peripheries, and we shall mirror this reality in our scholarly setup. With this ‘panoramic’ structure we also hope to avoid the problematic ‘East vs. West’ dichotomy still operative in many Late Antique studies.¹⁷

Of course, this volume also has significant ‘blank spots’, and we are aware of the fact that important regions and projects with very interesting material have been excluded. Hundreds of Late Antique so-called ‘row-grave cemeteries’ (‘Reihengräberfelder’ in German) formed funerary landscapes of Britain, Gaul, the Iberian and Balkan Peninsulae, parts of Italy, North Africa and the Black Sea from the 5th to the 10th c. AD (Fig. 2).¹⁸ Although some of the papers in this volume partly integrate data from this class of burial evidence (Prién, Valeva), the dataset of row-grave cemeteries seemed far too large and challenging to integrate into our volume in a more prominent way because of two reasons. Firstly, most of such cemeteries did not reveal contemporary epitaphs, although their ‘managed’ appearance suggests the existence of tomb markers. Secondly, many of them fall outside our chronological scope. Admittedly, however, recent archaeological excavations of row-grave cemeteries employing natural science methods have provided magnificent data, as some of these burial fields could be excavated almost entirely and according to modern interdisciplinary standards, providing a totally new basis for statistical analyses, social hierarchies and migration theories. These examinations also generated innovative models, techniques and theories of funerary archaeology that are yet to be applied to the ‘Classical’ Mediterranean area of Late Antique funerary studies on a wider scale.¹⁹

16 PETTS 2019, 611–613.

17 See, most recently, e.g. the statement on East-West differences of epitaphic curves in NAWOTKA et al. 2021, 230: “This markedly lower proportion of epitaphs highlights an enormous distinction between the epigraphic culture in the East and the epigraphic habit in the West”. As most of our regional contributions show, an East-West-dichotomy is – at least in Late Antique funerary epigraphy – neither useful nor representative of the epigraphic reality. On the pitfalls of East-West comparisons and the advantages of ‘global’ studies, see: GUIDETTI/MEINECKE 2020b, 3–5.

18 DIERKENS/PÉRIN 1997; partly SCHMIDT 2000; SCHMAUDER 2002; HACKENBECK et al. 2010; HALSALL 2010, 93–106; KNIPPER et al. 2013; PEARCE 2013; HEINRICH-TAMÁSKA/STRAUB 2015; KOCH/PRIEN/DRAUSCHKE 2016; SCHUH/MAKAREWICZ 2016; HACKENBECK et al. 2017; ASPÖCK/KLEVNÄS/MÜLLER-SCHEEBEL 2020; KNIPPER et al. 2020; several contributions in EFFROS/MORREIRA 2020.

19 SCHUH/MAKAREWICZ 2016; BARON 2018; VEERAMAH et al. 2018; BRATHER-WALTER 2019; KRAUSSE et al. 2020.

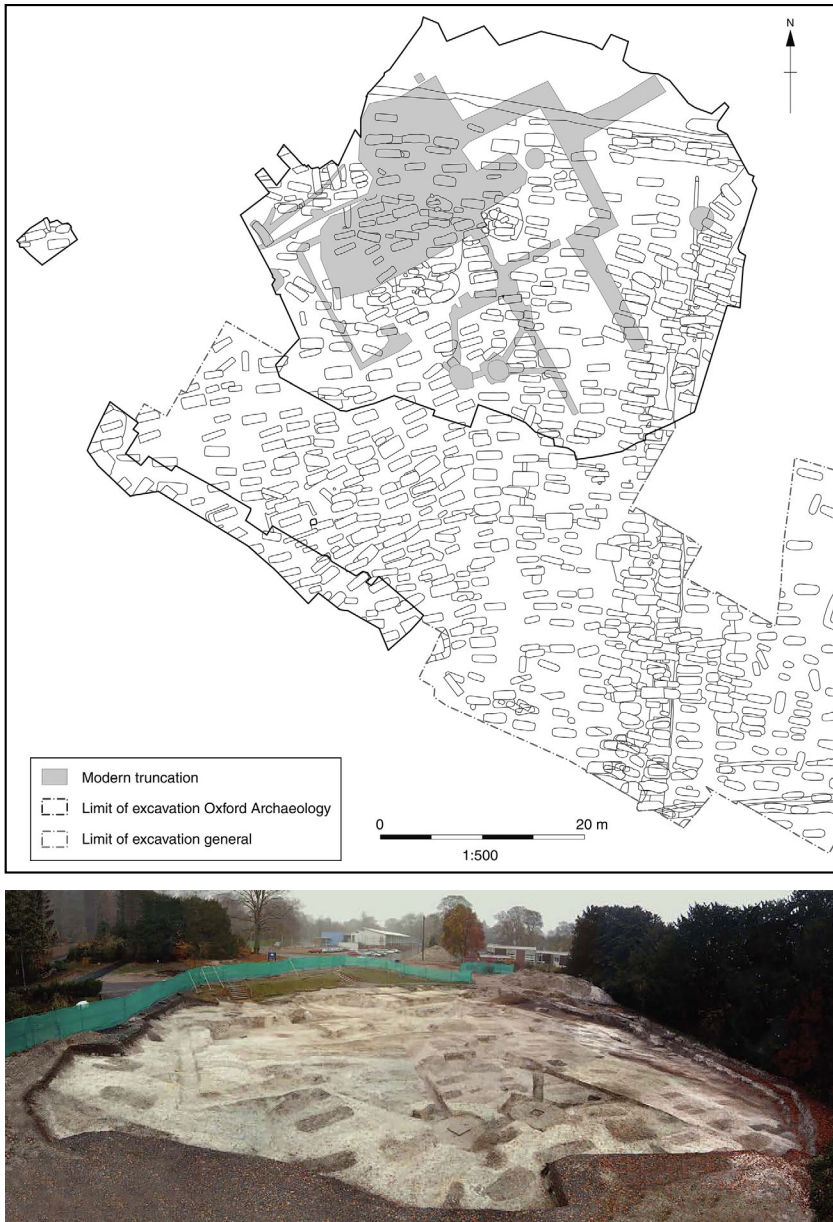


Fig. 2: a. Lankhills, Roman Cemetery, General Plan; b. Overall view of the site from the south.

The second criterium for the composition of this book was chronology. This volume concentrates on funerary evidence from the middle of the 3rd to the 8th c. AD (the timespan of what is called 'Long Late Antiquity')²⁰ but considers these limits

²⁰ CAMERON 2001; MARCONE 2008; a recent overview of problems of periodization can be found in HUMPHRIES 2017 and GUIDETTI/MEINECKE 2020a, 2–5.

flexible rather than firm. The papers dealing partly with Early Medieval evidence (Arbeiter, Gatier, Merten, Osnabrügge, Ott, Prien, Uberti) were also a welcome reminder of how important the achievements of Late Antiquity were for the funerary developments of the next centuries.²¹

Our third criterium of selection was the material *quality* of case studies and their potential for new *contextual analyses*. Questions on the materiality of epitaphs and tombs, their visibility, their accessibility and their interaction with iconographic elements and spatial setting are central to this volume, in order to highlight certain underestimated facets of mortuary habits and the commemoration of the dead. How were inscriptions, grave goods and corpses positioned, presented, treated, used and perceived in ceremonial acts and what consequences did these practices have in the course of the deceased's commemoration? In what kind of funerary spaces were these practices performed and to what extent did rituals create, shape or manipulate such spaces? What role did writing, funerary objects and the treatment of the body play in ritual practices or liturgies during Late Antiquity? One may wonder whether it is possible to determine their function as communicators within social practices and to use funerary topographies as meaningful elements of social hierarchical negotiation. In order to prepare the ground for these questions this chapter will try to give a short overview of the history, problems and challenges of research on Late Antique funerary culture. Finally, it will present some central themes of this volume, in order to pave the way for future trans-regional approaches to the topic.

Disciplinary Challenges for Epigraphic and Archaeological Syntheses on Late Antique Funerary Evidence: A Critical Survey of Previous Scholarship

Research on Late Antique burials and funerary inscriptions is unevenly distributed. The value of Late Antique tombs and epitaphs was recognized early, but too often, they have been and are still used only as sources for the discussion of continuities or discontinuities of human occupation, of urban decay (especially when found in former public and housing areas of towns), of demographic or onomastic developments and of the degree of 'Christianization'. Today, there are some regions with magnificent overviews of their Late Antique funerary culture(s). For some of these regions, excellent regional epigraphic corpora were assembled as early as the mid-19th c., when 'Christian epigraphy' first emerged as a scholarly discipline.²²

21 FÉVRIER 1978; SICARD 1978; TREFFORT 1996; several contributions in LÓPEZ QUIROGA 2009, PINAR GIL/JUÁREZ 2010, GIOSTRA 2019 and DE VINGO/MARANO/PINAR GIL 2021 also underline the transitional character of the distinction between both eras.

22 On the term 'Christian epigraphy', see: MAZZOLENI 2002; HANDLEY 2003, 11–13; ROUECHÉ/SOTINEL 2017, esp. 503f. with references to earlier works.

Other regions still lack epigraphic or/and archaeological syntheses at all. As individual chapters of the volume will present many microregional case studies, what follows here will mainly focus on regions underrepresented in the chapters. Of course, we cannot address all geographical lacunae exhaustively in this way, but we hope the complementary bibliographical hints for these regions may provide a useful starting point.

*Asia Minor*²³ and the *Palaestinae/Arabia*,²⁴ as well as many parts of Gaul,²⁵ the Iberian Peninsula²⁶ and Italy²⁷ have both a strong tradition in epigraphic studies

- 23 Epigraphic corpora with a specific Late Antique (or Christian) focus were established early: CUMONT 1895; I.Chr.Asie Mineure; JOHNSON 1995 (particularly on Early Christian epitaphs from Anatolia); see also e.g. I.Ephesos; SGO; AMELING 2017; recently, a new database on Early Christian inscriptions of *Asia Minor* and Greece, *Inscriptiones Christianae Asiae Minoris* (ICAM), was launched as part of *Inscriptiones Christianae Graecae* (ICG): <http://www.epigraph.topoi.org/> (accessed 03/02/2023). Local databases on Late Antique epigraphy, including epitaphs, are still rare; for *Aphrodisias*, see: <http://insaph.kcl.ac.uk/alaz004/> (accessed 03/02/2023). For an epigraphic overview, see MITCHELL 2017 and the contribution DESTEPHEN in this volume; for recent archaeological overviews, see: HENRY 2011; BRANDT et al. 2017; IVISON 2017; Rep. V (sarcophagi); ROUSSEAU 2019; NOVÁČEK et al. 2020; see also the contribution CUBAS DÍAZ in this volume.
- 24 Epigraphic corpora and regional overviews: DI SEGNI 2017. The *Inscriptiones grecques et latines de la Syrie* (IGLS), with its first volume launched in 1929, has no specific Late Antique focus, but incorporates Late Antique inscriptions from modern Syria, Lebanon and Jordan: <https://www.hisoma.mom.fr/recherche-et-activites/inscriptions-grecques-et-latines-de-la-syrie> (accessed 03/02/2023). The *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae* (CIIP) contains also Late Antique inscriptions; for the four volumes published so far, see: <https://alte-geschichte.phil-fak.uni-koeln.de/501.html> (accessed 03/02/2023); see also e.g. I.Moab; I.Jordanie; I.Zoora; partly also I.Syrie (references in the contribution GATIER in this volume). Archaeological overviews: MICHAELI 1996; GOLDFUS 1997; SANMORI 1998; SARTRE-FAURIAT 2001; KONRAD 2013 (*Arabia*); Rep. V (sarcophagi); several papers in EGER/MACKENSEN 2018 and the contribution BIANCHI in this volume.
- 25 Epigraphic corpora/syntheses: ICG; NICG; RICG; KNIGHT 1992; GUYON 1997; HANDLEY 2003. Archaeological overviews: YOUNG/PÉRIN 1991; DIERKENS/PÉRIN 1997; YOUNG 2001; Rep. III; LÓPEZ QUIROGA/MARTÍNEZ TEJERA/MORÍN DE PABLOS 2006; RAYNAUD 2006; THEUWS 2009; HALSALL 2010; CARTRON/HENRION/SCULLER 2015; FORT/KASPRZYK/ACHARD-COROMPT 2016; DE LARMINAT et al. 2017; BLAIZOT 2018; THEUWS 2019; several contributions in EFFROS/MORREIRA 2020; for two more regional overviews in Gaul see the contributions MERTEN and UBERTI in this volume.
- 26 Epigraphic corpora/overviews: IHC; ICERV; CIPTP; HANDLEY 2003; *Hispania Epigraphica. Online database. Roman Inscriptions from the Iberian Peninsula*: http://eda-bea.es/pub/search_select.php (accessed 03/02/2023). For inscriptions from Mérida, see the local database: <http://www3.uah.es/cil2digital/> (accessed 03/02/2023). Archaeological overviews: LÓPEZ QUIROGA/MARTÍNEZ TEJERA/MORÍN DE PABLOS 2006; LÓPEZ QUIROGA 2009; Rep. IV; Quattrocchi; for an overview of Late Antique burials and epitaphs from the Iberian peninsula, see the contribution ARBEITER in this volume.
- 27 The first volume of the *Inscriptiones Christianae Urbis Romae* (ICVR) appeared in 1861. The *Inscriptiones Christianae Italiae septimo saeculo antiquiores* (ICI, 17 volumes so far), launched in 1985, are accessible in various open-access databases: *Epigraphic Database Rome* (EDR): <http://www.edr-edr.it/default/index.php> (accessed 03/02/2023); on mosaic

(developed early on) and important overviews of Late Antique funerary archaeology. Britain,²⁸ Egypt,²⁹ the large islands of the Mediterranean,³⁰ Greece³¹ and the provinces along the Rhine and the Danube³² saw increasing activity during the last

inscriptions from churches in *Venetia et Histria*, see: <https://mosaikinschriften.materiale-textkulturen.de/> (accessed 03/02/2023); on Late Antique inscriptions from *Tuscia et Umbria*, see: <https://tusciaetumbria.materiale-textkulturen.de/> (accessed 03/02/2023); both databases emerged from the work of BOLLE 2019, esp. 64–74, who extensively exploits Late Antique epitaphs and their materiality from *Tuscia*, *Umbria*, *Venetia*, *Histria*, *Apulia* and *Calabria* as well as *Ostia* and Rome; for the study of inscriptions from the Roman catacombs, the *Epigraphic Database Bari* (EDB) has already become an indispensable working tool: <https://www.edb.uniba.it/> (accessed 03/02/2023); a large collection of *loculi* from the catacombs including colored images is: EHLER 2012; for further epigraphic overviews in Italy, see also: ICNapoletana and the contributions FELLE and MAINARDIS in this volume. Archaeological overviews of Late Antique funerary material from Italy (regional or nation-wide): Rep. I and Rep. II (sacrophagi); FIOCCHI NICOLAI 1988; BIERBRAUER 1975; DANNHEIMER 1989 (Sicily); BROGIOLO/CANTINO WATAGHIN 1998; CANTINO WATAGHIN 1999; RIEMER 2000; HAUG 2003, 273–288 (Northern Italy); FIOCCHI NICOLAI 2009; POSSENTI 2014; CHAVARRÍA ARNAU 2015; EBANISTA/ROTILI 2016 (Italy and Adriatic area); CHAVARRÍA ARNAU 2018; MAXWELL 2019; RICCOMI 2021; see also the contributions NUZZO and ZIMMERMANN in this volume.

- 28 Epigraphic corpora/overviews: IBC; BritRom; KNIGHT 1992; HANDLEY 2003, 20–22; short overview also in PETTS 2019, 611f. Archaeological overviews: WATTS 1989; PHILPOT 1993; O'BRIAN 1999; QUENSEN-VON-KALBEN 2000; KEEGAN 2002; PITTS/GRIFFIN 2012; PEARCE 2013; GERRARD 2015; PEARCE 2015; PETTS 2019, 608, 611–613, 616f.; REDFERN et al. 2019.
- 29 Epigraphic corpora: I.Chr.Egypte; VAN DER VLIET 2018, with an iconographic focus: Crum, Tudor, THOMAS 2000 and the contribution NAUERTH in this volume. Archaeological overviews and case studies: DAVIS 2005; DE MOOR/FLUCK 2007; DUNAND 2007; DE MOOR/FLUCK 2011; VAN STRYDONCK 2011; O'CONNELL 2014; EICHNER 2018; HUBER 2018.
- 30 For the central Mediterranean islands, see: MARTORELLI/PIRAS/SPANU 2015; for *Sardinia* and *Sicilia*, see: ICS; SIPSicilia; NGICS; GIUNTELLA/BORGHETTI/STIAFFINI 1985; DANNHEIMER 1989; CARRA BONACASA et al. 2015; for the islands of the Aegean Sea, see: MICHAELIDIS/PERGOLA/ZANINI 2013; SWEETMAN 2019, 519f.; for Cyprus and Crete, see: I.Chr. Crete; FOX et al. 2012; PAPAGEORGHIOU/FOULIAS 2013; FOX/TRITSAROLI 2018; for Rhodes, see: VOLANAKIS 1998.
- 31 Epigraphic corpora: I.Byz.Attica; I.Chr.Cyclades. For archaeological overviews, see KOURKOUTIDOU-NICOLAIDOU 1997; LASKARIS 2000; MARANO 2018; SWEETMAN 2019, esp. 520–524 and the contribution OTT in this volume.
- 32 For the Rhine-provinces, see *Deutsche Inschriften online-database* (DIO): <http://www.inschriften.net/inschriftensuche.html> (accessed 03/02/2023) and the contributions OSNABRÜGGE and PRIEN in this volume with extensive bibliographies; for the Alpine region, see: BIERBRAUER/MOR 1986; GLASER 1997; HEBERT/STEINKLAUBER 2003; SCHMIDT 2000, 273–283. For archaeological overviews of funerary evidence from the Late Antique Balkans, see: NIKOLAJEVIĆ 1980; SNIVELY 1984; COOKE 1998; Rep. II (*Dalmatia*); SCHMIDT 2000, 283–309; VALEVA 2001; SCHMAUDER 2002; BOYADJIEV 2003; FEHR 2008; BORN 2012, esp. 36–42, 78–86, 115–123; YASIN 2012; ACHIM 2015; VIDA 2015; Rep. V (sarcophagi, *Thracia*); BOWDEN 2019, esp. 540–542; HEINRICH-TAMÁSKA/STRAUB 2015; KOCH/PRIEN/DRAUSCHKE 2016; IVANIŠEVIĆ/BUGARSKI 2018; KNIPPER et al. 2020; see also the contribution VALEVA in this volume. Epigraphic corpora of Late Antique inscriptions from the Balkan Peninsula are still rare, present only collections bound by past and current national borders and

decades. It is no surprise that in areas with a long tradition of Late Antique funerary research – e.g. Britain, Spain, Italy, France, Hungary, Greece and Germany – the latest standards and methods of tomb excavation and documentation derived from the natural sciences have been implemented on a large scale. In other areas, such as North Africa (including *Cyrenaica* and *Tripolitania*),³³ and the Near East (*Syriae*, *Mesopotamia*, *Osrhoene*),³⁴ either an updated epigraphic overview or an archaeological overview – or, in some cases, both – is lacking, or being developed only recently. This is partially to be explained by the problematic geopolitical situation currently affecting some of these regions, but also by extensive looting, stagnating administrative and preservation processing, extremely fragmented publication traditions, and scholarly disinterest in certain (e.g. Early Christian) material evidence. The proceedings of our conference will try address some of these lacunae in a synthesizing way (e.g. Arbeiter, Ardeleanu, Cubas Díaz, Destephen, Gatier, Mainardis, Nuzzo, Osnabrigge, Prien, Uberti, Valeva), but we feel that more of such regional summaries are required.

Surprisingly, Late Antiquity has so far played only a marginal role in handbooks and general overviews of ancient death and burial (Tab. 1). Jocelyn Toynbee's often-cited book on *Death and Burial in the Roman World* dedicates a limited number of pages to Late Antique funerary monuments, exclusively devoted to elite mausolea, Rome's catacombs and Early Christian sarcophagi.³⁵ Some early landmark-compendia on ancient burial integrating Late Antique topics present a welcome development for our purposes,³⁶ but there are still many recent compendia on ancient death and burial with a diachronic outlook that tend to exclude

require new approaches according to recent documentarian standards: RICM. The corpora ILJug (particularly vols. 1 and 3), ILLPRON, IMS, IScM and RIU also integrated many Late Antique epitaphs, although they are diachronically broad collections. Late Antique epitaphs have also been published in other collections: I.Chr.Bulgarien; IIFDR (*Dacia/Romania*); BARNEA 1977 (*Romania*); BARNEA 1980 (*Eastern Illyricum*); MIGOTTI 1997 (*Pannonia*); Conrad (*Moesia Inferior*); GAUTHIER/MARIN/PRÉVOT 2010 (*Salona*); LIA (*Albania*); HANDLEY 2003, 18–20 (*Balkans*).

- 33 For an updated synthesis from *Mauretania Caesariensis* to *Byzacena*, including extensive bibliography, see the contribution ARDELEANU in this volume; for *Tripolitania*, see: ILAfr and *Inscriptions of Roman Tripolitania* (IRT), also available in: <https://inslib.kcl.ac.uk/irt2009/search/index.html> (accessed 03/02/2023); WARD PERKINS/GOODCHILD 1953; for *Cyrenaica*, see: *Inscriptions of Roman Cyrenaica*: <https://ircyr2020.inslib.kcl.ac.uk/en/search/> (accessed 03/02/2023).
- 34 Epigraphic corpora: e.g. I.Syria, IGLS; BRIQUEL-CHATONNET/DEBIÉ/DESREUMAUX 2004. Archaeological (mostly regionally constrained) overviews: GRIESHEIMER 1997 (*Northern Syria*); SARTRE-FAURIAT 2001 (*Southern Syria*); KONRAD 2013 (*Syriae*); DE JONG 2017 (with some useful prospects into Late Antiquity); Rep. V (sarcophagi); EGER/MACKENSEN 2018 (several local/regional case studies).
- 35 TOYNBEE 1976, 132, 159–163, 216, 234–244.
- 36 STRUCK 1993; PEARCE/MILLET/STRUCK 2000; VAQUERIZO GIL 2002; cf. also later some transregional compendia: FABER 2007; BRINK/GREEN 2008; BRANDT/PRUSAC/ROLAND 2015; AMELING 2016; PEARCE/WEEKES 2017.

Late Antique evidence from the discussion, in contrast to the Classical or Imperial periods.³⁷

Epigraphic and archaeological studies on Late Antique funerary evidence have only recently made their appearance in handbooks dealing explicitly with Late Antiquity as a distinct period (Tab. 2). It is surely not exaggerated to state that current scholarship on Late Antique urbanism or material culture prefers other topics, such as debates on ‘decline’, on barbaric invasions/migration, on religious transformation, on *spolia*, on sculpture, on new urban foundations, on city walls, on military forts, on the cult of saints or on sacred architecture.³⁸ Burial data has been increasingly integrated in such compendia on Late Antiquity only in most recent times, which is surely also due to the potential of newly established methods in burial archaeology and funerary epigraphy (see below) for the examination of social and demographic developments of Late Antique communities.³⁹ Despite this long overdue appreciation, a closer look on many recent compendia, which did integrate Late Antique funerary case studies, reveals other challenges: (modern) national academic traditions and scholarly preferences for certain topics still dominate the picture (Tab. 1, 2). A certain fascination for the Roman catacombs and spectacular Late Antique (Imperial) mausolea is more than obvious.⁴⁰ Late Antique sarcophagi have always attracted significant scholarly attention because of their pivotal status for the development of Early Christian art and iconography.⁴¹ Our

37 HEINZELMANN 2001; SCHRUMPF 2006; BARAY/BRUN/TESTART 2007; GOWLAND/KNÜSEL 2009; SCHEID 2008; NENNA 2012; RÜPKE/SCHEID 2010; CARROLL/REMPEL 2011; CASTEX 2011; HOPE/HUSKINSON 2011; NILSSON STUTZ/TARLOW 2013; DEVLIN/GRAHAM 2015; THOMPSON 2015; DE LARMINAT et al. 2017; NENNA/HUBER/VAN ANDRINGA 2018.

38 See e.g. CHRISTIE/LOSEBY 1996; WEBSTER/BROWN 1997; BROGIOLLO/WARD-PERKINS 1999; LAVAN 2001; LIEBESCHUETZ 2001; LAVAN/BOWDEN 2003; KRAUSE/WITSCHERL 2006; BAUER 2008; YASIN 2009; SAMI/SPEED 2010; LAVAN/MULRYAN 2011; SCHATZMANN 2011; INTAGLIATA/BARKER/COURAULT 2020; JACOBS 2013; PARELLO/RIZZO 2016; SMITH/WARD-PERKINS 2016; RIZOS 2017; CARNEIRO/CHRISTIE/DIARTE-BLASCO 2020; LAVAN 2020; LÄTZER-LASAR/URCIOLI 2021; for a reflection on the dominating topics of Late Antique urban research, see: LOSEBY 2009, GRIG 2013 and HUMPHRIES 2019, 11–14 (all with almost complete exclusion of burial contexts).

39 TABBERNEE 2014; LAVAN/MULRYAN 2015; MARTORELLI/PIRAS/SPANU 2015; PARELLO/RIZZO 2016; BOLLE/MACHADO/WITSCHERL 2017a; DIARTE-BLASCO/CHRISTIE 2018; PETTEGREW/CARAGHER/DAVIS 2019; CARNEIRO/CHRISTIE/DIARTE-BLASCO 2020; GUIDETTI/MEINECKE 2020a.

40 On Late Antique Imperial funerals and mausolea, see: KOLLWITZ 1954, 210–215; TOYNBEE 1976, 159–163; JOHNSON 2009; PETTEGREW/CARAGHER/DAVIS 2019 present only one chapter on catacombs by Vincenzo Fiocchi Nicolai.

41 As it is impossible to give an overall bibliographical overview on Late Antique sarcophagi here, we concentrate on the most important compendia: KOCH 2000; STUDER-KARLEN 2012; CARTRON/HENRION/SCULLER 2015 (only *Galliae*). A very useful tool for the study of Late Antique sarcophagi is the *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage*, launched in the 1960's. Rep. I (Rome and *Ostia*); Rep. II (Italy, *Dalmatia*, world museums); Rep. III (France, Tunisia, Algeria); Rep. IV (Spain, Portugal, Morocco); Rep. V (Constantinople,

brief bibliographical survey, illustrated in Tab. 1, 2 also shows that some trans-regional compendia are (despite their promising titles) actually micro-regional overviews of those geographic areas with which their editors are familiar or where they come from.

Currently, the record of *transregional comparisons* on Late Antique funerary cultures is actually pretty sparse. Despite the high number of published Late Antique epitaphs and recent excavation projects in Late Antique burial sites, only few conferences and volumes so far have dealt with this topic from a broader, comparative perspective. Given the fact that archaeological and epigraphic material from/around tombs is an indispensable source for the study of Late Antiquity, and considering that in many Mediterranean regions and adjoining territories the earliest ‘Christian’ evidence in physical form comes mostly from burial contexts, it is astonishing that there is no handbook or companion providing an updated overview of Late Antique ‘epitaphic cultures’ and mortuary habits until this day. Studies on Late Antique funerary material always were (and still are) quite insular. Compendia such as Paul Styger’s *Altchristliche Grabeskunst* from 1927, Alfred Rush’s *Death and Burial in Christian Antiquity* from 1941 and André Grabar’s seminal work *Martyrium*, completed in 1946, paved the way for modern scholarship on Late Antique funerary practices.⁴² One could add further studies on ‘burial *ad sanctos*’, on privileged burials and on burials in churches,⁴³ on funerary liturgy and on mortuary rituals.⁴⁴ However, a particular characteristic of Late Antique townscapes, i.e. intra-urban burials, came into scholarly focus only from the late 1990’s onwards.⁴⁵

Asia Minor, Thracia, Palaestina, Arabia). For burials in sarcophagi in the Late Roman West, see: DRESKEN-WEILAND 2003; generally on Early Christian iconography within burial contexts: STYGER 1927; STUIBER 1957; MURRAY 1981; BISCONTI 2000; DRESKEN-WEILAND 2010; DRESKEN-WEILAND 2011; DRESKEN-WEILAND/ANGERSTORFER/MERKT 2012.

42 STYGER 1927; RUSH 1941; GRABAR 1943–1946.

43 LECLERCQ 1914, 1641–1650; DYGGVE 1952; KÖTTING 1965; DEICHMANN 1970; SNIVELY 1984, 117–124; DUVAL/PICARD 1986; DUVAL 1988; GLASER 1997; GRIESHEIMER 1997, 205–210; SCHOLZ 1998; GOLDFUS 1997; see now also: SCHMIDT 2000, 250–232; YOUNG 2001; LEHMANN 2007; YASIN 2009, 46–100; YASIN 2012; HAHN/KLEIN 2015; FIOCCHI NICOLAI 2016, 625–630 on the first churches with explicit burial function; SANMORÌ 1998; EGER 2018; HUBER 2018; SCHICK 2018; DE VINGO/MARANO/PINAR GIL 2021.

44 SAXE 1970 and KYRIAKAKIS 1974 (both mainly literary sources); FÉVRIER 1978; SICARD 1978; FÉVRIER 1987; PAXTON 1990, 32–44 (mainly literary sources); TREFFORT 1996; JOHNSON 1997; COOKE 1998; SANMORÌ 1998; SCHMIDT 2000; SWIFT 2000; VELKOVSKA 2001; SAMELLAS 2002 (mainly literary sources); KONRAD 2013, 210; SPERA 2005; some contributions in RÜPKE/SCHIED 2010 and THÜR 2014; IVisON 2017; there are still no lemmata in the relevant lexica on Late Antique material culture (RAC, DACL) for keywords such as “funerary rituals” or “mortuary customs”; on some reflexes of funerary rituals in epitaphs and on ‘Christian burial’ in general, see: KOLLWITZ 1954; PFOHL 1983, 473–481; PIETRI 1983, 531–535; MERKT 2012, 21–25.

45 On intra-urban (or ‘intra-mural’) burials, increasing from the late 3rd c. AD onwards in the West, see: DYGGVE 1952; MENEGHINI/SANTANGELI VALENZANI 1995; CANTINO WATAGHIN/LAMBERT 1998; VOLP 2002, 115–118 (all with the now outdated explanation of a

In 2002, Ulrich Volp published a very useful handbook on Early Christian funerary rituals with lots of archaeological, literary and epigraphic sources from the entire *oecumene*.⁴⁶ Eric Rebillard's groundbreaking works also applied a pan-Mediterranean perspective, even if some of his hypotheses that question the 'Christian character' of much known evidence have been nuanced in recent scholarship.⁴⁷ One can tell from the titles of these works alone that the main focus was driven by what the authors argued to be 'Christian funerary culture(s)' or 'Christian cemeteries' (*coemeteria*) – concepts that are still current in many national research traditions, although they have been repeatedly challenged.⁴⁸

The lack of transregional syntheses is also apparent if we zoom out to consider the two relevant disciplines combined in this volume, funerary archaeology and funerary epigraphy. *Archaeological overviews* with a similarly broad geographical outlook, such as the conferences "*L'archéologie du cimetière chrétien*" and "*L'inhumation privilégiée*", the long-term project *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage*, as well as Yvette Duval's central book on 'ad sanctos-burials' from 1988, remain exceptions and are thematically restricted.⁴⁹ An innovative and highly important book for our purposes is Ann Marie Yasin's "*Saints and Church Spaces in the Late Antique Mediterranean*" from 2009, which deals with a lot of funerary material across the *oecumene* and convincingly illustrates the potential of combining epigraphic, iconographic, architectural, spatial and ritual analysis.⁵⁰ In 2017, 2018 and

specific 'Christian' feature or due to barbarian invasions). On criticism of that last model, based on the chronological and spatial differences of intra-urban burial appearances: HAUG 2003, 278f. (with socio-economic explanation of this shift); on the ideological facets of burial *intra urbem*: CANTINO WATAGHIN 1999; for intra-urban burial in the East, already known in earlier periods (as heroa and cenotaphs), but becoming more common only by the 6th c. AD, see HENRY 2011; several contributions in EGER/MACKENSEN 2018; FOX/TRITSAROLI 2018; NABULSI et al. 2020.

46 VOLP 2002; cf. also a very useful pan-Mediterranean survey of Late Antique burial grounds (though with exclusive 'Christian' focus): FIOCCHI NICOLAI 2016; another brief overview on 'Christian' cemeteries from the entire *oecumene* was provided already by LECLERCQ 1914; the Near East (with exclusion of Greece and Egypt) is covered by SAMELLAS 2002.

47 REBILLARD 1993; REBILLARD 2003; REBILLARD 2009; differing opinions, especially concerning the 'Christian character' of burial *areae* are: YASIN 2009, 59; FIOCCHI NICOLAI 2016, 619.

48 On the discussion of the old 'problem' of recognizing genuine 'Christian' burial grounds: LECLERCQ 1914; KRAUTHEIMER 1960, esp. 28f.; FÉVRIER 1978; BRANDENBURG 1994; JOHNSON 1997; FIOCCHI NICOLAI 2016; for the rejection of religiously separated burial grounds, see REBILLARD 1993; REBILLARD 2003.

49 GALINIÉ/ZADORA-RIO 1996; DUVAL/PICARD 1986; DUVAL 1988; now updated by several recent conferences: ALDUC-LE BAGOUSSE 2009; see also DE VINGO/MARANO/PINAR GIL 2021.

50 YASIN 2009; for other studies of funerary spaces combining ritual, epigraphic, decorative and architectural data, see: DAVIS 2005; ZIMMERMANN 2012; MEINECKE 2014; ROUSSEAU 2019; DALLY/FABRICIUS/VON HESBERG 2018.

2021, four conferences in Pella, London and Aix-en-Provence explicitly dealt with the archaeology of Late Antique burials from a Mediterranean-wide perspective, clearly illustrating the desire of synthesizing the rich and growing dataset.⁵¹ Once again, Rome, Italy, Britain and Gaul dominated with several papers each, while the Eastern provinces were represented only with few case studies. In general, the Western provinces have been the subject of several transregional overviews, gathering and confronting archaeological material from Late Antique tombs.⁵² Overviews of this kind are much needed for the Eastern Mediterranean, especially, where the overall picture is still largely dominated by isolated studies, micro-regional or local analyses and publications dealing with specific, geographically limited regions.⁵³ This gap was partially closed by two volumes on burial practices in the Near East, edited in 2012 and 2018.⁵⁴ However, a general problem of these recent conferences with a specific archaeological focus was the marginal role awarded to funerary epigraphy.

It is needless to underline that natural sciences have deeply changed any approach to funerary interpretations of the Late Antique era. From the 1960's onwards, anthropological and aDNA analysis started to influence funerary archaeology, nuancing the hard-fought debates about identity and ethnicity, traditionally discussed only on the basis of grave goods and epitaphs.⁵⁵ Recently, palaeogenetics entered the funerary sciences and has influenced the 'ethnic identity debates'

- 51 Pella-conference on privileged burials: DE VINGO/MARANO/PINAR GIL 2021; "Fieldwork in Late Antique Archaeology 2017: Burial and Funerary Practice", London, 25 November 2017, <https://lateantiquearchaeology.wordpress.com/2017/11/01/fieldwork-in-late-antique-archaeology-burial-london25nov2017/> (accessed 03/02/2023); "Late Antique Archaeology 2018: Burial and Memorial in Late Antiquity", London, 17 March 2018, <https://lateantiquearchaeology.wordpress.com/2018/04/23/laa-burial-memorial-lecture-videos-birkbeck-17-03-2018/> (accessed 03/02/2023); "Death and the Societies of Late Antiquity. New Methods, New Questions?", Aix-en-Provence, 3–5 November 2021, https://mortantiquitard.sciencesconf.org/data/pages/DETAILED_PROGRAMME_1.pdf (accessed 03/02/2023).
- 52 SICARD 1978; DUVAL/PICARD 1986; DUVAL 1988; TREFFORT 1996; COOKE 1998; SWIFT 2000; SCHMIDT 2000; VAQUERIZO GIL 2002; DRESKEN-WEILAND 2003; LÓPEZ QUIROGA 2009; ROUSSEAU 2009; PINAR GIL/JUÁREZ 2010; KOCH/PRIEN/DRAUSCHKE 2016.
- 53 SAMELLAS 2002 is a welcome first step in gathering primary sources on burial practices of the 4th to 6th c. AD, although archaeological data is underrepresented here; for complementary, though regionally-restricted, archaeological overviews, see: GOLDFUS 1997; GRIESHEIMER 1997; SANMORÌ 1998; SARTRE FAURIAT 2001; KONRAD 2013; EGER 2018; SCHICK 2018.
- 54 PERRY 2012; EGER/MACKENSEN 2018. Though of a diachronic nature, both volumes have a strong focus on Late Antiquity.
- 55 UCKO 1969. On ethnic interpretations inferred from Late Antique burial contexts (mostly grave goods): BIERBRAUER/MOR 1986; RIEMER 2000; BIERBRAUER 2008; POSSENTI 2014; EGER 2015. Critical views: BRATHER 2004; VON RUMMEL 2007; FEHR 2008; THEUWS 2009; POHL 2010; HEINRICH-TAMÁSKA/STRAUB 2015; BRATHER 2016; see also the contribution PRIEN in this volume. On migration theories discussed by funerary data: HACKENBECK

ever since.⁵⁶ Despite an increasing application of such methods during the last two decades, still only few Late Antique necropoleis have been excavated by modern standards, which include ‘holistic’ analysis of funerary data, and there is no Late Antique cemetery that has been excavated entirely.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, with the help of anthropological and stable isotope/nitrogen analyses, we can now discuss an impressive range of human habits, such as diet customs, fasting practices, funeral rituals, health and hygienic status, mortality rates, demographic changes, mobility and group migrations, kinship, gender-specific patterns, and even the economic and agrarian exploitation of territories.⁵⁸ The treatment of bodies, their prepara-

2008; PEARCE 2010; HANDLEY 2011 (epitaphs); on recent reflections about aDNA analyses in burial archaeology, see now: BRATHER 2016; HOLLARD/KEYSER 2019.

56 Especially the ‘Lombard question’ continues to produce much discussion, but also vast amounts of new genetic data from burials, see e.g.: BEDINI et al. 2012; BEDINI/PETITI 2014; MAZZUCCHI et al. 2014; VAI et al. 2015; GIOSTRA 2019. For a critical review of the recent developments and risks of applying genetic research to historical narratives, see: VON RUMMEL 2018.

57 On more recent developments and problems of funerary archaeology, with a particular focus on excavations of Late Antique burials, see: PEARCE 2015.

58 On faunal evidence from Late Antique funerary contexts, see: BARON 2018; several contributions in DESCHLER-ERB et al. 2021. Stable isotope and nitrogen analysis from Late Antique tomb excavations has exploded recently, and with this footnote we want to facilitate comparative studies in this field: PEARCE 2015 (general); case studies: AL-SHORMAN 2004 (Sa’ad, Yasielah/Jordan); PROWSE et al. 2004 (*Ostia*); FULLER et al. 2006 (Britain); BEDINI/BARTOLI 2007 (Northern Italy); REDFERN 2008 (Britain); BOURBOU/Tsilipakou 2009 (Greece); ECKARDT et al. 2009 (Britain); KEENLEYSIDE et al. 2009; RUTGERS et al. 2009 (Rome); HACKENBECK et al. 2010 (Bavaria); VARGIU/PAINE 2010 (*Elaiussa Sebaste*); AL-SHORMAN/EL-KHOURI 2011 (*Barsinia/Palaestina*); BOURBOU et al. 2011 (Greece); HEINRICH-TAMÁSKA/SCHWIESSING 2011 (Keszthely-Fenekpuszta/*Pannonia*); VAN STRYDONCK et al. 2011 (Egypt); FULLER et al. 2012 (Turkey); MOLES 2012 (*Mesambria*/Bulgaria); LÖSCH/HOWER-TILMANN/ZINK 2012 (Deir el-Bachit/Egypt); PERRY et al. 2012 (*Phaeno*/Jordan); GREGORICKA/SHERIDAN 2013 (Jerusalem); KNIPPER et al. 2013 (Central Germany); BEDINI/PETITI 2014 (Piedmont); MAZZUCCHI et al. 2014 (Lombardy); SALESSE et al. 2014 (Rome); SANDIAS/MÜLDNER 2015 (Ya’amun/Jordan); VAI et al. 2015 (Piedmont); MARINATO 2016 (Northern Italy); MION et al. 2016 (Amiens/Gaul); RISSECH et al. 2016 (*Barcino*); SARAGOÇA et al. 2016 (Portugal); SCHUH/MAKAREWICZ 2016 (upper Rhine valley); KIESEWETTER 2017 (*Hierapolis/Phrygia*); HACKENBECK et al. 2017 (*Pannonia*); HERRSCHER et al. 2017 (Northern Gaul); WONG et al. 2017; EMERY et al. 2018 (Vagnari/Italy); CHAVARRÍA ARNAU 2018 (Northern Italy); FOX/TRITSAROLI 2018 (Greece, Cyprus, *Asia Minor*, Palestine); REDFERN et al. 2019 (Britain); VEERAMAH et al. 2018 (Bavaria); ALAICA et al. 2019 (Ibiza); BRATHER-WALTER 2019 (*Germaniae, Galliae*); MILELLA et al. 2019 (Bologna/Italy); CROWDER et al. 2020 (Britain, Transylvania); KNIPPER et al. 2020 (Mözs-Icsei dűlő/*Pannonia*); MAXWELL 2019 (Northern Italy); several contributions in EFFROS/MORREIRA 2020 (*Galliae*); MA et al. 2021 (Carthage); NABULSI et al. 2020 (Khirbet es-Samrā’/Syria); NOVÁČEK et al. 2020 (*Ephesos*); RICCOMI 2021 (*Tuscia*); on further data from North Africa, *Arabia* and *Palaestina*, as well as *Cilicia*, see the contributions ARDELEANU, BIANCHI and CUBAS DÍAZ in this volume; a first transregional synthesis (though with a focus on central-Eastern Europe) on stable isotopes and genetic archaeology in Late Antique and Early Medieval times is now available in GIOSTRA 2019. For a very useful (diachronic) database on strontium isotope

tion and presentation during funerals and processions (including rich clothes and goods designed for deposition in the graves), and the reception of disposed dead by contemporary audiences of funerary rituals have become increasingly important in recent scholarship.⁵⁹ New methods and bioarchaeological excavation techniques, e.g. geophysics, computer tomography of burial blocks in laboratories, as well as analyses of textiles, faunal and organic materials, made it possible to exploit many so far underrepresented facets of mortuary practices and cemetery organization.⁶⁰ From the 1970's onwards, the social meaning, as well as the commemorative and communicative potential of burials, came into the focus of post-processual archaeology, a field that in more recent times seems to experience a growing importance.⁶¹ During the 1980's, Henri Duda established his influential concept of *archaeoethanatology*. This concept, which includes the management and development of corpse treatment and its decay, for the first time tried to apply as many traditional archaeological excavation techniques as possible *together with* natural sciences during the proper excavation of burials.⁶²

Like Late Antique funerary archaeology, the study of Late Antique *funerary epigraphy* has suffered from very different biases. From the late 19th century onwards, there have been many attempts to synthesize the abundant material. Yet again, transregional compendia are extremely rare. The corpus *Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae Veteres* (ILCV) was initiated in 1925 in order to cover the Western Roman Empire (except Rome, Spain and Britain), while the *Inscriptiones Christianae Graecae* (ICG) started in 2008 to deal with at least two central regions of the East (*Asia Minor* and Greece). However, both corpora explicitly focus on 'Christian inscriptions' and exclude other Late Antique data. From the 1980's onwards,

analyses from the Mediterranean, see: <https://isoarch.eu/database/> (accessed 03/02/2023); an ERC-project (HistoGenes) launched in 2020 will analyze high volumes of genetic data from Late Antique and Early Medieval burials (AD 400–900) in Eastern Europe: <https://www.histogenes.org/> (accessed 03/02/2023).

- 59 DAVIS 2005; REIFARTH 2013; PEARCE 2015, esp. 451, 453; THOMPSON 2015; DEVLIN/GRAHAM 2015; GRIG 2018; KRAUSSE et al. 2020.
- 60 DAVIS 2005; RUTGERS et al. 2007; DE MOOR/FLUCK 2007; DE MOOR/FLUCK 2011; VAN STRYDONCK et al. 2011; LÖSCH/HOWER-TILMANN/ZINK 2012; REIFARTH 2013; BARON 2018; HUBER 2018; EICHNER 2018; BRATHER-WALTER 2019; KRAUSSE et al. 2020; on geophysics, which allow spectacular insights in delimitation of burial plots and whole cemeteries, and might also detect grave markers without excavation: KONRAD 2013, 205; PEARCE 2015, 449, 452.
- 61 On the first studies (including Late Antique material) on funerary evidence understood as social practices: SAXE 1970; TREFFORT 1996; see later also: CHESSON 2001; DAVIS 2005; GOWLAND/KNÜSEL 2009; GRAHAM 2009; for growing interest in Roman (funerary) commemoration practices: CARROLL/REMPEL 2011; HOPE/HUSKINSON 2011; DE JONG 2017. On specific Late Antique contexts, see: KOTILA 1992; BRINK/GREEN 2008; REBILLARD 2009; YASIN 2009; HALSALL 2010, 232–260.
- 62 DUDAY 2009, with references to and development of his former studies; see BARAY/BRUN/TESTART 2007; RÉVEILLAS 2019.

Late Antique funerary epigraphy was also integrated in several influential overviews.⁶³ The conference “*La terza età dell’epigrafia*” in 1988 was a landmark and a decisive step towards the consolidation of Late Antique epigraphy as an autonomous ‘discipline’, which ever since has had its own sessions at the international conferences on Greek and Latin epigraphy.⁶⁴ Over the last three decades, digital editing of inscriptions in databases with specific query tools (allowing researchers to search for an inscriptions’ materiality, supports and find context) enable new interdisciplinary research endeavors.⁶⁵ These documentation instruments as well as a new methodological approach to inscriptions, have stimulated new reflections on how inscriptions were produced, set up, perceived and treated. The ‘sociological’ or ‘contextual’ value of inscriptions, applied in epigraphic scholarship, also provoked new methodological approaches for the study of funerary epigraphy. From the 1980’s and 1990’s onwards, epitaphs were increasingly studied with a new focus on their archaeological and spatial contexts, their supports, their materiality, their iconography and decoration, their appearance as well as their communicative and commemorative potential.⁶⁶ Ricardo Galvão-Sobrinho’s article from 1995 presented a first statistical survey on ‘Early Christian’ funerary epigraphy in the West, and more recent works discussed the question of differing (Latin) epigraphic habits in Late Antiquity.⁶⁷ The concept of the endurance of very heterogeneous, but still vital ‘epitaphic habits’ (later ‘epigraphic cultures’) across the Late Antique *oecumene* was established during the last three decades.⁶⁸ In 2015, a volume on “*Spätantike Grabinschriften im Westen des Römischen Reiches*” continued this trend with several mi-

63 MACMULLEN 1982; SHAW 1984; the two lemmata in the *Reallexicon für Antike und Christentum* on Greek and Latin funerary inscriptions were written in 1983; PFOHL 1983; PIETRI 1983.

64 DONATI 1988.

65 For specific databases, see the footnotes above and the contributions ARDELEANU, FELLE, OSNABRÜGGE, UBERTI and ZIMMERMANN in this volume.

66 Epitaphs: MACMULLEN 1982, 239–242; SHAW 1984; MEYER 1990, esp. 81–94; SARTORI 1997; epitaphs and inscriptions in Late Antique funerary contexts: TULLOCH 2006; MAZZOLENI 2002; HANDLEY 2003, 35–88; BRINK/GREEN 2008; DRESKEN-WEILAND/ANGERSTORFER/MERKT 2012; BOLLE 2019; more generally on Late Antique inscriptions (not only funerary) and their appearance: SUSINI 1982; TROUT 2009; EASTMOND 2015; BOLLE/MACHADO/WITSCHEL 2017b; on materiality of inscriptions in general: MEIER/OTT/SAUER 2015; PETROVIC/PETROVIC/THOMAS 2019.

67 GALVÃO-SOBRINHO 1995; more recently: CLEMENS/MERTEN/SCHÄFER 2015. For the Greek East, comparable transregional overviews of Late Antique funerary epigraphy are lacking or have been developed only for thematically restricted evidence (SGO) or broad diachronic overviews with no particular Late Antique focus (NOWOTKA 2021). MAZZOLENI 2002, DRESKEN-WEILAND 2010, DRESKEN-WEILAND/ANGERSTORFER/MERKT 2012 and BOLLE/MACHADO/WITSCHEL 2017a integrate some material from the East.

68 DONATI 1988; GALVÃO-SOBRINHO 1995; DRESKEN-WEILAND 2012; BOLLE/MACHADO/WITSCHEL 2017a.

cro-regional overviews on the West.⁶⁹ For the East, until recently one could only rely on a myriad of local and micro-regional (but mostly diachronic) corpora and two recent conferences with several case studies from Constantinople and its wider regional environment, which on the other hand presented only limited data on funerary epigraphy.⁷⁰ The 2021 handbook “*Epigraphic Culture in the Eastern Mediterranean in Antiquity*” finally presents a much-needed transregional, diachronic and statistical overview of epigraphic practices in the regions still dominated by Greek epigraphy.⁷¹ Additionally, “*The Epigraphic Cultures of Late Antiquity*”, published in 2017, navigates through the entire Mediterranean and heavily builds on epitaphs as a main source of discussion.⁷² However, in all of these the clear epigraphic focus led to the fact that *funerary archaeology* did not play a significant role.

Methodological Problems of Late Antique Funerary Research: Some Attempts at a Solution

The aforementioned narrow disciplinary approaches as well as a set of other methodological problems is characteristic for studies on Late Antique funerary material. Scholarship on Late Antique tombs has always been and still is interwoven with the problematic terms of a ‘Christian epigraphy’⁷³ or ‘Christian burials’.⁷⁴ Enough has been said about the risks, but also about the legitimization of such terms. We have clear evidence for Christian funerary *areae* and Jewish dominated burial grounds (Ardeleanu, Felle, Nuzzo, Zimmermann) from the early 4th c. AD onwards,⁷⁵ but in most regions of the *oecumene*, Christians did not physically separate their dead from deceased Jews or pagans, neither did they bury them according to differing customs (Arbeiter, Ardeleanu, Cubas Díaz, Gatier, Osnabrügge, Ott, Prien, Valeva). The formulae of funerary inscriptions start showing clear references to Christianity only from the late 3rd c. AD onwards, but even later it is often simply impossible to differentiate between Christian, Jewish or pagan, since the formulae are often

69 CLEMENS/MERTEN/SCHÄFER 2015; earlier epigraphic syntheses on the Late Antique West were presented in ILCV and IGCVO; see also later: CARLETTI 2008; HANDLEY 2011; WITSCHERL 2017.

70 RHOBY 2015; LAUXTERMANN/TOTH 2020, which, however, integrates the whole Byzantine period.

71 Almost all contributions in NAWOTKA 2021 expand on funerary epigraphy until the 7th c. AD, even if explanations for curve peaks or falls are only rarely provided for the timespan of our interest (3rd–8th c. AD); see also the conclusions NAWOTKA et al. 2021, esp. 232–240, where Late Antique dynamics of epigraphic practices are discussed in detail, but emphasis is attributed almost exclusively to non-funerary inscriptions.

72 BOLLE/MACHADO/WITSCHERL 2017a.

73 On the problems, see SALWAY 2015; ROUECHÉ/SOTINEL 2017.

74 JOHNSON 1997; VOLP 2002, 96–151.

75 FIOCCHI NICOLAI 2016.



Fig. 4: Detail of the funerary banquet scene.

Fig. 3: Tomis, late 3rd–4th c. AD-funerary stela with *D(is) M(anibus) S(acrum)*-formula and funerary banquet scene.

nearly identical (Cubas Díaz, Gatier, Nuzzo). The burial habit of inhumation spread across the *oecumene* from the late 2nd c. AD onwards, but it was neither a Christian custom nor did it totally displace cremation everywhere (Ardeleanu, Mainardis, Prien) (Fig. 3).⁷⁶ In many regions, the transition from ‘pagan’ to ‘Christian’ was slow and complex. This is best demonstrated by continuities in funerary art or formulae such as *D(is) M(anibus) S(acrum)* which survive into the 5th and 6th c. AD (Fig. 4). On the other hand, it has been recognized that putatively ‘Christian’ formulae such as ἐνθάδε κίτε/κεῖται were used already in pagan times (Cubas Díaz, Gatier). Neither should one forget the persistence of pagan funeral rituals such as mummification (Merten, Nauwerth) (Fig. 5) or the ‘Charon’s obol’ (Mainardis, Ott, Prien). Libation, funerary feasting, funerary banquet scenes and ‘pagan’ motives are still well-documented in many 4th to 6th c. AD-burial contexts, funerary mosaics, stelae, funerary *mensae*, sarcophagi and paintings (Arbeiter, Ardeleanu, Merten, Ott, Prien, Uberti, Valeva) (Figs. 3, 4, 6).⁷⁷

⁷⁶ VOLP 2002, 186–195; PEARCE 2015, 442, esp. 452f.; FOX/TRITSARIOLI 2018.

⁷⁷ In general: MURRAY 1981 and many references in MULRYAN 2011; the century-old and ‘global’ motif of the funerary banquet (‘Totenmahl’) is still present in 4th–5th c. AD funerary monuments across and beyond the *oecumene*: on literary and archaeological evidence, see: SCHMIDT 2000, 234–246; for numerous Late Antique funerary stelae with ‘Totenmahl’ scenes from Italy, the Balkans and the Aegean Sea: AE 1987, 804; AE 2010, 1299;



Fig. 5: Deir el-Bachît, St. Paul Monastery, Necropolis, Mummy in context incl. the grave marker that sustained a wooden cross.

This is not to say that religious affiliation was not an important facet of funerary representation in Late Antiquity, as is best demonstrated by the wide distribution of unambiguous symbols such as crosses, *menoroth*, Christian and Jewish epigraphic formulae or onomastics from the 4th c. AD onwards (Ardeleanu, Cubas Díaz, Felle, Zimmermann). What matters more in this discussion, in our view, is the syncretic, multivalent character and the social context of such religious ostentation. Well-attested textiles from Egypt with richly woven Christian motives produced explicitly for burial were probably used as divine protection in death, but they were also part of an inherited, pre-Christian funerary culture and of ‘public showings’, e.g. in processions, in order to enhance the social status of the deceased and their heirs (see also Ott).⁷⁸ In other words: there may have been multiple reasons for the geographically uneven evidence at our disposal, and geopolitical as well as chronological circumstances have to be taken into account. Strong and enduring local facets of epitaphic habits as well as kinship traditions may have rendered religious affiliation during the 3rd and 4th c. less important than previously thought. The discretion of Christians before the peace of the Church might explain the lack of pre-4th c. AD religious ostentation. Conversely, in the 5th–7th c. AD the demonstration of ‘Christianness’ in burial practices was no longer required in many regions.

Conrad, nos. 194, 195, 274; RIU 368, 1010, 1179; RIU III 906; RIU V 1164; IScM V 43; CIL III 10611; CIL XI 3800; I.Chr.Cyclades, p. 251, pl. 53; several 4th c. AD-sarcophagi with diners in relief or sculpture from the Eastern provinces: ILJug 2762; for Tyros, see: DE JONG 2010, 608; Rep. V; for banquet scenes and syncretic motifs in funerary paintings, see: FIRATLI 1966; MICHAELI 1996; VALEVA 2001; DAVIS 2005; DRESKEN-WEILAND 2010, 181–212; ZIMMERMANN 2012; ROUSSEAU 2019; several contributions in GUIDETTI/MEINECKE 2020a.

⁷⁸ DAVIS 2005, 362; see further examples and useful bibliography in MULRYAN 2011.

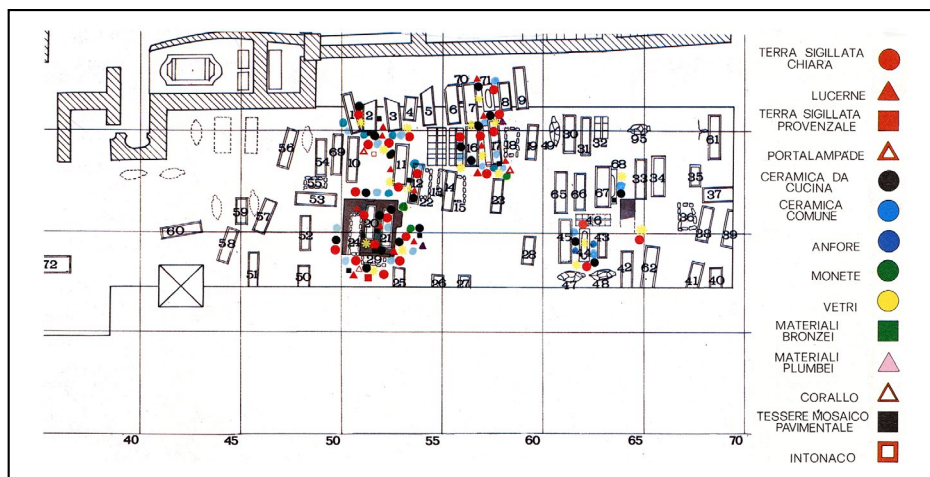


Fig. 6: Funerary *mensae* with associated ritual deposits from Late Antique *Cornus/Sardinia*.

As we have seen in the last section, Late Antique funerary studies have always been dominated by a predilection for certain research topics. The interest in spectacular elite burials is striking,⁷⁹ while ordinary burials have long been overlooked or excavated without proper documentation. However, it is obvious that middle- and lower-status burials have their legitimate value for the reconstruction of funerary topographies, of social hierarchies, of demography and mobility. This is perfectly shown by their balanced integration into most contributions to this volume (Arbeiter, Ardeleanu, Bianchi, Cubas Díaz, Felle, Mainardis, Gatier, Ott, Osnabrügge, Prien, Uberti, Zimmermann). The much-needed, stronger adaption of isotope and aDNA analysis of burials could mark a huge progress in the discussion about recognizing burial habits among Late Antique groups of lower or higher social status or of professional or monastic affiliation.⁸⁰

But also the dominant topics in Late Antique funerary studies have their problems. The leading role of Rome and Constantinople in the production and distribution of elaborate relief sarcophagi has been well-studied by art historians, but the archaeological contexts of myriads of other provincial sarcophagi have only re-

79 GRIG 2013, 564f. rightly criticizes the general focus of Late Antique research on elite material culture.

80 See already remarkable results and debates about detection of social status by isotopic analysis of human remains: FULLER et al. 2006; KEENLEYSIDE et al. 2009; BOURBOU/Tsilipakou 2009, 127; RUTGERS et al. 2009, 1132f.; HACKENBECK et al. 2010, 3f.; KNIPPER et al. 2013; RISSECH et al. 2016; HERRSCHER et al. 2017; EMERY et al. 2018; ALAICA et al. 2019; REDFERN et al. 2019; KNIPPER et al. 2020, 19; MA et al. 2021; monastic attribution: LÖSCH/HOWER-TILMANN/ZINK 2012; GREGORICKA/SHERIDAN 2013; professional attribution: PERRY et al. 2012; NOVÁČEK et al. 2020, 213 (slaves?).



Fig. 7: Constantinople, marble sarcophagus with epitaph with inlaid letters (metal?) and portrayal representation with inscription incl. the formula ἐνθάδε κίται.

cently been considered in depth (Arbeiter, Cubas Díaz).⁸¹ There are still too few studies on the finding conditions and the contextual integration of elaborate sarcophagi within various funerary spaces (Fig. 7). The opposition between urban and rural necropoleis remains a strongly felt dichotomy in current scholarship, but some case studies in this volume try to give more balanced overviews of the differences and similarities between these two funerary worlds (Arbeiter, Ardeleanu, Cubas Díaz, Destephen, Gatier, Prien, Osnabrügge).⁸²

Another major methodological problem of funerary research in Late Antiquity remains that of absolute dating, and this is true for both epigraphy and archaeology. The bulk of Late Antique tombs and epitaphs is still impossible to date (or can only be dated roughly) by traditional approaches, such as linguistic, formulaic, onomastic, palaeographic, numismatic and typo-chronological analyses.⁸³ Regional dating systems such as provincial or regnal eras (Arbeiter, Ardeleanu, Bianchi, Destephen, Gatier), consular dates (Cubas Díaz, Gatier, Nuzzo, Uberti), and indictions do help to

81 DRESKEN-WEILAND 2003; MEINECKE 2014; DALLY/FABRICIUS/VON HESBERG 2018.

82 Only for Late Antique Britain, a high standard of excavation of both urban and rural necropoleis can be observed, though also here, the preference for urban funerary archaeology is evident: PEARCE 2013; PEARCE 2015, 448f.

83 The problem of dating Late Antique inscriptions was recognized as early as the first scientific corpora emerged in the mid-19th c.: DE ROSSI 1862.



Fig. 8: *Sardeis*, 4th c. AD-hypogaeum of Chrysantios, a δουκηνάριος φαβρικήσιος (high official and armorer) and ζωγράφος (painter), (tomb 76.1, Appendix A.1), with wreath inscription and funerary paintings showing 'classical' topics such as birds and scattered flowers as possible reference to rituals performed within the tomb.

establish relative chronologies in some regions, but mostly they are absent or only preserved in small numbers.⁸⁴ However, there is great archaeological potential in stratigraphic, radiocarbon, dendrochronological (e.g. with preserved wood from coffins) or thermoluminescence dating.⁸⁵ Several contributions to this volume present new approaches to the question of dating tombs and epitaphs as well as their long-term use after their original setting was abandoned (**Ardeleanu, Bianchi, Felle, Gatier, Mainardis, Merten, Nuzzo, Ott, Prien**). These approaches should be developed further in order to precise regional and local chronologies of funerary evidence.

A challenge for any epigraphic as well as archaeological project on Late Antique burials is the uneven state of preservation and archaeological visibility within tombs or necropoleis. From well-preserved contexts in arid or semi-arid areas we know that inscriptions on stone, on mosaics or as painting were not the only form of tomb signaling. The accurately organized rows of many Late Antique cemeteries suggest surface marking. Wooden markers and enclosure features (often preserved only as postholes, see Fig. 5), anepigraphic stone mounds, but also anepigraphic stelae, tile roofs and cist tombs with simple symbols such as crosses or *menoroth* have to be taken into consideration (**Arbeiter, Ardeleanu, Cubas Díaz, Gatier, Felle, Nauwerth, Nuzzo, Zimmermann**). As well-excavated contexts from Egypt show, wooden stelae and tomb covers could contain painted or plaster-incised epitaphs, and it is therefore possible that entire series of (today lost) markers that have been considered anepigraphic, were in fact inscribed.⁸⁶ Finally, we have to bear in mind that tomb

⁸⁴ HANDLEY 2003, 122–138; for *Palaestina/Arabia*, see: MEIMARIS 1992.

⁸⁵ On conventional dating by 'epigraphic' criteria: KNIGHT 1992; GALVÃO-SOBRINHO 1995; HANDLEY 2003; WITSCHERL 2017, 40; NIKITSCH 2018; on 14C, typological and stratigraphic dating of tombs, which, however, require high funding resources: DE MOOR/FLUCK 2007; RUTGERS et al. 2007 (with radiocarbon dating of charcoal material scattered in the sealing mortars of tombs); SALESSE 2014; GERRARD 2015; HEINRICH-TAMÁSKA/STRAUB 2015; PEARCE 2015, 443.

⁸⁶ EICHNER 2018, 237f.

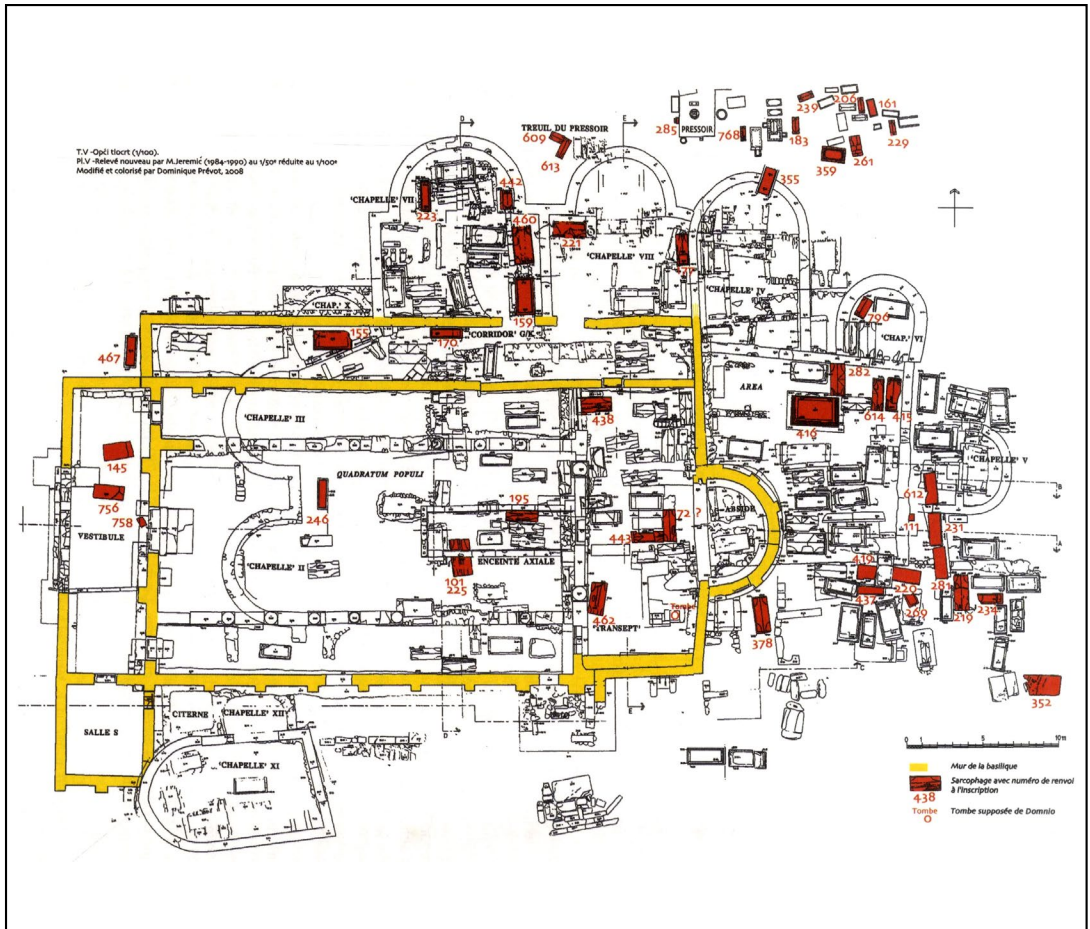


Fig. 9: *Salona*, Manastirine church with alleged *ad sanctos*-burials and distribution of inscriptions.

markers did not always signal single tombs, even if the funerary stela or *tabula* from a mausoleum mentions only one name. As anthropological and contextual analyses have revealed, single epitaphs might have signaled collective tombs for whole *familiae* (Ardeleanu, Gatier, Mainardis, Uberti), specific social groups, such as monastic communities (Bianchi) and professional associations (Cubas Díaz) (Fig. 8), or age- and gender-related groups (Ardeleanu, Bianchi, Ott).

Ideological problems still dominate Late Antique funerary research: the identification of (literary-attested) famous sites of Early Christianity always was – and still is – a catalyst driving excavation projects and approaches, instead of developing stratigraphic sequences and dating, e.g. of church building phases (Fig. 9).⁸⁷ The interest in the material evidence of a ‘Palaeochristian past’ in Western (Christian)

87 YASIN 2012 with deconstruction of the tenuous, literary-based development of monumentalization of *Salona*’s churches; *contra*: GAUTHIER/MARIN/PRÉVOT 2010; FIOCCHI

countries deeply contrasts scholarly interests in the (Muslim) Near and Middle East and North Africa, where Late Antique monuments and material culture came into focus considerably later, mostly driven by Western scholars in the era of colonization.

This is not the place to critically evaluate varying approaches and national academic traditions to interpret material evidence. However, it seems obvious to us – and this is strongly supported also by our preceding overview of the history of scholarship – that there is one structural problem of disciplines dealing with funerary data. Late Antique archaeologists still come together to discuss funerary habits, tomb types and grave goods, while Late Antique epigraphists primarily deal with funerary inscriptions by privileging the content of the texts. This is why we wanted to unify both disciplines under the umbrella of a chronologically well-defined but geographically still wide enough topic: “*Contextualizing Epigraphic and Archaeological Evidence of Mortuary Practices*”.

Localism, Micro-Regionalism and Pan-Mediterranism: Defining Shared Characteristics of a Late Antique ‘Funerary *koiné*’

The title of this book deliberately features the term *oecumene*, in order to stress an unbiased view of the way both regionalism and globalism may be represented in Late Antique material culture(s). In this case, *oecumene* should be regarded not as an ecclesiastical, but as a geographical term, as it was used in Late Antiquity itself: the *inhabited world*. Across this huge expanse, from the margins of the Sahara to *Arabia*, and from Trier to Egypt, funerary cultures emerged with very different regional characteristics. By taking these different regions into consideration in a balanced and comparative way, we hope to avoid centrist views on Late Antique capitals or the Mediterranean alone. Common or ‘global’ funerary habits, in fact, are known not only from regions without direct access to the Mediterranean, but also from the frontiers of the Late Roman Empire and even well beyond them.

Instead of concentrating on long-established (but problematic) models of acculturation, such as ‘Romanization’ and ‘Christianization’, recent scholarship has made considerable progress in identifying micro-regional identities and micro-regional biases of material culture, without neglecting global trends that were obviously at work. The concepts of ‘localism’ and ‘regionalism’, as well as ‘globalization’ or ‘glocalization’, have been established as powerful and useful tools to explain cultural transformation apart from problematic ethnic or religious affiliations.⁸⁸ For Late Antique funerary studies, the potential of ‘globalization’ theories

NICOLAI 2016, 624; for a critical view on the invention of holy spaces in Rome: DENZEY LEWIS 2020.

⁸⁸ On localism: BECK 2020; on regionalism: WHITMARSH 2010; on glocalization: ROBERTSON 1998; FINE/THOMPSON 2018; on ‘globalization’ and archaeology: PITTS/VERSLUYS 2015; HODOS 2017; KOUREMENOS/GORDON 2020.

have not yet been applied systematically, although recently microregional diversity and localism became thriving fields of scientific work.⁸⁹ As many of this volume's contributions show, both localisms and the presence of similar material evidence from funerary contexts encountered far off, may have been the result of the cultural, economic and political interconnectedness of the Late Antique World. Recently-developed methods help in fact to better understand changes in material culture as caused by a balanced mixture of local/regional and 'global' trends not excluding each other – trends that, moreover, impacted and shaped each other on different levels. The concept of the inseparable 'entanglement' of material culture with its former users and its dialectic between local *and* global is the theoretical background we try to apply in this volume. On the one hand, it was our aim to stress the importance of local and regional developments influencing funerary and epigraphic cultures. On the other hand, this approach should not leave unconsidered the transregional (or 'global') trends that can doubtlessly be traced in Late Antique funerary customs. The volume's structure shows this lockstep in a particular way. Concentrating on their specific areas of research, the authors all provide important case studies for regional or local traits of funerary and epigraphic developments. Nevertheless, all contributions are also entangled with each other, as they discuss funerary customs that appear in several regions of the Late Antique *oecumene*.⁹⁰

Despite all recent focus on regional and local particularities, it is important to acknowledge that universally recognizable characteristics of a 'funerary *koiné*', visible in material culture for many centuries, persisted in Late Antiquity. One may think of the numerous *carmina*, *elogia* and funerary epigrams known from across the Late Antique *oecumene*.⁹¹ This particular class of elite funerary inscriptions was deeply rooted in classical culture and was applied – as in previous times – to represent the *παίδεῖα* of the deceased. It is no surprise to find such elaborate inscriptions attached to high-class tomb types, such as mausolea and hypogaea (**Arbeiter, Ardeleanu, Gatier, Mainardis, Valeva**). Exceptional tombs across the *oecumene* required exceptional epigraphic and decorative signaling, such as colorful mosaics or paintings in underground burials (**Arbeiter, Ardeleanu, Felle, Nuzzo, Valeva, Zimmermann**) and the use of precious materials, such as glass, gold or exotic

89 'Globalization' theories, in general, have become increasingly applied only in recent Late Antique studies: WICKHAM 2005; HUMPHRIES 2017; PREISER-KAPPELLER 2018; GUIDETTI/MEINECKE 2020a; for 'global' trade, see: HARRIS 2007; for growing appreciation of regional and local approaches in Late Antique studies, see: MULRYAN 2011; GRIG 2013, 557f.; BOLLE/MACHADO/WITSCHERL 2017a (several chapters on regional features of Late Antique epigraphic cultures); MICHAELIDIS/PERGOLA/ZANINI 2013; GNOLI/NERI 2019 (on regional identities); HUMPHRIES 2019, 12f.; on the idea of 'Mediterranean cities' in Late Antiquity, see: LOSEBY 2009; on regionality of dress accessories from Late Antique burials, see: SWIFT 2000.

90 Every contribution therefore bares cross-linking references to comparative examples within this volume in the footnotes.

91 SGO; see also GRIG 2017.

marbles. Funerary paintings (including painted *tituli*) remained *en vogue* across the *oecumene*. They can mostly be encountered in underground burial contexts, such as barrel-vaulted tombs or hypogaea, and it is astonishing to find ‘timeless’ iconographic schemes, such as funerary banquet scenes and established patterns of floral and geometric motives, not only in the Roman catacombs, but also in tombs along the Danube and in the Eastern and African provinces (Ardeleanu, Bianchi, Gattier, Nuzzo, Ott, Valeva, Zimmermann) (Fig. 8).⁹²

Supra-regional similarities also become evident in the material culture presented in this book. The sudden and widely attested spread of mosaic epitaphs in the central and Southwestern Mediterranean (to which one may add some sparse examples from the *Dioecesis Orientis*) from the 4th c. AD onwards probably responded to a new idea of their communicative and commemorative potential. These colorful inscriptions attracted viewers in a much more direct way than their predecessors in stone, and it is not surprising to find them clustered in ‘visible’ funerary contexts, such as churches or *areae*. Despite some local particularities in their production, there are many cross-references (style, format, motifs, topics) between mosaic epitaphs in North Africa, Sardinia, the Adriatic area and the Iberian Peninsula (Arbeiter, Ardeleanu).⁹³ This new trend of highlighting epitaphs in colors and adopting them to increase the tombs’ architectural and decorative affordance is also evident in the increasing number of painted inscriptions in funerary contexts (Ardeleanu, Felle, Nuzzo, Valeva, Zimmermann). Furthermore, we can trace some transregional or ‘global’ similarities of top-elite burials, such as their use of exorbitantly decorated relief sarcophagi, gold-thread textiles, luxurious dress-accessories (e.g. crossbow brooches), spectacular glass wares (*diatrete* glasses or ‘cage cups’; Fig. 10) or ‘gypsum burials’ (Arbeiter, Ardeleanu, Bianchi, Merten, Ott, Prien).⁹⁴ These extremely rich ensembles point to well-orchestrated, public burial ceremonies and a shared language of elite funerary representation across the

92 For an even wider geographical and chronological context, see: GUIDETTI/MEINECKE 2020b, 15f.

93 DUVAL 1976; CARRA BONACASA et al. 2015; Quattrocchi; cf. also some remarks in WITSCHL 2017, 48f.

94 On top-elite (including Imperial) sarcophagi, see entries in the volumes of the *Repertorium*; on gold-thread finds (*Galliae*, North Africa, Britain, Iberian Peninsula, Italy, *Noricum*, *Pannonia*, *Moesia*, *Scythia Minor*, Greece, *Asia Minor*, Palestine and *Syria*); SCHMIDT 2000; DRESKEN-WEILAND 2003; BORN 2012, 82; REIFARTH 2013, 478–491; SALESSE et al. 2014; PEARCE 2015, 454; GRIG 2017, 428; on ‘gypsum’ or ‘plaster burials’, well distributed along the Rhine provinces, *Galliae*, Britain, but also known from Italy, North Africa, Egypt and *Pannonia*: REIFARTH 2013, 433–477; PEARCE 2015, 453; SALESSE et al. 2014, 43; on similar finds of luxurious dress accessories across the Empire: SCHMAUDER 2002; VON RUMMEL 2007; DE MOOR/FLUCK 2011; EGER 2015; on the ca. 80 Late Antique *diatrete* with concentrations in the Rhine zone, Gaul, Italy and the Eastern Mediterranean: WHITEHOUSE 2015; on crossbow brooches as possible markers of high military positions in the Late Roman state, see: SWIFT 2000.



Fig. 10: Diatreta glass from a funerary context at a *villa* in Köln-Braunsfeld, 1st half 4th c. AD with inscription: ΠΙΕ ΖΗΤΑΙC ΚΑΛΩC ΑΕΙ (Drink, live well forever).

oecumene.⁹⁵ In some cases, the lavishness of burials and their furnishing could be associated with members of the Imperial court (Merten), with military aristocrats or with royal commissioners, who wanted to present themselves as members of a Mediterranean-wide upper elite class (Fig. 8).⁹⁶

On the other hand, regional, and local heterogeneity was the rule in Late Antique burial customs. This is reflected by the regionally differentiated structure of this book. The epitaphic and mortuary habits could vary enormously, even between neighboring towns within a 10 km distance. This heterogeneity becomes very obvious in the materiality of tomb markers, showing a wide panorama of variety. While in some funerary landscapes the ‘classical’ grave stele was still dominant, with characteristic variations in form, scale, decoration and script (Ardeleanu, Gatier, Nauwerth),⁹⁷ other such landscapes were marked by their own traditions, e.g. in the predominant use of sarcophagi, developed only in Late Antiquity (Arbeiter,

95 Cf. PEARCE 2015, 458.

96 On the debate of Late Antique ‘Prunkgräber’: SCHMAUDER 2002; VON RUMMEL 2007, 382f.; EGER 2015, 273f.; THEUWS 2019.

97 See also *Moesia and Thracia*: Conrad.

Ardeleanu, Cubas Díaz, Mainardis, Osnabrügge, Prien, Uberti). Specific natural pre-conditions, such as soil and stone quality, also influenced the emergence of local funerary types, such as catacombs and underground or rock-carved burials (Cubas Díaz, Felle, Gatier, Zimmermann). Since a variegated collection of different local and regional characteristics will be presented in the single contributions, it is not necessary to outline them in this chapter. Instead, the following sections will summarize some central, and repeatedly addressed themes and phenomena discussed in the various chapters of this book. We believe that these results can be of value for general future studies on Late Antique funerary customs.

Collective *and* Individual Traits in Funerary Ownership and Social Representation

Recent work has shown that, in the course of Late Antiquity, a predominantly individual self-presentation in and around tombs was slowly replaced by collective representation.⁹⁸ In some regions, we have firm evidence for Christian authorities taking care of the dead, managing cemeterial organization and – more importantly – paying burial plots also for the poor (Ardeleanu, Bianchi, Cubas Díaz, Zimmermann).⁹⁹ It is generally accepted that this caritative *cura pro mortuis* (alongside with the doctrine of resurrection of the body) was one of the most significant facets of the success of Christianity, since in other religions such widespread care for the dead was absent.¹⁰⁰ Some inscriptions indicate that organized *collegia* (not necessarily of exclusively Christian or Jewish character) were responsible for selling and administrating burial plots. However, the indications discussed in almost every contribution to this volume show that individual representation at tombs remained significant throughout Late Antiquity: spectacular mausolea built all over the *oecumene* (Arbeiter, Ardeleanu, Cubas Díaz, Gatier, Mainardis, Uberti, Valeva), innumerable Early Christian sarcophagi, luxurious grave goods as well as highly elaborate decorative and epigraphic furnishings of tombs (also in churches).¹⁰¹ Status, παιδεία and wealth of the dead, as well as individual tomb ownership, were still expressed by adding personal traits to the presentation of the body, by written messages (e.g. through ostentatious addition of burial prices:

98 YASIN 2005; YASIN 2009; FIOCCHI NICOLAI 2016, 626–639 even states that the collective Eucharist in (burial) churches replaced any form of individual rituals and self-representation by the 5th c. AD; on the importance of collective burials already in Imperial times, see: PEARCE 2001.

99 Tert. apol. 39; see also DRESKEN-WEILAND 2012, 79–81.

100 BRANDENBURG 1994; REBILLARD 2009.

101 For mausolea, often attached to churches in Late Antiquity, see: CHEVALIER/SAPIN 2012; for sarcophagi, see: *Repertorium*; for grave goods, see: VOLP 2002, 198; for the East: KONRAD 2013, 208–210.

Ott, Felle, Zimmermann), but also by including private portraits in tomb paintings, mosaics or on relief sarcophagi (Arbeiter, Ardeleanu, Felle, Gatier, Zimmermann, Valeva).¹⁰² During the second half of the 3rd c. AD, the popular habit of individual representation in funerary statues (life-sized or over-life-sized) in/on top of tombs, as well as the custom of staging deceased persons in *ronde-bosse* on top of sarcophagi decreased sensibly, but both were still perpetuated regionally throughout the 4th c. AD (Valeva).¹⁰³ Rich garments and staged processions enhanced virtues such as *dignitas*, *auctoritas*, *pietas*, *nobilitas* and *honor*. These century-old norms, gradually enriched by new 'Christian' virtues, such as *devotio* or *religiositas* were still praised in many epitaphs for men, as were *pudicitia*, *castitas* and *fides* for women or *innocentia* for children. Professions were still proudly on display in epitaphs and images, and they never lost their function as markers of socio-economic distinction. While a general trend of decreasing display of professional affiliation (with local exceptions in Ardeleanu, Felle, Zimmermann) is visible in the West, such display flourished and even peaked during Late Antiquity in several Eastern regions (Cubas Díaz, Destephen, Gatier).¹⁰⁴ Moreover, in enclosures *sub divo* and within churches, families were still active in purchasing privileged burial plots and in proudly demonstrating kinship in their funerary inscriptions (Ardeleanu, Bianchi, Gatier, Mainardis).¹⁰⁵

New Funerary Spaces of Social Negotiation and the Interiorization of Inscriptions

Most contributions to this book focus on the topology of funerary epigraphy, i.e. the examination of the exact setting and use of inscriptions and tombs within their original spatial context. Three broad types of funerary spaces dominated during

102 For sarcophagi: STUDER-KARLEN 2012; on funerary painting: VALEVA 2001; ZIMMERMANN 2012; on Late Antique private portraits in funerary contexts, see DRESKEN-WEILAND 2010, ROUSSEAU 2019, fig. 12 and several case studies in TSAMAKDA/ZIMMERMANN 2020.

103 See also examples of statuary on top of Late Antique sarcophagi from Tyros: I.Tyr nécropole.

104 For *Berytos*: MOUTERDE 1929; for *Hierapolis* in *Phrygia* see: SEG XLVI 1656, 1671 adn; SEG XXXIII 1139; SEG XXXIV 1139; [L.Hierapolis Judeich 133, 222](#); for Tyros, see I.Tyr nécropole, DE JONG 2010, 627 and the contribution CUBAS DÍAZ in this volume. For a comprehensive account on professions in inscriptions and papyri in the Eastern Mediterranean, and especially in Egypt, see RUFFING 2008. Some exceptions in the West might be *Aquileia* and Rome, where symbols such as tools or attributes placed on epitaphs might have signaled professional affiliation: EHLER 2012, 175–181, 229–290; BOLLE 2019, 72.

105 On the importance of familial responsibilities in burials, see SHAW 1984, 497 and more explicitly for Late Antiquity: SAMELLAS 2002; REBILLARD 2003; TULLOCH 2006; for Late Antique Tyros, see DE JONG 2010, esp. 623; cf. also from archaeo-biological perspective: THEUWS 2019, 138.

Late Antiquity: 1. churches with burials and funerary chapels, 2. underground burial systems such as catacombs or hypogaea, and 3. necropoleis *sub divo*, which also featured burial in enclosures (*areae*) and monumental tombs. The new phenomenon of burials in churches is a recurring topic within this volume. Starting in the 4th c. AD, it was mostly first implemented in pre-existing necropoleis *extra muros*, a fact from which derives the debated term of ‘cemetery churches’. As early as the late 4th c. AD, such churches with burials were built in the cities’ *suburbia*, and increasingly began to penetrate the urban fabric.¹⁰⁶ Many of these churches were multifunctional, e.g. hosting both congregational and funerary activities or martyr-related pilgrimage. By the 5th c. AD, burial in and associated to *basilicae* was distributed across the *oecumene* (Arbeiter, Ardeleanu, Bianchi, Cubas Díaz, Gatier, Mainardis, Merten, Osnabrügge, Ott, Prien, Valeva). Although we still lack a comparative study on his phenomenon,¹⁰⁷ the primary function of many of these churches was to embody burials. In fact, dozens of urban and rural churches or chapels featuring pavements more or less entirely pierced with tombs have been documented across the *oecumene*. The dense ‘palimpsests’ of tomb markers within such basilica-spaces (on stone and mosaics, painted or carved), developing on the churches’ circulation levels over the course of time, even raises questions about the practicability of liturgical acts (Arbeiter, Ardeleanu, Merten). In the East, burial associated to churches often appears in a spatially more restricted fashion than in the West, where tomb-filled *basilicae* are widespread. It was often clustered only in certain areas attached to or within churches, e.g. in hypogaea, annexes, chapels, crypts or *atria*. Such separate burial rooms obviously served to demonstrate social hierarchies, as they may be interpreted as burial grounds for church donors, clerics, elite families or monastic communities. On the other hand, burial beneath the floors of the *sanctuarium*, choirs, apses and naves is not attested as frequently in the East as in the West, where epitaphs help to understand hierarchical tomb setting.¹⁰⁸ Another striking characteristic of the East is that only very few of these church burials seem to have been equipped with ‘real’ epitaphs, marking particularly prestigious tombs (Bianchi, Cubas Díaz, Destephen, Gatier, Valeva). The exceptionally high (and obviously restricted) honor of basilica-associated burials is further exemplified by the fact that the vast cemeteries around such ‘burial churches’ (very characteristic in the West, and partially present in *Asia Minor* and Greece as well) are almost lacking in the Near East.

It is obvious that different types of enclosed funerary spaces preconditioned and produced different ways of using funerary inscriptions. In North Africa, Italy, the

¹⁰⁶ CANTINO-WATAGHIN 2003, 243–245.

¹⁰⁷ Some general thoughts on the concept of burial within churches can be found in: DRESKEN-WEILAND 2003, 113–178; YASIN 2009, 69–100; FIOCCHI NICOLAI 2016, 627–642.

¹⁰⁸ GOLDFUS 1997; SANMORÌ 1998; GRIESHEIMER 1997, 205–210; LASKARIS 2000, 24–51; FIOCCHI NICOLAI 2016, 634; EGER 2018; HUBER 2018; SCHICK 2018; but see some exceptions in the contributions BIANCHI, CUBAS DÍAZ and GATIER in this volume.

Moselle region, the Balkans, and on the Iberian Peninsula, the abundance of funerary epigraphy is clearly linked to the concentration of built and enclosed funerary spaces, and often to the veneration of local saints (**Arbeiter, Ardeleanu, Felle, Merten, Nuzzo, Valeva, Zimmermann**). In these regions, Late Antique funerary epigraphy followed a new trend of ‘interiorization’, in contrast to the long-established principles of epigraphy’s exterior and frontal orientation.¹⁰⁹ As civic inscriptions were increasingly set up in enclosed ensembles (on walls, pavements, columns, vaults, interior architraves etc.), funerary inscriptions also developed in the wake of the emergence of new such funerary spaces, like churches or chapels with burials, accessible crypts, catacombs ad hypogaea (**Arbeiter, Ardeleanu, Bianchi, Felle, Merten, Nuzzo, Ott, Uberti, Valeva, Zimmermann**). Along with this new trend of interiorization, not only the mise-en-page, but also the materiality of inscriptions changed significantly. Paintings and mosaics, as well as plaster and tiles, were often used as supports of writing in such enclosed funerary spaces. The setting contributed actively to new opportunities for visual effects, e.g. through the play of light and shadow or the use of color, crafting spaces full of aura. Iconographic themes (biblical, bucolic) and texts (psalms, prayers) furthermore contributed to creating a paradisiacal sphere (**Arbeiter, Nuzzo, Valeva**) and surely helped mourners to imagine their relatives in safe and peaceful places (Fig. 8).¹¹⁰ Tombs and epitaphs were often clustered in highly frequented zones (e.g. near the *sanctuarium* or martyr graves), re-shaping such ‘sacred areas’ by their mere accumulation, but also usurping the particular aura of such privileged zones for themselves like ‘parasites’. It is no surprise to find these sacralized areas occupied by highly privileged burials. The spatial distribution of epitaphs clearly shows that civic elites, clerics and magistrates deliberately chose (and rivalled in obtaining) the physical proximity of such particular ‘hot spots’.¹¹¹ Now that – only as of recent – epitaphs have been accurately mapped within contextual plans of such enclosed burial areas, it is possible to better understand local social hierarchies and collective movements during commemorative acts (**Arbeiter, Ardeleanu, Bianchi, Cubas Díaz, Felle, Merten, Zimmermann**). Interiorized spaces (churches, monasteries, chapels, hypogaea and catacombs) afforded enhanced opportunities of collective perception and commemoration, as is underlined by the fact that they were all designed for repeated frequentation by ‘living audiences’ after the actual burial had taken place. The new trend of interiorized epigraphy was even carried to the point that certain tomb types, such as sarcophagi, were themselves inscribed on the inside (**Arbeiter, Ardeleanu, Uberti,**

109 On this very *Late Antique* epigraphic trend, which can also be observed in decorative systems: BAUER 2008, 187f.; WITSCHERL 2017, 34.

110 For epitaphs with hints to the hope of attending the Elysium, see: MERKT 2012; DRESKEN-WEILAND 2012; for the crafting of paradisiacal spheres in (not only Christian!) tombs evoked by painting and art, see: KOURKOUTIDOU-NICOLAIDOU 1997; VALEVA 2001; DENZEY LEWIS 2018; ROUSSEAU 2019; for biblical motives, see: DRESKEN-WEILAND 2011.

111 Cf. YASIN 2009.

who uses the term ‘endotaphes’, *Valeva*). It is still debated who would have been addressed in such inscriptions, i.e. the deceased themselves, their heirs or even God – or whether the inscriptions were designed to be seen and read only once, during the funeral at the open sarcophagus, or in the framework of a splendid public procession.¹¹² Such restricted visibility of inscriptions is a typical characteristic of funerary epigraphy in Late Antiquity, and can be encountered before only on a marginal level.¹¹³

The Persistence of Publicly-Oriented Representation in Open Necropoleis

Despite the new trend of setting up inscriptions in the interior of funerary spaces, myriads of ostentatious and publicly-oriented inscriptions were still set up in open necropoleis: as stelae, but also on *mensae, cupae*, sarcophagi and mausolea (**Arbeiter, Ardeleanu, Cubas Díaz, Destephen, Gatier, Mainardis, Nauerth, Osnabrügge, Ott, Prien, Uberti**). It seems that the traditional extra-mural cemeteries were still considered to be the most important burial grounds throughout Late Antiquity, especially in the East: intra-urban burial, seemingly, was far less common there (**Bianchi, Cubas Díaz, Destephen, Gatier, Nauerth, Valeva**; note that **Ardeleanu, Mainardis, Merten, Prien and Uberti** also discuss examples from the West). Isolated intra-mural cemeteries associated to small neighborhoods, workshops and religious buildings occurred as a new feature in many smaller settlements and larger towns (**Arbeiter, Ardeleanu, Cubas Díaz, Mainardis, Nuzzo, Ott**).¹¹⁴ At the same time, burial in the *suburbia* of towns often took place in close physical proximity to both elite houses and artisanal quarters as well as extra-urban sanctuaries (**Ardeleanu, Cubas Díaz, Mainardis, Merten**). Rural cemeteries, e.g. next to villages, *villae*, estates or non-urban sites of worship mostly remained an above-ground phenomenon and a constant feature of funerary landscapes (**Arbeiter, Ardeleanu, Cubas Díaz, Gatier, Prien, Valeva**). The bulk of Late Antique epitaphs in the East comes from open cemeteries, evidencing that social hierarchization and funerary representation took place on a spatial level completely different from church-associated burial in the West.

Accurate mapping of epitaphs in open necropoleis has produced interesting results as well.¹¹⁵ Old excavation reports and archival material, surprisingly often,

112 DRESKEN-WEILAND 2003, 189f. 398; REBILLARD 2009, 15.

113 For earlier examples, see: TOYNBEE 1996, 264. 281; MEINECKE 2014; on the phenomenon in general see also: FRESE/KEIL/KRÜGER 2014.

114 Cf. for other similar examples: MENEGHINI/SANTANGELI VALENZANI 1995; CANTINO WATAGHIN/LAMBERT 1998.

115 LAVAN 2015, 72f. underlines the importance of epigraphic plotting in digital maps, but mainly names examples of civic inscriptions (*Aphrodisias, Sagalassos, Ephesos*); cf. also the ‘Last Statues of Late Antiquity’-project: SMITH/WARD-PERKINS 2016. For accurate epitaph mapping in plans of buildings and open necropoleis, see: YASIN 2009, 69–100;

show quite exact locations of epigraphic findspots, hitherto neglected by traditional linguistic approaches of epigraphic corpora. The ensuing plotting activity, which has to be undertaken *in situ*, allows us to reflect not only about spatial and diachronic developments of funerary activity within a town, but also about movement patterns during ceremonies, and the social hierarchies there were thereby negotiated within these necropoleis. Using this approach, several case studies in this volume enable us to locate particular zones for elite burial, familial or middle-class burial, and cemeteries of the poor. Furthermore, we can now assess the varying dynamics burial zones experienced over time and space within one and the same town (**Ardeleanu, Cubas Díaz, Mainardis, Ott, Uberti**). Inscriptions now directed commemorative and processional movement, and in certain cases even formed the backbone of orientation in vast necropoleis. Epitaphs were set up and perceived as ‘actants’ of social communication. As several papers in this volume show, it is important to take the topographic characteristics of necropoleis into account, such as valleys, rivers, hills, geological preconditions (e.g. soil quality) and streets, in order to appropriately consider the setting and perception of tombs, as well as the visibility and accessibility of epitaphs (**Cubas Díaz, Gatier, Mainardis, Nuzzo, Ott, Uberti, Valeva, Zimmermann**).

The Many Facets of Burial ‘*ad sanctos*’

Several contributions to this volume discuss the much-debated phenomenon of so-called ‘burials *ad sanctos*’, a trend that started in the 4th c. AD and subsequently spread across the entire *oecumene* (**Arbeiter, Ardeleanu, Bianchi, Felle, Gatier, Mainardis, Merten, Prien, Valeva, Zimmermann**).¹¹⁶ The Italic, Gallic, Iberian, African, Germanic and Adriatic provinces are particularly rich in such burial contexts, while burial associated with saints is more isolated in the East. Still, examples are extensively distributed, with some highlights in *Asia Minor*, the *Palaestinae*, *Arabia* and Greece (**Bianchi, Gatier, Ott**). In recent times, the old narrative of a linear development of such ‘*ad sanctos*’-burials, starting from a holy tomb figuring as a focal point of massive burial, has rightly been questioned.¹¹⁷ Intensive burial activity within or around a church is not necessarily proof for the presence of enshrined relics. In most cases, it remains unclear what such burial spaces looked like initially.

DE JONG 2010, 611–617 esp. figs. 13–15; GAUTHIER/MARIN/PRÉVOT 2010, fig. 3; BOLLE 2019, figs. 106, 113, 121, 122, 126, 145, 148, 153, 156, 158, 161, 166, 171, 173, 180, 181, 183; see also the interactive plans with zoomable inscriptions in: <https://mosaikinschriften.materiale-textkulturen.de/> (accessed 03/02/2023).

¹¹⁶ BROWN 1981; DUVAL 1986; DUVAL 1988; VOLP 2002, 119–123; see also the useful *Cult of Saints database* (CSLA): <http://csla.history.ox.ac.uk> (accessed 03/02/2023).

¹¹⁷ KÖTTING 1965, esp. 24–28; BROWN 1981, 3; *contra*: YASIN 2009, 70f.; YASIN 2012; DENZEY LEWIS 2020.

Often, it may be that a saint's tomb and its veneration as a martyr shrine was introduced in an already heavily frequented necropolis, a church or a chapel with pre-existing burials, at a moment in time significantly later than the literary tradition about these sites suggests. Therefore, such 'landmark tombs' did not always initiate massive burial activity, but rather used and manipulated pre-existing prominent burials for the construction of their own prestigious legacy (Ardeleanu, Merten). Nevertheless, one cannot neglect the clear attraction that tombs of martyrs and saints, as divine places where heaven and earth met, exerted on the faithful with regard to burial and hope for resurrection. Even if clear martyr presence – in general attested by 'authentic' martyr inscriptions or inscribed relics – is missing in many places, concentrated mass-burial around a church/chapel/mausoleum might still have been linked to desire for a burial spot *ad sanctos*.

The 'Problem' of Tomb Reuse

Ever since the new toolkit of natural sciences (as discussed above) became available to Late Antique funerary studies, the subjects of reuse, spoliation, opening and violation of tombs, as well as the redeposition of skeletal remains, have gained considerable popularity.¹¹⁸ As several contributions show, multiple and sequential deposition in the very same tomb was a widely distributed burial practice across the Late Antique *oecumene* (Arbeiter, Ardeleanu, Bianchi, Cubas Díaz, Mainardis, Ott, Uberti, Valeva). It is also attested in tombs marked by only a single epitaph. Uberti suggests that single names on tombs might have been considered as familial burial grounds by observers. Although Late Antique curse inscriptions (*defixiones*) or fines (*multae*) (Destephen, Cubas Díaz, Mainardis, Ott), inscriptions intended to protect tombs (Arbeiter, Bianchi) or apotropaic/prophylactic grave goods (Bianchi, Prien, Zimmermann) are known,¹¹⁹ tombs were exhumated, and even destroyed, at any given time. Especially the rivalry in gaining burial plots around presumed saints' burials led, eventually, to chaotic ensembles of multiple burials superimposed on each other (Ardeleanu, Merten). In some cases, however, polisomatic tombs and ossuaries were planned and executed from the outset as places for continuous burial of specific groups, e.g. of a monastical, clerical or familial nature (Bianchi, Cubas Díaz, Mainardis).

118 See already FÉVRIER 1978, 321f. and SANMORÌ 1998; more recently: DE JONG 2010, 612–617; PEARCE 2015, 461–463; FOX/TRITSAROLI 2018; MURER 2018; EICHNER 2018, 232; ASPÖCK/KLEVNÄS/MÜLLER-SCHEEBEL 2020.

119 On Late Antique *multae*, see also PFOHL 1983, 497–500; FÉVRIER 1978, 319–322; PIETRI 1983, 534; VOLP 2002, 88, 124; DE JONG 2010, 608; on protective or magical grave goods, such as amulets, quite still common in Late Antique tombs of the Near East and Egypt, see: RUSSELL 1995; DAVIS 2005; EGER 2018; HUBER 2018.

The ‘Epitaphic Renaissance’ of the 5th–7th c. AD: Various Explanations

An important observation drawn from the many regional overviews mentioned above is the general trend of a regional revival of funerary epigraphy in the 5th to 7th c. AD. The fact that the number of epitaphs increases during the 5th and 6th c. AD, after a massive drop visible across most regions in the late 3rd and 4th c. AD,¹²⁰ shows that epigraphic commemoration – especially in funerary contexts – regained importance (Arbeiter, Ardeleanu, Destephen, Merten, Nauerth, Nuzzo, Osnabrügge, Uberti) or even peaked (Bianchi, Cubas Díaz, Gatier) in this period.¹²¹ Only a few cities and regions provide substantial evidence of epitaphs from the late 3rd and 4th c. AD (Ardeleanu, Destephen, Felle, Mainardis, Zimmermann), and in some areas the epitaphic habit became inexistent.¹²² There are different regional explanations for both the trend of decline in the late 3rd/4th c. AD, and rebound in the 5th/6th c. AD. For Elisabeth Meyer, the Empire-wide awards of Roman citizenship following the *constitutio Antoniniana* were responsible for the diminished interest in epigraphic commemoration at tombs.¹²³ In some regions, economic, agricultural and political crises or revolts were obvious factors, as well as, possibly, the geographic location of individual sites and their limited access to wider economic and civic networks.¹²⁴ As has been stated in recent scholarship, scenarios of crisis and decline in the 3rd/4th c. AD have to be nuanced in some regions, and

120 MACMULLEN 1982, esp. 237–244; GALVÃO-SOBRINHO 1995; see also MITCHELL 2017, 271–282, who observes an enormous decrease in most regions of *Asia Minors*’ epigraphy after 300 AD; cf. several case studies in NAWOTKA 2012 (e.g. *Boiotia*, *Chersonnesos*, *Pontos* and *Thrace*, *Asia Minor*); see also the contributions ARDELEANU, NUZZO and UBERTI in this volume; however, at certain sites and regions 4th c. AD-epitaphs are still numerous, e.g. in *Mauretania Sitifensis* and *Caesariensis*, in Trier and in *Laodikeia (Phrygia)*: see the contributions ARDELEANU, MERTEN and DESTEPHEN in this volume.

121 On the ‘rebound’ of epigraphic practices in the 5th/6th c. AD: GALVÃO-SOBRINHO 1995; HANDLEY 2003, 20–22; SALWAY 2015; ROUECHÉ/SOTINEL 2017, 512; WITSCHERL 2017, 34; PETTS 2019, 611; for ratio developments between epitaphs and other inscriptions in the provinces of *Arabia* and *Palaestina*, see: DI SEGNI 2017, 288–299. Tab. 2 notes an epigraphic peak during the 5th to 7th c. AD, but also observes a decline of epitaphic commemoration in the Western part of her research area; cf. several contributions in NAWOTKA 2021 including comparable statistical data and analysis of many regions showing a general recovery in the 5th/6th c. AD (parts of *Asia Minor*, *Phoenicia*, *Egypt*); see also the contribution GATIER in this volume with several cities in *Arabia* presenting rich epitaph series of the 7th c. AD.

122 For ‘Christian’ burials, cemeteries and epitaphs before and during the Constantinian dynasty, see CARLETTI 2008; FIOCCHI NICOLAI 2016; for regions with almost no Late Antique epitaphic evidence later than 250 AD (such as *Raetia*, *Noricum*, *Thrace*, *Boiotia*, *Mauretania Tingitana* and parts of *Asia Minor*), see entries in ILCV and NAWOTKA 2021.

123 MEYER 1990.

124 E.g. in many cities of the *Dioecesis Thraciae* (except *Tomis* and *Serdica*): PORUZNİK 2021, 86, 89, 96.

even revised entirely for others.¹²⁵ Religious change, e.g. ‘Christianization’, could have prompted some transformations in the epigraphic culture as well, but should not be overestimated as a catalyst of a declining trend, given the high importance awarded to funerary epigraphy already in our earliest material evidence for Christian communities. Moreover, the visible decrease was often only the final phase of a longer-termed shift in the epigraphic praxis.¹²⁶

The ‘epigraphic renaissance’ of the 5th and 6th c. AD also has to be explained in multicausal terms. It is worth noting that it is attested almost exclusively in urban contexts, such as in *Apulia*, *Calabria*, *Aquitania*, and the Rhine and Danube frontier zone (**Nuzzo**, **Osnabrügge**, **Prien**, **Uberti**, **Valeva**), indicating the continuous vitality of urban networks and their importance for epigraphic production. Furthermore, the rise of epigraphic placement in spatial contexts such as catacombs or churches during that time surely had a positive effect on preconditions of physical preservation. Nonetheless, there are other areas where rural epitaphic habits thrived and sometimes even showed complex traits, such as *carmina* and epigrams (**Arbeiter**, **Ardeleanu**, **Cubas Díaz**, **Destephen**, **Gatier**, **Nauerth**). In Southern Italy, the epigraphic abundance is obviously linked to particular religious customs, as Jewish burials dominate the epigraphic record (**Nuzzo**). In the Iberian, Gallic, Balkan, African and other Italic provinces, the long-neglected agricultural prosperity, the economic interconnectivity and the spread of the cult of the saints were surely driving catalysts of a blossoming funerary epigraphy (**Arbeiter**, **Ardeleanu**, **Felle**, **Merten**, **Nuzzo**, **Valeva**, **Zimmermann**). The existence of a martyr shrine with pilgrim and mass-burial activity produced high amounts of epitaphs at several sites. This fact can be observed most strikingly along the Rhine, where the absence of such prominent cult centers may have accelerated epigraphic decline significantly (**Osnabrügge**, **Prien**). This explanation cannot be taken for granted for the whole *oecumene*, since we know of huge pilgrim sites centered around martyrs’ tombs with almost no funerary epigraphy, e.g. Abu Mina in Egypt or Qal’at Sim’an in *Syria*. Nevertheless, in many Eastern provinces numbers of epitaphs increase or even peak during the 5th and 7th c. AD (**Bianchi**, **Cubas Díaz**, **Gatier**). There, economic wealth and cultural connectivity, both of which are also reflected in spectacular contemporary building programs, ceramic deposits and thriving rural settlements, may have promoted the resilience of the epitaphic practice as a side effect.

125 See e.g. LAVAN 2001; LIEBESCHUETZ 2001; JACOBS 2013; PARELLO/RIZZO 2016; WITSCHEL 2017.

126 See several regional case studies in BOLLE/MACHADO/WITSCHEL 2017a and NAWOTKA 2021.

A New 'Physical' Perception of Tombs and Funerary Markers

A recent shift in the methodological approach to inscriptions (and their material supports) has made it possible to advance new interpretations of the Late Antique perception of burials and their epigraphic as well as decorative marking. Several of our contributors expand on this tendency with splendid examples. It seems that a general shift from 'vertical' to 'horizontal' or 'upright' to 'flat'-perception took place during the 4th and 5th c. AD (Arbeiter, Ardeleanu, Bianchi, Merten, Mainardis, Nuzzo, Osnabrügge, Ott, Uberti). This trend was not only a consequence of the phenomenon of increasing burial within *basilicae*, but rather a reaction, probably, to the spread of inhumation and its characteristic preservation of bodies for the afterlife in their entirety (Uberti suggests speaking about the 'corporality of inscriptions'). It also went along with a material shift, if we consider the contemporaneous spread of mosaic markers: from then on, conventional scenes and motives from standing, frontal representations were literally 'laid down' on the floor. But this trend is also visible in some open cemeteries and funerary enclosures *sub divo* (Arbeiter, Ardeleanu, Mainardis, Merten), as inscriptions were increasingly positioned horizontally, on or slightly over circulation level. This resulted in a shift in the observer's perception of spatial environments around tombs and their inscriptions. The accessibility of tombs and the legibility of epitaphs might have been related to patterns of movement during commemorative rituals. While street-oriented frontality of inscriptions, in the Imperial period, was part of an architecturally well-orchestrated ensemble, in which the tomb itself was mostly invisible, the horizontal layout of Late Antique epitaphs manipulated the spectator's view by focusing his or her main attention on the very tomb itself. In some cases, epitaphs could only be read by literally bowing over the dead, and therefore created a close bonding between the observer and the deceased. This new 'physical union' between the dead and the living, emphasized by repetitive commemorative rituals, might also be one possible explanation for the entry of tombs into the urban fabrics. Nonetheless, several open cemeteries from the Hellenistic and Roman period were occupied until Late Antiquity, all across the *oecumene*. This shows that the old concepts of street-oriented frontality, roadside tomb monumentalization and extrovert orientation of epitaphs remained valuable features of funerary representation, although also in several of these cases, direct access to tombs and into funerary districts was intended (Ardeleanu, Cubas Díaz, Uberti) (Fig. 11). Similar mechanisms were at work in underground galleries using *loculi* with frontally-oriented *tituli* (Felle, Zimmermann). Interestingly, in these cases an increasing physical approximation of frontally exercised epitaphs (and their readers) to the dead can also be observed, e.g. inscriptions set on sarcophagus cases and *loculi*, directly next to the inhumated bodies.¹²⁷

127 A very striking example is the al-Bass cemetery of Tyros, where the epitaphs were often placed on the short sides of *loculi* closing slabs, directly between iron rings that allowed to re-open the tombs for sequential burial: DE JONG 2010, 611–622.

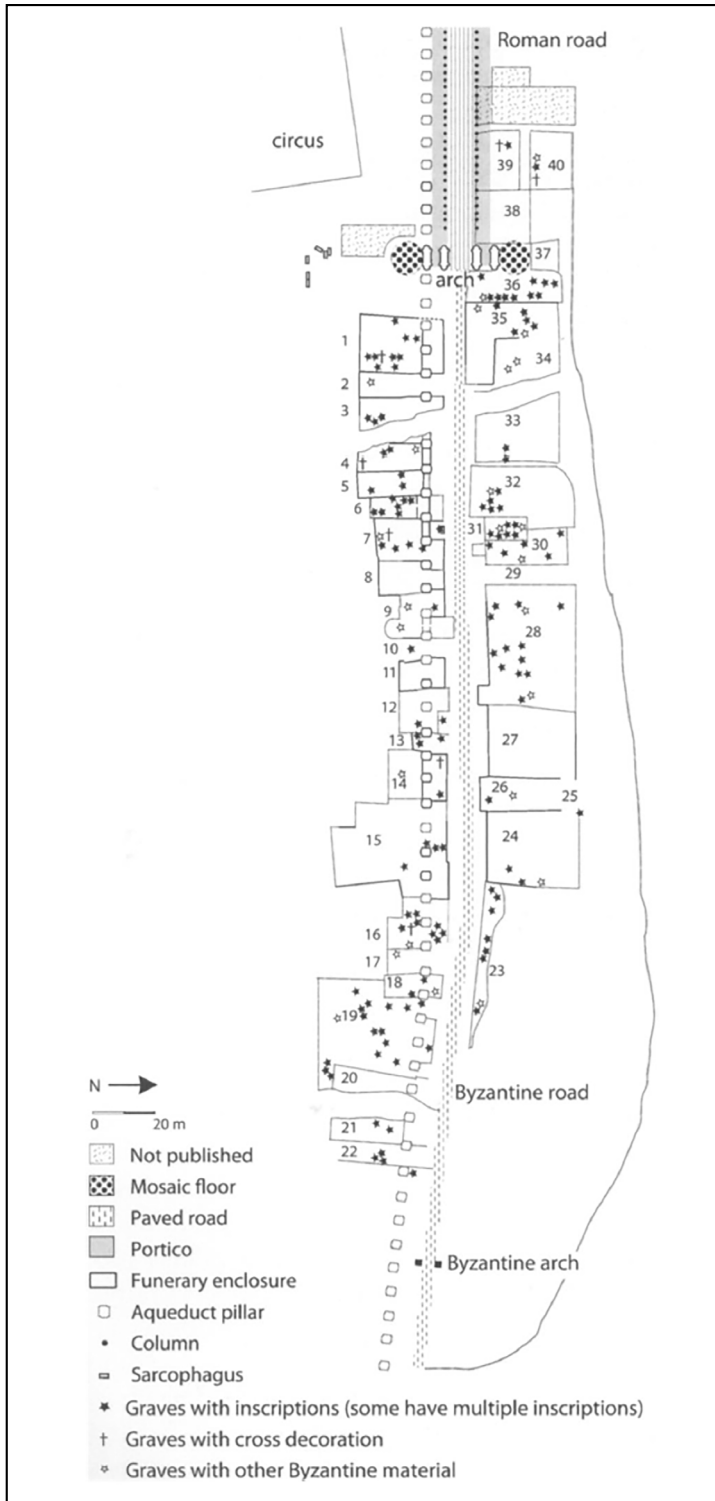


Fig. 11: Tyros, al-Bass cemetery, 4th to 7th c. AD-phase with increasing Late antique burial activities expanding alongside the 'funerary road'.

The Archaeological and Epigraphic Evidence of Funerary Commemoration

The close physical proximity between the living and the dead, as a characteristic of Late Antique funerary customs, is well-illustrated by a vast range of commemorative rituals, such as funerary feasting and collective remembrance of the communities' dead. We want to stress the importance of differentiating funeral-related and posthumous rituals, although they resemble each other in their material evidence and it is therefore not always easy to make an archaeological distinction between them.¹²⁸ Recent analyses have shed new light on the character of these commemorative rituals, especially on dining and drinking, but also on offerings regularly performed at the tombs (**Arbeiter, Ardeleanu, Bianchi, Felle, Merten, Ott, Prien, Uberti, Valeva, Zimmermann**).¹²⁹ The West is particularly rich in such contexts, but recurring examples from the Eastern provinces show that these rituals were perhaps more widely distributed than hitherto believed.¹³⁰ Despite the sharp critiques these rituals triggered among contemporary Christian authors, archaeological artefact assemblages (such as glass and ceramics around the surface of closed tombs), but also epigraphy (*mensae, piscinae*) and funerary art (banquet scenes and 'Totenmahl'-stelae), clearly attest their longevity. Non-funerary botanical and faunal deposits, as well as rich literary evidence, illustrate the complexity and popularity of the commemoration of the dead in Late Antiquity. Many tombs were planned and designed for repeated frequentation by the surviving descendants according to the ritual calendar. This is suggested not only by the many architectural features intended to guarantee the accessibility of tombs (*mensae*, stairs, lockable doors, removable entry slabs, benches, facilities for crowded gatherings and hydraulic installations). Also, the communicative frontality of decorative elements (mosaics, reliefs, paintings), the strategic setting and the acclamatory character of epitaphs turned the tombs and necropoleis into veritable 'theaters' of interactive commemoration (Fig. 8).¹³¹ Imagery, architectural décor, light and inscriptions demanded attention and invited the audience to participate actively in commemorative rituals.

128 For funeral-related rituals, see: FÉVRIER 1978, 324–326; COOKE 1998; SCHMIDT 2000, 321–420; VOLP 2002, 185–207; for archaeologically invisible commemorative rituals, such as prayer, mourning, speeches at tombs and collective commemoration during the Eucharist: VOLP 2002, 208–233; REBILLARD 2009; YASIN 2009; FIOCCHI NICOLAI 2016, 640.

129 Cf. already STUIBER 1957; FÉVRIER 1978, 337–347; SPERA 2005; BRINK/GREEN 2008; PEARCE 2015, 450, 463–465, who correctly notes that commemorative rituals have not been exhaustively studied compared to funeral-associated rituals; cf. BLAIZOT 2018, esp. 533–535.

130 For Eastern examples in *Tyros, Resafa* and the Syrian central massif: GRIESHEIMER 1997, 119–193; KONRAD 2013, 210; DE JONG 2010, 608 f. fig. 12; 612 with an early 4th c. AD-inscription in an annex of a funerary enclosure that invites to celebrate the festival of *Maioumas*; on funerary *mensae* from Crete, see: I.Chr.Crete 77, 83, 104.

131 On the communicative potential of decoration and inscriptions in Late Antique funerary contexts, see TULLOCH 2006; ZIMMERMANN 2012; DENZEY LEWIS 2018 uses the interesting

Taste, smell and sound locked these memories into the participants' minds. In doing so, these media promoted a tight personal relationship between the buried and the tomb-visitors, commonly shared in the performative act of commemorative rituals. It seems that the slow expiration of these rituals during the 6th and 7th c. AD – again with considerable regional differences – also provoked the end of epigraphic and decorative self-representation and communication in funerary contexts.¹³² In other words: as soon as commemorative rituals were abandoned, epigraphic, architectural and decorative articulation of these formerly 'ritualized spaces' were no longer required.

The Materiality of Late Antique Epitaphs as a Key Approach in Contextual Funerary Studies

Despite their sheer quantity and their contentious simplicity, Late Antique epitaphs are a subclass of inscriptions perfectly suited to the current trend of reconsidering the materiality of inscriptions. Attentive autopsy of the material supports, including their rear and lateral sides (along with the necessary publication of photographic documentation), allows for spectacular new insights into (and the reconstruction of) the original topological and praxeological context of inscriptions. As shown by **Arbeiter, Ardeleanu, Cubas Díaz, Osnabrügge** and **Uberti** in this volume, the existence of buildings with integrated burials below floor level can be sometimes reconstructed based on the material aspects of the epitaphs' supports alone (special preparation of lateral sides, signs of wear by circulation), even if we have no other evidence for such burial buildings. Since Late Antique epitaphs, obviously, were generally placed above the head of the deceased on circulation level (**Mainardis, Ott**), while all other parts of the same tomb were entirely buried, a re-examination of the visibility of tomb markers in open cemeteries was possible, e.g. in *Aquileia* and Corinth. Attentive autopsy of fragmentary inscription supports, such as plaques with *tabulae ansatae*, large-scaled plates or the spatial composition of inscriptions on their supports also helps to restrict the possibilities of reconstructing their original position and perception – as parts of mausolea, as *loculus* slabs within catacombs/hypogaea or as parts of a sarcophagus' front (**Arbeiter, Ardeleanu, Cubas Díaz, Uberti**). Such materiality-based approaches, in deposits with hundreds or thousands of fragmented and decontextualized inscriptions, have the potential to lead to astonishing results. The materiality of inscriptions tells its own story and future scholarship should integrate this aspect more systematically into the classic, linguistic way to study and document funerary inscriptions.

term "memory theatres"; ROUSSEAU 2019; for the general increasing acclamatory character of Late Antique inscriptions, see: WITSCHER 2017, 50.

132 See several case studies in TSAMAKDA/ZIMMERMANN 2020.

Final Remarks

Preparing, organizing and publishing *Funerary landscapes of the Late Antique oecumene* was a long, but (hopefully) fruitful attempt to better understand one of the most important fields of Late Antique material culture. As editors, we feel that more ‘holistic’ approaches to Late Antique funerary customs and epitaphs (involving contemporary evidence from regions well beyond the frames of the *oecumene*) are required to increase our understanding of a class of material that is too often considered a mere illustration of daily life. Funerary contexts and inscriptions have the potential to help us reconstruct central aspects of this transformative period, such as urban and demographic development, social hierarchization, health and diet, kinship and migration processes, individual and collective commemoration, but also specific rituals and the perception of religious and social spaces. In this respect, we hope to promote further comparative studies on this fascinating period and topic. If as a community of scholars we manage to combine the possibilities of recent approaches and to put together different expertise over the course of the next years, we are convinced that this volume can mark some progress in our knowledge about mortuary habits in the transitional phase of Long Late Antiquity as well as about conceptualizations of death and burial in general.

Tables

Tab. 1: Late Antique case studies in recent compendia/conferences on ancient burial

Title	On Late Antiquity	Regions, topics concerned
STRUCK 1993	12 out of 37	Britain (7), <i>Germaniae</i> (3), <i>Galliae</i> (3)
PEARCE/MILLETT/STRUCK 2000	8 out of 28	Italy (4 of 5 on Roman catacombs), Britain (2), <i>Galliae</i> (1)
HEINZELMANN 2001	7 out of 25	Rome and Ostia (4), Italy (3), grave goods (4), coins in burials (1), sarcophagi (1), amphora burials (1)
VAQUERIZO GIL 2002	15 out of 34	Italy (2 on Rome+Ostia, 1 on sarcophagi), <i>Hispaniae</i> (12, 2 on sarcophagi), West (1)
SCHRUMPF 2006	–	–
FABER 2007	14 out of 25	<i>Germaniae</i> (4), Greece (1), <i>Pannonia</i> (1), <i>Moesia</i> (1), Italy (4), <i>Galliae</i> (1), Britain (1), <i>Germania magna</i> (1), funerary rituals (9), inhumation (14), sarcophagi (1), cremation (3), monumental tombs (1), burial <i>ad sanctos</i> (1), epitaphs (1), child burials (1), grave goods (4)
BARAY/BRUN/TESTART 2007	0 out of 26	–
BRINK/GREEN 2008	7 out of 9	Rome (3, all on catacombs), North Africa (2), epitaphs (2)
SCHEID 2008	3 out of 22	Britain (1), Italy (3), Rome (1), rural burial (1), burial rites (1), epitaphs (1), funerary feasting (1), tomb reuse (1)
GOWLAND/KNÜSEL 2009	1 out of 20	Britain (1)
RÜPKE/SCHEID 2010	2 out of 14	Egypt (1), Italy (1), North Africa (1), funerary feasting (1)
PINAR GIL/JUÁREZ 2010	22 out of 22	<i>Hispaniae</i> (13), Northern Italy (4), Southern Italy (1), <i>Galliae</i> (2), burial in/around churches (5), reliquaries (1), Mediterranean (1), grave goods (16), palaeoanthropology (2)
CARROLL/REMPEL 2011	2 out of 9	<i>Germaniae</i> (1), <i>Pannonia</i> (1), Britain (1), tomb reuse (1), tomb markers (1)
HOPE/HUSKINSON 2011	0 out of 10	–
CASTEX 2011	2 out of 18	Rome (2, both on catacombs)
NENNA 2012	2 out of 24	Egypt (2), child burials (2)
THÜR 2014	2 out of 11	Italy (1), <i>Noricum</i> (1), <i>Pannonia</i> (1)
AMELING 2016	7 out of 12	Literary/epigraphic sources on Late Antique burial (7)
BRANDT/PRUSAC/ROLAND 2015	3 out of 14	Caucasus (1), North Africa (1), <i>Scythia Minor/Moesia Secunda</i> (1), Albania (1)
DEVLIN/GRAHAM 2015	1 out of 8	Britain (1)
THOMPSON 2015	1 out of 12	Britain (1), cremation (1)
PEARCE/WEEKES 2017	4 out of 11	Britain (3), Italy (2), <i>Galliae</i> (1), <i>Germaniae</i> (1)
DE LARMINAT et al. 2017	3 out of 33	<i>Galliae</i> (2), Roman catacombs (1), isotope analyses (1)
EGER/MACKENSEN 2018	10 out of 15	Emesa (1), Egypt (2), Jordan/ <i>Arabia</i> (2), Darayya (1), Chisphin (1), Beirut (1), <i>Gerasa</i> (1), burials in churches (2), grave goods (4)
NENNA/HUBER/ VAN ANDRINGA 2018	2 out of 18	<i>Galliae</i> (2), burials in/around churches (1), commemorative rituals (2)

Tab. 2: Funerary case studies in recent compendia/conferences on Late Antiquity

Title	Late Antiquity	Late Antique regions, topics
WEBSTER/BROWN 1997	4 out of 13	<i>Galliae</i> (2), Greece (1), <i>Germaniae</i> (2), funerary painting (1), grave goods (3)
CHRISTIE/LOSEBY 1996	5 out of 13	Greece (1), <i>Hispaniae</i> (1), <i>Galliae</i> (2), North Africa (1), intra-urban burials (2)
BROGIOLO/WARD-PERKINS 1999	4 out of 11	Northern Italy (1), Italy (1), <i>Galliae</i> (1), intra-urban burials (2)
LAVAN 2001	3 out of 13	Thessaly (1), <i>Asia Minor</i> (1), Late Antique burial in general (1)
LAVAN/BOWDEN 2003	3 out of 17	Albania (1), Late Antique burial in general (1), West (1)
KRAUSE/WITSCHHEL 2006	5 out of 16	<i>Galliae</i> (2), <i>Hispaniae</i> (1), Southwest Anatolia (1), <i>Venetia et Histria</i> (1), burial <i>ad sanctos</i> (2), intra-urban burials (3), epitaphs (1), sarcophagi (2), burial in churches (1), <i>martyria</i> (3), <i>hypogaea</i> (1), rural burials (1), funerary art (1)
ROUSSEAU 2009	10 out of 44	North Africa (2), <i>Galliae</i> (2), Britain (1), Italy (1), Rome & Ostia (3), burial <i>ad sanctos</i> (1), epitaphs (3), kinship (1), funerary painting (2), funerary art (2), Roman catacombs (3), commemoration (2), sarcophagi (1), intra-urban burial (1), burial in/around churches (1), monumental tombs (1)
SAMI/SPEED 2010	6 out of 16	Transylvania (1), Britain (2), <i>Gaelicia</i> (1), <i>Sicilia</i> (1), Ravenna (1), cremation (2), child burials (1), grave goods (1), epitaphs (2), catacombs (1), <i>hypogaea</i> (1), burials in churches (1), mausolea (1)
SCHATZMANN 2011	4 out of 17	<i>Germaniae</i> (2), <i>Galliae</i> (2), epitaphs (1), cremation (2), grave goods (3), lead sarcophagi (1)
TABBERNEE 2014	1 out of 10	Balkans, Greece and the Aegean (1)
LAVAN/MULRYAN 2015	7 out of 19	Late Antique burial in general (3), <i>Pannonia</i> (1), Greece (1), <i>Noricum</i> (1), West (1), grave goods (3), intra-urban burials (2), child burial (1), epitaphs (1), burial <i>ad sanctos</i> (1)
RHOBY 2015	3 out of 20	Constantinople (1), Bulgaria (1), Black Sea area (1), epitaphs (3)
MARTEORELLI/PIRAS/SPANU 2015	34 out of 83	Martyr cult (3), <i>Sardinia</i> (19), Sicily (10), Italy (11), Pantelleria (1), Britain (1), catacombs (1), child burials (4), epitaphs (6), funerary mosaics (2), grave goods (11), sarcophagi (4), funerary painting (2), rural burials (3)
PARELLO/RIZZO 2016	12 out of 42	Sicily (9), Italy (2), anthropology (1), grave goods (2), commemorative rituals (2), rural burials (1)
BOLLE/MACHADO/WITSCHHEL 2017a	11 out of 17	West (1), East (1), <i>Galliae</i> (2), <i>Hispaniae</i> (1), <i>Tuscia et Umbria</i> (1), <i>Asia Minor</i> (2), Aegean (1), Rome (3), epitaphs (11), sarcophagi (5), catacombs (2), <i>formulae</i> (5), burial <i>ad sanctos</i> (2), funerary painting (1), materiality of epitaphs (4), metrical epitaphs (3), history of research on Late Antique epigraphy (1)
DIARTE-BLASCO/CHRISTIE 2018	11 out of 18	Northern Italy (2), Southern Italy (1), Rome (1), <i>Galliae</i> (1), Britain (2), <i>Germaniae</i> (1), <i>Hispaniae</i> (2), intra-urban burials (2), suburban burials (1), rural burials (6), burial in churches (1)
PETTEGREW/CARAGHER/DAVIS 2019	21 out of 34	Jordan (1), Cyprus (1), <i>Asia Minor</i> (1), <i>Illyricum</i> , Greece and Cyclades (1), Balkans (1), <i>Galliae</i> (1), Britain/Ireland (1), <i>Hispaniae</i> (1), North Africa (1), Egypt (1), general (1), catacombs (2), <i>martyria</i> and burials <i>ad sanctos</i> (2), burial rites in the East (1), monastic burial customs (1), mosaics in burials (1), ceramics, lamps, amulets from burials (3)

Tab. 2 (Continued)

Title	Late Antiquity	Late Antique regions, topics
CARNEIRO/CHRISTIE/ DIARTE-BLASCO 2020	10 out of 15	Butrint (1), Northern Italy (1), Britain (1), <i>Hispaniae</i> (6), <i>Galliae</i> (1), child burials (1), intra-urban burials (4), aDNA analysis (1), spoliation (2), rural burials (1), burials in/around churches (2), monumental tombs (2), sarcophagi (3), epitaphs (3)
GUIDETTI/MEINECKE 2020	9 out of 15	Funerary banquet (1), funerary paintings in Serbia (1), funerary amulets (1), 'child with grape' motif, global (1), gold glasses (1), Asian influences in burials of Gaul (1), funerary reliefs in South Arabia (1), obolus coins along the Silk Road (1), funerary objects Middle and Far East (1)
LAUXTERMANN/TOTH 2020	4 out of 18	<i>Asia Minor</i> (2), Italy (1), Greece (1), epitaphs (4), funerary rituals (1)

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Bestattung und Kommemoratio im frühchristlichen Hispanien

Materielle, ikonographische und inschriftliche Aspekte

Einleitung

Mit den folgenden Ausführungen begeben wir uns in die spätantike *Hispania*, so wie sie territorial-verwaltungstechnisch durch Diokletian neugeordnet wurde (Abb. 1). Die Einteilung in fünf Provinzen – *Tarraconensis*, *Carthagin(i)ensis*, *Baetica*, *Lusitania* und *Gallaecia* (alsbald ergänzt um die kleine sechste Provinz *Insulae Baleares*) – sollte dann, was das Festland betrifft, auch nach der Einwanderung germanischer Kontingente durch die gesamte Westgotenzeit hindurch, also bis 711 n. Chr., in einer sehr weitgehend identischen kirchlich-politischen Aufteilung weiterleben.¹

Die jenem geographischen und chronologischen Blickfeld geltende monumenkundliche Wissenschaft hat gegenüber dem Stand der 1970er Jahre, also der Endphase der archäologisch-kunsthistorischen Forschungswelt im *alten Regime*,² immense Bereicherung erfahren. Seit dem demokratischen Aufbruch Spaniens und Portugals hat auch, als Ertrag einer allgemeinen Befreiung der Wissenschaften, unser Einblick in die Welt der künstlerischen und der nicht-künstlerischen Denkmäler der spätantiken *Hispania* auf das Erfreulichste exponentiell zugenommen.³

- 1 Zur Geschichte MARQUES 1993; MATTOSO 1993; COLLINS 2004; KULIKOWSKI 2004; BOWES/KULIKOWSKI 2005; DIAZ MARTÍNEZ/MARTÍNEZ MAZA/SANZ HUESMA 2007; LORING/PÉREZ/FUENTES 2007; KAMPERS 2008. Zur Kirchengeschichte immer noch sehr nützlich GARCÍA VILLOSLADA 1979.
- 2 Dies war auch die späte Zeit im Wirken des Altmeisters Helmut Schlunk († 1982). Repräsentativ der *Hispania antiqua*-Band SCHLUNK/HAUSCHILD 1978, den wir nach wie vor mit großem Gewinn heranziehen, auch wenn die beiden Verfasser sich in der Konzeption dieses Werkes sehr spürbar auf den Denkmälerkreis der reinen Bau- und Kunstgeschichte konzentrierten, auf das ästhetisch Ansprechende, das für ein breiteres Publikum ‚augen-blicklich‘ Interessante, und dabei die Domäne des Christlich-Religiösen nur ausnahmsweise verließen.
- 3 Einige Überblickswerke seien genannt: Für Portugal MACIEL 1996; ebenfalls vorbildlich für Katalonien PALOL I SALELLAS/PLADEVALL I FONT 1999. Weiteren Bereichen der Halbinsel widmen sich RIPOLL/GURT 2000; OLMO ENCISO 2008; WOLFRAM 2011; WALKER 2016; CHAVARRÍA ARNAU 2018; MARTÍNEZ JIMÉNEZ/SASTRE DE DIEGO/TEJERIZO GARCÍA 2018; SÁNCHEZ VELASCO 2018.

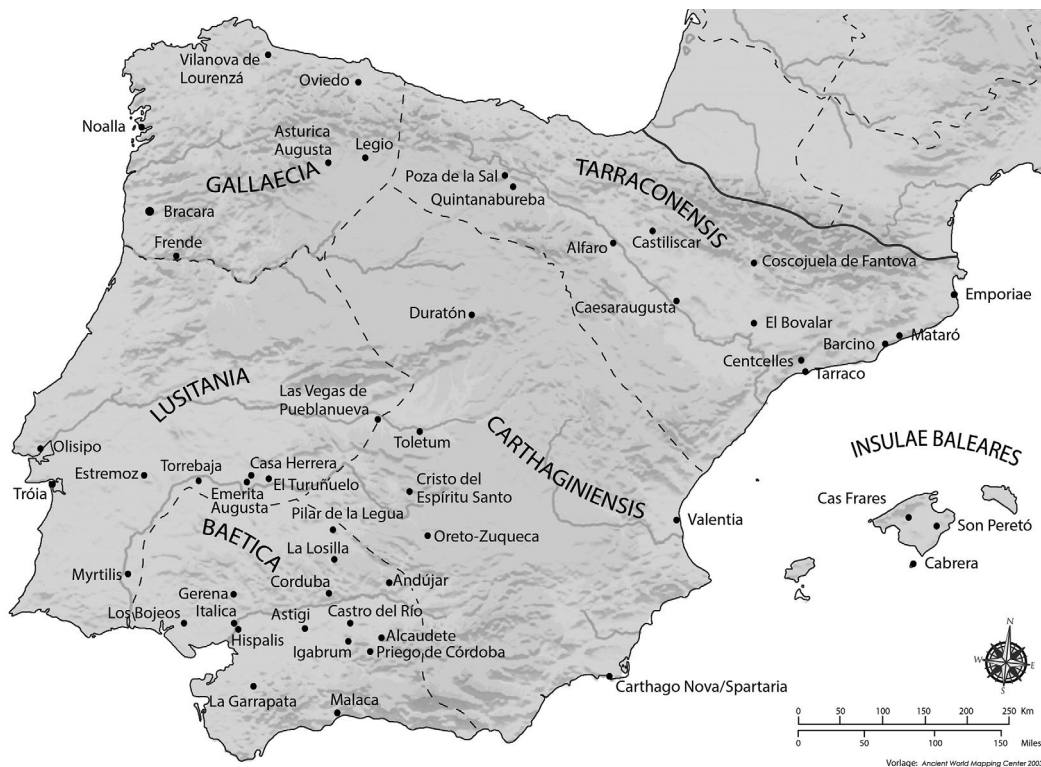


Abb. 1: Karte Hispaniens mit der von Diokletian eingeführten Provinzeinteilung (die Verselbständigung der Balearen ist etwas jünger) und Markierung der im vorliegenden Beitrag genannten Fund- und Standorte.

Was das engere Thema des vorliegenden Beitrages anbelangt: die archäologische Erscheinung des spätantik-christlichen Sepulkralwesens auf der Iberischen Halbinsel, so kann man heute auch hier, dank beständiger Forschungen in den vergangenen Jahrzehnten und Jahren, ein enorm spannendes Bild zeichnen – ein Bild sehr mannigfaltiger Variationen um das Grundthema ‚Körperbestattung‘.⁴ Nicht ohne Verwegenheit und oft nur schlaglichtartig soll im Folgenden der Versuch

- 4 Eine ideenreich kommentierte und nützliche Umschau über das hispanorömische Sepulkralwesen, wenn auch nur mit kurzen Inkursionen in die Spätantike, bietet VAQUERIZO GIL 2011. Weitere beachtenswerte Beiträge: LÓPEZ QUIROGA/MARTÍNEZ TEJERA 2009a; PINAR GIL/JUÁREZ VILLENA 2009; BARRAGÁN VALENCIA 2010, 17–33; LÓPEZ QUIROGA 2010; GURT I ESPARRAGUERA/SÁNCHEZ RAMOS 2011; MOLIST/RIPOLL 2012; VIGIL-ESCALERA GUIRADO 2013; QUIRÓS CASTILLO/CASTELLANOS 2015; SÁNCHEZ RAMOS 2019. – Titel zu einzelnen Regionen, Städten, Orten, Nekropolen und Bestattungspätzen: DEL AMO 1979–1989; TORRES/MACIAS 1993; FLÖRCHINGER 1998; BURCH et al. 1999; LÓPEZ QUIROGA/RODRÍGUEZ LOVELLE 1999; SÁNCHEZ RAMOS 2007; CUNHA 2008; BARRAGÁN VALENCIA 2010; SÁNCHEZ RAMOS 2010; BARROSO CABRERA/CARROBLES SANTOS/MORÍN DE PABLOS 2011; GONZÁLEZ ORTIZ 2013; FERNÁNDEZ CALVO 2016; HEVIA GÓMEZ/ESTEBAN BORRAJO/ZARZALEJOS PRIETO 2016; AREZES 2017; BERNARDES 2017. – Ausweislich des spezialisierten Schrift-

unternommen werden, eine größere Zahl der Aspekte auf aktuellem Stand und mit etlichen Zeugnissen jüngerer Forschungsaktivitäten anzusprechen und dabei, über die Präsentation einer puren Phänomenologie hinausweisend, diesen oder jenen interessanten Punkt noch besonders zu akzentuieren. Eine auch nur oberflächlich das gesamte Spektrum der denkbaren, zudem oft dynamischen Entwicklungen unterworfenen Facetten berücksichtigende Studie ist auf so engem Raum selbstredend unmöglich, doch hegen wir die Zuversicht, viel für das hispanische Panorama Typisches wiedergeben zu können.

Sarkophage und Mausoleen

Wenden wir uns einer von der Welt der einfachen Menschen weit entfernten Materie zu, nämlich dem ebenso exklusiven wie ikonographisch wirkmächtigen Bestand der christlich reliefierten Sarkophage. Hier ist im Jahr 2018, von Nora Büchschütz verfasst, der vierte Band des einschlägigen Repertoriums erschienen, welcher, dann auch auf eine Reihe etwas jüngerer spätantiker Stücke ausgreifend, einen Fundus von 153 Sarkophagen der Iberischen Halbinsel präsentiert.⁵ Was die mehr oder weniger stadtrömisch anmutenden Marmorsärge des 4. Jhs. n. Chr. anbelangt, die man bis vor einiger Zeit durchweg für Import aus der Ewigen Stadt hielt, so gewärtigen wir nun eine von der Autorin in Anlehnung an Guntram Koch⁶ propagierte Einteilung in drei Gruppen: erstens die zweifelsfrei aus Rom stammenden Exemplare, zu denen etwa das konstantinische Stück Rep. IV 74 aus *Asturica/Astorga* (Prov. León) mit einer Reihe klassischer Szenen (darunter Lazarus, Gefangenschaft Petri, Stammeltern, Isaaksopfer), der Säulensarkophag Rep. IV 42 in Córdoba aus dem mittleren 4. Jh. n. Chr. oder die späte, rein neutestamentliche Bethesda-Front Rep. IV 132 in *Tarraco/Tarragona* zählen; zweitens die Werke immigrierter stadtrömischer Künstler mit gewissem thematischem Sondergut wie das singuläre Stück Rep. IV 149 mit der *receptio animae* in *Caesaraugusta/Zaragoza* (die von Wunderepisoden Christi begleitete zentrale Figur der personifizierten Seele reckt den Arm empor, der von einer aus dem Himmel kommenden Hand ergriffen wird; Abb. 2);⁷ drittens die Erzeugnisse lokaler Werkstätten, unter welche z. B. der auch stilistisch recht spürbar sich absetzende Kasten Rep. IV 16 von *Castiliscar* (Prov. Zaragoza) fällt, wo links in der Auferweckungsgridsepisode die Schwes-

tums scheint die Inzidenz von Brandbestattungen in Hispanien gegen das 4. Jh. n. Chr. bereits massiv reduziert.

5 Rep. IV (bedauerlicherweise von der Verfasserin unkorrigiert und ohne Einholung des Imprimatur in das Publikationsverfahren gegeben; daher exorbitant viele Monita im gedruckten Text). Harsche Rezensionen mit inhaltlichen Einwänden verfassten STUDER-KARLEN 2019 und DRESKEN-WEILAND 2021.

6 KOCH 2000, 519–535.

7 MOSTALAC CARRILLO 2009, 103–115.

ter des Lazarus fehlt, rechts die Magierhuldigung durch einen grüßenden Mann ergänzt wird und Wein- und Speisungswunder zu einem Bild zusammengezogen sind (Abb. 3).⁸ Ob sich diese durchaus mit Argumenten versehene Einteilung, welche von der überkommenen durchweg stadtrömischen Provenienzzuordnung abweicht, also etwa von der 1975 durch Manuel Sotomayor vertretenen Sicht auf die hispanischen *sarcófagos romano-cristianos*,⁹ in der Forschung wird behaupten oder gar durchsetzen können, steht dahin.

Neu erschienen dann ab ca. 400 n. Chr. auf der Pyrenäenhalbinsel beim frapanten Abebben der stadtrömischen Produktion und Strahlkraft die nun mehr und mehr ganz eigene und regional gebundene Wege gehenden einheimischen Sarkophage wie der recht bekannte Christus-Apostel-Kasten Rep. IV 75 aus der Krypta des Mausoleums von Las Vegas de Pueblanueva (Prov. Toledo; Abb. 8) mit seinen extrem schlanken, durch *tituli* identifizierten Gestalten, einer der ganz wenigen christlichen Reliefsarkophage Hispaniens mit bekanntem Originalkontext,¹⁰ oder – völlig anders – die als Gruppe unverwechselbaren Exemplare aus der Landschaft Bureba in der nordspanischen Provinz Burgos mit ihren ‚aufgepumpten‘ Rebstöcken und den extrem gedrungen und unbeholfen sich ausnehmenden, dabei ikonographisch gern hoch originell eingebundenen Figuren. Herausragend sind ein Exemplar aus Quintanabureba Rep. IV 11 mit der Leitervision der nordafrikanischen Märtyrerin Perpetua (Abb. 4) und ein anderes aus Poza de la Sal Nr. 12 mit seiner Darstellung – so N. Büchenschütz – Susannas, die von einem Soldaten und den beiden Ältesten ihrem Richter Daniel zugeführt wird.¹¹ Eine weitere Gruppe hat ihren geographischen Schwerpunkt in der *Baetica*, also in Andalusien, und die sehr flachen, wie aus Teig ausgestochen und aufgeklebt wirkenden Figuren ihrer Protagonisten vertreten einen wiederum ausgeprägt partikularen Stil – so das qualitätvolle Stück Rep. IV 48 in *Astigi/Écija* (Prov. Sevilla) mit seinen einfach zu deutenden Szenen (Isaaksopfer, Guter Hirte, Daniel in der Löwengrube) und die Fragmente Rep. IV 72 aus Alcaudete (Prov. Jaén) mit äußerst figurenreicher Lazaruserweckung, dazu einer David-und-Goliath-Episode sowie einer Löwengrube, in welcher Daniel nun allerdings von einer größeren Zahl an Bestien belagert wird (Abb. 5);¹² etwas abweichend in der Faktur ein bei Estremoz (Distr. Évora, Portugal) aufgetauchtes und bereits wieder verschollenes Bruchstück sehr wahrscheinlich von einem Sarkophagkasten Rep. IV 153 mit hochinteressanter Wiedergabe des Evangelisten Lukas und seines Symbols.¹³

8 SCHLUNK/HAUSCHILD 1978, 118f. Taf. 7. Dieser Band auch zu den meisten der hier nachfolgend angesprochenen Reliefsarkophage.

9 SOTOMAYOR 1975.

10 Zu Mausoleum und Sarkophag SCHLUNK 1966; HAUSCHILD 1969; HAUSCHILD 1978; SCHLUNK/HAUSCHILD 1978, 129–131 Taf. 21; VIDAL/GARCÍA-ENTERO 2015, 414f.

11 SCHLUNK 1965; SCHLUNK 1972; TESTINI 1996.

12 Zu beiden SCHLUNK 1962.

13 MACIEL 1999.



Abb. 2: Zaragoza, Santa Engracia. Sarkophagkasten Rep. IV 149 ,mit der *Receptio animae*'. Immigrierter stadtrömischer Künstler? Nicht vor 2. Viertel 4. Jh. n. Chr.



Abb. 3: Castiliscar (Prov. Zaragoza), Sarkophagkasten Rep. IV 16. Lokale Werkstatt? 1. Hälfte 4. Jh. n. Chr.

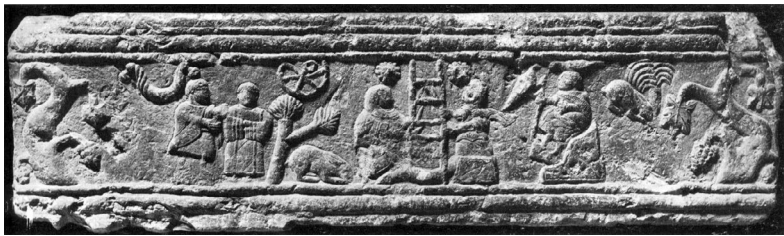


Abb. 4: Burgos, Museo, Sarkophagkasten Rep. IV 11 aus Quintanabureba (Prov. Burgos).



Abb. 5: Madrid, Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Sarkophagfragmente Rep. IV 72 aus Alcaudete (Prov. Jaén). 5.–6. Jh. n. Chr.

Erneut völlig anders, was das Konzept des lückenlosen Bespielens der Flächen anbelangt, präsentiert sich in Oviedo (Asturien) der ausweislich des Marmorbefundes (Provenienz: Estremoz) ebenfalls auf der Halbinsel geschaffene Deckel Rep. IV 88 mit aufgestütztem, umkränzttem Christogramm, Tauben, Gefäßen, Akanthus- sowie Weinranken und Trauben – und mit einem Rest roter Bemalung oder Grundierung –, ein Deckel, der durch seine Inschrift selbst in der ersten Person zu uns spricht – ein gar nicht so seltener Kunstgriff – und sagt: *Inclusi tenerum praetioso marmore corpus aeternam in sedem nominis Ithacii* (Abb. 6): „Den zarten Körper dessen, der Ithacius heißt, habe ich zum ewigen Sitz in kostbaren Marmor eingeschlossen.“¹⁴



Abb. 6: Oviedo, Kathedrale, Sarkophagdeckel des Ithacius, Rep. IV 88. 5. Jh. n. Chr.

Naheliegenderweise kamen dann auch erneut – freilich nicht mehr aus Rom – Importsarkophage ins Land, so aus *Karthago* der in der Tarraconenser Fructuosus-Nekropole am Fluss Francolí, d. h. in einer Lokalisierung *ad sanctos* gefundene Kasten Rep. IV 114 mit dem Gesetzesempfang des Mose und dem Isaaksopfer; sein Inhaber war laut Inschrift *Leucadius primicerius domesticorum*, also ein Führungs-offizier der kaiserlichen Leibgarde.¹⁵ Aus Gallien stammte demgegenüber das Ex-

¹⁴ SCHLUNK/HAUSCHILD 1978, 138f., Taf. 30, 31; FERNÁNDEZ FERNÁNDEZ 1981; VIDAL/GARCÍA-ENTERO 2015, 416f.; TORRE MIGUEL 2018, 332–334.

¹⁵ SCHLUNK/HAUSCHILD 1978, 132–134 Taf. 24; die karthagische Provenienz dieses und weiterer Stücke anhand des Steinmaterials (*kadel* aus dem Jebel Er Rorouf am Golf von Tunis) wurde geklärt von RODÀ 1990, bes. 731–734 Taf. 4.2. Zu der einst singularär imposanten und bedeutsamen, bald nach ihrer damaligen wissenschaftlichen Untersuchung weithin



Abb. 7: Empúries (Prov. Girona), *Neapolis*. Sepulkralkammer mit mehreren Sarkophagen neben der frühchristlichen Kirche.

emplar Rep. IV 147 im galicischen Vilanova de Lourenzà (Prov. Lugo) mit Christogramm, Riefeln und Walmdeckel.¹⁶

Die große Mehrzahl der benutzten Steinsärge war selbstredend in der Faktur und zumeist auch im Material weitaus einfacher, wofür als besonders anschauliche Beispiele zwei Stücke aus El Turuñuelo (Prov. Badajoz) und *Valentia/Valencia* sowie etliche – mit sattelförmigen Akroterdeckeln – im Bereich der *civitas Emporiae/Impurias*/Empúries (Prov. Girona), also des alten *Ampurias* (Abb. 7) genannt sein mögen.¹⁷ Ohne Reliefs gearbeitet, wurden sie nur gelegentlich zumindest mit der elementarsten christlichen Bekundung in Gestalt eines Kreuzes versehen, und doch blieben sie, selbst im Abstand ihres gestalterischen Anspruchs von den Relief-

zerstörten Nekropole vorbildlich SERRA VILARÓ 1928–1930 (Leucadius-Sarkophag: ebd., Bd. 2, 35, 102f. Taf. 23,3, 24,4, 47,2, 48,2–3, 60,1). Siehe ebenfalls DEL AMO 1979–1989 (Leucadius-Sarkophag: ebd. Bd. 1, 80, 112f., 118–120, 258f.; zu den karthagischen Produkten vgl. auch den Beitrag ARDELEANU in diesem Band mit weiterführender Literatur.

¹⁶ SOTOMAYOR 1991, 66–72.

¹⁷ El Turuñuelo: PÉREZ MARTÍN 1961, 10f. Abb. 2 mit Hinweis auf das marmorne Material dieses Stückes und der Vermutung, es könne sich um einen wiederverwendeten kaiserzeitlichen Kasten handeln; Valencia: RIBERA I LACOMBA/ROSSELLÓ MESQUIDA 1999, 16f. mit Abb.; Empúries: AQUILUÉ ABADÍAS 2009, 49–52 mit 3 Abb.; NOLLA/TREMOLEDA 2015, 165 (2 Farbabb.) Abb. 53, 89, 90, 93, 118, 200, 201, 205, 206, 217, 218, 220, 221, 230, 259. Diese ampuritanischen Beispiele versammelten sich gern in Grabkammern, und gelegentlich findet man auf ihnen ein bei der Bearbeitung erhaben stehengelassenes Kreuz. Zu den funerären Aspekten der dortigen *Neapolis* siehe auch die vorausgegangene Publikation von NOLLA/SAGRERA 1995. – Beeindruckend umfangreich ist die Sammlung der aus der Tarraconenser Nekropole stammenden Sarkophagkästen und -deckel: PALOL I SALELLAS/PLADEVALL I FONT 1999, Abb. S. 258. – Dem Phänomen der Versenkung von Steinsarkophagen unter den Lauffhorizont (etwa einer Kirche), bei welcher die Abdeckung mutmaßlich im Fußboden erkennbar blieb oder sogar ein wenig über denselben emporragte, wenden wir uns gegen Ende des vorliegenden Beitrages gesondert zu.

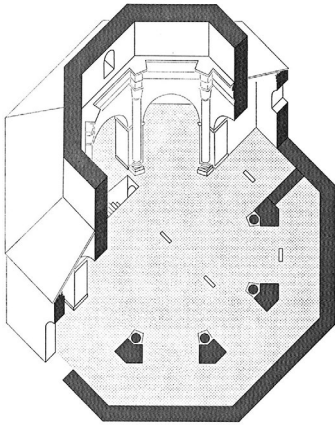


Abb. 8: Las Vegas de Pueblanueva (Prov. Toledo), Mausoleum mit Krypta. Zeichnerische Rekonstruktion. Spätes 4. Jh. n. Chr.

sarkophagen, Zeugnisse eines Bestattungsaufwandes, der nur sehr Wenigen vergönnt war.¹⁸

Ähnliches galt naturgemäß auch für das elitäre Privileg der Grablegung in einem Mausoleum – ganz besonders exquisit in der Krypta des schon genannten, mit enormer Größe angelegten Sepulkraloktogons von Las Vegas de Pueblanueva (Prov. Toledo; Abb. 8) oder auch nur in einem Bau von der bescheideneren Art eines – christlichen? – Beispiels mit bleiernen Behältern für die Toten, dessen Reste man in der nördlichen Peripherie von *Valentia/Valencia*, im heutigen Viertel Orriols, aufgedeckt hat (Abb. 9).¹⁹ Einen Sonderfall markiert jene ebenfalls recht kleine Struktur im *suburbium* der lusitanischen Kapitale *Emerita Augusta/Mérida* (Prov. Badajoz), aus welcher sich immerhin Hispaniens wichtigstes frühchristliches Sanktuarium und Pilgerzentrum für eine weibliche Heilige entwickeln sollte, nämlich für die unter Diokletian umgebrachte emeritensische Märtyrerin Eulalia. Man hat dort in nächster Nähe eine Vielzahl an *ad sanctos* entstandenen Grabstätten gefunden.²⁰

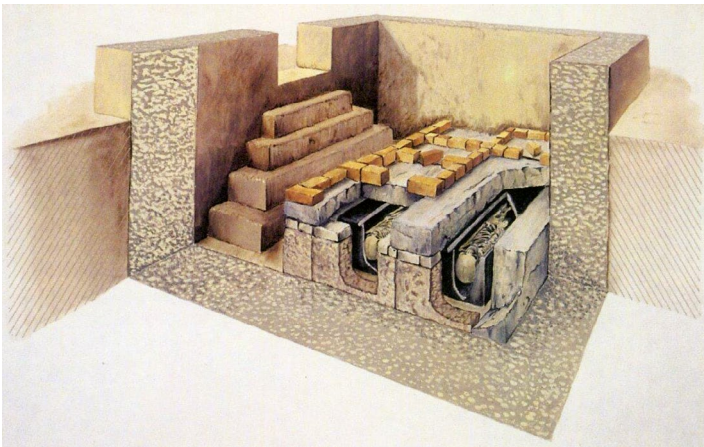


Abb. 9: Valencia, Mausoleum im Stadtteil Orriols. Zeichnerische Teilrekonstruktion. 4. Jh. n. Chr.

18 Ein ganz eigenes Kapitel bilden die im heutigen Galicien, also im äußersten Nordwesten wohl während des 5./6. Jhs. n. Chr. aufgekommen und in beachtlicher Zahl erhaltenen Granitsarkophage mit gebändertem Deckeldecor in der Ausformung *lauda de doble estola*: SUÁREZ OTERO 1997.

19 RIBERA I LACOMBA/ROSSELLÓ MESQUIDA 1999, 17f. mit Abb.

20 MATEOS CRUZ 1999, 56–58, 69f., 115–121 bes. mit Abb. 18, 29, 52 (*edificio martirial*); zu den Inschriften aus Mérida und Umgebung, darunter auch den spätantiken Epitaphen aus

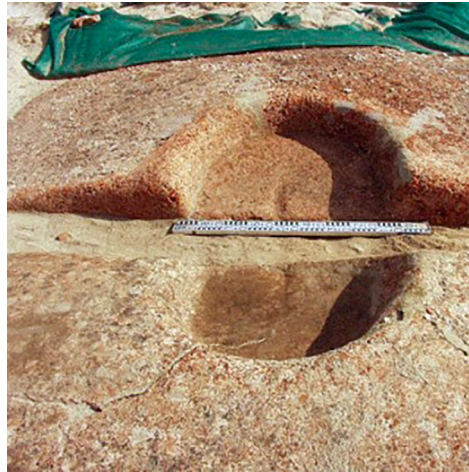


Abb. 10: Tróia (Distr. Setúbal, Portugal), frühchristlicher Kultbereich. *Mensae* über Grabanlagen.

Lediglich kurz erwähnt sei an dieser Stelle noch, dass dem im fortgeschrittenen 4. Jh. n. Chr. reich mosaizierten Kuppelmonument von Centcelles bei Tarragona²¹ – mit seinem Jagdfries, dem christlichen Themenring, seiner oberen Zone aus Jahreszeiten- und hochoffiziellen Kathedra-Bildern sowie dem völlig goldgrundigen Himmels-Rondell im Zenit – heute nur noch von einer Minderheit der Fachleute Chancen eingeräumt werden, als ein Mausoleum in funerärem Kontext zu stehen – eine Frage, die u. E. freilich in der Tat noch nicht endgültig entschieden ist.

Grabstätten im Wandel. Lokalisierung von Begräbnissen

Nicht unerwähnt bleiben soll ein auch in der *Hispania* nachzuweisender, von den Christen zunächst noch weitergeführter Brauch: die Sitte des Totenmahls an der Grabmensa, für welche man gerne Lagerflächen (*stibadia*) über den Bestattungspätzen schuf, gelegentlich mit noch gut erkennbarer sigmaförmiger Aussparung zum Deponieren der gemeinsam einzunehmenden Speisen. Solche Grabmensaen wurden u. a. und besonders instruktiv in der – heute musealisierten – Nekropole San Antón der einstigen Provinzhauptstadt *Carthago Nova*/Cartagena (Prov. Murcia) nachgewiesen²² und gleichfalls im Bereich der frühchristlichen Stätte von Tróia (Distr. Setúbal, Portugal; Abb. 10).²³ Dass die über solche Installationen sich

Santa Eulalia und Casa Herrera vgl. auch die Datenbank: <http://www3.uah.es/cilzdigital/> (Stand: 20. 11. 2021).

21 ARBEITER/KOROL 2015.

22 BERROCAL CAPARRÓS/LAIZ REVERTE 1995, 176–178 Taf. 4,1–3; GURT I ESPARRAGUERA/SÁNCHEZ RAMOS 2011, 463, 471f.

23 ALMEIDA/PAIXÃO/PAIXÃO 1982; PINTO/MAGALHÃES/BRUM 2016, 318–324. Weitere Beispiele finden sich genannt und bibliographiert von SÁNCHEZ RAMOS 2006, 374 Anm. 43 Abb. 10.

mitteilende Sitte der *convivia* am Ort der Toten in der Kirchenhierarchie auf immer weniger Gegenliebe stieß – sicher wegen der paganen Wurzeln solchen Treibens –, zeigt ein gegen diese Riten zielender Beschluss des 572 n. Chr. abgehaltenen zweiten Konzils von *Bracara/Braga* im damals noch suebischen, ehemals gallaecisch dominierten Nordwesten der Halbinsel.²⁴

Waren spätantik-christliche Grablegen mit einem Gotteshaus verbunden, dann konnten sie sich sowohl innerhalb dieses Sakralbaues als auch außerhalb befinden, was wir deutlich zum Beispiel aus dem Befund im spätantiken Weiler von El Bovalar (Prov. Lleida; Abb. 11) ersehen.²⁵ Zwar erging 561 n. Chr. in der soeben genannten Stadt Braga auf dem ersten der dort unter suebischer Herrschaft durchgeführten Konzile ein Verbot, die Gläubigen innerhalb des Gotteshauses beizusetzen,²⁶ aber es handelte sich eben um eine Synode von nur regionaler Autorität. Unsere Feststellungen über weite Bereiche der spätantiken *Hispania* hinweg zeigen klar, dass die Niederlegung der Toten im Kirchenraum um das 5. und 6. Jh. n. Chr. dort eben doch etwas vollkommen Normales war – innerhalb von Siedlungen und Städten allerdings natürlich nur soweit es dort schon statthaft war bzw. allmählich wurde, überhaupt die althergebrachte strikte Trennung der Lebenden von den Toten aufzugeben.

Weitere Beispiele für die Bestattung im Kirchenraum bieten u. v. a. auch die beiden Basiliken mit gegenständigen Apsiden von Casa Herrera bei Mérida²⁷ – aber schon in einem ländlichen Umfeld – und auf der suburban gelegenen Nekropole des Städtchens *Myrtilis/Mértola* (Distr. Beja; Abb. 22)²⁸ im Süden des heutigen Portugal. Genau dieses Bild bietet als ein dem Totenkult doch wohl geradezu vorrangig gewidmetes Gotteshaus auch die mit Gräbern dicht an dicht gefüllte Nordkirche der Nekropole von Tarragona,²⁹ und teils ähnlich vollgepackt zeigte sich dort die ältere und wichtigere, weiter südlich gelegene Märtyrerkirche des Oberhirten Fructuosus und seiner Gefährten (Abb. 21). Das vom Bestattungswesen geprägte Areal beider Kirchen befindet sich *extra muros* beim Fluss Francolí.

Zu spätantiken Funerärmensen in Nordafrika, Germanien, Gallien und dem Balkanraum vgl. die Beiträge ARDELEANU, MERTEN, OTT, PRIEN und VALEVA in diesem Band.

24 Kanon 69: *Non liceat christianis prandia ad defunctorum sepulcra deferre et sacrificia reddere mortuorum Deo* (VIVES 1963, 102).

25 PALOL I SALELLAS/PLADEVALL I FONT 1999, 145f., 188–192 (Beiträge von Pere de Palol i Salellas). Nach wie vor fehlt eine ausführliche Monographie über diese wichtige Stätte.

26 Kanon 18: *Item placuit, ut corpora defunctorum nullo modo intra basilicam sanctorum sepeliantur, sed si necesse est de foris circa murum basilicae [...]*. Als ein konkreter Grund dieses Verbots der Bestattung im Sakralbau wird der den ehrwürdigen Märtyrern zu erweisende Respekt angegeben; siehe den edierten Text bei VIVES 1963, 75. Ausführliche Erörterung bei LÓPEZ QUIROGA/MARTÍNEZ TEJERA 2009b.

27 CABALLERO ZOREDA/ULBERT 1975; ULBERT 1978, bes. 22–44.

28 TORRES/MACIAS 1993 mit Faltplan Abb. 19 (weiter ausgreifende Vorlage unserer Abb. 27).

29 LÓPEZ VILAR 2006, Umschlagbild und Bd. 1, Abb. 162.

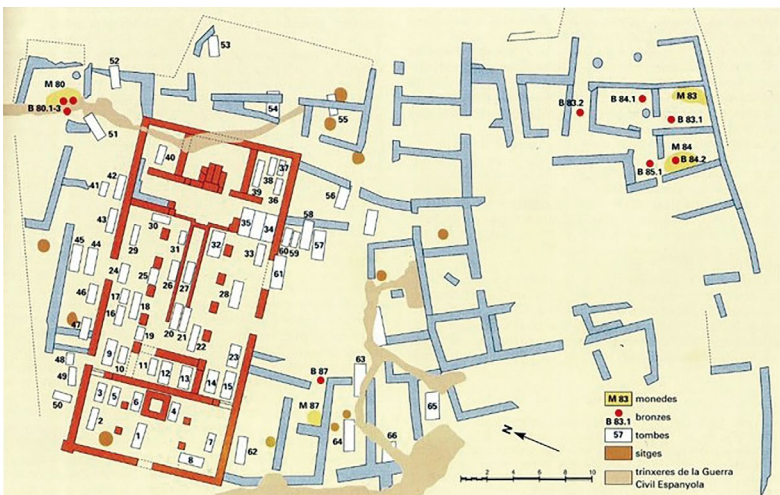


Abb. 11: El Bovalar (Prov. Lleida), spätantike Kirche nach Osten und ihr Grundriss mit umgebenden Strukturen.

Wie unübersehbar man freilich zu spätantiker Zeit in hispanischen Städten daran ging, sich dem überkommenen Bestattungsverbot im *pomerium* bzw. *intra muros* zu widersetzen, erweist das Beispiel Valencia, wo eine mitten im Zentrum ausgeübte Beisetzungsaktivität (Abb. 12) schon im 5. Jh. n. Chr. begann, was gerne damit in Verbindung gebracht wird, dass sich hier am Forum, beim Ort der nachmals entstandenen großen Kathedrale, einst mutmaßlich die innerstädtische Martyriumsstätte des heiligen Vinzenz – dann natürlich mit kommemorativer Befragung – befunden habe; sicher ist diese These allerdings nicht.³⁰ Ein ‚neues‘ und

30 RIBERA I LACOMBA 2007, 382–384, 391–393, 408–411, bes. Abb. 3–6, 8–11 (unsere Abb. 12), 18–21; Widerspruch bei LÖX 2017, 144–151, 156f.

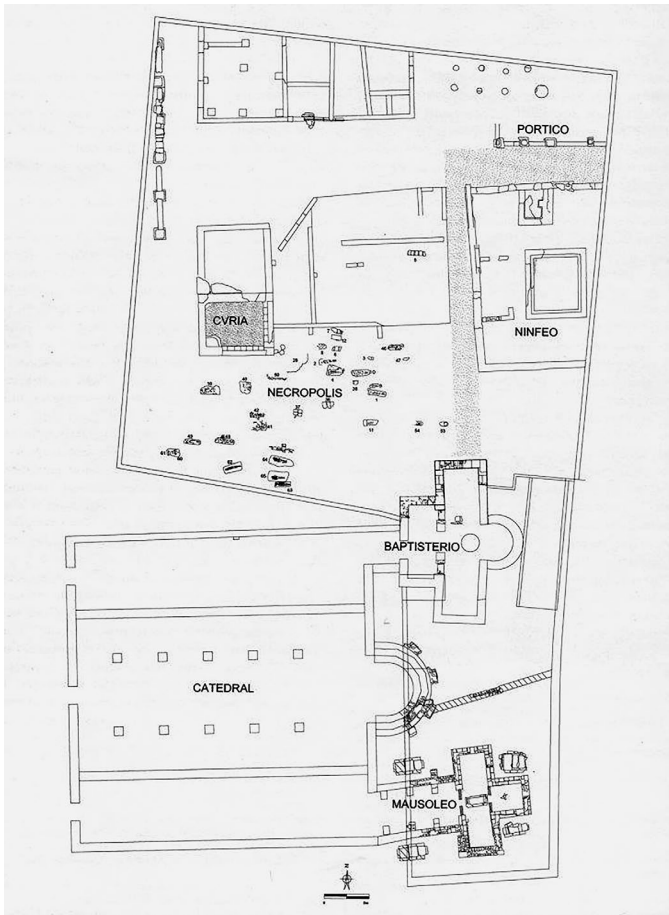


Abb. 12: Valencia, Gebäudegruppe der Kathedrale, Nekropole und nördlich anschließende Römerbauten im 6. Jh. n. Chr.

ausnehmend beachtenswertes Beispiel für die sehr frühe Bildung einer innerstädtischen Nekropole, nämlich gleichermaßen vom 5. Jh. n. Chr. an, bietet jetzt *Astigi/Écija* (Prov. Sevilla) in der ehemaligen *Baetica*; dort hat man an der heutigen Plaza de España, also am zentralen Punkt der römischen Stadt, einen höchst instruktiv bewahrten christlichen Funeralbezirk freigelegt, welcher seinerzeit durch Umnutzung der monumentalen *porticus* am *temenos* des alten Kaiserkulttempels entstanden war.³¹ Im Kathedralbereich von *Barcino(na)/Barcelona*, um noch ein Beispiel zu nennen, konstatiert man für die Jahrzehnte um 600 n. Chr. an der Innenseite der Stadtmauer, nahe der Kathedrale, eine ganze Reihe von Beisetzungen.³²

31 GARCÍA-DILS DE LA VEGA 2015, 475–484.

32 BELTRÁN DE HEREDIA BERCERO 2008; Aufkommen und Lage dieser Gräber sehr anschaulich zu erkennen auf den im Kontext der wissenschaftlichen Untersuchungen entstandenen farbigen Plänen der Kathedralzone, etwa bei BELTRÁN DE HEREDIA BERCERO 2006, 94f. Nr. 9.

Ausgestaltung, Belegung und Ausstattung von Gräbern

Was im großen Überblick die Faktur der *sepulchra* anbelangt,³³ so stehen am Beginn unserer Umschau, die erdrückende Mehrzahl dieser Ruhestätten bildend, die Grablegen der ‚kleinen Leute‘ mit einer beträchtlichen Bandbreite der materiellen und technischen Möglichkeiten. Bei regelhaft anzutreffender Rückenlage der Toten bilden die einfachste Gestaltung naturgemäß die zahllosen Inhumationen in schlichten grubenförmigen, nach ihrer Belegung abgedeckten Erdgräbern. Deutlich gesteigerten Arbeitsaufwand machten demgegenüber jene Beisetzungsstätten erforderlich, die man in eine Felsbasis eintiefte; dafür sei als Beispiel auf der kleinen Baleareninsel Cabrera im dortigen spätantiken klösterlichen Kontext von Pla de ses Figueres das mit einer Steinplattenabdeckung versehene *enterrament* Nr. 3 aufgerufen.³⁴ Dort, wo brauchbares Spolienmaterial für das Einfassen und Überfangen der Strukturen zur Verfügung stand, wurde dieses selbstredend gern benutzt, so wie es die besagte Fructuosus-Nekropole von *Tarraco* vor Augen führt,³⁵ aber auch etwa ein notdürftig und simpel *a cappuccina* mit *tegulae* hergestelltes Grab in Valencia und weitere in der *Gallaecia*.³⁶ Ebenfalls unter dem Leitgedanken der Wiederverwendung findet man Amphoren-Bestattungen für Säuglinge und Kleinkinder.³⁷ Das mehr oder weniger gediegene Konturieren eines Grabes mit längeren natürlichen oder eigens erst dafür zugerichteten, die Wand bildenden Platten (*tipo cista*) begegnet immer wieder, so beim Grab Nr. 1 der Nekropole La Cruz del Cristo in dem Weiler Cristo del Espíritu Santo bei Malagón (Prov. Ciudad Real).³⁸ Alternativ bot sich der Einsatz kleiner, flacher, unbearbeiteter und gestapelter Platten; diese weniger gängige Technik veranschaulicht eine – doppelt belegte – Ruhestätte in der Nekropole La Benita bei Cabra (Prov. Córdoba; Abb. 13),³⁹ während schließlich eine Anlage in der aktuellen Göttinger Kirchengrabung von

33 Der *Liber ordinum*, eine Sammlung präskriptiver liturgischer Texte, die im 7. Jh. n. Chr. festgeschrieben wurden, allerdings nur durch jüngere Codices überliefert sind, enttäuscht unsere Hoffnungen auf weitere Erkenntnisse aus erster Hand praktisch gänzlich, liefert er doch als Zusätze zu einer üppigen Flut an Gebets-, Anrufungs- und Segnungstexten nur hier und da Anweisungen zu konkretem rituellem Handeln, die jedoch meist lapidar bleiben und bezüglich der materiellen Gestaltung der Grablegen so gut wie nichts beisteuern: FÉROTIN 1904, Sp. 107–149.

34 RIERA RULLÁN 2009, 99–101 Abb. 3–9; RIERA RULLÁN 2017, 137–143, jeweils mit drei Phasenphotos zu Formbildung, Belegung und Abdeckung des Grabes.

35 PALOL I SALELLAS/PLADEVALL I FONT 1999, Abb. S. 261.

36 Valencia: RIBERA I LACOMBA/ROSSELLÓ MESQUIDA 1999, 24 mit Abb.; CALVO GÁLVEZ 2000, 193f. mit 2 Abb.; *Gallaecia*: LOPEZ QUIROGA 2018, 421 Abb. 1 (aus Noalla, Gemeinde Sanxenxo [Prov. Pontevedra], 3. Jh.).

37 Als Beispiel in Valencia: RIBERA I LACOMBA/ROSSELLÓ MESQUIDA 1999, 24f. mit Abb. Zur dortigen Nutzung von Amphoren(teilen) für infantile Bestattungen auch CALVO GÁLVEZ 2000, 194f. mit 2 Abb.

38 FERNÁNDEZ CALVO 2016, 25, 31 Abb. 5.

39 SÁNCHEZ VELASCO/MORENO ROSA/GÓMEZ MUÑOZ 2009, 158 Taf. 38 (unsere Abb. 13).



Abb. 13: Cabra (Prov. Córdoba), Nekropole La Benita. Grab Nr. 38.



Abb. 14: La Losilla bei Añora (Prov. Córdoba), Grab Nr. 4 im Inneren der Basilika.

La Losilla (ebenfalls Prov. Córdoba; Abb. 14) für im Vergleich wirklich achtbare bauliche Qualität steht.⁴⁰

Zu betonen ist im Übrigen, dass die Beisetzungen – zur ungehinderten Schau des dereinst bei seiner Wiederkehr von Osten her erwarteten Heilands – deutlich bevorzugt west-östlich ausgerichtet und mit dem Kopf im Westen disponiert wurden (Abb. 11, 22), auch wenn diese Vorkehrung dann bei allfälligen weiteren Belegungen offenbar ohne Scheu zunichte gemacht werden konnte. Gerade La Losilla illustriert sehr anschaulich die Gewohnheit solcher ein ums andere Mal erfolgender Nachbestattungen, in deren Zug man die Skelette von dort vorgängig beigesetzten Individuen zu *paquetes óseos* zusammenräumte.⁴¹ Hiervon zu unterscheiden sind Ruhestätten, die schon bei ihrer Entstehung als Kollektivanlagen konzipiert wurden, so in Valencia, wo man während der zweiten Phase der Almoína-Nekropole (Abb. 12) bei der Kathedrale besonders imposante Gräber für bis zu 25 Individuen schuf.⁴²

40 ARÉVALO SANTOS 1994, 124f. Abb. 1, 3, 6.

41 SCHLIMBACH 2017, 121–123 (Gräber Nr. 14 und 10). Gemäß der beigelegten Abb. 4 enthielt Grab Nr. 14 „die Skelette und Skelettreste von wenigstens vier Bestattungen“, wobei sich – ein Sonderfall – „hier obenauf zwei Skelette in Rückenlage befanden [...]. Jene müssen zuletzt entweder gleichzeitig oder mit nur sehr kurzem zeitlichem Abstand beigesetzt worden sein“ (ebd. 121).

42 CALVO GÁLVEZ 2000, 198–202 mit Abb.; RIBERA I LACOMBA 2007, 408–411 Abb. 18, 21, 22.



Abb. 15: Sevilla, Museo Arqueológico. Keramische Gefäße aus fünf Gräbern bei und in der Kirche von Gerena (Prov. Sevilla). 6.–7. Jh. n. Chr.

Ein spezielles Kapitel, sehr wohl auch in Nekropolen und gern mit der Funktion einer nochmals gesonderten, strikteren Hülle, bestritten die bis ins späte 5. Jh. n. Chr. gelegentlich auftretenden, allerdings kaum einmal als christlich zu erweisenden Bleisarkophage⁴³ – s. auch die bleiernen Behälter im Mausoleum von Orriols bei *Valentia* (Abb. 9) – und andererseits die Holzsärgе, die heute regelmäßig vergangen sind, auf deren Vorkommen in der Spätantike aber ggf. die bewahrten Eisennägel hindeuten.

Das Thema der in den Gräbern eventuell vorhandenen Beigaben (*depósitos*) bzw. der dort angetroffenen Elemente persönlicher Ausstattung (*ajuales*) ist facettenreich und erkenntnisträchtig und würde eigentlich nach einer hochgradig differenzierten gesonderten Behandlung verlangen. Wir belassen es jedoch bei zwei Einblicken, nämlich bei den Exempla mehrerer keramischer Gefäße aus Gräbern im Bereich der Basilika von Gerena (Prov. Sevilla; Abb. 15)⁴⁴ und den Trachtinventaren weiblicher Verstorbener aus zwei Grablegen des riesigen zentralspanischen

43 MARTÍN URDÍROZ 2002; zu einem bleiernen Deckel mit mutmaßlichem Christogrammschmuck aus Andújar (Prov. Jaén), heute in Madrid, SÁENZ Y VELASCO 1987; Rep. IV 79. Für eine Nekropole in *Italica* (Prov. Sevilla), die auch Bleisarkophage enthielt, hat man überzeugend christlichen Kontext vermerkt: FERNÁNDEZ GÓMEZ 1992, 98 Nr. 27.

44 FERNÁNDEZ GÓMEZ 1992, 93–96 Nr. 26bis: Die fünf bis zu 27,5 cm hohen, unterschiedlichen Gefäße der Typen Kanne/Krug und Flasche, welche im 6.–7. Jh. n. Chr. entstanden und wohl Öle oder flüssige Salben enthielten, stammen aus fünf Gräbern im Umfeld sowie im Inneren der Kirche; auf unserer Illustration erkennt man bei einem der Stücke deutliche Reste roter Bemalung. Für den Süden der Halbinsel und auch speziell für diese Kirche findet sich u. a. dieser Themenbereich abgehandelt bei FLÖRCHINGER 1998. Eine rezente, nach Regionen organisierte Zusammenstellung von Rechercheleistungen zur hispanischen Keramik jener Jahrhunderte einschließlich verschiedener funerarer Kontexte liefern die Herausgeber MARTÍN VISO et al. 2018.



Abb. 16: Segovia, Museo Provincial de Bellas Artes. Trachtzubehör der Frauengräber Nr. 79 und 445 aus der Nekropole von Duratón (Prov. Segovia).

Friedhofs von Duratón (Prov. Segovia; Abb. 16), einer jener Nekropolen, deren ethnische Verortung nach wie vor debattiert wird.⁴⁵

Als eine speziell zu beachtende, persönliche Beigabe mag etwa das im heutigen Stadtgebiet von Priego de Córdoba (Prov. Córdoba) aus einem mutmaßlich dem

⁴⁵ Duratón: MOLINERO PÉREZ 1948. Konkret angesprochen sind hier die Gräber Nr. 79 und 445. – RIPOLL LÓPEZ 1994, 308, 312–317 Nr. IV.3. Zu den diskutierten zentralspanischen Nekropolen und ihrem Fundmaterial u. v. a. RIPOLL 1985; EBEL-ZEPEZAUER 2000; SASSE 2000; EGER 2005; RIPOLL 2010; BARROSO CABRERA 2018; EGER 2022.

4. oder 5. Jh. n. Chr. entstammenden, mit Dachziegeln *a cappuccina* überfangenen Grab, und zwar aus der rechten Armbeuge des Toten geborgene Eisenkreuz mit unterem Fortsatz angeführt werden, bei dem man sich also wohl ein Handkreuz mit hölzernem Griff oder gar einen bodenlangen Kreuzstab vorzustellen hat, was auf einen Geistlichen hinweisen und uns einen Blick in die Frühzeit christlicher Würdezeichen gewähren könnte.⁴⁶ Gleichermäßen ziemlich rezent ist der Fund eines in der zweiten Hälfte des 4. oder der ersten Hälfte des 5. Jhs. n. Chr. gefertigten Goldanhängers von 1,8 cm Durchmesser mit Monogrammkreuz, Alpha und Omega aus dem Grab eines Kindes oder Jugendlichen, welches zu einem Friedhof beim schon genannten südportugiesischen Mértola gehörte.⁴⁷ Zum altbekannten Gut zählt demgegenüber die ebenfalls prophylaktisch zu verstehende, im 6. Jh. n. Chr. gefertigte goldene Pressblech-Medaillonbrosche einer vornehmen Frauenbestattung von El Turuñuelo (Prov. Badajoz) mit Anbetung der Magier und griechischer Schutz-Anrufung der Muttergottes, welche also nach der *communis opinio* im Osten des Mittelmeergebiets gefertigt wurde und gerade in diesem vorausgesetzten Importcharakter stets als ein äußerst bemerkenswertes Stück gegolten hat.⁴⁸

Materialität und Rezeptionsmöglichkeiten von Grabmarkern in sepulkralen Kontexten

Wenden wir uns der immobilien Ausgestaltung und Auszeichnung hispanisch-frühchristlicher Gräber und hierbei einigen besonders hervorhebenswerten Befunden zu, so soll an erster Stelle ein in seinem Aufbau eigentlich wenig anspruchsvolles Grab beim Bauernhof El Arrimadizo im Umland von Priego de Córdoba genannt werden. Dieses besitzt eine denkwürdige Schrift-Einritzung, deren Signifikanz durch die geringe Auffälligkeit ihrer Anbringung sogar noch gesteigert wird: Die auf einer der das Grab konfigurierenden Platten getroffene Aussage befand sich nicht nur am Fußende, sondern obendrein im Inneren der Struktur, so dass sie, jedweden Adressaten unter den lebenden Hinterbliebenen negierend, fraglos direkt und ausschließlich dem Verstorbenen zugutekommen sollte.

46 Nekropole in der Calle Ramón y Cajal, Grab Nr. 5: CARMONA ÁVILA/LUNA OSUNA 2007, bes. 58, 62f. Taf. 29, 30, 37.

47 Necrópole da Achada de S. Sebastião, Grab Nr. 243: LOPES 1999, 89f.; bessere Illustration bei MACIAS 2006, 119 Abb. II.74.

48 Die mit Granit- und Schieferplatten geschützte Bestattung fand sich im selben Gräberfeld wie der oben angesprochene Sarkophag von El Turuñuelo: PÉREZ MARTÍN 1961, 12–40, bes. 16–27 Abb. 9–11; SCHLUNK/HAUSCHILD 1978, 156 Taf. 49a. AGER 2010, 74f. mit Anführung von Vergleichsstücken erwägt sogar die Möglichkeit einer Herstellung im damals byzantinischen küstennahen Südosten Hispaniens. Wie auch immer, das Stück passt gut zu dem im Raum Mérida während des 6. Jhs. n. Chr. bekanntermaßen sehr wirksamen byzantinischen Einfluss.

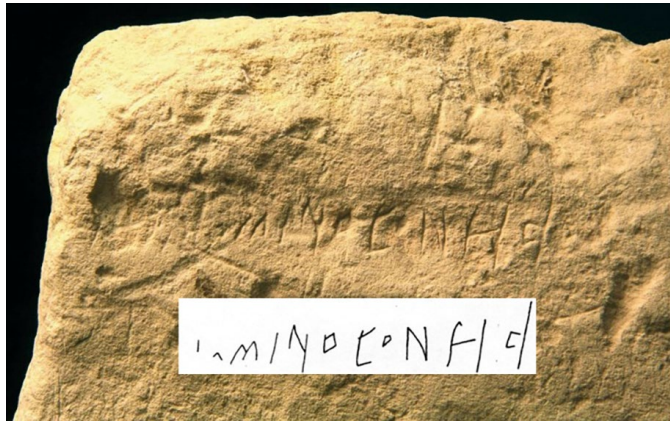


Abb. 17: Priego de Córdoba (Prov. Córdoba), Museo Histórico Municipal. Element einer steinernen Grabeinfassung aus El Arrimadizo. Psalmwort [+ in d]omino confid[o] = (Psalm 10,2; Länge des Erhaltenen: 10 cm) aus dem Inneren des Grabes.

Es handelt sich um das Psalmwort 10,2 aus der Vulgata, *In domino confido*: „Ich traue auf den Herrn“ (Abb. 17).⁴⁹ – Ganz anders als in El Arrimadizo, wo der Leitspruch im Grabinneren verborgen wurde, war eine dem Lokalmuseum von Castro del Río (Prov. Córdoba) gehörende Inschriftplatte einst als für jedermann lesbare Abdeckung einer letzten Ruhestätte gedacht, wenn auch immerhin wieder in der Ich-Form; der Tote namens Johannes wollte als ein Sünder – *peccator* – dastehen, und als seine Devise wählte er, dazu passend, die Imploration *Miserere mei deus*: „Erbarme Dich meiner, Gott“. Auch diese erweist sich als ein kurzes Psalmwort (50,3 und 55,2).⁵⁰

Dass die Gottergebenheit und die Gewissheit des Angewiesenseins auf göttliches Erbarmen sich auch und besonders in simplen und deutlichen Christuszeichen verdichteten, mögen einige auf Gräbern anzutreffende Beispiele beglaubigen: Aus Valencia sei ein in die *opus signinum*-Oberfläche des betreffenden Grabes zuversichtlich eingeritztes Monogrammkreuz genannt, und die Insel Mallorca steuert – aus

49 CARMONA ÁVILA 1990; *CIL II²/5 287* (Armin U. Stylow); weitere Beispiele solcher ‚Endotaphe‘ in den Beiträgen ARDELEANU, UBERTI und VALEVA in diesem Band.

50 STYLOW 1987, 107–109, 113; SÁNCHEZ VELASCO/MORENO ROSA/GÓMEZ MUÑOZ 2009, 143–145; *CIL II²/5 402* (Armin U. Stylow). – Eine verwandte epigraphische Aussage fand man an der Deckplatte des mit zwei Individuen belegten Sarkophaggrabes in der Sondage 10 von La Garrapata bei Arcos de la Frontera (Prov. Cádiz) mit dem Wortlaut *Domini omnipotens [sic] rogamus indulgentias [sic]*: „Vom Herrn, der allmächtig ist, erleben wir Beweise seiner Milde“ (also Vergebung der Sünden), wobei aber dieser Text – ein ähnlicher Fall wie derjenige von El Arrimadizo – auffälligerweise wieder im Grabesinneren, nämlich hier nun an der Innenseite der Deckplatte stand: RICHARTE GARCÍA/AGUILERA RODRÍGUEZ 1997, bes. 54f. mit seitenverkehrt gedrucktem Photo 3 von der Inschrift. Auf diese Bestattung kommen wir unten noch einmal zurück.

demselben Material sogar erhaben modelliert – zwei Kreuze bei, mit welchen man seinerzeit frühchristliche Ruhestätten in Cas Frares und in Son Peretó versah.⁵¹ Von höchster Eindrücklichkeit ist ein bei Grabungen im Bereich der Pfarrkirche Santa Maria in *Iluro/Alarona/Mataró* (Prov. Barcelona) zutage gekommenes Grab, dessen *signinum*-Überzug ein am Kopfende erhaben modelliertes, volle 68 cm großes Monogrammkreuz einbegriff (Abb. 18).⁵²

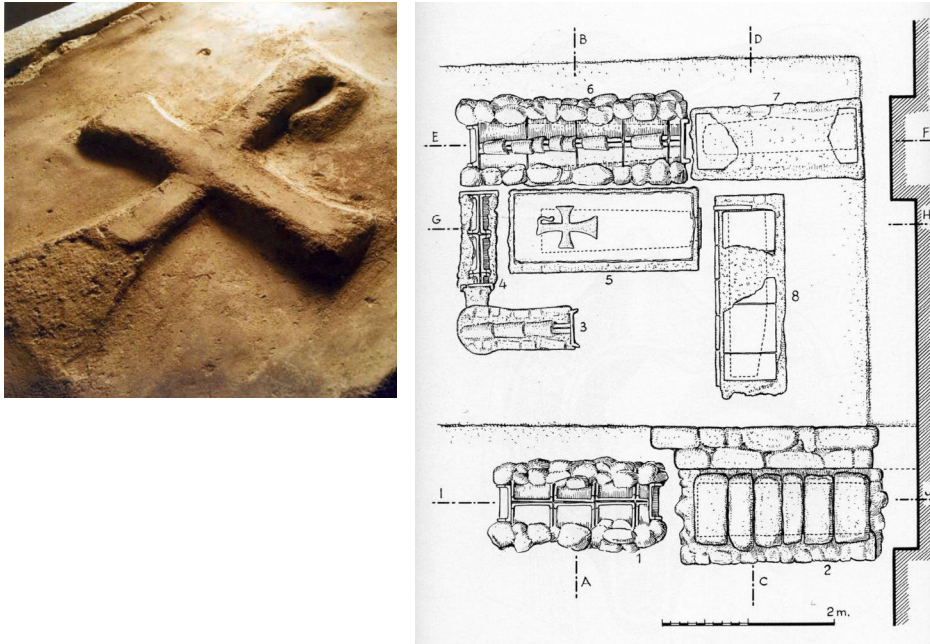


Abb. 18: Mataró (Prov. Barcelona), Museu Arxiu de Santa Maria. Erhabenes Monogrammkreuz einer *opus signinum*-Überdeckung, von Grab Nr. 5 der dem Gotteshaus benachbarten Nekropole hierher übertragen. Plan der Fundsituation.

An einer weitaus höheren Stelle der Skala, was individuelle Gestaltung, Kunstfertigkeit und Einsatz schriftlicher wie nun auch elaboriert bildlicher Mittel bei oft sicherlich gehörigem finanziellem Aufwand zur Schmückung sepulkraler Anlagen betrifft, haben wir die Grabmosaiken oder zumindest deren prominentere Vertreter. Von dieser im heutigen Tunesien und nordöstlichen Algerien fast ubiquitären Gattung kennt man in Hispanien mehrere Dutzend physisch mehr oder weniger gut erhaltene, im Einzelfall stark zerstörte oder gar nur noch aus Quellen

51 Valencia: CALVO GÁLVEZ 2000, 199, 201 mit Abb.; RIBERA I LACOMBA 2007, Abb. 20. Cas Frares und Son Peretó: RIERA RULLÁN 2009, 104–106 Abb. 37, 54, 55.

52 RIBAS I BERTRAN 1975, 78–82 Taf. 2 Abb. 39–41; BONAMUSA ROURE 2011, bes. 222, 230, 235, 263f. (Abb. 4.34, 4.35), 609, 615, 692 (Abb. 7.111), Umschlagbild farbig (unsere Abb. 18).

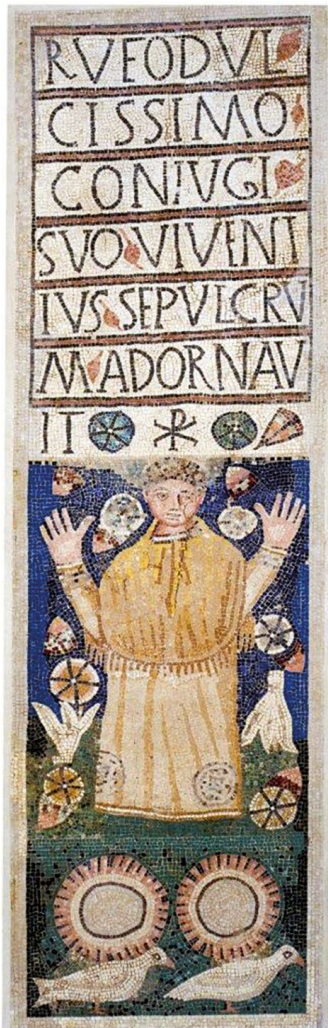


Abb. 19: Huesca, Museo. Grabmosaik des Rufus aus Coscojuela de Fantova (Prov. Huesca).

geläufige, in das 4.–6. Jh. n. Chr. zu datierende Exemplare, deren Katalog in lockerer Verteilung das Gros der hier behandelten iberischen Gebiete übergreift⁵³ – von den Balearen im Osten über Zentralspanien (als rezente Entdeckung in *Oretum/Oreto-Zuqueca* [Prov. Ciudad Real] der Grabschmuck des Diakons Aurelius Vincentius⁵⁴) bis hinüber zum gallaecischen Nordwesten (aus Frende [Distr. Oporto, Por-

53 GÓMEZ PALLARÈS 2002; ARBEITER 2006; Quattrocchi, pp. 931–1012 (es fehlt das Grabmosaik in der Kirche Santa Eulalia in Mérida; dazu MATEOS CRUZ 1999, 132–136 Abb. 59); QUATTROCCHI 2017a; QUATTROCCHI 2017b. Für nordafrikanische Grabmosaikern mit statistischen Verteilungskarten vgl. den Beitrag ARDELEANU in diesem Band.

54 POVEDA NAVARRO/FUENTES SÁNCHEZ 2019; farbige Abb. unter <https://www.lanzadigital.com/cultura/el-mosaico-con-lauda-funeraria-de-oretum-protagonista-en-una-mesa-redonda-de-la-universidad-carlos-iii/> (Stand: 20. 11. 2021).

tugal] das Mosaikepitaph des Palladius⁵⁵) –, doch finden sich die fünf im Folgenden konkret anzusprechenden, besonders achtbaren bewahrten Exemplare allesamt an Standorten der *Tarraconensis*: Da ist, aus *Graccurreis/Alfaro* (La Rioja) am Ebro-Fluss, das überaus mitteilsame Tableau des verstorbenen Ursicinus, welcher Gott anempfohlen, so gut es gehen will porträtiert und in persönlich-familiären Details umschrieben wird, wobei sich am Ende seine hinterbliebene Frau Melete als Auftraggeberin dieses Epitaphs zu erkennen gibt.⁵⁶

Da sind, aus Coscojuela de Fantova (Prov. Huesca) am Übergang zu den Pyrenäen, der als Schafträger abgebildete Presbyter Macedonius und der als ein Beter vorggeführte Rufus (Abb. 19), wobei erneut jeweils die Ehefrau als Bestellerin des Mosaikpaneels des letzten Ruheortes auftritt.⁵⁷ In der Tarraconenser Nekropole, die wir bereits wiederholt ansprachen, fanden sich u. a. das unbekümmert zwischen Hoch- und Querformat schwankende Ampelius-Mosaik mit einem – verlorenen – Christuszeichen über dem Kopf des Bestatteten, einem Lamm und Blütenzweigen, die einem Gefäß entwachsen,⁵⁸ und, als Gipfel des Anspruchs, das dem frühen 5. Jh. n. Chr. zugewiesene, höchst qualitätvolle Grabmosaik des Optimus (Abb. 20): Dieser Verstorbene wird in der *toga contabulata* mit Schriftrolle und Redegestus dargestellt; nach überkommener Meinung war er ein hoher ziviler Würdenträger, während andere Forscher in ihm aber vielleicht doch eher einen verstorbenen Bischof erkennen wollen. Jedenfalls war Optimus ein Mann von hinreichendem Rang, um in der südlichen und ursprünglich einzigen, dem lokalen

- 55 Hier handelt es sich ausnahmsweise um den Teil einer offenbar als Abdeckung gedachten Granitplatte, in die das Mosaik eingesetzt wurde. MACIEL 1996, 164–166 mit Abb.; CIPTP 160; LOPES 2011, 586f. mit Abb. – Von Quattrocchi, pp. 942, 969f. (Kartierung) irrtümlich der *Lusitania* zugewiesen, dort an der Atlantikküste lokalisiert und – wegen des Ortes seiner Musealisierung? – als „mosaico de Porto [POR 1]“ angesprochen, obwohl Frende ganz im Osten des heutigen portugiesischen Distrikts Oporto, also weit im Binnenland liegt.
- 56 Das Paneel findet sich ausgestellt im Madrider Museo Arqueológico Nacional. GALINDO ROMEO 1933; ÁLVAREZ-OSSORIO 1935; GÓMEZ PALLARÈS 2002, 59f., 72f., 75, 77, 87f. Abb. 20; ARBEITER 2006, 278–280, 288 Abb. 20, 21; Quattrocchi, pp. 954–956, 968f., 972–978, 980f., 985, 989 Abb. 16; QUATTROCCHI 2017a, 74, 78f., 82, 85f., 89 Abb. 8; QUATTROCCHI 2017b, 128f., 132 Abb. 9; <http://www.man.es/man/exposicion/recorridos-tematicos/arqueologia-muerte/14-lauda-ursicinus.html> (Stand: 04.09.2021).
- 57 Beide – sowie auch Reste weiterer Grabmosaiken mit derselben Provenienz – im Museum von Huesca. DEL ARCO 1921; BLÁZQUEZ MARTÍNEZ 1990; GÓMEZ PALLARÈS 2002, 35–37, 72f., 75, 77 Abb. 11, 12; ARBEITER 2006, 283–288, Abb. 28, 29; MOSTALAC CARRILLO 2009, 74, 84f., 126–133 (sehr gute Farbbilder); Quattrocchi, pp. 956–959, 968f., 971–974, 977–981, 984f., 988 Abb. 17, 18; QUATTROCCHI 2017a, 74, 76, 78, 80–82, 85, 87–89 Abb. 6a, b; QUATTROCCHI 2017b, 125–127, 131f. Abb. 5, 6.
- 58 SCHLUNK/HAUSCHILD 1978, 135f. Taf. 26a; GÓMEZ PALLARÈS 2002, 68f., 72f., 75, 77 Abb. 31; ARBEITER 2006, 277f., 287 Abb. 17, 18; Quattrocchi, pp. 944f., 967, 969, 971–973, 975, 977–980, 984, 987, 989 Abb. 9; QUATTROCCHI 2017a, 74, 76, 78–80, 83, 87f. Abb. 7c; QUATTROCCHI 2017b, 129, 132 Abb. 10.



Abb. 20: Tarragona, Museu i Necròpolis Paleocristians. Grabmosaik des Optimus. Frühes 5. Jh. n. Chr.

Märtyrerbischof Fructuosus gewidmeten Nekropolenkirche von Tarragona im Mittelschiff sehr weit vorne beigesetzt zu werden (Abb. 21).

Sein leider unvollständiger und somit nicht durchgehend eindeutig verständlicher epigraphischer Nachruf könnte übersetzt in etwa gelautet haben: „Optimus! Der Herr hat Dir, siehe, die verheißenen göttlichen Himmelfesten gewährt: Du ruhst am heiligen Sitz Christi“, und es ist gut denkbar, dass die Schlussaussage direkt auf die privilegierte Position seiner Bestattung im Innenraum des Sakralbaues nahe dem Altar anspielt.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ SERRA VILARÓ 1928–1930, Bd. 1, 31 f., 107, farbiges Frontispiz, Taf. 1 (Plan: Nr. 40), 8,4, 32,1; SCHLUNK/HAUSCHILD 1978, 136 f. Taf. 27; GÓMEZ PALLARÈS 2002, 67 f., 72 f., 75, 77 Abb. 30 (Deutung als Bischof?); ARBEITER 2006, 271–275, 287 Abb. 9 f.; Quattrocchi, pp. 943 f., 967,

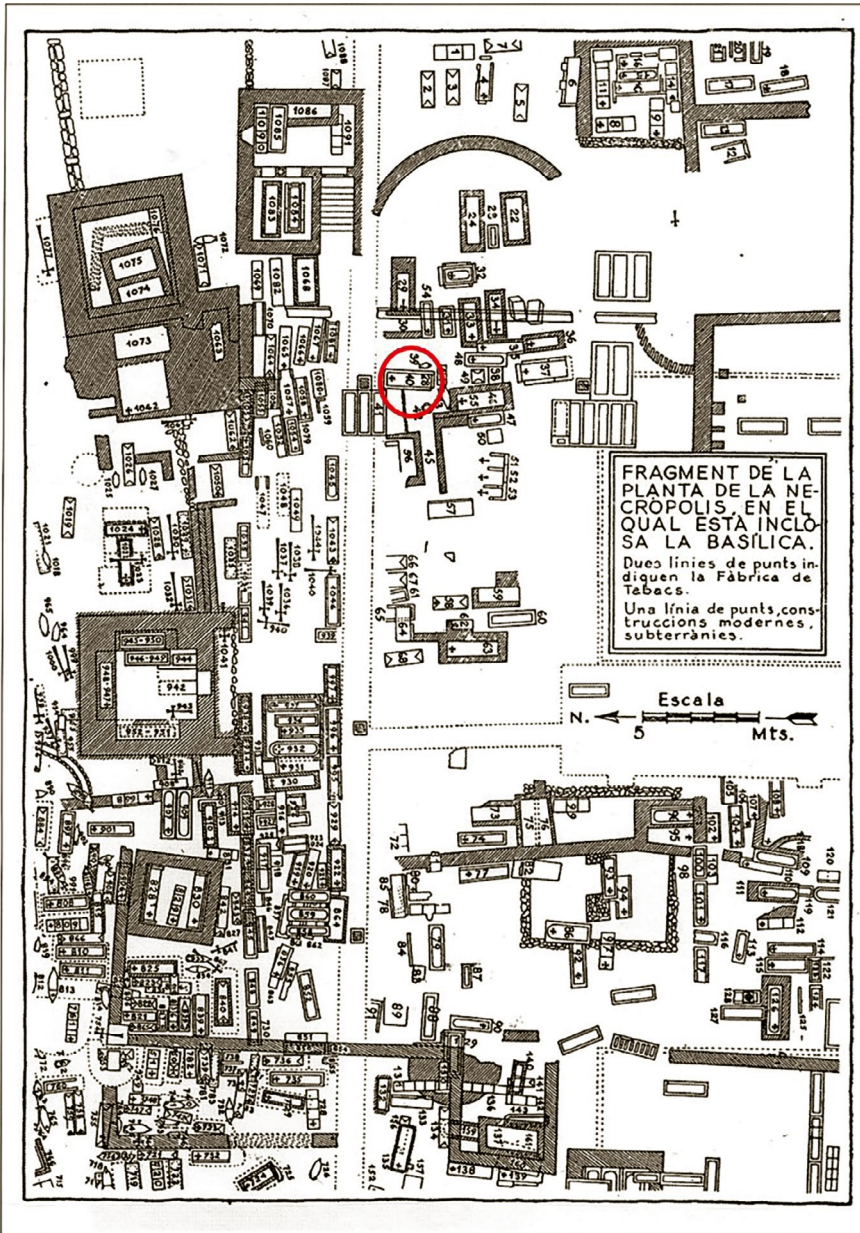


Abb. 21: Tarragona, Plan der Südkirche (Fructuosus-Kirche) im Nekropolenbereich am Fluss Francolí mit Angabe der Gräber und Sepulkralbauten und Markierung des Optimus-Grabes Nr. 40.

969, 971f., 975, 977, 979–981, 984f., 989 Abb. 8; QUATTROCCHI 2017a, 74, 76, 78, 80, 82f., 87f. Abb. 7a; QUATTROCCHI 2017b, 126f., 131f. Abb. 7. – Auch zum Grab und seiner Lage im einstigen Kirchenraum: DEL AMO 1979–1989, Bd. 1, 58, eingeleitete Tabelle nach S. 64, 106–108, 111, 133 Nr. 40; ebd. Bd. 2, Abb. 51; ebd. Bd. 3, Plan 63.

Fraglos müssen wir uns vorstellen, dass dieses und weitere in den Fußboden des Gotteshauses eingelassene Grabmosaiken für permanente Sichtbarkeit gedacht waren, und würden vorderhand naheliegenderweise gern darauf vertrauen, dass sie, so wie auch andere in Kirchenböden liegende Gräber, die etwa Inschriftplatten trugen, mit ihrer Oberfläche den Laufhorizont des Kultraumes respektierten. Garantieren können wir solches allerdings weder für Sepulkralmosaiken noch überhaupt für die Gesamtheit der in christlichen Kulträumen angelegten Ruhestätten: Wir wissen nicht nur, in Bezug auf Nordafrika, um die damalige Existenz von Gräbern mit oder ohne Mosaikdekor, welche in Gestalt von *caissons* vollends aus dem Laufniveau herausgehoben waren,⁶⁰ sondern haben auch für Hispanien Hinweise darauf, dass die Oberflächen zumindest von Gräbern mit gewissen Präentionen – allerdings nur ein wenig – über dem eigentlichen Kirchenboden liegen konnten, wodurch ebenso unvermeidlich wie befremdlich ein normales Umhergehen im Gotteshaus stark erschwert wurde, andererseits aber natürlich mittels der stufigen, einem Betreten intuitiv widerratenden Heraushebung der Grabanlagen für deren besseren Schutz gegen Abnutzung gesorgt war:

Können wir bei dem soeben genannten einzelnen Grab im mallorquinischen Kultbau von Son Peretó – genauer gesagt: im dortigen Baptisteriums-Umgang –, dessen *opus signinum*-Oberfläche ein erhaben modelliertes Kreuz aufwies, nur allgemein von zwangsläufig daraus sich ergebenden Niveaudifferenzen und somit von einer wenig bequemen, vielleicht gar etwas riskanten Passage sprechen,⁶¹ so war der Boden der Nekropolenkirche im heute portugiesischen *Myrtilis/Mértola* offenbar geradezu großflächig uneben: Dort lässt einer der aus *signinum* hergestellten Grabüberzüge des Langhauses, nämlich derjenige der Antonia aus dem Jahr 571 n. Chr., noch besonders deutlich erkennen, dass man bei ihm wie gewiss auch bei mehreren anderen, benachbarten Grabaufgaben der Formgebung eines Sarkophagdeckels nahezukommen suchte: Die glatte Oberfläche mit der eingelassenen, nur den Kopfbereich überfangenden Epitaphplatte geht an allen vier Kanten in Schrägen über, und diese sollten dann ja wohl oberhalb des Laufbodens der Basilika gesehen werden (Abb. 22, 23).⁶²

60 DUVAL 1976, 29–31 mit Abb. 11, 12, letztere eine Planzeichnung, auf welcher sich die in der sog. *Chapelle des Martyrs* von Tabarka (Tunesien) angetroffenen *tombes en saillie* eingetragen finden. Weitere Beispiele aus Nordafrika und Trier sind in den Beiträgen ARDELEANU und MERTEN in diesem Band diskutiert.

61 Die aus solcher Unebenheit resultierende Stolpergefahr (und Abnutzungsperspektive) ergab sich natürlich auch bei nicht in Gotteshäusern, sondern in Nekropolen befindlichen und dort einem Laufhorizont einbeschriebenen Gräbern mit *signinum*-Elementen wie mutmaßlich demjenigen von Cas Frares, das wir oben an gleicher Stelle mit dem gemeinsamen Literaturhinweis RIERA RULLÁN 2009, 104–106 Abb. 37, 54, 55 angesprochen haben.

62 MACIAS 1993, 47–53 Abb. 4, 16, 18 (Antonia), 19; CIPTP 45. – Auch Sepulkralmosaiken kamen in der Mertolaner Basilika vor (ebd. 51 Abb. 22).



Abb. 22: Mértola (Distr. Beja, Portugal), Basilika der Nekropole. Blick über Mittel- und Nordschiff nach Westen mit Gräbern im Boden und annähernd gleich ausgerichteter Gräberplan (rot: christlich; grün: islamisch).



Abb. 23: Mértola, Basilika der Nekropole. Grab der Antonia aus dem Jahr 571 n. Chr.

Morphologisch passt dazu der im nicht allzu weit entfernten spanischen Ort Los Bojeos (Prov. Huelva) gefundene Rest einer höchst qualitätvollen, ursprünglich gewiss körperlangen marmornen Abdeckung, welche mit einer Gedächtnisinschrift für den verstorbenen Murensis sowie mit einem dessen Kopf behütenden Christogramm zwischen Tauben und Pflanzen und einst an allen vier Seiten mit stark ins Auge springenden Schrägen versehen war (Abb. 24). Schon wegen dieser suggestiven Form ist das grob um 500 n. Chr. entstandene Stück fast durchgehend direkt als ein Sarkophagdeckel angesprochen worden, doch hat jüngst Jerónimo Sánchez Velasco auch die andere Option ins Auge gefasst, das Stück eventuell als die Überfangung eines Senkgrabes zu verstehen. In diesem Fall wird man sich vor allem mit Rücksicht auf die Schrägen kaum etwas anderes vorstellen können, als dass auch die Abdeckung mit der Murensis-Inschrift über den umgebenden Boden hinaus anstieg, wobei wohl zu vermuten ist, dass es sich um den Boden eines christlichen Kultbaues handelte.⁶³



Abb. 24: Huelva, Museo. Sarkophagdeckel oder Überfangung eines Senkgrabes aus Los Bojeos de Bonares (Prov. Huelva) mit Inschrift für Murensis. Um 500 n. Chr.

Durchaus denkbar und verführerisch ist aber bei dem Murensis-Deckel eine Vermutung, die daraus folgt, dass ein solches zugehöriges ‚Senkgrab‘ ohne weiteres auch direkt in Gestalt eines Sarkophagkastens existiert haben könnte; dann wäre hier von einem (nicht überlieferten) in den Boden eingetieften Sarkophag die Rede, dessen (erhaltener) einst gewiss allein sichtbarer, epigraphisch vervollkommneter

⁶³ GONZÁLEZ 2001, bes. 543 Taf. 1; SÁNCHEZ VELASCO 2010, 120f. Abb. 24, 25 mit Bezeichnung als Sarkophagdeckel; vom nämlichen Verfasser SÁNCHEZ VELASCO 2018, 247 dann aber vorsichtiger der Alternative „lid for a sarcophagus and/or tomb“ zugeordnet. Im hispanischen Repertorium christlicher Reliefsarkophage Rep. IV taucht das Stück nicht auf. Vgl. ähnliche, über die Autopsie von Abdeckplatten gewonnene Erkenntnisse zu Gräbern in Bestattungsgebäuden im Beitrag OSNABRÜGGE in diesem Band.

Deckel seinerzeit das Niveau des Laufhorizonts klar überstiegen hätte. Interessanterweise gab es ja damals – gerade im Südwesten der Pyrenäenhalbinsel – steinerne Sarkophagkästen, die innerhalb (und auch abseits) von Kirchen tief in den Untergrund versenkt wurden, so dass ihre Abdeckung wohl mit dem Niveau des Laufhorizonts/Estrichs koinzidierte und dementsprechend sichtbar und begehbar war. Dann und wann mögen Sarkophage mit ihrem Deckel aber auch im Sinne einer weiteren Steigerung der Augenfälligkeit aus dem Laufboden gleichsam ‚herausgewachsen‘ sein, wovon Letzteres in einem Fall – La Garrapata (Prov. Cádiz) – gar durch eine an der Deckelplatte in bekannter Weise vierseitig umlaufende Abschrägung mehr als nahegelegt wird.⁶⁴ Konstruktiv könnte hier eine direkte Parallele zum Murensis-Deckel (und einem womöglich auch dort zugehörigen, versenkten Sarkophagkasten) vorliegen.

In Mértola ist der Kontext eines Kircheninnenraumes evident. Was dort beim modernen Betrachter auf den ersten Blick zunächst nur den Gedanken an uneingeschränkte gottesdienstliche Andacht heraufbeschwört, erweist sich auf den zweiten Blick – und allemal einst für die spätantiken Nutzer – als ein wohl recht unruhig ausgebreitetes Stakkato von überhöhten Hindernissen sepulkralen Charakters. Die Fachkollegin Maria Manuela Alves Dias hat mit Blick auf Mértola den plausiblen Gedanken formuliert, dass die in der genannten Basilika zu erwartende Schwierigkeit, sich zwischen solchen ‚Stolperfallen‘ zu bewegen, dort zumindest für die Spätphase anstelle tagtäglicher Kultübung eine reine Begräbnisfunktion nahelege.⁶⁵

Der reiche Schatz der in Spanien und Portugal bewahrten sepulkralen Inschriftauflagen⁶⁶ benennt außer dem Namen und einer Versicherung der Gottestreue der

64 Cristo del Espíritu Santo (Prov. Ciudad Real), ausgedehnte Nekropole La Cruz del Cristo, oben bereits angesprochen: FERNÁNDEZ CALVO 2016, 25, 27 („... los elementos constructivos que cubren las sepulturas [hier also die monolithen Deckplatten der drei gefundenen Sarkophage]... probablemente constituían su única referencia visible, a modo de señalización“), 67, 80, 82–84, 108 Abb. 4, Gräber Nr. 32, 51, 52 – Pilar de la Legua (Prov. Ciudad Real): ESTEBAN BORRAJO et al. 2017, 267, 270f. Abb. 5–9; eine rezente Luftaufnahme mit vorangeschrittener Grabung unter <https://almadenysusrincones.com/index.php/2019/11/09/almaden-la-iglesia-visigoda-del-pilar-de-la-legua-s-vii/> (Stand: 11.08.2020). – La Losilla (Prov. Córdoba; s. o. im Abschnitt der Grabausgestaltung) bietet, was diese Ausführungsoption betrifft, ebenfalls instruktive Befunde, über welche die bevorstehende Veröffentlichung der Göttinger Grabung durch Fedor Schlimbach Näheres bekanntmachen wird. – Auf der Liegenschaft La Garrapata (Prov. Cádiz) ist ein schon erwähnter steinerne, in den Boden eingetiefter Sarkophag mit einer Deckelplatte zu nennen, deren Unter-(=Innen!)seite ein kurzes inschriftliches Gebet trägt (s. o.), während an allen vier Kanten der Ober-(=Außen!)seite Abschrägungen auffallen; der Behälter wird somit doch wohl über das Laufniveau hinausgegangen sein: RICHARTE GARCÍA/AQUILERA RODRÍGUEZ 1997, 54f. Photos 1, 2 Abb. 3, 4.

65 DIAS 2007, 380.

66 Neben den geläufigen Corpora und der Serie *Hispania epigraphica* seien hier speziell genannt: ICERV; DIAS 1993; MUÑOZ GARCÍA DE ITURROSPE 1995; RAMÍREZ SÁDABA/MATEOS CRUZ 2000; HANDLEY 2003; CIPTP; VÉGH 2017.



Abb. 25: Mértola, Basilika der Nekropole. Grabplatte mit Inschrift auf den kirchlichen Chorleiter Andreas aus dem Jahr 525 n. Chr.

oder des Verstorbenen mehr oder weniger standardmäßig auch das – oft nur ungefähre – Alter der beigesetzten Person und im Südwesten der Halbinsel ganz regelhaft das exakte Todesdatum. Das im lusitanischen *Myrtilis*/Mértola innerhalb (Abb. 22) und (auch weit?) außerhalb der Nekropolenkirche gefundene Inventar muss als in seiner Mannigfaltigkeit herausragend bezeichnet werden, spiegelt es doch die gesellschaftliche Differenzierung eines gar nicht so großen, aber trotzdem kosmopolitisch akzentuierten Gemeinwesens wider.⁶⁷ Sowohl das jüdische Element war zugegen (Bruchstücke mit eingeritzter *menorah* und Angabe des To-

67 DIAS 2007; VÉGH 2017, 97–101.

desjahres 482 n. Chr.)⁶⁸ als auch die vordem im griechischsprachigen Raum beheimateten und nun im Epitaph auf Griechisch verabschiedeten Christen. Einer von ihnen, Eutyches, entschlafen 544 n. Chr., war Vorleser – *ANAIÑOCTEC [sic]* – in der Kirche.⁶⁹ Ein anderer hingegen, der Christ Andreas, starb 525 n. Chr. als Leiter des kirchlichen Sängerkhore: als *princeps cantorum sacrosancte aeclisiae mertilliane* (Abb. 25).⁷⁰ Die 524 n. Chr. hingschiedene Aianes besaß den adeligen Rang einer *honestafemina*.⁷¹ Und im bereits genannten Ort Los Bojeos ist von herausragendem Interesse die 509 n. Chr. entstandene Inschrift für den nur aus dieser Quelle bekannten Bischof wohl des benachbarten Sitzes von *Elepla/Niebla* (Prov. Huelva) mit dem sprechenden Namen Vincomalos, der 85jährig und, wie wir erfahren, 43 Jahre nach seiner Priesterweihe verstarb.⁷²

Als eine frühe Grabinschrift von ungewöhnlicher, ja ausnehmender Mitteilungsfreude sei zu guter Letzt noch der auf der Finca Torrebaja (Prov. Badajoz) knapp 50 km guadianaabwärts von Mérida gefundene, bereits im Zeitraum vom späten 4. bis zum mittleren 5. Jh. n. Chr. entstandene Nachruf auf den tugendhaften Pascentius präsentiert (Abb. 26).⁷³ Unter einem von A und ω sowie zwei Palmwedeln begleiteten Christogramm liest man folgendes, in der Wortanordnung schlicht dem verfügbaren Platz gehorchendes, hier am Ende leicht ergänztes *carmen epigraphicum*, welches naturgemäß noch beträchtlichen Aufwand in der Kommentierung erheischt:

- 68 DIAS 1993, 111 Nr. 1; CIPTP 11. Das *recessit in pace* muss nicht exklusiv dem christlichen Credo assoziiert werden; dies erweist die bei Tarragona gefundene, mit zwei eingeritzten *menoroth* versehene Grabplatte der *Isidora filia ... Ionati et Axiaes; pauset anima eius in pace cum omne Israel*: MACIAS I SOLÉ/MENCHÓN I BES/MUÑOZ I MELGAR 1999, 276 f. mit Abb. – Mutmaßlich analog zur Situation in Mértola ist auch in der spätantiken Tarracöner Nekropole von Mas Rimbau zwischen lauter christlichen Gräbern eine von den Archäologen als wohl jüdisch angesehene Bestattung mit allerdings vielleicht erst kurz vor ihrer Abdeckung eingeritztem siebenarmigem Leuchter aufgetaucht: REMOLÀ VALL-VERDÚ 2011.
- 69 Die langgestreckte Platte trägt untereinander drei griechische Grabinschriften. DIAS 1993, 115 Nr. 5; DIAS 2000; CIPTP 37; FERNANDES/VALÉRIO 2013, bes. 81–84.
- 70 SCHLUNK/HAUSCHILD 1978, 150 f. Taf. 44; DIAS 1993, 133 Nr. 23; CIPTP 26.
- 71 DIAS 1993, 116 Nr. 6; CIPTP 25; *Aianes hon(esta) fem(ina) fam(ula) D(e)i vixit annos pl(u)s m(inu)s XXVIII requievit in pace D(omi)ni d(ie) V non(as) iulias era dLXIas* (d. i. der 3. Juli 524 n. Chr.).
- 72 AE 2001, 1183; GONZÁLEZ 2001, bes. 544–549 Taf. 3; SÁNCHEZ VELASCO 2010, 19 f. Abb. 23: *Vincomalos ep(iscopu)s Xpi servus vixit annos LXXXV ex quib(us) in sacerdotio vixit an(nos) XLIII recessit in pace d(ie) IIII nonas februarias era dXLVII* (d. i. der 2. Februar 509 n. Chr.; von Sánchez Velasco indessen wenig glaubhaft auf 559 n. Chr. umdatiert).
- 73 AE 2018, +821; RAMÍREZ SÁDABA 1991; SAN BERNARDINO CORONIL 1997; ESCOLÀ TUSSET 2009, 685–689.

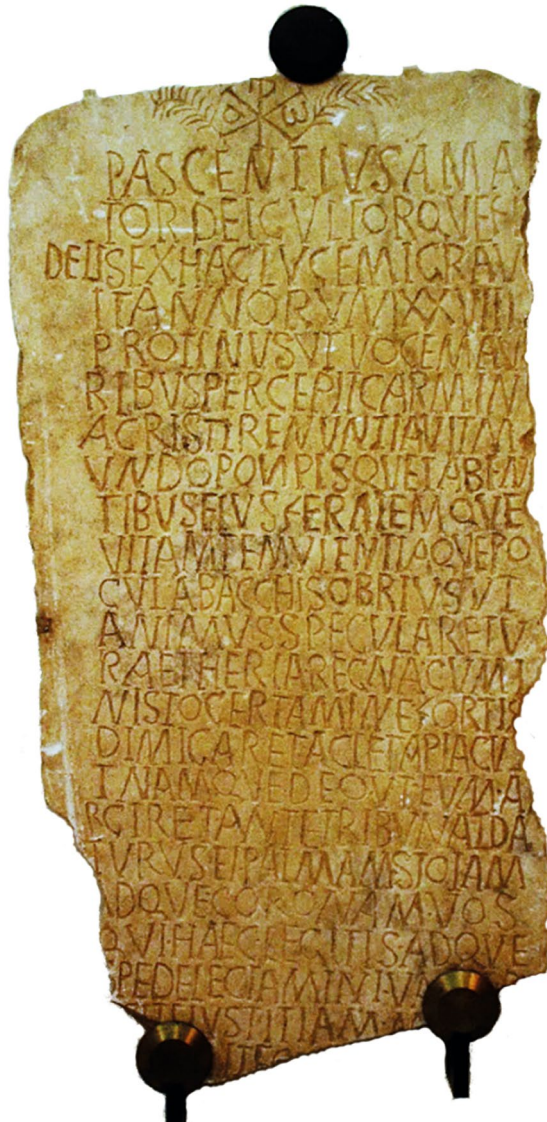


Abb. 26: Badajoz, Museo Arqueológico Provincial. Inschriftplatte vom Grab des Pascentius aus Torrebaja (Prov. Badajoz). Spätes 4.–Mitte 5. Jh. n. Chr.

PASCENTIVS AMA	Pascentius, Liebhaber
TOR DEI CVLTORQVE FI	und treuer Verehrer Gottes,
DELIS EX HAC LVCE MIGRAV	ging aus dem Licht dieser Welt von dannen
IT ANNORVM XXVIII	mit 28 Jahren.
PROTINVS VT VOCEM AV	Kaum dass ihm das Wort und
RIBVS PERCEPIT CARMIN	die Lieder Christi zu Gehör kamen,
A CRISTI RENVNTIAVIT M	entsagte er der Welt
VNDO PONPISQVE LABEN	und ihrem hinfälligen Gepränge
TIBVS EIVS FERALEMQVE	und einem Leben, wie es den Bestien
VITAM TEMVLENTIAQVE PO	eigen ist, ⁷⁴ und den trunken machenden
CVLA BACCHI SOBRIVS VT	Bechern des Bacchus, damit seine
ANIMVS SPECVLARETV	besonnene Seele die
R AETHERIA·REGNA·CVM I	himmlischen Reiche kennenlerne. Da
N ISTO·CERTAMINE·FORTIS	er sich in diesem Kampf als ein
DIMICARET·ACLETA PLACVI	starker Athlet schlug, gefiel es
T NAMQVE·DEO·VT·EVM·A	Gott, ihn vor das
RCIRET·ANTE·TRIBVNAL DA	Tribunal zu rufen, ⁷⁵ auf dass er ihm
TVRVS·EI·PALMAM·STOLAM	Palmwedel, Stola
ADQVE·CORONAM·VOS	und Kranz gebe. Ihr,
QVI·HAEC·LEGITIS·ADQVE	die ihr dieses lest und
SPE·DELECTAMINI·VANA·[--]	euch in eitler Hoffnung ergeht,
[--]ITE IVSTITIAM M[----]	seid gewarnt und lernt, was die Gerechtigkeit ist,
[---]OLITE C[---	und seid ferne davon, Gott geringzuschätzen. ⁷⁶

In der hispanisch-frühchristlichen Epigraphik ist dieser Text etwas sehr Besonderes. Der Leser erhält breite und in ausgesuchten Formulierungen vorgetragene Auskünfte über den anfangs schlechten Lebenswandel, die Läuterung und den schließlich uneingeschränkt sieghaften Glaubenseifer des verstorbenen Pascentius, bevor

74 Oder: „dem verderblichen Leben“, denn *feralis* hat unterschiedlich herzuleitende Bedeutungen.

75 RAMÍREZ SÁDABA 1991, 92 schlägt die Lesung *asciret* (von *ascire* = bewusst zulassen) vor, doch SAN BERNARDINO CORONIL 1997, 224 argumentiert zugunsten des eigenartigen *arciret* so, dass *arcire/accire* (eigentlich *adci[e]re* = heranziehen, rufen) sehr gut mit der von ihm hier vermuteten manichäischen Idee der designierten Rückkehr einer bewährten Seele zur lichten Substanz des Göttlichen konform gehe (s. u.).

76 Diese punktuelle Rekomposition des Textes ([*disc]ite iustitiam m[oniti et n]olite c[ontemnerere deum]*), erstmals 2003 auf einem Kongress vorgeschlagen von ESCOLÀ TUSET 2009, 687–689, ist sehr plausibel, beruht sie doch in gut nachvollziehbarer Weise auf Vergil, *Aeneis* 6.620 (*discite iustitiam moniti et non temnere divos*). Der Autor weist darauf hin, dass sogar der karthagische Bischof Quodvultdeus (437–453 n. Chr.) genau diesen Klassikervers, zusammen mit einer Reihe von Bibelzitate, einsetzte, um Gehorsam für das Gesetz Christi einzufordern (so im heute allgemein für Quodvultdeus anerkannten *Liber de promissionibus et praedictionibus Dei* 3,37: PL 51, 833).

ein moralisierender Epilog die Mitteilung abrundet. Die von José Luis Ramírez Sádaba vorgelegte Analyse hat den soliden literarischen Fundus des Verfassers herausgearbeitet: die hier eingesetzten Rekurse und Anspielungen auf klassische lateinische Poesie und die gedanklichen Affinitäten zu frühen christlichen Autoren. Dabei wird betont, wie nah die an Pascentius beschworene Symbologie einer siegreichen Selbsthingabe (*tribunal, palma, stola, corona*) dem von Prudentius um 400 n. Chr. gerade im martyrialen Kontext verbreiteten Ideengut steht. Dass freilich die in dem Epitaph als ein erfolgreicher Kämpfer gepriesene Persönlichkeit buchstäblich ihres festen Glaubens wegen umgekommen sei, ist so gut wie undenkbar. J. L. Ramírez Sádaba möchte es dabei belassen, dass Pascentius dank seiner Abnegation eine ‚martyrerwürdige‘ Kategorie erreicht habe, ohne das Blutzugnis abzulegen. Dies ist unmittelbar glaubhaft, denn zur Entstehungszeit der Inschrifttafel war es längst auch bei aller persönlichen Bereitschaft praktisch nicht mehr möglich, für das durch die staatliche Autorität anerkannte christliche Credo zum Blutzugehen zu werden.⁷⁷

Konklusion

Mit großen Schritten über das weite hispanische Territorium eilend, unablässig im spätantiken Zeitrahmen des 4. bis 7. Jhs. n. Chr. springend, vor allem aber im 5. und 6. Jh. n. Chr. sich bewegend, hat der vorstehende Beitrag versucht, seinen Stoff nach

77 Der partikulare Deutungsversuch von SAN BERNARDINO CORONIL 1997 begreift die martyrialen Anklänge der Inschrift im Sinne eines martyrialen Selbstverständnisses, wie es im 4. und 5. Jh. n. Chr. unter den Manichäern entwickelt wurde, wobei er unseren Pascentius mit seinem in Hispanien tatsächlich fast singulären Namen als genau jenen Häretiker identifiziert, von welchem für das Jahr 448 n. Chr. der Abschnitt 138 der Chronik des Hydatius berichtet (BURGESS 1993, 98): „Einen gewissen Pascentius, welcher der Stadt Rom entstammte, sich aus *Asturica* geflüchtet hatte und ein Manichäer war, ergriff Bischof Antoninus in *Emerita*; er verhörte ihn und ließ ihn dann auch aus der luisitanischen Provinz ausweisen“ (Übersetzung A. Arbeiter). Zu einem Anhänger Manis und zum licht(wanderungs)betonten Weltzyklus- und Erlösungskonzept jener Religion passe die sehr gewählte, ungewöhnliche Wendung *ex hac luce migravit ... sobrius ut animus specularetur aetheria regna*, und auch die Betonung des Hörens (*auribus percepit*), der radikale Verzicht auf Wein (*renuntiavit ... temulentiaque pocula Bacchi*) und die mutmaßlich angesprochene Lossagung von jeder Form bestienhafter Lust am Fleisch (*renuntiavit ... feralemque vitam*) ließen sich sehr gut mit dem Denken der manichäischen Gemeinschaft verbinden, denn in deren Verständnis werde die *restitutio ad regnum Dei*, also zu den hier genannten *aetheria regna*, durch das Miteinander von *cognitio* der Theorie und praktischer Einhaltung der asketischen *regula sanctitatis* erlangt. SAN BERNARDINO CORONIL 1997, 227 resümiert, „dass die ausgehend von der onomastischen, geographischen, zeitlichen und doktrinären Übereinstimmung zwischen der Inschrift von Torrebaja und dem Abschnitt 138 des *Hydatii Chronicon* entwickelten Argumente es uns gestatten, an eine Identität des epigraphischen mit dem literarischen *Pascentius* zu denken“ (Übersetzung A. Arbeiter). Im Vorhandensein des Christogramms sieht er kein der manichäischen These entgegenstehendes Hindernis.

Sachaspekten geordnet und mit einer Reihe von Illustrationen versehen einer fachlich interessierten Leserschaft nahezubringen, und dabei fast die gesamte Bandbreite des sozialen Gefüges im christlich werdenden und gewordenen Hispanien abzudecken – freilich mit der kuriosen Ausnahme der in keiner Weise dingfest zu machenden westgotischen Königsgräber.⁷⁸ Vorgestellt wurden als die wohl augenfälligsten frühen Erweise des Überganges zum neuen christlichen Credo die figürlich-szenisch dekorierten Reliefsarkophage stadtrömischer Prägung, welchen klar autochthone wie auch weitere Importsarkophage mit Reliefschmuck sich anschlossen – ohne den überwältigend mehrheitlichen Bestand schmuckloser oder nur mit dem Kreuzzeichen versehener Steinkisten zu vergessen. Auch Mausoleen zählten zu den Zeugnissen privilegierter Bestattung. Die überkommene, von der Kirche dann jedoch bekämpfte Sitte des Totenmahls lässt sich für die spätantik-christliche *Hispania* noch an einigen Orten in den Spuren entsprechender Installationen beobachten und bis weit in das 6. Jh. n. Chr. hinein voraussetzen. Bei Gelegenheit feststellbare Bestrebungen, Inhumationen im Gotteshaus zu verbieten, blieben ohne nennenswerten Anklang, und gerade bei Sakralbauten zur Heiligenverehrung ist solches auch unmittelbar verständlich. Das althergebrachte Verbot der Beisetzung im städtischen *pomerium* wurde auf der Iberischen Halbinsel vom 5. Jh. n. Chr. an aufgeweicht. Eine Umschau über die physische Konsistenz der deutlich regelhaft west-östlich disponierten Bodengräber zeitigt das erwartete Bild beträchtlicher Mannigfaltigkeit von der äußersten Armut über die Verwendung leidlich brauchbaren Einfassungsmaterials bis hin zur gediegenen Konstruktion der Ruhestätte oder zur Aufbietung eines Sarkophages. Nachbestattungen bildeten eine gängige Erscheinung. Das Inventar der bei den Toten gefundenen Gegenstände reicht von gewöhnlichem Gut, wie es Tongefäße und Trachtbestandteile sind, bis zu den sehr vereinzelt entdeckten, speziell auszeichnenden Gegenständen von materiellem Wert und/oder schützendem oder eventuell auf die persönliche Rolle zu Lebzeiten anspielendem Charakter. Jenseits des Einzelfalles einer im Grab befindlichen, also wieder der Intimität der verstorbenen Person vorbehaltenen Psalmenschrift werben ungezählte epigraphische und etliche zeichenhafte oder stärker bildliche Botschaften um die Aufmerksamkeit der Betrachter, allen voran die Sepulkralmosaiken, unter denen die figürlich dekorierten hervorstechen. Bei diesen musivischen Paneelen ebenso wie bei funerärem Schmuck aus plastisch geformtem *opus signinum*, bei Inschriftplatten wie bei (dekorierten) Deckeln von eingetieften Sarkophagen stellt sich die Frage, ob sie das umgebende Laufniveau respektierten oder – vielleicht gar zu ihrem eigenen Schutz – mehr oder weniger markant aus dem Boden emporkamen; entsprechende Anhaltspunkte sind jedenfalls gegeben.

78 Über die Ruhestätten der westgotischen Monarchie, deren Vertreter für mehr als zwei Jahrhunderte auf der Pyrenäenhalbinsel herrschten, breitet sich sonderbarerweise für uns Heutige fast undurchdringliches historisches Dunkel und immense Ratlosigkeit, was ihre (einstige) materielle Substanz anbelangt: ALONSO ÁLVAREZ 2005; ALONSO ÁLVAREZ 2008; SCHLIMBACH 2009; ALONSO ÁLVAREZ 2013; ARCE 2020.

Als ein besonders eloquenter Fundus hispanischer Grabinschriften wird derjenige des einst lusitanischen, durchaus kosmopolitischen Subzentrums Mértola in einigen Beispielen präsentiert, und schließlich findet sich der aus Torrebaja (Prov. Badajoz) stammende, überaus mitteilsame und poetisch anspruchsvolle Nachruf auf den im Glauben geläuterten Pascentius ausführlicher und mit Rücksicht auf die Forschung erörtert.

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STEFAN ARDELEANU

Materializing Death in Late Antique North Africa

Epitaphs, Burial Types and Rituals in Changing Funerary Landscapes

Introduction

In 1926, Alfred-Louis Delattre counted 40 000 inscriptions stemming from the various Late Antique necropoleis and churches he excavated at Carthage.¹ Even if this number looks like an attempt to rival the numbers known from Rome's catacombs, a deeper dig into Delattre's reports reveals that there was some truth in his exaggeration: the ca. 4 000 Carthaginian epitaphs published in the known corpora do not come anywhere near the real number of funerary inscriptions excavated at the African metropolis.² While Carthage is a complex story in itself, many other North African sites also produced a high amount of Late Antique epitaphs, matched only by Italy in the entire *oecumene*. Therefore, the African provinces represent a privileged case in discussions about the 'last epigraphic practice' in the ancient Mediterranean regions.

This contribution seeks to give an updated overview of general trends in funerary epigraphy and commemorative rituals in Late Antique North Africa. It focuses especially on the materiality of epitaphs, their integration in funerary habits and tomb types, as well as on the role of tombs as markers of social distinction in a time of transforming urban landscapes. The geographical framework is bound by the Late Antique provinces of *Africa Proconsularis*, *Byzacena*, *Numidia Militana*, *Numidia Cirtensis* (the latter two re-united as *Numidia Constantina* in AD 314), *Mauretania Sitifensis* and *Mauretania Caesariensis* (Fig. 1).³

1 DELATTRE 1926, 15. This article emerged from the Heidelberg Collaborative Research Centre 933 'Material Text Cultures' (Subproject A01,2a: 'The positioning, perception and handling of inscriptions in funerary contexts of Late Antique North Africa'). The CRC 933 is financed by the German Research Foundation (DFG). For discussion and corrections as well as image rights I thank Moheddine Chaouali, Corisande Fenwick, Raphael Hunsucker, Don Jansen, Ammar Othman, Anna Sitz and Christian Witschel.

2 Too small numbers are given in GALVÃO-SOBRINHO 1995, 441 (2.300) or TANTILLO 2017, n. 44 (1.200). For more representative numbers, see BOCKMANN 2014, 346f.; ARDELEANU 2020, n. 41. To these numbers, several hundred unpublished Late Antique epitaphs in the garden of Carthage's Byrsa museum have to be added.

3 For exact dates of the creation and dissolution of provinces, and for their geographical limits: LEONE 2007a, 23–28, 25f. (changes in the Vandal period), 26–28 (changes in Byzantine times); LASSÈRE 2015, 529–532.

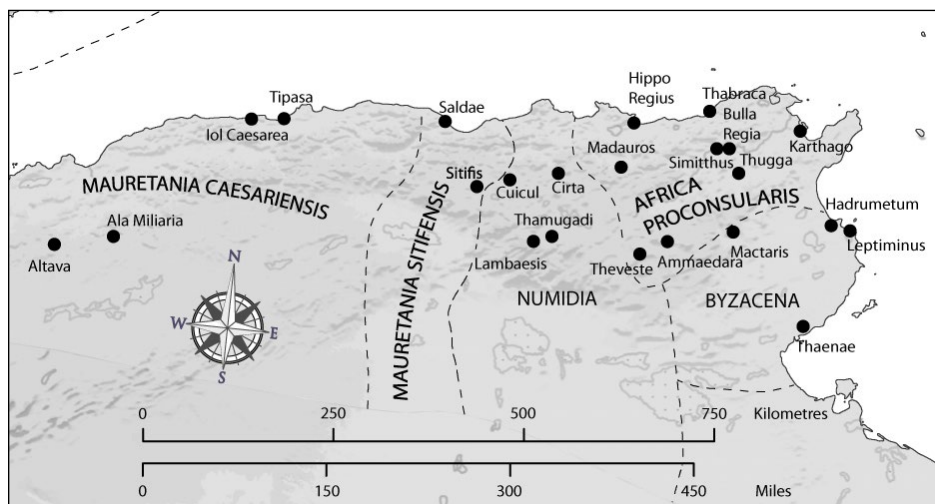


Fig. 1: North Africa in Late Antiquity with main sites discussed in this chapter (mid 3rd–mid 7th c. AD).

Chronological limits extend from the middle of the 3rd to the middle of the 7th c. AD. North Africa's Late Antique history was long labelled as a period of urban decadence, of instability, of economic crisis and religious conflicts, bolstered by 'traumatic events' such as the 'destructive Vandal conquest' or 'never-ending' Moorish attacks.⁴ However, recent work on urbanism, ceramics, numismatics and in survey archaeology shows that North Africa was still one of the Mediterranean's most densely inhabited and wealthiest landscapes.⁵ Economic connectivity was maintained throughout the 5th and the 6th c. AD. Some rural areas boomed and even saw their heyday in agricultural exploitation and settlement.⁶ Provincial and municipal administration – as many civic inscriptions of the later 4th c. AD show – was still fairly efficient.⁷ At the same time, urban life, as in other regions in the West, underwent profound transformation: some towns shrank drastically,⁸ others maintained their previous extension or continued to grow.⁹ Many cities were equipped with defenses,¹⁰ new urban nuclei developed ubiquitously. Some 350 churches are known from North Africa, a showcase area of Early Christian sacred

4 LEONE 2007a, esp. 32–41 with theoretical discussion of these still fairly powerful 'labels'.

5 Late Antique urbanism: LEPELLEY 1981; LEONE 2007a; SEARS 2007; BOCKMANN/LEONE/VON RUMMEL 2019; surveys: BOCKMANN 2013; ceramics: BONIFAY 2004; BUSSIÈRE 2007; numismatics: MORRISSON 2016.

6 DOSSEY 2010.

7 LEPELLEY 1981; TANTILLO 2017; for *carmina epigraphica* (including public contexts): HAMDOUNE 2016.

8 E.g. *Lambaesis, Hippo, Madauros, Thugga, Thignica, Mactaris, Hadrumetum, Leptiminus*.

9 E.g. *Tipasa, Caesarea, Sitifis, Thamugadi, Cuicul, Sufetula, Bulla Regia, Thuburbo Maius*.

10 E.g. *Sitifis, Constantina, Tiddis, Thibilis, Theveste, Ammaedara, Madauros, Thugga, Carthage, Thaenae*.

architecture.¹¹ Especially those shrines dedicated to the new urban patrons, the martyrs, became the new *foci* of many urban communities.¹² In and around these *celeberrimi loci*, extensive burial activity developed, while intra-urban burials are attested as early as the 3rd c. AD.

These last aspects lead us to the main topic of this contribution: North Africa's changing funerary landscapes in Late Antiquity. I will commence with a brief outline of the *status quaestionis* on Late Antique funerary epigraphy, presenting numbers, distribution and the heterogeneous picture of North Africa's *epitaphic habits*. A second section will discuss how different urban topographies in Late Antiquity were shaped by burials and how social hierarchy was expressed in funerary settings. I will then emphasize the mutual interconnectedness between new developments in funerary customs, the most important tomb types (sarcophagi, mausolea, underground tomb systems) and epigraphic tomb signaling (*stelae*, *arulae*, *cupae* and *mensae*). The last section will demonstrate North Africa's outstanding potential for interdisciplinary studies of rituals at Late Antique tombs. It should be noted right away that regional funerary habits did not follow artificial provincial boundaries, but rather microregional patterns and century-old traditions. Coherent clusters presenting similar epigraphic, stylistic and archaeological evidence can be made out on Cap Bon (Northwestern *Proconsularis*), in the Hautes Steppes (Northwestern *Byzacena*/Southwestern *Proconsularis*), the Tell (central *Proconsularis*), the Sahel (Eastern *Byzacena*), central *Numidia*, central *Sitifensis*, and central and Western *Caesariensis*.

Diversity in *Epitaphic Habits* in Late Antique North Africa

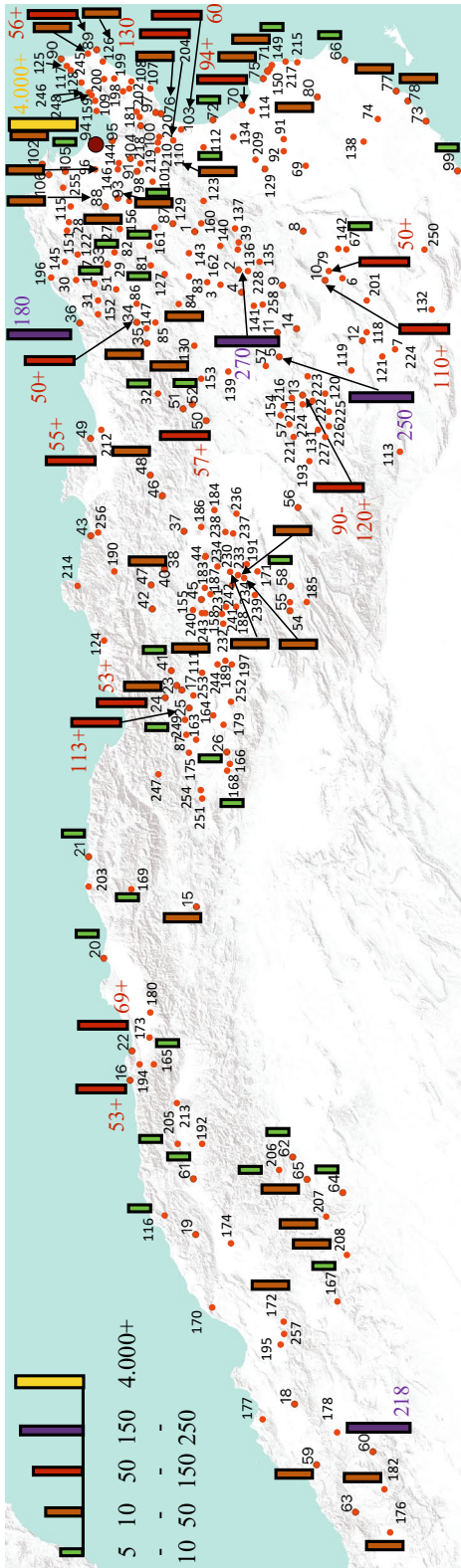
There is no updated overview on the state of Late Antique funerary epigraphy in North Africa, apart from two excellent, but now outdated articles by Noël Duval and Carlos Galvão-Sobrinho.¹³ Since Duval's article from 1988, nearly 1000 new Late Antique epitaphs were published, scattered in a confusing mass of single articles and monographs.¹⁴ Because of the problematic situation at Carthage, and due to the dispersed material, it is impossible to assess the overall number of North Africa's Late Antique epitaphs. Still, there is good reason to believe that they exceed 8 000. At least for the most important sites (except Carthage) we can present absolute numbers (Fig. 2).

11 The number of basilicae mentioned here and in Tab. 1 is taken from two compendia: GUI/DUVAL/CAILLET 1992 and BARATTE et al. 2014. Sites are mostly cited in geographical order from West to East.

12 DUVAL 1982; BOCKMANN 2014; cf. also BLANC-BIJON 2008; ARDELEANU (in press).

13 DUVAL 1988; GALVÃO-SOBRINHO 1995; see now also ARDELEANU 2020.

14 An attempt to evaluate the most important evidence from 1988 to 2019 with an extensive (though still incomplete) bibliography can be found in ARDELEANU 2020.



1	Thabbara	30	Thunigaba	59	Albulae	88	Cinceri	117	Hr. Dhouhek	146	Ouled ez-Zid	175	Sertei	204	Sidi Jidili	233	Tenet Anouda
2	Maktar	31	Vaga	60	Altava	89	Demna	118	El Erg	147	Oued Mellègue	176	Numerus Svororum	205	Tigvæ	234	Djebel Snobra
3	Udeles	32	Popliti	61	Cast. Tingitanum	90	Missua	119	M. el Oussera	148	Maxlva	177	Castra Pucorum	206	Kh. des Aouisset	235	Mergueb et Tir
4	Midiidi	33	Belais Major	62	Colunnata	91	Beni Hassan	120	Hr. el Guiz	149	F. Dinamis	178	Mechera	207	Mochara Sfa	236	Hr. Bou Zezen
5	Ammaedara	34	Bulla Regia	63	Damous	92	Bordj Touil	121	Magfja	150	Thapsus	179	Cast. Dintense	208	Ala Miharia	237	Hr. Sefjan
6	Hadouch	35	Smitthras	64	Djeddars	93	Furni	122	F. Auflidians	151	Rucuma	180	Elephantaria	209	Hr. Alalcha	238	Hr. Djerouda
7	Borj Maâjen	36	Thabraca	65	Taret	94	Karthago	123	Draa Ben Joudet	152	Hr. Rbhira	181	Bir Bou Rebka	210	Ain Mziger	239	Naamane
8	H. el Aïoum	37	Ain Abid	66	Acholla	95	Naro	124	Bou Djemah	153	Naragara	182	Pomaria	211	Hr. el Ksour	240	Mechira
9	Sufes	38	Chabersas	67	Hr. Ben Salah	96	Di. Djelloud	125	El Hnouaria	154	Hr. el Ksour	183	Bir Aïda	212	Villa Verdier	241	Bou Takrematen
10	Surfetla	39	Ks. Bou Fatha	68	Bou Freha	97	Shagu	126	Menzel Yahia	155	Melharza	184	Thigisis	213	Ichêrene	242	Azrou Zaouia
11	Thala	40	Constantina	69	El Gebiou	98	Segermes	127	Gales	156	Vallis	185	Arris	214	Chout el-Batel	243	Bou Kaben
12	Thelapte	41	Cuicul	70	Iadrumetum	99	Skhira	128	Carpis	157	Sidi N'Sir	186	Sigus	215	Sullechum	244	Kh. Bou Hadeif
13	Theveste	42	Milev	71	Hr. Sokrine	100	Tuberne	129	Hr. Djellula	158	Bir el Djedid	187	Kef Mestoua	216	Aque Caesaris	245	Cleupea
14	Vegesela	43	Ruscade	72	Horreca Caelia	101	Thurbuo Maitus	130	Sicca Veneria	159	Soliman	188	Ferne Bou Neb	217	Dar el Hadji Hassen	246	Mornaighia
15	Auzia	44	Sila	73	Iunca	102	F. Bassianus	131	Hr. Gaiga	160	Apfina Maitus	189	Hr. Terlist	218	Dr. Onst	247	Rusinpisir
16	Iol Caesarca	45	Telerghma	74	Hr. Sgar	103	Uppenna	132	Capsa	161	Tichilla	190	Mergomeh et Tir	219	Dar el Onst	248	Takelsa
17	Montipi	46	Uthilis	75	Leptiminus	104	Uthina	133	Ad Aque	162	Zama	191	Macmales	220	Oued Ramel	249	Kondiat Adiala
18	Regiae Arbal	47	Tiddis	76	Pupput	105	Utica	134	Themetra	163	Ain Khalfoun	192	Oued Fouda	221	Hr. Gaga	250	Hr. el Baroud
19	Renatill	48	Guelma	77	Paparura	106	Uzalis	135	Chusira	164	Horreca	193	Cedias	222	Ksar Tebnet	251	Kh. Achir
20	Rensuniae	49	Hippo Regius	78	Thanaea	107	Nepolis	136	Agger	165	Sidj Ghiles	194	Sidj Ghiles	223	Bekkarria	252	Ain el Hadjar
21	Iomnium	50	Madauros	79	Thagamuta	108	Curubis	137	Kranet	166	Beida Bordj	195	Tasaccura	224	Magfja	253	Mechta Bou Abdallah
22	Tipasa	51	Med el Bab	80	Thysdrus	109	Neferis	138	Hr. el Mahallah	167	Aque Sirenses	196	Arzomb el Bania	225	Hr. Seid	254	Tixer
23	Novaricia	52	Thagura	81	Thugga	110	Sidi Habieb	139	Tifali	168	Lenmetel	197	Kherbet el Kebira	226	Hr. Foum Meleg	255	Borj el Hatab
24	Satafis	53	Dala	82	Thignica	111	Kherbet Arong	140	Thimissa	169	Bou Ismael	198	Hr. Diar el Hâjfel	227	Hr. A.-er-Katane	256	Villa Verdier
25	Stifis	54	Verecunda	83	Mustis	112	Uisippira	141	Althiburos	170	Cap Ivi	199	Borj Lathlath	228	Ksar Bou Fatha	257	Castra Nova
26	Thamallula	55	Lambesis	84	Uchi Maitus	113	Ad Matoris	142	Hr. Meskiana	171	Guelin	200	Hr. Kneiss	229	Hr. el Abiod	258	Ain Barchouch
27	Hr. el Koucha	56	Mascuta	85	Thibaris	114	Zaouit Sonssa	143	Civ. Sivallitana	172	Hacine	201	El Oumaisia	230	Ain Kohla		
28	Thisidit	57	Tibessa Khaila	86	Bou Salem	115	Thizica	144	Thimidia Regia	173	Aque Calidae	202	Chul	231	Hr. Kortheia		
29	Membrassa	58	Thamugadi	87	Ouled Sbaa	116	Cartennae	145	Nefza	174	Mina	203	Rusucurru	232	Mta Azrou		

Fig. 2: Distribution and numbers of epitaphs in Late Antique North Africa (mid 3rd–mid 7th c. AD).

One surprising result of this survey is that North Africa's Late Antique epitaphic habits were anything but urban phenomena. Naturally, there are high numbers in provincial capitals such as *Caesarea*, *Sitifis*, Carthage or *Hadrumetum*, showing the lasting importance of these ever-successful centers.¹⁵ However, the frequency of epitaphs in rural regions (such as Western *Caesariensis*, central *Sitifensis*, central *Numidia*, the Hautes Steppes and Cap Bon) suggests a significant demand for written funerary commemoration, also in hardly urbanized regions. On the other hand, excavations in important cities such as *Lambaesis* (4), *Thamugadi* (5), *Cuicul* (6) or *Thelepte* (5) have revealed only a small number of epitaphs, despite the presence of huge Late Antique necropoleis with hundreds of burials and many churches. This absence of evidence is surely not a matter of archaeological visibility, but a sign of highly local differences in mortuary practices. It seems that in some cities the epigraphic practice of tomb marking perished much earlier than in others.

Another important result is the consolidation of an extreme regional diversity in epitaphic practices. This was already grasped in 1988 by N. Duval,¹⁶ but is now corroborated by stratified contexts. Formulae, paleography, marker types, accompanying symbols and material differed in such a way that in some regions even two neighboring sites presented totally different epitaphic cultures. Regional parallels can also be traced in the epigraphic record, but these may plausibly be explained by assuming travelling workshops that produced epitaphs for wider regional distribution.¹⁷ The overall picture is extremely heterogeneous, underlining the relevance of local traditions in funerary representation.

The question of dating is still a difficult one, and unfortunately only few projects use dates from human bones, grave goods or stratigraphic contexts to date epitaphs. An interdisciplinary approach is necessary, since the inscriptions themselves only rarely provide reliably datable evidence. In some regions, such as both *Mauretaniae*, eras and locally established chronologies based on decoration, paleography, or church dates help to offer precise dating.¹⁸ In 1995, C. Galvão-Sobrinho

15 *Caesarea*: LEVEAU 1983; LEVEAU 1984, 88, 209–213; LEVEAU 1999; *Sitifis*: FÉVRIER 1965b; *Carthage*: ENNABLI 1975; ENNABLI 1982; ENNABLI 1991; DUVAL 1988, 285–288; BOCKMANN 2014; ARDELEANU 2020, n. 41; *Hadrumetum*: DUVAL 1976, 92f.; DUVAL 1988, 284f.; AOUNALAH et al. 2019, 48–58.

16 DUVAL 1988; for the *Mauretaniae* see: FÉVRIER 1964, FÉVRIER 1965a.

17 *Thabraca's* workshops (DOWNS 2007) may have produced mosaics for the region down to the Medjerda-valley, as close paleographic and decorative parallels (meanders/triangles) in *Belalis Maior* and *Bulla Regia* show: MAHJOUBI 1978, 274–296; DUVAL 1976, 64 fig. 33; DOWNS 2007, no. 89; CHAOUALI 2019, n. 19, figs. 1, 2 assumes an independent atelier in *Bulla Regia*; Cap Bon: GHALIA 2001; GHALIA 2008; *Byzacena*: Terry.

18 On *Caesariensis* and the provincial era: FÉVRIER 1964; FÉVRIER 1965a; FÉVRIER 1986; on consul dates (*Satafis*, *Cuicul*, *Mactaris*, Carthage, *Leptiminus*) and dates with Vandal regnal years (*Madauros*, *Theveste*, *Ammaedara*, El Erg, Ounaissia, *Sufetula*, *Mactaris*, Carthage), both generally rare: DUVAL 1976, 93; PRÉVOT 1984, 102; on the Byzantine indiction (larger groups in *Hippo*, *Theveste*, *Ammaedara*, *Sufetula*, *Mactaris*, Carthage), which gen-

concluded that North African funerary epigraphy declined considerably in the late 3rd c. AD, was revived shortly during the second half of the 6th c. AD and finally perished by the mid-7th c. AD.¹⁹ This model needs to be differentiated. First of all, varying regional peaks in the evidence have to be considered. New finds in *Sufetula*, for example, seem to confirm that the Byzantine period (mid 6th-mid 7th c. AD) was the century of epigraphic exuberance.²⁰ In nearby *Ammaedara*, recently published finds include a group of late 3rd to 4th c. AD *cupae*, as well as 22 mosaic and stone epitaphs from the 4th to mid-6th c. AD.²¹ The late 4th to late 5th c. AD is the only Late Antique phase of epigraphic activity that we can trace in the ca. 50 epitaphs from nearby *Thagamuta*; also in *Theveste*, epitaphs from this phase match the number from the Byzantine period.²² The transitional phase between the late 3rd and the 4th c. AD is – leaving aside Carthage, *Caesarea?*, *Altava* and *Hadrumetum* – still very difficult to determine in the epigraphic record. Therefore, if an overall peak in North African production of epitaphs is to be fixed, it should be dated from the second half of the 5th to the 6th c. AD, which is, for the majority of regions discussed here, the century of Vandal control. This general picture is corroborated by recent stratigraphic tomb excavations, but also by intensified stylistic work, especially regarding mosaic epitaphs in several regions.²³

There are several ways to explain this veritable epigraphic boom of the 5th and 6th c. AD. One reason is the general demographic and economic stability of the North African provinces in this period. The fact that the peak is obvious not only in towns, but also in rural zones, clearly confirms this point. Another central role should be accredited to the establishment of martyr cults. Over 200 places of martyr veneration have been recorded throughout North Africa and their heyday is the 5th to the 6th c. AD. Not surprisingly, the highest numbers of epitaphs come from complexes with martyrial presence (Tab. 1).²⁴ Whether this phenomenon is to be la-

erally provides a mid-6th c. AD *terminus post quem*: DUVAL 1988, 288–307; stylistic dating: Alexander; Terry; for an updated map with dates for some sites: ARDELEANU 2020, fig. 3.

19 GALVÃO-SOBRINHO 1995.

20 DUVAL 1988, 300–303; BEJAOU 2015, 58–80.

21 *Cupae*: BEN ABDALLAH 2013, nos. 96? (centre), 97, 102 (reused in basilica II), 104 (W-cemetery), 210, 216, 217 (environs); 4th/5th c. AD: BARATTE/BEJAOU 2011; new Byzantine epitaphs: BARATTE/BEJAOU 2009.

22 *Thagamuta*: BEJAOU 2015, 85–121, esp. 121 on chronology; *Theveste*: FÉVRIER 1978, 226 f.; KADRA 1989a; KADRA 1989b.

23 *Tipasa*: ARDELEANU 2018; *Hippo*: ARDELEANU 2019; Sidi Jdidi: BEN ABED-BEN KHADER/FIXOT/ROUCOLE 2011; STEVENS 2019, 654–658; *Bulla Regia*: CHAOUALI 2019; Carthage: STEVENS/GARRISON/FREED 2009; *Leptiminus*: BEN LAZREG 2002; BEN LAZREG et al. 2006; BEN LAZREG/STIRLING/MOORE 2021; Hr. Sokrine: BEJAOU 1992; stylistic dating: DUVAL 1976; Alexander; Terry (*Byzacena*); GHALIA 2001 (Cap Bon); YASIN 2009 (*Demna*, *Sitifis*); DOWNS 2007 (*Thabraca*); RAYNAL 2005 (*Uppenna*).

24 DUVAL 1982; DUVAL 1995, 203. Especially at Carthage (BOCKMANN 2014), but also in other churches or *areae*-burials next to ‘martyrs’ tombs’: *Tipasa* (ARDELEANU (in press)), *Thabraca*, *Uppenna*, *Ammaedara* II.

belled as ‘burial *ad sanctos*’ or not,²⁵ it is indisputable that martyrs’ tombs attracted mass burial. The most important point, however, is a general shift in the epigraphic practice, which occurred at the end of the 4th and the start of the 5th c. AD. In this period civic inscriptions drastically decreased.²⁶ The practice of honorific and votive inscriptions was abandoned, building and dedicatory inscriptions continued to be set only in limited numbers in fortifications, baths, houses and (predominantly) churches, with peaks in the Hautes Steppes and central *Numidia*.²⁷ The majority of building and dedicatory inscriptions from churches, however, stems from buildings with a clearly funerary character as their primary function.²⁸ The growing importance of commemorative representation through funerary epigraphy, observed also in other Western provinces during the 5th c. AD,²⁹ was another catalyst for the epigraphic revival of this time. We can therefore conclude that social representation in writing became a predominant phenomenon of the funerary space, from the beginning of the 5th c. AD onwards.

New Urban Funerary Topographies and Social Hierarchies: The Value of Epitaph-(Re-)Location

As North African townscapes experienced profound transformation, also their funerary topographies changed during the 3rd–7th c. AD (Tab. 1). Throughout the 3rd c. and first half of the 4th c. AD, extra-urban necropoleis remained the most relevant burial spots, even if intra-urban burials are attested from the late 3rd c. AD onwards.³⁰ The first burials in churches are dated to the later 4th c. AD (*Sitifis*, *Hippo*, *Theveste*) and, from then on, this new habit spread unstopably across North Africa. In total, 170 churches with a partly or primarily funerary function are known (Fig. 3).³¹

The ‘classical’ types of funerary churches are both widely attested, i.e. intra-urban burial churches and burial churches within pre-existing extra-urban necropoleis. Both types could or could not be linked to martyrial ‘tombs’, and sometimes both are known from the very same town (*Hippo*, *Ammaedara*, *Sufetula*). During the 5th c. AD,

25 For extensive discussion of this topic see DUVAL 1982, 501–524; YASIN 2009, 69–71; more detailed on North Africa: ARDELEANU (in press).

26 LEPALLEY 1981; TANTILLO 2017; cf. many Western provinces WITSCHERL 2017, 33–38 (regional differences).

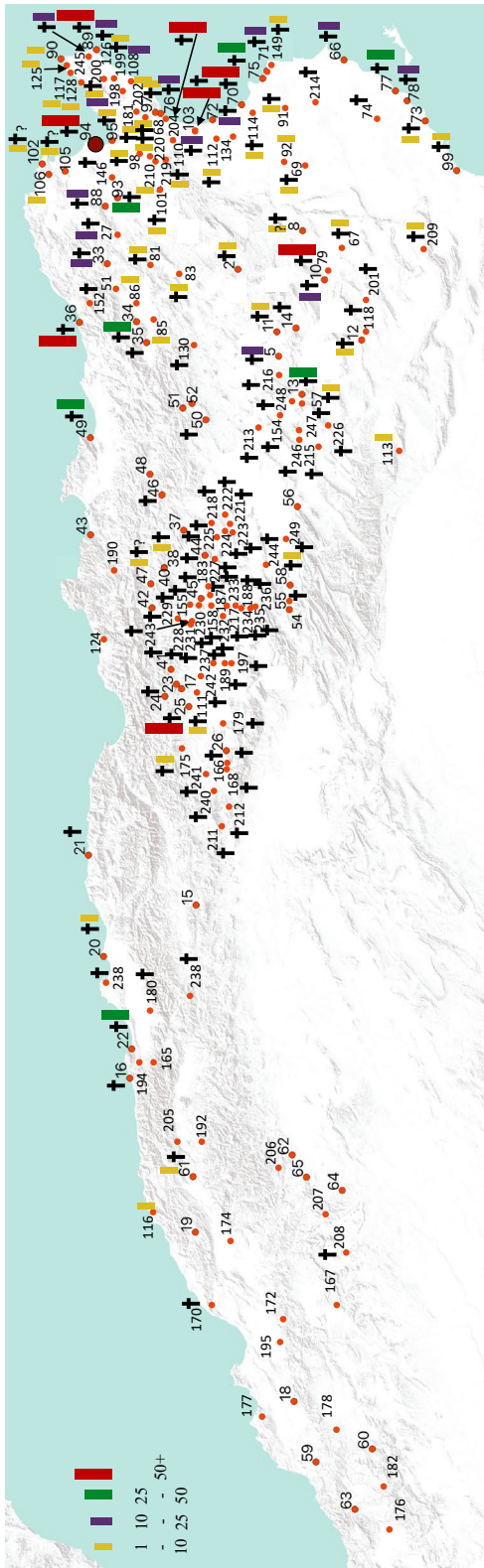
27 MONCEAUX 1908; BERTHIER 1942; HAMDOUNE 2011; BEJAOU 2015; BEJAOU 2016; HAMDOUNE 2016.

28 E.g. Hr. Sokrine (BEJAOU 1992); *Horrea Caelia* (GHALIA 1998). Only *Mactaris*, *Ammaedara*, *Theveste* and Carthage show higher numbers of non-funerary inscriptions, but here again, epitaphs make up over 90 % of the total record. On martyr inscriptions (often using epitaph formulae): DUVAL 1982.

29 HANDLEY 2003, 20–22.

30 E.g. in *Thysdrus*, and more widespread from the 5th–7th c. AD: LEONE 2007b.

31 The number is based on GUI/DUVAL/CAILLET 1992 and BARATTE et al. 2014.



1	Thabhora	29	Membressa	57	Tebessa Khafia	85	Thibaris	113	Ad Maiores	141	Althiuros	169	Bou Ismael	197	Kherbet el Kebira	225	Hr. Bou Lhilet
2	Maktar	30	Thuingaba	58	Thaungadi	86	Bou Saleh	114	Zaouit Soussa	142	Hr. Meskiana	170	Cap Ivi	198	Hr. Diar el Hajjet	226	Hr. Foum Metleg Citehli
3	Unites	31	Vaga	59	Albulac	87	Ouled Sheh	115	Thizica	143	Cv. Svalfiana	171	Gueljal	199	Borj Latlath	227	Ferme Gourdon
4	Mrididi	32	Pophti	60	Altava	88	Cincara	116	Cartennae	144	Thimida Regia	172	Hacine	200	Hr. Kneiss	228	Tiffeltassine
5	Ammadara	33	Belalis Maior	61	Cast. Tingitanum	89	Demna	117	Hr. Dhonkeh	145	Nefza	173	Aguae Caldae	201	El Oumassia	229	Hr. el Bahira
6	Hadonch	34	Bolla Regia	62	Columnata	90	Missa	118	El Erg	146	Ouled ez-Zid	174	Mina	202	Chul	230	Bled Faham
7	Borj Maajen	35	Simitthus	63	Damous	91	Bent Hassen	119	M. el Oussera	147	Ouled Mellegue	175	Seriel	203	Rusucuru	231	Mechra
8	Hr. el Aloun	36	Thabraca	64	Djeddars	92	Bordj Touil	120	Hr. el Guiz	148	Maxula	176	Numerus Svorium	204	Sidj Jdidj	232	Bou Takrematen
9	Sufes	37	Ain Abid	65	Tiare	93	Furni	121	Magfa	149	F. Dinamius	177	Castra Pucorum	205	Tigivae	233	Azrou Zaouia
10	Sufertula	38	Chabersas	66	Acholla	94	Karthago	122	F. Aufidians	150	Thapsus	178	Mechra	206	Kh. des Aouisset	234	Kharba Ben Douadi
11	Thala	39	Ks. Bou Fatha	67	Hr. Ben Salah	95	Naro	123	Draa Ben Joudet	151	Rucuma	179	Cast. Dinnense	207	Mechara Sfa	235	Ouled Aissa
12	Thelepte	40	Constantina	68	Bou Ficha	96	Dj. Djelloud	124	Bou Djenah	152	Hr. Rhiria	180	Elephantaria	208	Ain Millaria	236	Kh. Salah
13	Theveste	41	Cuicul	69	El Gebiou	97	Siagu	125	El Haoutia	153	Naragga	181	Bir Bou Rebka	209	Hr. el Baroud	237	Kh. Bou Hadef
14	Vegecula	42	Milev	70	Hadrumentum	98	Segermes	126	Menzel Yahia	154	Hr. el Ksour	182	Pomaria	210	Ain Mziger	238	Gouca
15	Auzia	43	Rusicade	71	Hr. Sokrine	99	Skhira	127	Gales	155	Meharza	183	Bir Aida	211	Gabaria?	239	Icosium
16	Iol Caesarea	44	Sila	72	Horrea Caelia	100	Tuberuac	128	Carpis	156	Vallis	184	Thigisis	212	Aras	240	Equizetum
17	Morphi	45	Telerghma	73	Iunca	101	Thurburbo Maius	129	Hr. Djellula	157	Sidi 'Nsir	185	Ariss	213	Vasampus	241	Sidi Embarek
18	Regiae Arbal	46	Thibilis	74	Hr. Sgar	102	F. Bassianus	130	Sicca Veneria	158	Bir el Djedid	186	Sigus	214	Hr. Halfa	242	Novae Sparsa
19	Renault	47	Tiddis	75	Leptiminus	103	Uppenna	131	Hr. Gaaga	159	Soliman	187	Kef Mestaoua	215	Ain Ghorab	243	Bou Kaben
20	Rusguniae	48	Guelma	76	Poppunt	104	Uthina	132	Capsa	160	Apisa Mains	188	Ferme Bou Neb	216	Aguae Caesaris	244	Hr. Gressès
21	Iominium	49	Hippo Regius	77	Paparura	105	Utica	133	Ad Aquae	161	Trechila	189	Hr. Terlist	217	Mta Azrou	245	Clupea
22	Tipasa	50	Madauros	78	Thaenae	106	Uzalis	134	Themetra	162	Zama	190	Mergueh et Tir	218	Hr. el Ksar	246	Vazavi
23	Novarcia	51	Med el Bab	79	Thagamuta	107	Neapolis	135	Chusira	163	Ain Khalfoun	191	Macomades	219	Hr. Rmirmir	247	Hr. Deheb
24	Satafis	52	Thagura	80	Thysdrus	108	Curubis	136	Aeger	164	Horrea	192	Oued Foudja	220	Oued Ramei	248	Hr. el Ksour
25	Stiffis	53	Dahaa	81	Thugga	109	Neferis	137	Kranet	165	Sufasar	193	Cedias	221	Oued Rhezal	249	Hr. Onazen
26	Thamallaha	54	Verecunda	82	Thignica	110	Sidi Habich	138	Hr. el Mahallah	166	Breda Bordj	194	Sidi Ghiles	222	Foum el Amba	250	Hr. Seffan
27	Hr. el Koucha	55	Lambaesis	83	Musitis	111	Kherbet Arong	139	Tituli	167	Aguae Sirenses	195	Tasaccura	223	Foum el Amba	251	Hr. Seffan
28	Thisiduo	56	Mascula	84	Uisippira	112	Uisippira	140	Thimisia	168	Lemelief	196	Argoub el Banja	224	Hr. Djerouda	252	Hr. Seffan

Fig. 3: Distribution of mosaic epitaphs and burial churches (marked with black crosses) in Late Antique North Africa (mid 3rd-mid 7th c. AD).

burial in churches became the most prestigious form of funerary representation, as several rural examples with hundreds of tombs show.³² In central *Numidia*, an homogenous series of ca. 50 rural ‘chapels’ follows consistent patterns: small communities burying their dead (from five to 50 inhumations) in small buildings, most of which had a pure funerary character and were often linked to reliquaries for local ‘saints’.³³ From these sites, only few cemeteries are known, suggesting a strong collective impulse towards burial in such chapels. The fact that tombs were rarely signaled by epitaphs perfectly shows the restricted character of these burial communities, who must have organized on their own how and where burials were distributed.

The relationship between urban necropolis developments and burial churches is complex and often poorly understood. In most cases, we lack firm dating material that enables us to establish whether a necropolis developed around a church or the church was, rather, inserted into an older or already ‘Christian’ cemetery.³⁴ In fact, pre-existing burials – some already ‘Christian’ – under churches with dense *ad sanctos* burials are reported in *Tipasa*, *Theveste*, *Hippo* and Carthage (Damous el Karita, St. Monique). Sometimes, burial activity started only slowly in pre-existing churches with an ‘ordinary’ liturgical function (*Hippo* Chevillot, *Thabraca*’s urban basilica, *Belalis Maior*). There are also cases where martyr relics were added to pre-existing burial churches (Sidi Jdidi I, *Uppenna*, Carthage, Bir el Knissia, *Tipasa* St. Peter and Paul), or burial churches without martyr veneration (*Sitifis*, *Hippo* Chevillot). In other necropoleis, churches are not yet securely identified, but could still have existed (*Hippo* Borgeaud, *Mactaris*, *Thabraca*, East necropolis; *Leptiminus* II). In towns inhabited until today, the distinction between *intra* and *extra muros* is impossible to determine (*Thabraca*, *Theveste*, *Sicca Veneria*, *Mactaris*, *Hadrumentum*, *Leptiminus*), and often the date or even the existence of a rampart is uncertain. It can also be hard to establish the boundaries between various necropoleis of one town (Carthage, *Theveste*).

Furthermore, nucleated ‘neighborhood cemeteries’ *intra* and *extra muros* seem to have become an important new funerary pattern from the Vandal to the Byzantine periods. Some of these communal cemeteries – a specific Late Antique trend – were grouped around churches with no attested martyr presence or funerary function at all.³⁵ However, they are also attested within many towns in close proximity

32 On the phenomenon: DUVAL/PICARD 1986; rural churches: *Thagamuta*, *Demna*, *Uppenna*, *Menzel Yahia*.

33 BERTHIER 1942. Liturgical installations (altars, baptisteries) are very rare in these ‘burial buildings’.

34 E.g. in *Taparura*, where a baptistery was found in a Late Antique cemetery: BARATTE et al. 2014, 236f.

35 *Icosium*: SOUQ 2010, 101; QUEVEDO/BENSEDDIK 2021; *Cuicul*, S-basilica: EGER 2012, 96; *Hippo*, Chevillot basilica: ARDELEANU 2019, 411–424; *Ammaedara* III and VII: BARATTE et al. 2014, 312–318, 324–326; *Sufetula*: BEJAOUI 2015; Sidi Jdidi III: BEN ABED-BEN KHADER/FIXOT/ROUCOLE 2011, 163–224; Carthage: LEONE 2007b; STEVENS 2008.

to domestic and artisanal quarters, on streets and in abandoned temples, *fora* or baths, indicating a preference for close proximity and communication between areas of the living and the dead. One of the best examples showing this intra-urban burial activity is *Hippo Regius* (Fig. 4).

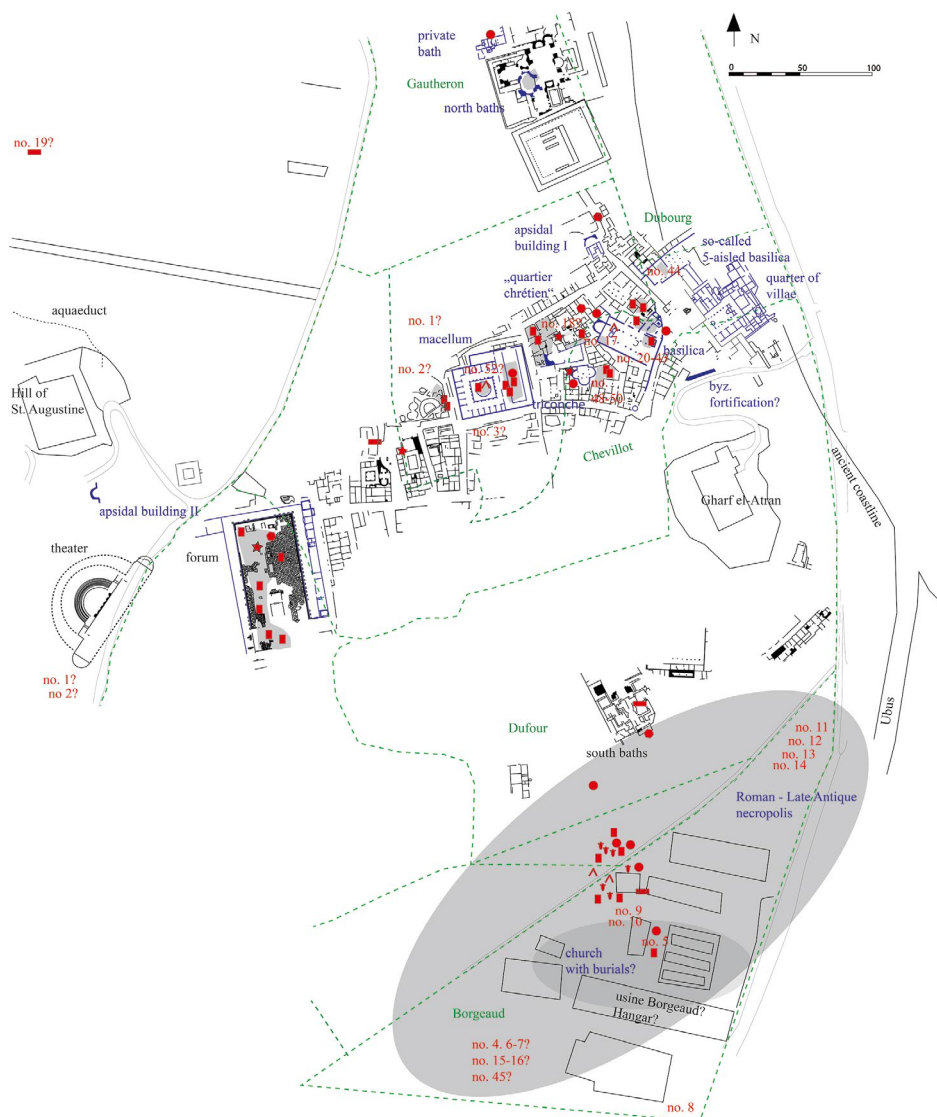


Fig. 4: Late Antique *Hippo Regius* with burial zones, distribution of Late Antique epitaphs and moving 'burial hot spots'; urn sign: amphora burial; flash sign: tile-roofed burial; vertical rectangular sign: stone cist burial; horizontal block: Late Antique sarcophagus; star sign: Late Antique belt buckle (from burial?); hexagonal sign: Late Antique cloisonnée fitting (from burial?); circle sign: other Late Antique small finds (tools, lamps, bronze, ivory); in blue: monuments with Late Antique phase; in gray: Late Antique burial zone.

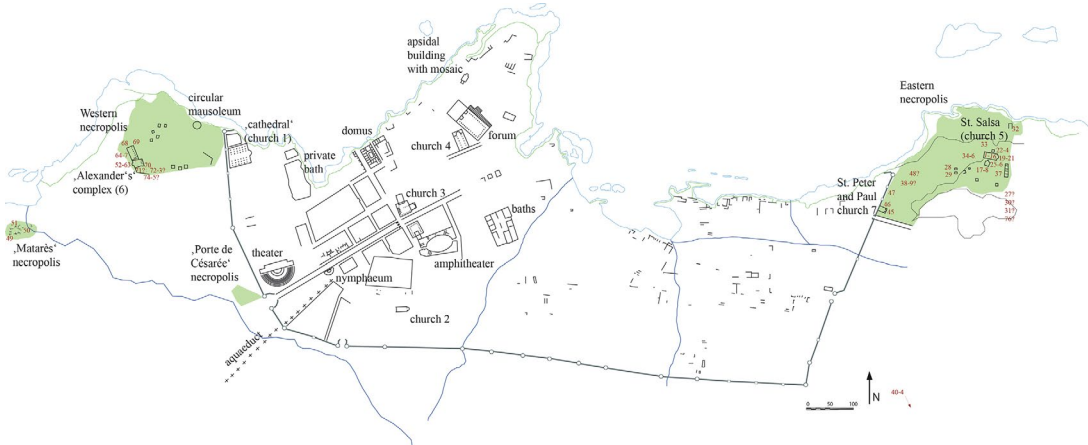


Fig. 5: Late Antique *Tipasa* with burial zones, distribution of Late Antique epitaphs and moving 'burial hot spots'; in green: Late Antique burial zones; red numbers: Late Antique epitaphs.

This phenomenon was common in *Proconsularis*, *Byzacena*, and to a lesser extent in northern *Numidia*, the westernmost example being *Sitifis*.³⁶ In *Caesariensis*, it seems to be absent. Epigraphy, but also rich grave goods from these cemeteries show that they were not only occupied by the lowest strata of urban society.³⁷ Tab. 1 shows that intra-urban burial (in churches or not) was never performed in *Caesariensis*, or only very late. This indicates the high relevance of extra-mural necropolises, where apparently also the local martyrs were venerated. Also in Carthage, intra-urban burial churches were practically absent, while the city's extra-urban cemeterial complexes housed thousands of tombs. In *Thamugadi*, the few intra-urban burials were restricted to privileged inhumations in churches.

In many towns, it is possible to trace the 'movement' and spatial separation of the clerical and civic elites' preferred *loci sepulcrales* thanks to exact epitaph location. In *Tipasa*, the clerical 'hot spot' from the late 4th to early 5th c. AD was a martyr complex at 'bishop Alexander's church' in the West necropolis, but then shifted to the Eastern cemetery in and around St. Salsa from the 5th to 6th c. AD (Fig. 5).³⁸

36 *Sitifis*: GUÉRY 1985, fig. 2; *Cuicul* (S-quarter), *Constantina*, *Lambaesis* (cemetery at camp): EGER 2012, 79, 87; *Hippo*: ARDELEANU 2019; *Theveste*?: ROCCA/BEJAOUÏ 2018, 232; *Sufetula*: BEJAOUÏ 2015, 58–79; *Mactaris* (around the 'maison de Venus' and Hoter temple): BARATTE et al. 2014, 283; *Thugga*, *Bararus*: RITTER/VON RUMMEL 2015, 42; *Simitthus*: VON RUMMEL/MÖLLER 2019, 187; Carthage, *Thysdrus*, *Hadrumentum*, *Bulla Regia*, *Thugga*?, *Utica*?: LEONE 2007b, also with problems of dating; cf. STEVENS 2008 on the phenomenon.

37 Carthage, non-élite tombs with epitaphs: STEVENS/GARRISON/FREED 2009, 348f.; rich items from tombs with no epitaphs (*Cuicul*, *Thamugadi*, *Hippo*, *Tuniza*, Carthage): EGER 2012, 92–96; ARDELEANU 2019, 406–409.

38 ARDELEANU 2018, 478–497; ARDELEANU (in press).

Tipasa's civic elites seem to have preferred autonomous mausolea and *areae* in Matarès and both of the cemeteries mentioned.

In *Theveste*, the shrine of St. Crispina absorbed all clerical funerary attention throughout Late Antiquity, while civic elites seem to have preferred burial in *areae* in old extra-urban cemeteries, and a high status military burial zone was established in the 'Minerva'-sanctuary in Byzantine times.³⁹ In *Ammaedara*, both civic and clerical elite burial of the Vandal period concentrated around basilicae I (the potential cathedral) and IV, but then moved to the vicinities of basilica VII and into 'monument VIII' in Byzantine times.⁴⁰ Late 5th/early 6th c. AD *Sufetula* saw clerical burials in basilicae I and II, but in Byzantine times, things changed: familial (Pompeiani), clerical and military burials can be located in basilica VIII, bishop tombs in the Southeastern cemetery church VII and military as well as clerical burials in basilicae III and VI.⁴¹ *Mactaris'* basilica I was the preferred episcopal burial site in the late 4th/early 5th c. AD, but in Byzantine times, basilica II became a civic élite burial spot and basilicae I, III and IV shared clerical *loci sepulcrales* (Fig. 6).⁴² In *Hippo*, an Homoean élite buried their dead from the late 4th to the mid-5th c. AD in the intra-urban 'Chevillot'-basilica, while the Catholic and military élite chose the extra-urban 'Borgeaud'-church from the 6th c. AD onwards (Fig. 4).⁴³

Numerous burials in enclosed *areae* in the extra-urban necropoleis, however, show that families, *collegia* (?), and elites were keen to be buried and commemorated not only in basilical or martyr-associated, but also in separate and 'traditional' mortuary spaces.⁴⁴ In *Ammaedara's* (VIII) and *Thabraca's areae*, tomb sig-

39 Ten out of twelve clerical epitaphs from the site come from the basilica of St. Crispine, an important pilgrim complex: DUVAL 1982, 123–128; GUI/DUVAL/CAILLET 1992, 314f.; FIOCCI NICOLAI 2016, 626; for the other two clerical epitaphs, the provenience is unknown: KADRA 1989a; KADRA 1989b; BOCKMANN 2013, 219–222; Byzantine military epitaphs: ILaG I, 3433, 3434.

40 DUVAL/PRÉVOT 1975; BARATTE/BEJAOUÏ 2009; BARATTE/BEJAOUÏ 2011; ROCCA/BEJAOUÏ 2018, 232; STEVENS 2019, 648–654; burials in the extra-urban basilica II seem to have been the tombs of a lower status community (including familial burial plots) albeit the presence of martyr 'tombs' here: STEVENS 2019, 651.

41 Basilicae I and II: BARATTE et al. 2014, 379–391; basilicae III and VI: AE 1971, 494, 495, 499, 500; basilica VII: ILTun 385; basilica VIII: ILCV 233; BEJAOUÏ 2015, 62–73.

42 PRÉVOT 1984, 12f., 22–28, 48–53, 61–65.

43 ARDELEANU 2019, 411–424 (Chevillot), 424–430 (Borgeaud).

44 *Tipasa* (perhaps 'municipal' *areae*): ARDELEANU 2018, 492f. figs. 3, 7; *Sitifis*, unknown contexts (relatives as dedicators, *filius, mater, pater, frater, avia, uxor, coniux, maritus*): AE 1922, 23 (AD 311), AE 1972, 761 (AD 359), CIL VIII 8491 (AD 337), 8640, 8643, 8644, 8646, 8647, 20412 (AD 384); *Thabraca*: DOWNS 2007, 89; *Bulla Regia (areae)*: CHAOUALI/FENWICK/BOOMS 2018, fig. 3; *Theveste*, Cambon-*area* (families of Fadiliana and Supserik; relatives as dedicators; *avunculus, mater, filius, coniux*; veterans and foreigners): AE 1995, 1745, 1746, 1751; AE 1958, 148a, b; CIL VIII 16655; SEG 18777; Saadane-*area* (relatives as dedicators; *socra, nepticula*): AE 1981, 883; chapel near rampart: ILCV 3086 (*ff(ratres)*); *Ammaedara*, 'monument VII': BARATTE et al. 2014, 327; *Acholla* (familial burial *area*, relatives as dedicators), *Hadrumentum*, Carthage: DUVAL 2003, 763; *Leptiminus* (elite in 'catacombs'):

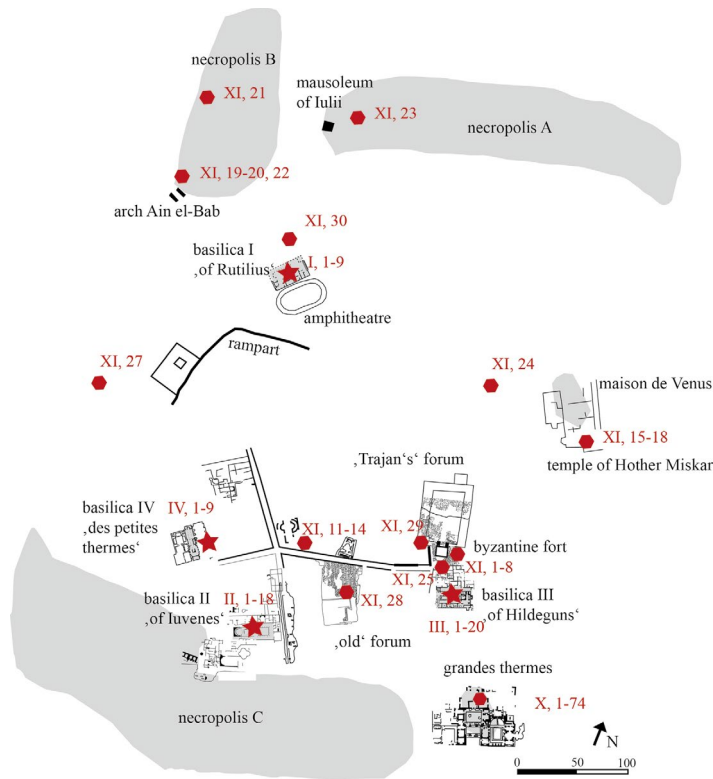


Fig. 6: Late Antique *Mactaris* with burial zones, distribution of Late Antique epitaphs and moving 'burial hot spots'; in grey: Late Antique burial zone; red numbers: findspot of Late Antique epitaphs after PRÉVOT 1984; star sign: Late Antique epitaphs found in original burial context; hexagonal sign: epitaphs found in reused context.

naling followed 'egalitarian' patterns (similar materials, formulae, iconography), whereas in *Cartennae*, *Acholla* and *Leptiminus* both collective identity and individual portraiture were displayed in epitaphs.⁴⁵ Although they could be attached to churches (*Ammaedara* II), these *areae* 'rivalled' with burial churches as collective burial grounds. During the 5th–7th c. AD isolated burial seems to have mostly lost its former status as highly-regarded means of individual representation. Apart from some isolated mausolea, discussed below, North African necropoleis *sub divo* contained only very few privileged tombs and single epitaphs from after the mid-6th c. AD.

BEN LAZREG et al. 2006; BEN LAZREG 2021; *Utica*, intra-urban? *area* 100 m SW to Phoenician necropolis: [ILTun 1179,1, 1179,4](#).

⁴⁵ DUVAL 1976, 62; DUVAL 2003; BEN LAZREG et al. 2006, 365; BEN LAZREG 2021. Although individual traits in portraiture (age, coiffure) and iconography (deceased as Orpheus and Good Shepherd), the format, layout, symbols and formulae of the inscriptions of this community are more or less uniform. Children were buried in separate rows.

Social Hierarchies and Liturgical Movement in Burial Churches: The Role of Epitaphs

If burial churches were the most promising places and epitaphs became the preferred medium of social representation, one could wonder whether a community's social hierarchies can perhaps be analyzed within these mortuary spaces. This is in fact possible in some well-preserved churches thanks to the mosaic epitaph, perhaps North Africa's most famous marker type. Although this class is also known from Italy, *Sardinia* and the Iberian Peninsula, the numbers for North Africa exceed 1300 examples (Fig. 3).⁴⁶ The richest clusters and identifiable workshops are known from *Sitifis*, Cap Bon, the Sahel, the Hautes Steppes and *Thabraca*. In some cases, over 100 mosaic inscriptions covered the floors of churches.

As Ann Marie Yasin and Dominique Raynal have recently argued, colorful mosaic epitaphs offered a higher degree of communicative force than stone markers, which were still preferred sometimes.⁴⁷ In *Demna* and *Uppenna* tomb markers show great uniformity in ornament, formulae and symbols, signs of a non-hierarchical, 'egalitarian' representation. New evidence from *Bulla Regia* shows that Christian communities – *contibernia Christianorum* – were responsible for and paid for the production of epitaphs for some members,⁴⁸ but it is still debated to what extent the African church itself owned and organized cemeteries.⁴⁹ Individual representation, however, was still possible within these trends. Portraiture, rich clothing and narrative scenes appear on epitaphs in burial churches.⁵⁰ Also, a clear family-bound representation is evident in the mosaics: some epitaphs refer to professions and offices in their texts and iconography.⁵¹ This is striking, since proud os-

46 DUVAL 1976 (with non-Christian forerunners); Alexander; Terry; recent finds: ARDELEANU 2020; for the Iberian Peninsula, see the contribution ARBEITER in this volume, for *Sardinia*, see: ICS; for the Western Mediterranean, see Quattrocchi.

47 RAYNAL 2005; YASIN 2009, 71–78; on the 'iconography of paradise' in mosaic epitaphs: POTTHOFF 2017, 195–209; on large stone series in *Mactaris* and *Ammaedara* I: DUVAL/PRÉVOT 1975, 13–187; PRÉVOT 1984.

48 CHAOUALI 2019, 179 with formulae indicating the dedicators: *ex petitione eis con/cessa de sua fecerunt*.

49 FIOCCHI NICOLAI 2016, 619, who firmly believes that 'Christian *areae*' existed in North Africa as early as the 3rd c. AD, which cannot be archaeologically proven; *contra*: REBILLARD 2003, 17–23; more nuanced: TEICHGRÄBER 2021, 35, 158 with older lit.

50 *Sertei*: ILCV 332 (AD 467); *Theveste*: ILCV 1385 (AD 508); *Taparura* (orantes, narrative scenes): DUVAL 1976, 93f.; Terry 96, 103, 105, 113, 116; *Horrea Caelia*: GHALIA 1998, 114f.

51 *Sitifis* I: AE 1966, 552 (*mater fecit*); Bou Kaben, burial church (Caii Iulii; *filius*, relatives, *heredes* as dedicators): ILaG II,3, 7488, 7491, 7492d, 7493; BERTHIER 1942, 126f.; *Theveste*, in/around St. Crispina (*coniux*, *uxor*, *filius/a*, relatives as dedicators): ILCV 1385, 4841; AE 1969/70, 683; *Sufetula*, Pompeiani in church VIII; BEJAOUI 2015, 67–73; *Bulla Regia*, Domitii in W-church: CHAOUALI/FENWICK/BOOMS 2018, fig. 12; CHAOUALI 2019, n. 13; *Furni*, no clerics in burial churches, but a Blossii-family in two churches (here also an *archiater*: CIL VIII 25811) and one mausoleum: CIL VIII 25812, 25817, AE 1978, 883;

tentation of professions and offices was by that time unusual and almost reserved for clerics.⁵² Only in Byzantine times, military offices regained some relevance, as series from *Rusguniae*, *Hippo*, *Theveste*, *Sufetula* and Carthage show.

Until recently, the potential of the exact setting of epitaphs in detailed plans was completely neglected by scholarship. Nevertheless, the mosaic inscriptions, for instance, played a crucial role in the liturgies celebrated at burial complexes during well-attested feast days in honor of the dead or of martyrs, the *dies natales*. For *Tipasa* and *Hippo*, the author was able to draw new plans according to old excavation reports and archival material (Figs. 7, 8, 9).⁵³ *Tipasa*'s 'Alexander complex' housed not only the relics of several local martyrs in an *area*, but also the tomb of bishop Alexander, who equipped the complex with a church and a sophisticated liturgical circuit in the late 4th or early 5th c. AD (Fig. 7).



Fig. 7: *Tipasa*, 'Alexander complex' with burial church and attached *area* for martyr, clerical and ordinary burial (late 4th–6th c. AD); green lines: hypothetical liturgical movement; red: mosaic; red numbers: Late Antique epitaphs placed in reading direction; darker green: thresholds, stairways; yellow: funerary/martyr *mensa*.

The crucial turning points of this circuit were marked by splendid inscriptions. These inscriptions communicated with the participants and, by their orientation and contents, told them not only where to go, but also what to do and where to look

Pupput (church, family epitaphs): AE 1997, 1609; for professions represented in iconography, see also EHLER 2012, 175–181, 229–290.

52 POTTHOFF 2017, 192 (Carthage); for entire North Africa, see: ARDELEANU 2020, fig. 2. Only the titles *clarissimus/a vir/femina* (*Cartennae*, *Tipasa*, *Sitifis*, *Cuicul*, *Ammaedara*, *Furni*, Carthage), *honesta femina* (*Mactaris*, *Thaenae*) and *flamen perpetuus* (*Mechera*, *Ammaedara*, Choud el-Batel, Carthage, *Furni*, *Uppenna*) had a wide distribution in Late Antiquity.

53 ARDELEANU 2018, figs. 3, 6; ARDELEANU 2019, fig. 3; ARDELEANU (in press).

at. They invited the faithful to have funerary meals on the *mensae* of the martyrs, as well as to sing, pray and practice charity. It is fascinating that these inscriptions also took account of the site's topography and architecture, as they encouraged the faithful to climb stairs and to cross thresholds. Burial at this site seems to have been initially restricted to clerics and their families, as two epitaphs demonstrate, one of which with the explicit term *ex permissu episcopi*.⁵⁴ The whole circuit was an orchestrated scenery for the representation of Alexander's *virtus* and his *cura* for his predecessors, the tombs of whom he gathered and re-buried in the nave of his 'genealogical' church. Alexander's epitaph on a 5 × 3 m mosaic in the center of the church was a sensation in itself, if we imagine the shaded light in the nave, the illusive colors and the panegyric poem running over 11 lines.

Such textual eye-catchers, with their striking inverted or diagonal orientation, often positioned in liminal positions (thresholds, entrances), definitely directed the faithful in their liturgical and processional movement.⁵⁵ What also became obvious from our new plans is that there was a tendency to group burials according to gender. Finally, detailed burial locations also reveal much about social exclusion. In *Tipasa*, foreigners seem to have been excluded from intra-basilical burial; in *Hippo*, a Homoean elite group occupied a church during the 5th c. AD for their burials, in some cases even destroying older tombs (Fig. 8); in Carthage and *Hippo*, burial of unbaptized children was prohibited in churches.⁵⁶

Outright destruction and superimposing multiple tombs were not uncommon in order to create physical proximity to the saints.⁵⁷ While it is well-known that the most privileged burial spots, such as apses or choirs,⁵⁸ were often granted to

54 ARDELEANU 2018, no. 57.

55 Diagonal epitaphs in *Thabraca's* 'martyrs chapel' (DOWNS 2007, 104–141) and Sidi Habich (BARATTE 2008, fig. 2), 'inverted', 'edge' and 'threshold' epitaphs in *Iomnium I* (GUI/DUVAL/CAILLET 1992, 57–61), *Tipasa* (ARDELEANU 2018, nos. 7–9); other promising sites for movement reconstruction: Menzel Yahia (GHALIA 2008, 208); *Uppenna* (RAYNAL 2005; YASIN 2009), Hr. Sokrine (BEJAOU 1992), *Horrea Caelia* (GHALIA 1998); on the latter both, see now also STEVENS 2019, 658–662.

56 ARDELEANU 2018, 493; ARDELEANU 2019, 423; in Bulla Regia, most prestigious burial spots in annexes of a funerary church were occupied by non-locals: NIKITA et al. 2023, 11 fig. 6.; in Carthage, Bir Ftouha/Bir el Knissia, church burials were limited and – with privileged exceptions – excluded from the cores, but intensive burial took place in annexes: STEVENS/KALINOWSKI/VAN DER LEEST 2005, 576; at Bir Ftouha, unbaptized (?) children were buried near the annexes of a baptistery: STEVENS 2008, 92; cf. Aug., *De sepultura catechumenorum* (Dolbeau 7/Main 15).

57 LANCEL 1997; ARDELEANU 2018, 493 no. 19; cf. *Thabraca*: six levels of burials, superimposed on and destroying earlier tombs: DOWNS 2007, 84, 519; *Ammaedara*: BARATTE/BEJAOU 2011, 172; *Bulla Regia*, 6th c. AD-mausoleum destroying earlier tombs: CHAOUALI 2019, 178; on the Iberian Peninsula and the *Galliae*, see the contributions ARBEITER and MERTEN in this volume.

58 DUVAL/PICARD 1986; BARATTE 2008; cf. *Cuicul's* S-church (only clerical epitaphs): ILLALG II, 3, 8297, 8299.



Fig. 8: *Hippo Regius*, intra-urban burial church (Chevillot, late 4th–6th c. AD) with burials according to gender (green signs), epitaphs *in situ* (red numbers); green lines: hypothetical liturgical movement; brown: latest burials.



Fig. 9: *Tipasa*, funerary church of St. Salsa with surrounding necropolis and re-located epitaphs (red numbers) (4th–6th c. AD). The epitaph position of the *diaconus* Adeod[atus] is highlighted; orange: pathway; C: cistern; M: mausolea; yellow: funery *mensa*; red: mosaic; dark blue: *cupa*.

high-ranking clerics, other clerics apparently followed their own burial-patterns. Tombs for *diaconi* and *subdiaconi* are often found at the entrances of churches or annexes (Fig. 9), i.e. exactly at the spots for which *diaconi* had been responsible during their lives.⁵⁹ Baptisteries and rooms linked to baptism were popular burial spots for *presbyteri* and *episcopi*, so as to emphasize what one of their most important clerical services had been.⁶⁰ On the other hand, only very few clerical epitaphs

59 *Ala Miliaria*: CIL VIII 21571; *Tipasa*, St. Salsa: ARDELEANU 2018, no.15; *Ammaedara*: BARATTE/BEJAOUI 2009, 67 no.6; *Thagamuta*: BEJAOUI 2015, 96 no.8; *Sufetula*, basilica VIII?; BEJAOUI 2015, 72 no.7; basilica III: AE 1971, 500?; Sidi Jdidi II: BEN ABED-BEN KHADER/FIXOT/ROUCOLE 2011, 60, 86, 113, 134f.

60 *Rusguniae*: ILCV 1111; *Thagamuta*: BEJAOUI 2015, 95 nos.4, 7; Sidi Habich, *Uppenna*,

were found in open necropoleis in North Africa, underscoring the high relevance of intra-basilical burial for clerics.⁶¹ Yet, in *Sitifis*, *Furni* or *Thaenae*, burial churches could also be dominated by civic elites.⁶²

Funerary Customs, Anthropology and Epigraphy: Problems and Perspectives

Like in the case of epitaphs, an updated synthesis is lacking also for mortuary archaeology of Late Antique North Africa (Tab. 1).⁶³ Only recently, some proper stratigraphic excavations in Late Antique cemeteries and burial churches have been undertaken.⁶⁴ The bulk of funerary material has been excavated during the colonial era and the first decades of the Maghreb's post-colonial history, a time in which funerary archaeology had not yet established its interdisciplinary approach. Yet, the main funerary customs are known today in their general outline. As elsewhere, the shift from cremation to inhumation took place from the late 2nd to the 3rd c. AD, even if there were rare 5th c. AD-cremations in Carthage.⁶⁵ East-West alignment and extended supine body positioning was the rule, although also other orientations, as well as flexed and crouched positions, are attested in rare cases.⁶⁶ Flexed and crouched burials, as well as cremation, were never recorded in combination with epigraphic markers, which might be a sign for burials of lower social status. In

Sufetula I and II: BARATTE 2008, 226–228, fig. 2, 3; ILCV 112, 3477; Hr. Sokrine: BEJAOU 1992, 334; STEVENS 2019, 659f.

- 61 Only in *Altava* two clerics were possibly buried in open necropoleis: MARCILLET-JAUBERT 1968, nos. 190, 197; cf. *Bulla Regia*: CHAOUALI/FENWICK/BOOMS 2018, 194, CHAOUALI 2019, where no bishop tombs are recorded in particular burial spaces next to (but not within) a burial church, indicating that neither intra-basilical nor common 'clerical' apse- or choir-burials were considered the most prestigious inhumation spots here.
- 62 FÉVRIER 1965b (just 2 clerics for 50 tombs); FORTIER/MALAHAR 1910, 93f.; BARATTE et al. 2014, 91–94.
- 63 First outline by GSELL 1901, 396–427; DUVAL 1995 and EGER 2012, 61–96 published useful introductions to funerary practices in Late Antique North Africa, although their focus is on topography and grave goods; further important reading in funerary archaeology: TROUSSET 1995; STONE/STIRLING 2007 (diachronic approaches).
- 64 *Icosium*: SOUQ 2010; *Bulla Regia*: CHAOUALI/FENWICK/BOOMS 2018; CHAOUALI 2019; Carthage: STEVENS/KALINOWSKI/VAN DER LEEST 2005; STEVENS/GARRISON/FREED 2009; *Pupput*: BEN ABED-BEN KHADER/GRIESHEIMER 2004; DE LARMINAT 2011; *Leptiminus*: BEN LAZREG et al. 2006; KEENLEYSIDE et al. 2009.
- 65 On the trend and problems: SCHMIDT 2000, 321f.; VOLP 2002, 186–195; in *Caesarea*, *Pupput* and *Leptiminus*, firm data is available (late 2nd/early 3rd c. AD): LEVEAU 1999, 114; BEN ABED-BEN KHADER/GRIESHEIMER 2004, 184f.; BEN LAZREG et al. 2006, 352f.; in *Sitifis*, the shift occurred slightly later (mid-3rd c. AD): GUÉRY 1985, 311f.
- 66 On East-West-orientation and the problems of a 'Christian' custom: SCHMIDT 2000, 321f.; for exceptions in *Sitifis*, *Caesarea* and Carthage: LEVEAU 1984, 207; STEVENS 2008, 98; EGER 2012, 82f.

central North Africa, from *Sitifensis* through *Numidia* to Western *Proconsularis* and the Sahel, the practice of depositing bodies in a lime/gypsum stratum was perpetuated from older traditions.⁶⁷ Isolated parallels are known from *Caesariensis* and Carthage.⁶⁸ This practice seems to have responded to the desire to avoid smells of putrefaction in closed and frequently used burial spaces (churches, family tombs). It is a matter of debate whether the custom also reflects a ‘Christian’ will to conserve the body.⁶⁹ Interestingly, this habit is mostly – with *Thamugadi* and the sites in the Sahel as exceptions – associated with epitaph-signaled burials or tombs within prestigious contexts, which might indicate that this custom was expensive and performed by wealthy or even elite classes.

Anthropological studies on Late Antique necropoleis in North Africa are rare. That is the main problem funerary research in this region has to deal with today.⁷⁰ It is thus extremely difficult to combine the available data with other aspects of funerary habits, such as commemoration by epitaphs and rituals. At sites where burials were excavated according to modern standards, however, we can see what implications these methods might also have for tomb signaling.⁷¹ While mosaic epitaphs for two or more family members matched the anthropological evidence

67 Sidi Embarek, Zraïa, Bou Takrematen: GSELL 1901, 258, 291, 343, 402; DUVAL 1995, 196; hundreds in *Thamugadi*’s S-necropolis (2nd–7th c. AD). On this burial custom, very popular in the Rhine/Moselle-zone, in Britain and other Mediterranean areas: REIFARTH 2013, 31–40, 433–477 (with African distribution and cases in *Sitifis*, *Constantina*); DE LARMINAT 2011, 228f. (with Roman forerunners in *Sitifis*, *Theveste*, *Sicca Veneria*, Carthage, *Siagu*, *Pupput*, *Hadrumetum*, *Gigthis*); cf. the contribution MERTEN in this volume. African examples not cited by REIFARTH 2013 are *Sitifis*: GUÉRY 1985, 295; *Numidia* (Hr. Seffan, Hr. Djerouda, ferme Gourdon, Bled Faham, Kef Mestaoua, Kh. Bou Hadeif: BERTHIER 1942, 86, 90, 91f., 100, 137, 160; *Mactaris*, *Theveste* (4th–5th c. AD): KADRA 1989a, 267; *Ammaedara*: BARATTE/BEJAOUÏ 2009, 62f.; BARATTE/BEJAOUÏ 2011, 163, 171, 173; *Sufetula*: DUVAL 1995, 192; *Hippo Regius*: ARDELEANU 2019, 408, n. 39, 435, nos. 19, 27; *Bulla Regia*: CARTON 1892, 72f.; *Belalis Maior*: MAHJOUBI 1978, 288, 308; *Cincari*: DUVAL/CINTAS 1976, 866f., 889; Sidi Jdidi: BEN ABED-BEN KHADER/FIXOT/ROUCOLE 2011, 61 fig. 32; Mraïssa (4th/5th c. AD): GHALIA 2001, 67; *Hadrumetum*: LEYNAUD 1922, 90; *Leptiminus* (3rd c. AD): BEN LAZREG et al. 2006, 353; STERRETT-KRAUSE 2017, 55f.; *Thaenae* (2nd–5th c. AD), *Thysdrus* (3rd c. AD), Raqquada (3rd c. AD): FORTIER/MALAHAR 1910, 83; JEDDI 1995, 140, 144–150, n. 17.

68 *Tipasa* (3rd c. AD): BOUCHENAKI 1975, 53, 73; Carthage: JEDDI 1995, n. 17; REIFARTH 2013, 474f.

69 REIFARTH 2013, 39f. In my view, the early cases show a pre-Christian tradition well-established in Africa.

70 E.g. *Ammaedara*, *Sufetula*, *Thagamuta*, Sidi Jdidi, *Uppenna*, where hundreds of tombs remained unexcavated or were opened recently without bone analyses: RAYNAL 2005; BARATTE/BEJAOUÏ 2009; BEN ABED-BEN KHADER/FIXOT/ROUCOLE 2011; BARATTE/BEJAOUÏ 2011, 147–210; BEJAOUÏ 2015.

71 Anthropological studies of Late Antique tombs have been undertaken in *Sitifis* (GUÉRY 1985, 237–307), Carthage and *Leptiminus* (STEVENS/KALINOWSKI/VAN DER LEEST 2005, 474–487; STEVENS/GARRISON/FREED 2009, 265–332; KEENLEYSIDE et al. 2009), and more recently in *Althiburos*, *Pupput*, *Thugga* (all without epitaphs) and *Bulla Regia*: RITTER/VON RUMMEL 2015, 64–73; CHAOUALI/FENWICK/BOOMS 2018, 196; NIKITA et al. 2023.

from associated graves in Carthage,⁷² in *Ti-pasa*, *Thabraca*, *Uppenna* and *Ammaedara* up to seven burials were recorded in a single tomb marked by one epitaph.⁷³ One has to ask, therefore, to which individual an epitaph should be attributed, if gender and age in the associated tomb are not determined by osteological analysis. Only in few cases, such as the Supserik-Supserika-epitaphs from *Theveste*, familial tomb opening and re-occupation was commemorated by two successive epitaphs installed over the very same container (Fig. 10).⁷⁴

In other cases, multiple deceased persons are mentioned in pre-fabricated ‘double’ or ‘triple’ epitaphs; the associated burials have, however, mostly not been analyzed.⁷⁵ Moreover, the lack of epigraphic signaling of tombs is not an implicit sign for ordinary or poor burial. In ‘neighborhood’ cemeteries, epitaphs were perhaps never necessary for the commemoration of the dead of such small communities. Within families and small communities, burial plots must have been perfectly known. Indeed, Susan T. Stevens’ studies at Carthage show that unmarked tombs were used in vertical burial stacks for sequential and familial burial up to four times.⁷⁶ Cemeteries in *Sitifis* and the Tell had ‘ephemeral’ anepigraphic markers: stone and earth mounds, tiles with crosses and ‘carreaux de terre cuite’.⁷⁷

Anthropological analysis could also inform the discussion about social hierarchies within burial contexts, an issue traditionally examined by epigraphy. Late Antique burial fields with no or few epigraphic markers in *Thugga*, Carthage and *Lep-timinus* had separate rows of adult and child burials, and mass child burials were



Fig. 10: *Theveste*, two epitaphs marking sequential burials of Supserik’s family within the same tomb, AE 1958, 148a, 148b (5th c. AD).

72 STEVENS/GARRISON/FREED 2009, 43–72.

73 LANCEL 1997, 808; Terry 52; DOWNS 2007, 113, 471, 510–512; BARATTE/BEJAOUI 2011, 172.

74 AE 1958, 148a, b; first Supserik and his *coniux* Germana were interred (signaled by a mosaic epitaph), then their children Supserika and Arcura (signaled by the semicircular stone *mensa*); DUVAL 1976, 86; cf. Carthage, where epitaphs of family burial plots were repaired or removed: STEVENS/GARRISON/FREED 2009, 45–51.

75 E.g. Carthage, Bir el Knissia: STEVENS 2008, 83; *Demna*: YASIN 2009, fig. 2.18.

76 STEVENS/KALINOWSKI/VAN DER LEEST 2005, 477; STEVENS/GARRISON/FREED 2009; cf. EGER 2012, 83f.

77 GUÉRY 1985, 237–307; STEVENS/GARRISON/FREED 2009, 347; on the ‘carreaux’, stamped bricks and regional tomb covers in *Proconsularis* and *Byzacena* (*Sufetula*, *Cincari*, *Furni*, Carthage): DUVAL 1995, 196. The burial churches in central *Numidia*, where epitaphs are rare, also required different tomb signaling: BERTHIER 1942.

documented in reoccupied mausolea in *Pupput*.⁷⁸ In such communal burial churches as Bir Ftouha and Bir el-Knissia at Carthage it was possible to detect prestigious burials and burial hierarchies by prominent position, by tomb furnishing, by analysis of disarticulated bones, by hierarchized burial position or by materials used.⁷⁹ Kinship, which usually is assessed only by information from tomb stones, could be determined more reliably by mitochondrial data. Isotope analysis would shed light on mortality rates and migration and diet analysis could help to assess – as recently shown for *Leptiminus*, *Bulla Regia* and Carthage – social differences between deceased buried in different tomb markers or types, questions that so far have only been answered by epigraphic evidence and grave goods.⁸⁰ In the 5th–6th c. AD cemetery at the Theodosian wall in Carthage, it became clear through isotope analysis that all members of the community buried at this spot shared almost identical dietary patterns throughout age and gender.⁸¹ This result might indicate that social hierarchies were articulated by differing grave markers and tomb types although the community as a whole had non-hierarchical diet customs and perhaps similar economic backgrounds.

Changing Regional Tomb Types and Their Repercussions on Tomb Signaling

In this section I will present some thoughts on the interconnectedness of changing tomb types and epigraphic markers. I will limit myself to tomb types that received epigraphic signaling (Tab. 1; Fig. 11).

78 *Thugga*: RITTER/VON RUMMEL 2015, 68; Carthage, Theodosian wall-cemetery: STEVENS 2008, 93; *Pupput*, mausoleum 30, over 5000 bones from children (5th c. AD): DE LARMINAT 2011, 114–118; Carthage, Yasmina-necropolis: STEVENS 2008, 100; age-separated burial in *Leptiminus* ‘catacombs’: BEN LAZREG et al. 2006, 367; BEN LAZREG 2021; cf. a cluster of epitaphs for children in Bir Ftouha, Carthage: STEVENS/KALINOWSKI/VAN DER LEEST 2005, 576.

79 STEVENS/KALINOWSKI/VAN DER LEEST 2005, 105–112; STEVENS 2008, 89–92.

80 KEENLEYSIDE et al. 2009 show that marine diet increased here in the 5th c. AD, but it is debated whether this is a sign of economic decline or prosperity; isotopes show few differences in diet between persons buried in mausolea/hypogea or simple pits, indicating that elites had diet preferences similar to those of lower strata; MA et al. 2021 have recently published new isotope results from the Theodosian wall cemetery of Vandalic date at Carthage; their highly interesting analysis shows that maritime food was not accessible to the small community buried here albeit its close proximity to the sea; whether this is a sign of the community’s socio-economic differentiation (in this case perhaps a sign of a lower economic status) or of diet traditions of an immigrated group (the samples were taken from the deads’ teeth, they may therefore reflect nutrition fingerprints from pre-adult immigrants) or just a local diet fashion, remains open to debate. The high percentage of proteins recorded in the $\delta^{15}\text{N}$ samples may point – with caution – to a migration from arid zones (e.g. Saharan or Southern Tunisian regions); on migration discussed by epitaphs/grave goods alone: HANDLEY 2011; EGER 2012; in *Bulla Regia*, recent isotopic analysis from a cemetery church revealed that privileged burial spots seem to have been occupied to a large extent by non-locals: NIKITA et al. 2023, 11 fig. 6.

81 MA et al. 2021, 9.

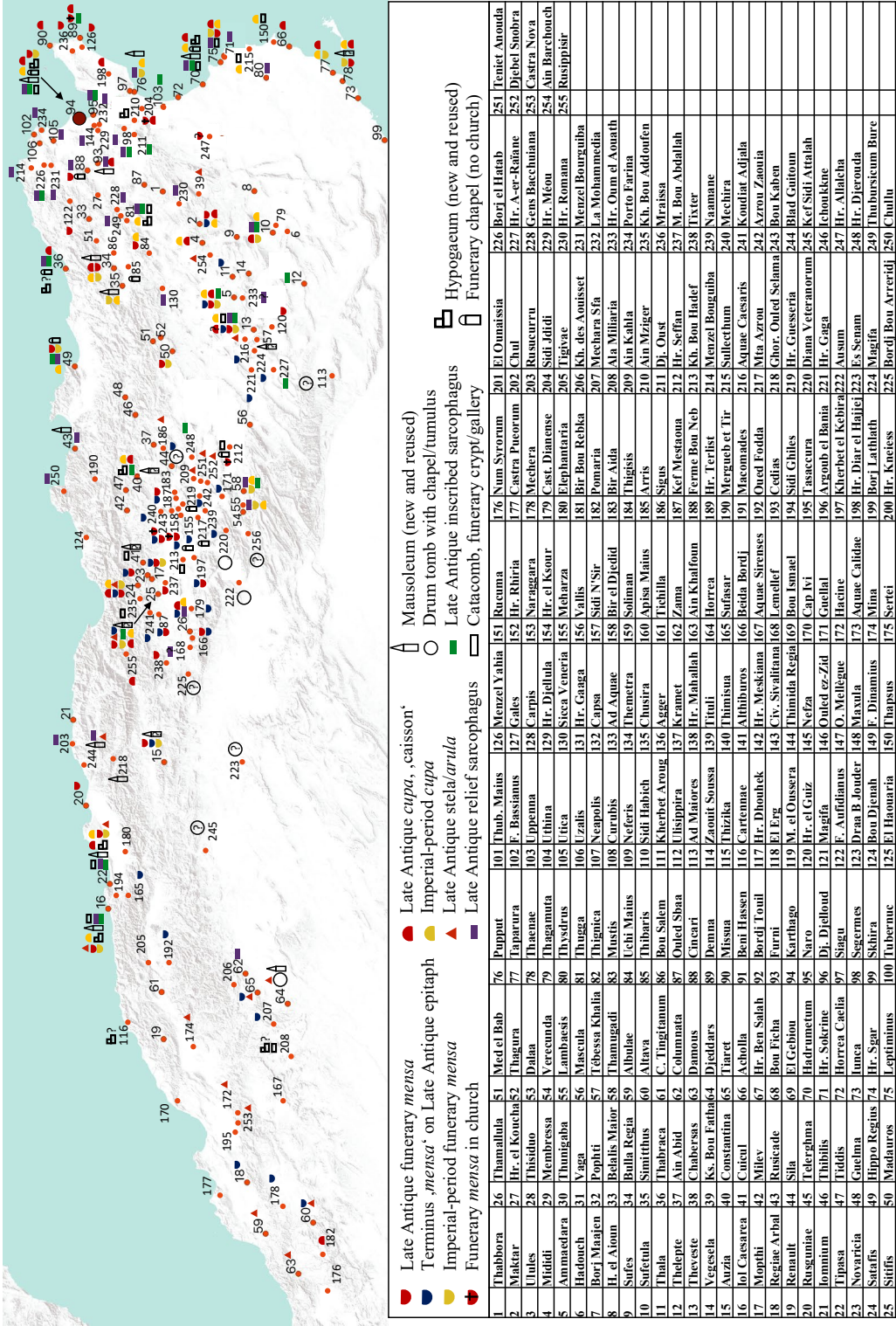


Fig. 11: Distribution of most widespread burial types in Late Antique North Africa.

It is no surprise to find the most varied spectra of Late Antique tomb types in dominating regional centers such as *Caesarea*, *Sitifis*, *Hippo*, Carthage and *Hadrumetum*. Pit tombs, *formae* or *fossae*, build cist tombs and tile-roofed tombs were ubiquitous tomb types in Late Antique North Africa.⁸² One should be cautious to link them exclusively to ordinary people, since they were used not only in cemeteries and *areae*, but also for privileged burials in churches, mausolea and hypogea. The materiality of their epitaphs can vary from local limestone to marble, and from tile to colorful mosaics with glass and precious stone inlays. Further, rich grave goods, traces of textiles, painted, plastered, lead and wooden coffins suggest a very wide social distribution of these burial types.⁸³

Inscribed sarcophagi without relief decoration are unevenly attested in Late Antique North Africa. In *Caesarea*, *Tipasa* and *Thamugadi*, where many sarcophagi can still be admired *in situ*, only few were inscribed.⁸⁴ There are isolated cases in *Sitifensis*, *Numidia*, central and Western,⁸⁵ as well as Eastern *Proconsularis*.⁸⁶ Free-standing sarcophagi with mosaic and carved epitaphs on the lids and the covers' lateral, long and upper sides are reported in open cemeteries and *areae*.⁸⁷ Epitaphs were also placed on the coffins' long front,⁸⁸ or on lateral sides.⁸⁹ Other sar-

82 On North African *formae*, cist and tile-roofed tombs, which still await a systematic typological classification: GSELL 1901, 402f.; DUVAL 1995, 196; STEVENS 2008; EGER 2012, 73 (Carthage only).

83 Wooden and lead coffins are attested from the Djeddars, *Rusucurru*, *Tipasa*, Bou Takrematen, *Thabraca* (8x lead), *Bulla Regia*, *Mactaris*, *Theveste*, *Leptiminus* and Carthage: CARTON 1892, 72f.; GSELL 1901, 403; PRÉVOT 1984, 43; DUVAL 1995, 196; DOWNS 2007, 383, 404, 409, 432, 459, 502, 513; STEVENS/GARRISON/FREED 2009, 352; EGER 2012, 72; CHAOUALI/FENWICK/BOOMS 2018, 193; BEN AÏCHA 2021, 439–446; on wealthy burials with exquisite textiles: EGER 2012, esp. 92–96.

84 *Caesarea*: AE 1983, 984; LEVEAU 1983, 92–95; LEVEAU 1999, 112, fig. 25; *Tipasa*: ARDELEANU 2018, appendix 1; *Thamugadi* (in necropoleis/churches, mostly anepigraphic): DUVAL 1995, 195.

85 DRESKEN-WEILAND 2003, 397f.; *Sitifis* (church): FÉVRIER 1965b, 38f.; *Constantina* (hypogaeum): EGER 2012, 199; Hr. Djerouda (church): AE 1946, 245a–b; BERTHIER 1942, 91; *Thelepte* (necropolis?): CIL VIII 181?; Dj. Oust: CIL VIII 24001?; *Thugga* (church/hypogaeum): BARATTE et al. 2014, 61–64; cf. below.

86 Numerous in Carthage, few in *Demna* and *Naro*: MAHJOURI 1978, 422; DRESKEN-WEILAND 2003, 405–409.

87 *Caesarea*: AE 1983, 984; *Tipasa*: ARDELEANU 2018, nos. 21, 25, 26, 34, 37, 46, 47, 68, 71 (lids' upper sides), 35, 36 (lids' lateral side); *Theveste* (lids' upper sides): AE 1995, 1740, 1748, 1751, 1752 (stone); ILaI 1, 3450, SEG 18777; AE 1989, 787; AE 1995, 1756 (mosaic); *Furni*: CIL VIII 25818; Carthage: CIL VIII 25308; ILCV 1415?; ENNABLI 1975, nos. 38, 43, 68, 75, 95, 110, 111, 112; ENNABLI 1991, no. 606 (all on lids' upper sides?).

88 *Caesarea* (necropolis): CIL VIII 9592; *Tipasa* (necropolis): ARDELEANU 2018, no. 20; *Rusicade* (mausoleum): CIL VIII 8189; *Hippo* (necropolis): ARDELEANU 2019, no. 19; *Thugga* (church): CIL VIII 27336; *Utica*: ILaFr 430,2; Carthage (necropoleis, churches): FOURNET-PILIPENKO 1961, nos. 28, 46–50, 74, 97; *Naro*: CIL VIII 24326; *Hadrumetum*: CIL VIII 63; Hr. Sokrine: Rep. III 642.

89 A local particularity in *Tipasa*: ARDELEANU 2018, nos. 23, 24, 32, 33, 46.

cophagi were buried under inscribed *mensae* visible over walking levels or along pathways.⁹⁰ Inscribed sarcophagi reacted to new installations in *areae*, churches and mausolea, since only their epitaphs were visible on circulation level.⁹¹ The quality and material of these coffins of local production is often poor, indicating that the type alone – even if inscribed – was not necessarily a sign of high social or even elite burial. If we would accept this hypothesis, *Tipasa's* elite would have counted over 2000 members, which surely was not the case.⁹² Some epitaphs are carved in such a simple (scratched single names) and erroneous way that we are tempted to interpret their commissioners as members of the middle or even lower classes.⁹³

Nevertheless, North Africa has also yielded some 200 relief sarcophagi dating to the late 3rd to mid-5th c. AD, and very few specimens from the 6th c. AD (Fig. 11).⁹⁴ This ambitious tomb type could only be commissioned by wealthy elites, and this holds true especially for the imported and marble examples, mostly found in elevated burial buildings.⁹⁵ Half of them was excavated at Carthage (ca. 95), and Carthage also seems to have housed a specialized workshop that exported sarcophagi throughout North Africa, but also as far as *Sardinia*, *Sicilia* and *Tarracco*.⁹⁶ Interestingly, also other regional centers, especially coastal sites, such as *Hippo* (3), *Tipasa* (9), *Caesarea* (10), *Thabraca* (4), *Rusicade* (3) and *Rusucurru* (2), have yielded comparatively high numbers, including imported specimens. This distribution, but also the variety of iconographic schemes chosen – mythological, biblical, architectural, strigilated – and epitaphs used – *carmina*, high paleographic quality – underline the predominant status of such towns and the openness of their elites towards wider Mediterranean trends. Some preserved contexts of such elite sarcophagi pose several questions regarding their perception and addressees. In Carthage, *Thabraca* and *Tipasa*, relief sarcophagi were found deeply buried and even hidden in mausolea, churches, caves and, in the case of open necropoleis, by walls

90 *Tipasa*: ARDELEANU 2018, nos. 19, 27?, 31, 69; *Theveste*: KADRA 1989a, 269 pl. I, XI.

91 *Tipasa (areae/churches)*: ARDELEANU 2018, nos. 1–3, 6–16, 53, 56, 57, 62, 65, 67, 68, 71; *Sitifis* (church): FÉVRIER 1965b, 38f.; *Theveste (areae)*: KADRA 1989a, 269; [CIL VIII 16659, 27915](#); church ('epitaphs' over sarcophagi): [AE 1995, 1733, 1734, 1735, 1736, 1737, 1738, 1739](#), [CIL VIII 2013?](#); *Ammaedara (areae/churches)*: BARATTE/BEJAOUÏ 2009, 59; BARATTE/BEJAOUÏ 2011, 177, 180f. figs. 182, 187; *Sufetula* (church): FOURNET-PILIPENKO 1961, no. 153; [AE 1909, 17](#); BARATTE/BEJAOUÏ 2011, 392; *Thabraca* (churches): DOWNS 2007, nos. 50, 87, 93, 97, 123, 126; *Furni* (mausoleum): [CIL VIII 25818](#); *Uppenna* (church, mosaics): TERRY 32, 36, 48, 52, 60, 63.

92 For high-class sarcophagi in *Cilicia* and *Aquitania*, see the contributions CUBAS DÍAZ and UBERTI in this volume.

93 Some inscriptions can barely be read: ARDELEANU 2018, nos. 34–36.

94 FOURNET-PILIPENKO 1961; Rep. III. Recent surveys revealed undocumented Late Antique strigilated sarcophagi in *Caesarea*, *Tipasa*, *Hippo* and *Thugga*: ARDELEANU 2019, 409.

95 For clearly elite contexts in *Rusucurru*, *Caesarea*, *Tipasa*, Blad Guitoun, *Rusicade*, Carthage: FOURNET-PILIPENKO 1961; LEVEAU 1983; Rep. III, p. 274f.

96 On this workshop and exports: DUVAL 1995, 195; TEATINI 2010; cf. the contribution ARBEITER in this volume.

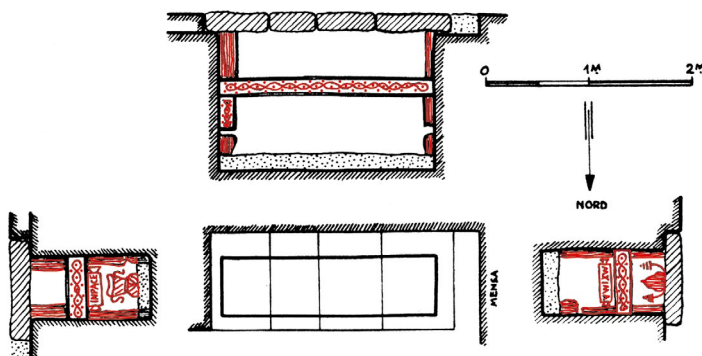


Fig. 12: *Tipasa*, sarcophagus under *mensa* with painted interior ‘epitaph’ of Maxima, *AE* 1942/43, 47 (late 4th/5th c. AD).

and other tombs.⁹⁷ Moreover, all three sites have also yielded examples of ‘hidden epitaphs’ on the interior sides of the sarcophagi (Fig. 12) or epitaphs covered by stairs or pedestals.⁹⁸ It is debated which function such ‘invisible inscriptions’ had in funerary rituals. It might be that the inscriptions addressed the deceased directly or even God himself, and even practical explanations such as protection of the body against looting have been suggested.⁹⁹ We should also consider that the sarcophagi’s epitaphs were presented (or could be seen) only during spectacular funerals (*prothesis* and *pompa*). Another reason might be that the ‘interiorized epitaphs’ would display the extraordinary status of the buried person in the unexpected case of tomb excavation.¹⁰⁰ In any case, once they were buried or hidden, they never could be seen again.

Late Antique mausolea are attested throughout North Africa (Fig. 11), the most spectacular examples being the Djeddars in *Caesariensis*, attributed to late 4th/5th c. AD-Moorish dynasts.¹⁰¹ These twelve monumental stepped tombs with incubation chambers are based on a Saharan *tumulus* type. Recently, other Late Antique *tumuli* with Saharan traits were examined in the *limes*-zone of *Numidia* and

⁹⁷ *Thabraca*: DOWNS 2007, 471; *Tipasa*: BOUCHENAKI 1975; ARDELEANU 2018.

⁹⁸ *Tipasa*: ARDELEANU 2018, 480, 487; Aouïnet-er-Raïane: MONCEAUX 1908, 196f.; *Theveste*: *ILAlg* I, 3427?; *Thabraca*: DOWNS 2007, 108f.; Carthage: ENNABLI 1975, ns. 56?, 102?, 117; ENNABLI 1982, n. 283?; ENNABLI 1991, nos. 195, 207, 244; *AE* 1997, 1647; *Cincari*, tomb painted on the inside: DUVAL/CINTAS 1976, 862–865.

⁹⁹ Cf. Italy: DRESKEN-WEILAND 2003, 187–202 and MEINECKE 2018, 60–66, who also discuss purity reasons and religious motifs, e.g. corpse-conservation; cf. the contributions ARBITER and VALEVA in this volume.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. MEINECKE 2018, 65f.

¹⁰¹ GSELL 1901, 412–427; LAPORTE 2009, 150–152; wooden coffin from Djeddar B with 14C date AD 410–490. Djeddars A (lintel epitaph: *AE* 2004, 1887), B (Christian family epitaphs from façade?), C (illegible, from façade) and F (reused epitaphs, AD 433–494) had inscriptions and several chambers with Christian paintings.

Mauretania.¹⁰² In *Caesariensis*, central *Numidia*, and Eastern *Proconsularis*, huge and lavishly decorated mausolea were still built or reoccupied by rich and self-confident elites, while the exact materiality and location of the tombs of the Vandal rulers remain unknown.¹⁰³ The extraordinary landscape-dominating tombs were clear signs of individual power and wealth, often neglected by scholarship focusing on ‘Christian’ collective funerary representation. Not surprisingly, the class of mausolea also preserves the most distinguished variety of epitaphic display, from traditional attachable plates in *tabulae ansatae* and monumental lintels, to *carmina* and colorful mosaic epitaphs corresponding to complex iconographic programs.¹⁰⁴ Other familial or individual mausolea and *memoriae* for martyrs, mostly with apsidal ground plans, were embodied in or attached to burial churches.¹⁰⁵ High social status, however, was presented also epigraphically in various ways. It seems that during the late 4th and the 5th c. AD, external mausoleum-signaling by epitaphs, practiced for so long, was given up in favor of ‘interiorized’ tomb markers. This epigraphic shift is probably a consequence of the growing relevance of commemorative rituals performed at or in these buildings. Perhaps it also tied in with a trend that can be observed in epigraphic display on sacred architecture:¹⁰⁶

- 102 FENTRESS/WILSON 2016 interpret these drum tombs with chapels (all anepigraphic, some built into or reusing Roman forts/*villae*) as an influx of Berber groups into the abandoned *limes* zone before the Vandal conquest, but reliable post-Roman dates are available only in *Ausum* and near *Diana Veteranorum*.
- 103 Blad Guitoun, Ghorfa Ouled Selama: LAPORTE 2009; *Caesarea*, reused mausoleum E-cemetery: LEVEAU 1984, 214f.; funerary chapels (no churches) in *Numidia*: Hr. Seffan, Meharza, Mechta Azrou: BERTHIER 1942, 90, 112–115, 148f.; Hr. el Guesseria: GUI/DUVAL/CAILLET 1992, 226; *Bulla Regia*, mausoleum, 6th c. AD: CHAOUALI/FENWICK/BOOMS 2018, 189, 195; *Simitthus*, mausoleum 3 near NW-church: VON RUMMEL/MÖLLER 2019, 198 fig. 8; *Thabraca*, several ‘funerary chapels’, rotunda: DOWNS 2007, 82–96; *Furni*, Blossii-mausoleum with mosaic depicting Daniel in the lion’s den: DUVAL 1976, 88; *Thibaris*’ triconch and *Cincari*’s tetraconch neither show church elements nor martyr presence and were perhaps funerary chapels: *contra* DUVAL/CINTAS 1976, 881–884, 903; Carthage, Bir Ftouha triconch, Damous el Karita rotunda: STEVENS 2008, 87f.; *Pupput*, reused mausolea 14, 18, 19, 20, 22, 25, 30, 31 in 4th/5th c. AD: DE LARMINAT 2011, 105–108, 167, 300f.
- 104 *Tipasa*: ARDELEANU 2018, nos. 17 (lintel of *memoria*), 22, 30?, 38?, 39?, 48, 50?; *Sitifis*: CIL VIII 8638, 8639, 8642, 8648 (all AD 405), 8634 (AD 440, *tabula*); *Auzia*: ILCV 4839 (AD 305; *carmen*, *tabula*); FÉVRIER 1964, 151; *Cuicul*: IALg II, 3, 8304 (37 × 50 × 8 cm; AD 463; *tabula*); Bir Aïda (64 × 55 × 12 cm; *tabula*): IALg II, 3, 7496a; Tébessa Khalia: CIL VIII 2035 (lintel?; *carmen*; late 3rd c. AD); *Thaenae* (lintel?): ILAfr. 38(25). Many *carmina* in *Auzia*, *Sitifis* *Theveste*, *Mactaris*: HAMDOUNE 2011.
- 105 Oued Rhezel: BERTHIER 1942, 54; *Theveste*, *Thagamuta*, *Thabraca*, *Mactaris*, *Furni*, Carthage, *Uppenna*, *Demna*: DUVAL 1995, 198 STEVENS 2008, 81f.; BARATTE et al. 2014; *Bulla Regia*: CHAOUALI 2019, fig. 6, rectangular chapel attached to pre-existing church; *Tipasa*, martyr-chapel for St. Salsa? predating a later annexed church: ARDELEANU (in press); for *Salona* and *Trier*, see the contributions MERTEN and VALEVA in this volume.
- 106 On this phenomenon, see: WITSCHERL 2017, 49f.

like in the case of churches, facades of monuments were no longer considered as the most prestigious places of epigraphic display.

This trend also holds true for another wide-spread tomb type of Late Antique North Africa: underground rock-cut tomb systems.¹⁰⁷ Catacombs and burial crypts are known from central *Numidia*, the Hautes Steppes, the Sahel and Carthage (Jewish and Christian);¹⁰⁸ single or family hypogea, richly decorated and inscribed, from all African provinces.¹⁰⁹ In *Caesarea*, according to a recent autopsy of the epitaphs' supports by the author, a series of Early Christian (4th c. AD) *tituli* with close parallels to the Roman catacombs strongly indicates the presence of catacombs or hypogea with *loculi* not detected until now (Fig. 13).¹¹⁰

107 DUVAL 1995, 201; in *Tipasa* and *Leptiminus*, periodic frequentation is attested not only by staircases, lockable doors and fine wall-painting, but also by lamps, ceramics and glass: LESCHI 1957, 380; BEN LAZREG et al. 2006; BEN LAZREG/STIRLING/MOORE 2021.

108 Crypts and galleries with *loculi*-burials under churches in Kherbet Bou Addoufen/*Sitifensis* (GSELL 1901, 185f.) and in central *Numidia*: BERTHIER 1942, 82, 86, 89, 160; cf. *Ala Miliaria*, *Cuicul* (2 churches), *Theveste* (gallery under St. Crispina, *loculi* epitaphs in *cubicula*, in front of *arcosolia*): GUI/DUVAL/CAILLET 1992, 8, 92–103, 311–316; *Thugga*, St. Victoire: BARATTE et al. 2014, 61–64; *Hadrumentum*: LEYNAUD 1922; DUVAL 1976, 92; Terry 134–155 (mosaic *loculi* epitaphs); AOUNALLAH et al. 2019, 48–58 (colored marble *loculi* epitaphs); *Leptiminus* (vaulted 'catacombs', mosaic epitaphs on walking level or slightly above), *Thapsus* and *Sullectum*: LEYNAUD 1922; BEN LAZREG 2002, 337 n. 5; BEN LAZREG et al. 2006, 359–368; BEN LAZREG 2021.

109 *Tipasa* (with *arcosolia*, painted biblical scenes, floral and faunal motifs): GSELL 1901, 407f.; BOUCHENAKI 1975, figs. 123–128; 'hypogea' with Christian epitaphs in *Cartennae*: GSELL 1901, 408; ILCV 2044; CIL VIII 9693, 9694; *Ala Miliaria*: GSELL 1901, 409; *Constantina*: re-occupied 'hypogeum of Praecilius': GSELL 1901, 54; HAMDOUNE 2011, 205; EGER 2012, 299; *Thabraca* (hypogeum with *loculi*?): DOWNS 2007, 83; *Thugga* (4th c. AD, with paintings): ILTun 1521; DUVAL 1976, 88; DE LARMINAT 2011, 284; Ain Mziger: DUVAL 1976, 90; Carthage, lavishly furnished/decorated hypogea of Asterius and Redemptus (6th/7th c. AD): EGER 2012, 76f.; hypogea at Bir el Knissia/Damous el Karita/Mcidfa/St. Monique: CIL VIII 25040; STEVENS 2008, 84; BOCKMANN 2014, 355f. fig. 6; *Hadrumentum*: Eustorgius-hypogeum? with mosaic *elogium*: AE 1960, 90, 91, 92; DUVAL 1976, 92f.; hypogeum with mosaic epitaph: Terry 177.

110 LEVEAU 1983, LEVEAU 1984, LEVEAU 1999 notes several re-occupied hypogea without *loculi* (E-cemetery) and *areae* (W-necropolis), where these plaques cannot be plausibly reconstructed. Most Late Antique epitaphs from *Caesarea* could be documented by the author in the museums of Cherchel and Algiers in 2017. They are now available in an exemplary database: <http://ccj-epicherchel.huma-num.fr/fr/le-projet-epicherchel/> (accessed 08/06/2021). The preference for small, thin and horizontally developed marble epitaphs (cf. measurements, below), rarely attested in North Africa, with irregular shapes of reused marble architecture, rules out many possibilities of positioning these epitaphs: they did not belong to flat tomb covers, and neither were they inserted in masonry *cupae* (attested here in Imperial times, but with very regular and vertical *stela* formats: LEVEAU 1984, 208), nor in mausolea or *areae* façades, for which they are too small (cf. a lintel? or plate from *Caesarea*'s W-necropolis mentioning an *area ad sepulcram* and a *cella*: ILCV 1583). Also the epitaphs' materiality (roughened surfaces), their layout (scarcity of formulae, single names) and iconography (anchors, doves, olive trees, orantes) are



Fig. 13: *Caesarea*, two *tituli* for Iulia Tutta and Vitula from *loculi* in non-localized catacombs?, [CIL VIII 9589](#), [9591](#) (late 4th/5th. c. AD).

The hypogea's and catacombs' distribution, mainly along the coasts, clearly corresponds to natural preconditions (easy excavation of rocks), but also to century-old funerary traditions in these regions going back to pre-Roman times. In *Leptiminus*, several underground funerary halls and tunnels are recorded, and dense burial was signaled by splendid marble and mosaic markers with individual (portraits, professions) and familial traits (onomastics), or narrative scenes.¹¹¹ These underground elite burials lacking any basilical connection must have been accessible for the descendants of a distinct social group, as dense burial activity from mid-4th to the mid-5th c. AD and numerous finds (contemporaneous lamps with Christian symbols, glass) indicate.¹¹²

Besides these profound shifts in epigraphic tomb signaling, we can state that some North African regions also perpetuated traditional forms. *Stelae*, and to a lesser extent also *arulae*, were still present in some regions, and the former were very popular in the open air necropoleis of *Caesariensis*, *Sitifensis* and *Numidia*,

perfectly comparable to *loculus*-plates from Roman catacombs: EHLER 2012, esp. 677–683 (with identical combinations of symbols). From the W-Hanafi-necropolis: [AE 1985, 950](#) (orans; 53 × 22 × 1 cm), LEVEAU 1984, 210 n. 6 (dove, anchor; 10 × 15 cm); E-Nsara-necropolis: [CIL VIII 21428](#) (67 × 28 cm), [21434](#) (46 × 34 cm); undetermined provenance: [AE 1985, 966](#) (16,5 × 11 × 2 cm); [CIL VIII 9589](#) (dove, anchor; 74 × 20 cm), [9591](#) (roughened frame; 64 × 28 cm; cf. DUVAL 1988, fig. 9); [21421](#) (olive tree, anchor; 29 × 27 cm); LEVEAU 1984, 214 n. 34 (olive tree, dove, anchor; 25 × 14 cm). Similar stone series are attested in Africa from *Hadrumentum* and Carthage, both with catacomb-presence: LEYNAUD 1922; ENNABLI 1982, nos. 24, 34; ENNABLI 1991, nos. 62, 79, 575, 580, 588, 613–615. In Carthage, some of these examples were found near La Marsa and Gammarth, where Jewish and Christian catacombs are located: DUVAL 1995, 201; BEJAOUI 2016.

111 BEN LAZREG 2002, esp. fig. 8 with a deceased? as Orpheus; BEN LAZREG et al. 2006; BEN LAZREG 2021.

112 BEN LAZREG 2002, 341; BEN LAZREG et al. 2006, 349; STERRETT-KRAUSE 2017; BEN LAZREG/STIRLING/MOORE 2021.

where even late 6th c. AD-examples with formulaic *DMS* openings are known.¹¹³ Unfortunately, especially in Western *Caesariensis*, the epitaphs' archaeological contexts are often unknown, which heavily hampers a proper reconstruction and interpretation. In *Altava*, however, some scarce data is known from the tombs, and the presence of grave goods such as table wares (which stops almost everywhere in Late Antique North Africa from the 4th c. AD onwards) matches the 'conservative impression' of this remote zone noted already in the case of the epitaphs.¹¹⁴ Christian elements (symbols, formulae) seem to have appeared on these epitaphs comparatively late, not before the mid-4th c. AD.¹¹⁵ Only limited numbers of *stelae* are attested in the Tell, indicating that this type survived longer in rural or remote areas.¹¹⁶ In all other regions, however, the *stela* and the *arula* as century-old established tomb markers were completely abandoned by the 4th c. AD.¹¹⁷ This was probably a late consequence of the shift from cremation to inhumation, and (a new preference more generally) to burial in churches, buildings and *areae* under circulation level.

- 113 On *DMS*: DUVAL 1988, 279; in *Mactaris* and *Hippo*, even Byzantine *DMS*-epitaphs are known: PRÉVOT 1984, 209 with distribution of Late Antique *DMS*-epitaphs; add ARDELEANU 2019, nos. 9, 17; on *Altava*, where a local decoration was developed with palm breeches as architectural frames combining pagan and Christian symbols (crosses): MARCILLET-JAUBERT 1968; *Albulae*: ILCV 3274 (*arula* with incense burner from AD 470); HAMDOUNE 2018, 433; Damous: FÉVRIER 1986, 777–779 fig. 7, 8; 805–809 (ca. 50 *stelae*, 4th/5th c. AD); *Mina*: ILCV 3052a, b; Tiaret: ILCV 4385 (AD 480); *Castra Nova*, Djeddars: GSELL 1901, 405; *Caesarea*: 4th c. AD-hexagonal funerary altar: LEVEAU 1984, 210; altar: CIL VIII 9378 (262 AD); in *Tipasa*, the first 'Christian' epitaphs (3rd c. AD?) seem to have been inscribed on *stelae*: ARDELEANU 2018, nos. 40–44; Blad Guitoun: AE 2013, 2166 (AD 331); *Sitifis*: anepigraphic *stelae*/stone piles marking Late Antique tombs: GUÉRY 1985, 244–307; FÉVRIER 1964, 147; *Satafis*: CIL VIII 20281; *Sigus*: CIL VIII 5749 (*arula* with *DMS*, late 3rd/early 4th c. AD); homogenous series of Christian 4th c. AD-*stelae*, all with one formula (*redditio*) and *dies natales* in Aïn Kahla (36), Teniet Anouda (16) and Dj. Snobra (15): IALg II, 3, 7458, 7459, 7460, 7461, 7462, 7463, 7464, 7465, 7466, 7467, 7468, 7469, 7469a, 7469b, 7469c, 7469d, 7469e, 7469f, 7469g, 7469h, 7469i, 7469j, 7469k, 7470, 7470a, 7470b, 7470c, 7470d, 7471, 7471a, 7471b, 7471c, 7471d, 7471e, 7471f, 7471g, 7471h, 7471i, 7471j, 7471k, 7471l, 7471m, 7471n; 3rd c. AD-funerary altar from *Theveste*, where onomastics indicate an Early Christian context: FÉVRIER 1978, 227.
- 114 On the scarcity of grave goods in Late Antique African tombs, not necessarily a sign of spreading Christianity (cf. VOLP 2002, 198–203; the contribution PRIEN in this volume): EGER 2012, 85–92 with other local exceptions.
- 115 FÉVRIER 1986; HAMDOUNE 2018, 433–471.
- 116 E.g. in Aïn Barchouch (CIL VIII 2780; BEN BAAZIZ 2000, 74, 264 suggests a Byzantine date) or a rural *villa* nearby (BEN BAAZIZ 2000, 206; 4th c. AD); Ksar Bou Fatha: HAMDOUNE 2011, no. 24 (*arula*, 2nd half of the 3rd c. AD). In *Hippo*, the author was able to discard the established hypothesis of 6th–7th c. AD-*stelae* by thorough analysis of the supports' back and lateral sides. The epitaphs are flat tomb covers: ARDELEANU 2019, 428–430.
- 117 FÉVRIER 1962, 153 dates the last *stelae* from Eastern *Caesariensis* to the mid-3rd c. AD.



Fig. 14: *Thabraca*, 'caisson' with mosaic epitaph and individual representation of Dardanius, [ILTun 1710,24](#) (second quarter 5th c. AD).

A widespread burial-marker type in North Africa's open air-cemeteries was the *cupa* or *cupula*,¹¹⁸ and also this tomb type persisted well into Late Antiquity with a wide range of local differences (Fig. 11). Deeply connected to the shift from cremation to inhumation, the *cupae*'s most characteristic feature is their monolithic semi-cylindrical top. Also rectangular, slightly aboveground markers, in Franco-phone literature labelled as 'caissons', are known. Probably the 'caissons' are a small variant of the funerary *mensa* with reclining possibility for one person, as indicated by their restricted (mostly water-resistant) surface corresponding with the tomb below them. They seem to have emerged from the *cupa*-type during Late Antiquity, as a famous example from *Thabraca* shows (Fig. 14). In both *Mauretaniae*, *cupae* were widely abandoned after AD 300.¹¹⁹ In *Numidia*, the Hautes Steppes and the Tell, several cities and small rural towns continued to use monolithic *cupae* with traditional floral, astral and ritual-associated symbols in the 4th c. AD.¹²⁰ As in

118 On this type: STIRLING 2007; EGER 2012, 80f. Late Antique *cupae* are also known from Southern Italy, Sicily and Spain; on an epigraphically attested *cupula* from *Rusippisir* (299 AD): FÉVRIER 1964, 150.

119 *Pomaria* (5th/6th c. AD): GSELL 1901, 404; *Caesariensis*: FÉVRIER 1962, 153; *Sitifensis*: FÉVRIER 1964, 147, 150 (near *Sitifts*, AD 254 and 296); *Sitifts*: [CIL VIII 8646](#) (late 3rd c. AD?); *Thamallula*: [CIL VIII 20597](#) (300 AD); FÉVRIER 1964, 149 (AD 287); *Satafis*: FÉVRIER 1964, 147 (AD 259).

120 *Constantina*: STIRLING 2007, 121; for six surely Early Christian examples from *Mididi* (one with a chalice): BEN BAAZIZ 2000, 257–259. In *Ammaedara*'s environs, late 3rd–



Fig. 15: *Thaenae*, mosaic epitaphs for Iulius Serenus and Numitoria Saturnina on 'caissons' with funerary banquet scenes, *IL Afr.* 38,44, *IL Afr.* 38,54 (early 4th c. AD).

the case of the *stelae*, *cupae* may have persisted longer in remote zones. Over the course of the 4th–6th c. AD, *cupae* and 'caissons' became more diversified and complex. Along the coasts, on Cap Bon and in the Sahel, masoned, plastered or mosaiced *cupae* and 'caissons' were used in open cemeteries, *areae*, mausolea, hypogaea and churches, in *Hadrumetum* even in catacombs.¹²¹ From most of these sites Roman forerunners are known, and this might explain their local popularity (Fig. 11), although their overall numbers decreased in Late Antiquity.¹²² With their elongated

4th c. AD-*cupae* are as numerous as in the town itself (three each): BEN ABDALLAH 2013; *Mactaris*: PRÉVOT 1984, no. XII, 5.

- 121 *Tipasa* (plastered, mosaiced, relief crosses): BOUCHENAKI 1975, 112; ARDELEANU 2018, 485, 489, nos. 28, 29; *Bulla Regia* (E-church, mosaic): CHAOUALI/FENWICK/BOOMS 2018, 194; *Thabraca* (*areae*, churches, mosaic): DOWNS 2007, nos. 7, 50, 87, 123–125; *Sufetula* (basilica VI): DUVAL 1976, 28; Carthage (cemeteries, mosaic): EGER 2012, 75 (4th c. AD); STEVENS 2008, 102; *Missua* (necropolis): GHALIA 2001, 67; *Acholla* (*area*): DUVAL 2003; *Taparura* (N-necropolis, *areae*?): Terry 93–114; *Demna* (church): DUVAL 1976, 29 fig. 11; Hr. Diar el Hajjej (church?): DUVAL 1976, 91; DUVAL 1995, 199; *Furni* (9x mausoleum, over *arcosolia*/in center): DUVAL 1976, 88; Sidi Jdidi: BEN ABED-BEN KHADER/FIXOT/ROUCOLE 2011, 53, 84, 86, 120 figs. 27, 33, 74; *Hadrumetum*: Terry 138, 154; *Leptiminus* (E-necropolis, *areae*, 4th c. AD): BEN LAZREG et al. 2006, 487; *Thaenae* (church): Terry 180; cf. the contributions ARBEITER and MERTEN in this volume.
- 122 STIRLING 2007, 121 quotes a 6th c. AD-*cupa* from *Lambaesis* (AE 2001, 2102), but its dating is uncertain; according to DUVAL 1995, 199, *cupae* were maintained even into Medieval times.

shape they marked the length of the bodies inhumed below, and therefore also protected them from intersection. Yet, their variable application shows their modification according to the requirements of new funerary spaces and rituals. *Thaenae's* early 4th c. AD-caissons display the deceased in vivid mosaics lying on *clinia* with rich furnishing, toasting with cups and therefore 'participating' in a funerary banquet, in the old iconographic tradition of the '*Totenmahl*', perhaps an invitation to perform these rituals at these accessible tombs (Fig. 15).¹²³ The *cupae's* slow integration into commemorative rituals is also evidenced by Late Antique 'caissons' from churches and open cemeteries with inscriptions on their flat upper surface slightly above circulation level (*Tipasa, Thabraca, Carthage?, Demna*), where reclining (for single persons), drinking and dining was possible.

Combining Archaeology and Epigraphy: Epitaphs and Commemorative Rituals at Tombs

It is well known that funerary feasts were performed in Late Antique North Africa as they were elsewhere across the West.¹²⁴ *Symposia* and dining banquets (*cubicula*) are mentioned in inscriptions from clear Christian contexts.¹²⁵ There is not only evidence from Christian tombs for food offerings during the funeral,¹²⁶ but even more data for commemorative dining at the tombs. The most fascinating burial type with a clear ritual function is the funerary *mensa*.¹²⁷ *Mensae* consist of one or more coffins, built over by a 'table' of semicircular or rectangular shape. The structure's central field, mostly a depression, could contain mosaic or stone epitaphs. The depressions were used to position meals and liquids, and the participants in this dining arrangement used to lie down on the surrounding 'couches'. Some epitaphs refer to the very practice of meal and service deposition

123 *IL Afr.* 38(8), 38(44), 38(54), all in a pagan tradition (*DMS*, cupids, no Christian formulae, hunting scenes), and all found in small vaulted underground funerary chambers, partly attached to cisterns. Some of the nearby vaulted tombs also had paintings (peacocks, doves), and one had a marble entry lintel? mentioning a *sacra domus aeternalis* (*IL Afr.* 38(25); 42 × 12 cm), indicating perhaps a slow shift to Christian faith; in others, lamps with Early Christian symbols were found: FORTIER/MALAHAR 1910, 87, 91–98; DUVAL 1976, 14; JENSEN 2008, 108–111; cf. the contributions MERTEN, OTT and VALEVA in this volume.

124 DUVAL 1995, 199f.; JENSEN 2008; POTTHOFF 2017; for the Rhine/Danube provinces and the Iberian Peninsula: FÉVRIER 1978; SCHMIDT 2000; VOLP 2002, 214–224; cf. the contributions ARBEITER, MERTEN, PRIEN and VALEVA in this volume.

125 *CIL VIII* 27333 (from *Thugga*); from the same church, also a cistern (possibly used during and after the festivities) and annex rooms (for dining?) or *klinai* are epigraphically attested: BARATTE et al. 2014, 62–64; TEICHGRÄBER 2021, 87.

126 GSELL 1901, 402 and BERTHIER 1942, 51 note fish and bird skeletons in tombs in *Tipasa* and Oued Rheel.

127 There is still no synthesis of this type; some remarks: GSELL 1901, 405; DUVAL 1995, 198f.; JENSEN 2008.

on the tables: *cibi ponuntur calicesque et copertae*.¹²⁸ Other inscriptions, densely distributed everywhere from *Caesariensis* to the Tell (but absent in Eastern *Proconsularis*), use the term *mensa* as an equivalent of the ‘tomb’ itself from the late 3rd c. AD onwards.¹²⁹ Some *mensae* preserved sophisticated flooding installations, cisterns and basins, others are basins themselves, on which epitaphs could have been carved.¹³⁰ Sometimes the epitaphs’ supports are equipped with drains and spouts, allowing either to fill or to empty the *mensa* in a controlled way. Two large and (technically as well as iconographically) very homogenous series from central *Sitifensis* – we cite here an epitaph from Kherbet el-Kebira (Fig. 16) – and *Madauros* present carved dishes, cups, vessels and libation holes, inviting the user to pour liquids, or to dine upon such graves.¹³¹

This shows that the monuments were ritually ‘washed’ and intensively used for dining. It is commonly believed that the flooding systems are the material proof for the funerary ritual of *refrigerium*, the ‘refreshment’ of tombs, known from many Christian authors criticizing these habits.¹³² An epitaph from *Auzia* explicitly mentions a *mensa cum titulum refrigerationis*.¹³³ For our purposes, it is highly interesting that the support with the epitaph itself became the central nucleus of this ritual. A famous example from *Tipasa*, with a mosaic inscription mentioning a *convivium*, encourages the user to dine on the spot.¹³⁴ Besides larger groups from Rome, Malta, *Sardinia*, the *Hispaniae*, the Adriatic area and the *Germaniae*, North Africa has preserved the highest amount of such *mensae* with

128 ILCV 1570 (AD 299) from *Satafis*, where *paterae* are also carved into the *mensa* itself.

129 FÉVRIER 1964; PRÉVOT 1984, 208–210 with (incomplete) distribution.

130 *Caesarea*: LEVEAU 1983, 97, 101; 139, 143; LEVEAU 1999, 94; *Tipasa*: BOUCHENAKI 1975; ARDELEANU 2018, figs. 1, 3, 7; *Leptiminus*, a veritable *piscina*: CIL VIII 11122; *Thaenae*: FORTIER/MALAHAR 1910, 90.

131 Stone *mensae* with rosette-depressions in Beida Bordj, Ouled Sbaa, *Mopthi*, M. Bou Abdallah, Kherbet el-Kebira: AE 1972, 773 (see here Fig. 16), *Thamallula*: AE 1972, 728, 754, 770 (AD 315), 771 (semicircular, libation holes), 772; FÉVRIER 1964, 149 (AD 299), CIL VIII 20589 (AD 318, *patera*); *Sitifis* (rectangular lowered surfaces, circular depressions, offering holes): AE 1972, 716, 734 (AD 334), 763; AE 1984, 940; CIL VIII 8633; FÉVRIER 1964, 151 (AD 299), 153 (AD 311), 156 (AD 334); *Satafis*’ (lowered, profiled supports, half-cylindrical shapes): FÉVRIER 1964, 165, 167 (AD 405 and 409), AE 1972, 758 (AD 371), 761 (AD 359), 762. Many epitaphs from *Satafis* also mention a *mensa*: FÉVRIER 1964, 155 (AD 324), 157 (AD 352 and 359), 159 (AD 362), 161 (AD 389), 163 (AD 392), 164 (AD 420); CIL VIII 8399, 8771a, AE 1942–1943, 66 (AD 405); see also FÉVRIER 1970; for *Madauros* (rectangular tables with offering holes, relief *paterae*, *urcei* and cups): ILaG I, 2746, 2766, 2770, 2774a, 2781, 2791, 2800; DUVAL 1988, 271, 280f.; incised cups on epitaphs in Carthage/*Uchi Maius*: DELATTRE 1926, 72; IBBA 2006, no. 455. For libation holes at Late Antique tombs, even from churches, see the contribution OTT in this volume.

132 Tert., De corona 3.3; 10, 21; Aug. Conf. 6.2; 29, 9; Ep. 22.1.3; Serm. 48, 361; Enarratio in Psalmum 12, 15.

133 CIL VIII 20780 (AD 318).

134 ARDELEANU 2018, 475 no. 49 fig. 1.

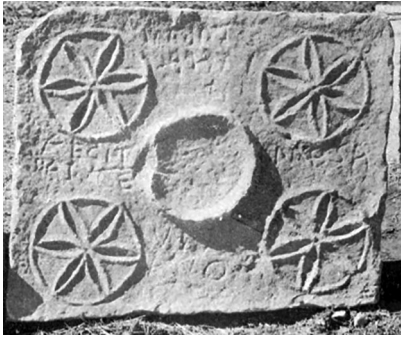


Fig. 16: Kherbet el-Kebira, *Mauretania Sitifensis*, *me(n)sa* of Iulia Saturnina, [AE 1972, 773](#) (4th/5th c. AD).



Fig. 17: *Mactaris*, *mensa* of Abbedeus, Maximus and Aurelia Victoriola with lowered surface and offering hole, [CIL VIII 23565](#) (5th/6th c. AD?).

‘ritualized inscriptions’.¹³⁵ Several clusters, all with local technical and decorative particularities, are attested in urban contexts from central *Caesariensis* to the Sahel, but also in rural zones such as central *Numidia* and Cap Bon.¹³⁶ We also have to consider decontextualized examples, such as a vast homogenous group from *Mactaris* (Fig. 17).¹³⁷ Their attribution to the *mensa*-type has long been disputed,

135 JENSEN 2008; for the Iberian Peninsula, the North-Western and Balkan provinces, see SCHMIDT 2000, for *Sardinia*, see ICS; compare also the contributions ARBEITER, OTT, PRIEN, UBERTI and VALEVA in this volume.

136 *Tipasa* (plastered semicircular *mensae*, with semicircular mosaic and rectangular stone tables): BOUCHENAKI 1975; ARDELEANU 2018, 489, 493, figs. 7, 8; Bou Kaben, Bir el Djedid (stone *mensae*, with offering holes): BERTHIER 1942, 123–129; *Theveste* (semicircular 5th c. AD-*mensae* entirely covered by mosaics without depression; semicircular/rectangular 4th–6th c. AD-stone *mensae* with libation holes, water spouts, epitaphs often in/around relief christograms): [AE 1958, 148b](#); [AE 1974, 707, 711, 713](#); [AE 1995, 1747, 1749, 1752, 1753?](#); DUVAL 1988, 273 fig. 6; KADRA 1989a, 271–274 Tab. 9, 10; HAMIDANE/HAMDOUNE 2014; *Ammaedara*: BARATTE/BEJAOUI 2011, 154, 152, 176, 182–204 (stone and mosaic *mensae*? with tile frames); *Hippo Regius* (stone *mensae* with libation holes): ARDELEANU 2019, 421, nos. 7, 9, 18); *Bulla Regia* (semicircular plastered, mosaiced *mensae* with entirely decorated couches): CHAOUALI/FENWICK/BOOMS 2018, 194 fig. 11; *fundus Aufidianus/Cincari* (stone *mensae* with semicircular/rectangular depressions): DUVAL 1988, 273 fig. 5; [CIL VIII 25826a](#); Menzel Yahia (stone *mensae* with frames, libation holes?): [ILTun 847a, 847b](#); Mraissa and *Demna* (semicircular mosaic, plastered *mensae*, late 4th/5th c. AD): GHALIA 2001, 66 f. fig. 4.

137 Ca. 60 examples: PRÉVOT 1984, 161–163, nos. II 5, III 13, X 17, 26, 33, 29, 48, 55, 68, XI 4, 10, XI 12, 14, 30, XII 1, 8, 12, 20, 26–28, 40, 46, 48, 49, 53, 59. None of these were found in churches, suggesting their exclusive use in necropoleis *sub divo*; cf. *Ammaedara*: BARATTE/BEJAOUI 2011, 181 fig. 205 (spout); Hr. Allalcha: AOUNALLAH et al. 2019, 68 (offering hole).



Fig. 18: *Theveste*, necropolis at École du Dr. Saadane with two large, semicircular *mensae* for collective dining over several tombs; libation holes and relief crosses on covers are marked with flashes (late 4th/5th c. AD).

since their funerary context is unknown. However, libation and offering holes, spouts, lowered and profiled supports clearly attest their ritual use.

As in the case of *cupae*, the popularity of *mensae* might be explained by earlier local traditions, since forerunners from the Imperial period are known in many of the quoted towns (Fig. 11).¹³⁸ In Late Antiquity, the epitaphs ‘move’ from associated *stelae* to the horizontally placed table itself.¹³⁹ There are huge *mensae* built over several tombs and certainly used by larger groups for dining (Fig. 18).¹⁴⁰ Others cluster densely in open cemeteries, suggesting collective feasting that included children, if we interpret very small-scaled *mensae* correctly. In some necropoleis, lots of Late Antique wine-amphorae, lamps, glass and ceramic drinking vessels were found around the *mensae*, and their analysis would help to better understand this ritual.¹⁴¹ In *Leptiminus*, an impressive amount of 4th–7th c. AD glass excavated over and around Early Christian underground tombs gives spectacular insights in these

138 In *Caesarea*, LEVEAU 1983, 112, 124–126, 130 excavated plastered *mensae* of the 2nd half of the 2nd c. AD; DE LARMINAT 2011, cat. 7 with list of Imperial period funerary *mensae*.

139 On the start of this trend see: FÉVRIER 1978, 225.

140 E.g. in *Tipasa* (ARDELEANU 2018, 493f., fig. 7 Northeastern part) and *Theveste* (KADRA 1989a, pl. X).

141 *Tipasa*: ARDELEANU 2018, 493; *Bulla Regia*: CHAOUALI/FENWICK/BOOMS 2018, 195 (beakers, goblets, lamps); material from burial churches/cemeteries in *Numidia*: BERTHIER 1942,

rituals, which, in comparison to the High Empire, even drastically increased.¹⁴² The thorough analysis of forms (beakers, cups, goblets, flasks) allows us to reconstruct these extensive, collective and post-mortem rituals – drinking, serving wine, libations – performed in the dark ‘catacomb’ system (glass lamps). The combined presence of identical forms of beakers, goblets and flasks in high numbers suggests that vessels were produced and purchased for one main purpose: funerary feasting. It seems that they were even stored at designated places for collective commemoration. Depositional ‘fills’ with extensive faunal evidence from the same hypogaea further confirms that rituals including butchering, offering and commemorative meals might have been practiced in these underground funerary spaces.¹⁴³ There cannot be any doubt about extensive feasting continuing until the 6th c. AD, even if African clerics harshly polemicized against such ‘pagan’ customs. The existence of 5th c.-*mensae* in church naves next to episcopal tombs, in crypts, apses and *atria*, shows that the clerical attempt to domesticate (and the modern attempt to play down) these feasts was unsuccessful.¹⁴⁴ At *Belalis Maior*, even 7th c.-epitaphs with libation holes are attested.¹⁴⁵ Several clerical epitaphs from elsewhere mention *mensae* as the type of tomb employed.¹⁴⁶

Concluding Remarks

This chapter has discussed the main characteristics of North Africa’s rich dataset of Late Antique burials and epitaphs. As I hope to have shown, both the epigraphical and the archaeological record present diverse micro-regional traits. Although these traits can be traced in many aspects of North Africa’s funerary landscapes,

74, 82–84, 92f., 101f., 115f.; *Thamugadi*, Carthage: EGER 2012, 89f.; *Puppūt*: BEN ABED-BEN KHADER/GRIESHEIMER 2004, 56; *Thaenae*: JEDDI 1995, 151.

142 STERRETT-KRAUSE 2017; for comparable commemorative rituals associated to glass finds from the Roman catacombs: VOLP 2002, 199; SPERA 2005, 22–26.

143 MACKINNON 2021 gives a recent overview on the complexity of recognizing rituals in burial contexts; for concrete evidence (sheep, goat, chicken) from the Late Antique context, see esp. MACKINNON 2021, 598–600.

144 *Tipasa*: ARDELEANU 2018, 488 no. 63; Sidi Jdidi III: BEN ABED-BEN KHADER/FIXOT/ROUCOLE 2011, 175f. figs. 104, 105; *Iunca*, *mensa* over bishop tomb: Terry 73; *Demna* (4th c. AD, *atrium*): GHALIA 2001, 67; Hr. Seffan, *mensa* in crypt under church; Bou Kaben, *mensa* in apse of basilica I, inscribed *mensae* in basilica II and church in Bir el Djedid: BERTHIER 1942, 84, 123–129; *ILAlg II,3, 7492a, 7492c*; *CIL VIII 8291, 8292*; even most recent publications tend to transform these funerary meals into caritative actions controlled by the church: VOLP 2002, 234–239; SPERA 2005, 9–11; FIOCCHI NICOLAI 2016, 636–638; more nuanced: TEICHGRÄBER 2021, 74.

145 MAHJOUBI 1978, 345–348; DUVAL 1988, 294; for 5th c. AD-libation tombs in *Thaenae*: JEDDI 1995, 151.

146 Guellal: *AE 1925, 42*: *Me(n)sa Migini subdiaconi*; *Magifa*: *CIL VIII 16755*: *Mensa presbiteri*; *Tipasa*: ARDELEANU 2018, 481 no. 76.

this vast area also shared multiple similarities in funerary customs with other parts of the Late Antique *oecumene*, especially the Western and central Mediterranean. That North Africa belongs to this *koiné* is best shown by the typological panorama of tombs. The closest parallels of African *mensae*, *cupae*, mosaic epitaphs, privileged burials, catacombs and even sarcophagi are found in areas (Sicily, *Sardinia*, Italy, Iberian Peninsula) that, politically, economically and culturally speaking, were well-connected to Africa for centuries.¹⁴⁷ Many shifts in epigraphic representation at the tombs were influenced by general social shifts. They also corresponded to changing funerary customs, the choice of tomb types and new funerary topographies. ‘Interiorized’ and ‘closed’ funerary spaces (mausolea, hypogea, catacombs, crypts, *areae*, burial churches), and even ‘hidden’ epigraphic representation (sarcophagi), gained relevance during the 4th/5th c. AD.¹⁴⁸ At the same time, expression of professions and offices (except for clerics and, later on, the military) or individual traits was widely abandoned or practiced only in isolated local cases in writing and image. Interestingly, also the 4th c. AD-decline of ostentatious ‘exterior’ tomb signaling by funerary *stelae* (except in *Caesariensis*),¹⁴⁹ *arulae* and *cupae* went along with a new preference for burials in ‘walkable’ churches and *areae*, or under ‘utilizable’ *mensae*. As a consequence, epigraphic tomb signaling moved from frontal/vertical to horizontal placement, which had new implications for the perception of tombs and epitaphs, and their integration in liturgies and rituals. Around the mid-5th c. AD, inhumation in free standing sarcophagi seems to have given way to burials, in churches or closed *areae*, below flat stone epitaphs or funerary mosaics, whose numbers increase drastically, exactly from the late 4th c. AD onwards.¹⁵⁰ Within these new funerary spaces, epitaphs took on new functions such as signaling particularly prestigious, sacred or (gender-)separated areas, structuring liturgical and processional movement or directing collective commemorative practices. Paradisiac and ritual-associated iconography on the epitaphs – in mosaics, for instance, with their new possibilities of communication through colors and materials – attracted attention. They contributed to the creation of powerful sacred spaces, in which the dead were commemorated during the *dies natales*, the community’s regular festivities (including processions, psalm singing) in honor of the dead.¹⁵¹ These new urban *foci* had a distinct *funerary* character, especially the churches of

147 Similarities in ‘Western’ mosaic epitaphs and sarcophagi: DUVAL 1976; TEATINI 2010; Quattrocchi.

148 For a similar phenomenon in other Late Antique ‘closed’ contexts (houses, baths): WITSCHERL 2017, 49f.

149 Even if the state of archaeological research in this zone is admittedly backward, the success of the *stela* in Western *Caesariensis* is perhaps a reaction to the lack of burial churches and intra-urban burials in this region. Not by chance mosaic epitaphs, distributed so densely in the Eastern Maghreb, are nearly absent here.

150 TEATINI 2010, 1318; on rare 6th c. AD-specimens: FOURNET-PILIPENKO 1961; Rep. III.

151 Acta Cyp. 4.3; Pass. Max. et Is. 12; cf. BOCKMANN 2014, 348.

local Saints, where mass burial was performed and salvation hoped for. Careful (re-)placement of epitaphs in city plans, cemeteries and churches allows us to pinpoint shifting social hierarchies in changing urban contexts and helps to understand the new mechanisms of collective, individual and familial representation.

Christianization alone was not the key phenomenon evoking all these developments, since many changes in tomb types, mortuary habits, funerary imagery and epigraphy cannot be evaluated adequately without local, non-Christian forerunners. In many towns the local clergy undertook efforts to control both martyr veneration and collective commemoration. Nevertheless, sequential tomb re-occupation, superposition and even destruction, as well as uncontrolled mass-burial were the rule. The funerary *mensae* are a wide-spread example of 'ritualized inscriptions' attesting that writing was an integral part of commemorative rites. Dining, drinking and libations at tombs are attested by installations (*mensae*, libation holes, spouts, carved vessels), finds (glass, ceramics), epigraphy (*refrigerium* and *mensa*-epitaphs), imagery (*Totenmahl*-scenes, depicted vessels) and contemporary metatexts.¹⁵² Increasing intra-urban burial, also in close proximity to or even inside living quarters, shows a need to visit tombs regularly and in an easy fashion. In these 'neighborhood cemeteries', epitaphs are recorded only rarely, which suggests that tombs were known by relatives and did not require particular signaling.

There is still a lot to do in North Africa, especially in terms of catching up with modern standards of burial excavation, but thorough documentation of epitaphs (and their supports) and grave goods in many storerooms across the Maghreb is also necessary. If we are able to develop modern documentation standards at funerary sites, North Africa seems a very promising field to gain crucial knowledge about the use of writing, during Late Antiquity, and the way societies dealt with a topic as fundamentally human as death and burial.

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152 For Augustine's reception of commemorative burial customs, see KOTILA 1992.

Tab. 1: Overview of the studied sites and their Late Antique funerary landscapes; funerary churches with attested martyr presence are signalled with *M*.

Site	Late Antique tomb type	continued/new extra-urban necropoleis	extra-urban coemeterial churches	new intra-urban burial fields	burials in intra-urban churches	(epigraphic) tomb signaling
Altava (MC)	<i>formae</i> , tile-roofed tombs, cist tombs	2 continued (NE; SW)	perhaps (martyr shrine in NE necropolis)	no	no	stelae
Caesarea (MC)	<i>formae</i> , sarcophagi, relief sarcophagi, pseudo-sarcophagi, tiled-roofed tombs, cist tombs mausolea, <i>areae</i> , hypogaea or catacombs?, amphorae	3 continued (E: Nsara, W: Hanafi; W: gare routière)	perhaps E (Ras-el-Mesk-houta) perhaps E (chappelle at Oued Nsara?)	no	no	<i>mensae?</i> , <i>cupae?</i> , lintels for mausolea, <i>areae</i> small <i>tituli</i> for <i>loculi</i> ? sarcophagi, flat stone covers
Tipasa (MC)	<i>formae</i> , sarcophagi, relief sarcophagi, mausolea, cist tombs, hypogaea, catacombs?, amphorae, wooden coffins, plastered tombs, relief sarcophagi	3 continued (E, W, Matarès)	E (St. Salsa, M), E (Peter&Paul, M), W (Alexander, M)	no	no	<i>cupae</i> , <i>mensae</i> , sarcophagi, mosaic epitaphs, flat stone covers, painted epitaphs
Rusguniae (MC)	cist tombs?	?	not recorded	?	N-church (6th/7th c.)	mosaic epitaphs, flat stone covers?, <i>mensae</i>
Icosium (MC)	<i>formae</i> , cist tombs, tiled-roofed tombs	1 continued, NW: Bab el Oued)	not recorded	byz. burials in church at pl. des Martyrs)	byz. burials in church at pl. des Martyrs)	no Late Antique epitaphs
Castellum Tingitanum (MC)	<i>formae</i> , sarcophagi, hypogaea	1/2 continued? (hôpital mili-taire; hypogaea zone)	probable (hôpital militaire)	no	no	mosaic epitaphs

Tab. 1 (Continued)

Site	Late Antique tomb type	continued/new extra-urban necropoleis	extra-urban coemeterial churches	new intra-urban burial fields	burials in intra-urban churches	(epigraphic) tomb signaling
Sitifis (MS)	<i>formae</i> , cist tombs (stone&tiles), tile-roofed tombs, mausolea?	2 continued? (E; N: ?)	not recorded	NNW-quarter (around basilicae A+B) NW: vast intra-urban cemetery in insula	NNW-quarter (basilicae A+B)	<i>cupae</i> , mosaic epitaphs, stone covers, <i>mensae</i> , plates for mau-solea, stone mounds, anepi-graphic stelae, tiles with cross
Cuicul (N)	sarcophagi, cist tombs (stone&tiles), <i>formae</i> , crypts	1 continued (SE)	SE (burial church in necropolis)	2 (S around Cresconius-basilica; W (around burial church; byz?)	S (Cresconius-basilica) W (burial church)	mosaic epitaphs, flat stone covers, mausoleum tituli?
Thamugadi (N)	tile-roofed tombs, sarcophagi, <i>formae</i> , cist tombs (stone&tile), hypogaea or vaulted crypts	3 continued (N, W, E) 1 new? (S, huge necropolis)	SE (burial church in necropolis) NW (basilica I, M), NE (basilica IV) S (basilica XI)	no	,basilica VII' in 'Donatist quarter'; SW: basilica IX, M)	mosaic epitaphs, flat stone covers, sarcophagi
Thabraca (P)	relief sarcophagi, sarcophagi, funerary chapels, <i>areae</i> , cist tombs (stone&tiles), hypogaea?, lead coffins	1 or 2 continued (E? with <i>areae</i> ?; NW)	1 or 2 (NW: 'martyr's chapel' and 'NW-chapel')	1-4 (in and around 'urban basilica' (with <i>areae</i>), several intra-urban plots	,Urban basilica'	mosaic epitaphs, flat stone covers, sarcophagi, <i>cupae</i>
Hippo Regius (P)	<i>formae</i> , cist tombs (stone-tile), tile-roofed tombs?, amphorae, sarcophagi, relief sarcophagi, lead coffins, plastered tombs	1 or 2 continued (SW: Borgeaud; SE: near theatre)	SW (Borgeaud-basilica, 6th-7th c., M?)	4th-7th? c.: Chevillot-basilica; 5th-7th? c.: several insulae, plazas, baths	Chevillot-basilica (4th-7th c.?)	mosaic epitaphs, flat stone covers, stone <i>mensae</i> ?, sarcophagi
Bulla Regia (P)	<i>formae</i> , sarcophagi, cist tombs (stone&tile), mausolea, lead coffins, tile-roofed tombs?	1 continued (W)	SW (basilica III); W (basilica IV)	3 (insula de la chasse, sanctuary of Apollo; both Byzantine?; one N of nymphaeum 5th c.?)	basilica I possible church N of nymphaeum	<i>cupae</i> , caissons, <i>mensae</i> , mosaic epitaphs, flat stone covers

Tab. 1 (Continued)

Site	Late Antique tomb type	continued/new extra-urban necropoleis	extra-urban coemeterial churches	new intra-urban burial fields	burials in intra-urban churches	(epigraphic) tomb signaling
Thugga (P)	<i>formae</i> , sarcophagi, cist tombs, crypts, hypogaea, relief sarcophagi	1 or 2 continued (NE and W?)	NE (St. Victoria)	perhaps 1 or 2 (theatre Trifolium-house (5th–7th c. burials)	no	sarcophagi, mosaic epitaphs, flat stone covers
Sidi Jdidi (P)	<i>formae</i> , cist tombs, sarcophagi, amphorae	not recorded	not recorded	not recorded	basilicae I (5th–6th c., M), II (M), III (both late 4th–6th c.)	mosaic epitaphs, caissons, flat stone covers, <i>mensae</i>
Puppit (P)	masonry tombs, reoccupied mausolea, amphorae, <i>formae</i>	1 or 2 continued (NE: 'Christian' cem. near Oued Temad; NW: Roman cem.)	burial church 'hotel Paradise'; intra-urban?	not recorded	burial church 'hotel Paradise'; extra-urban?	mosaic epitaphs
Karthago (P)	pit tombs, <i>formae</i> , sarcophagi, reused/new built mausolea, funerary chapels, cist tombs (stone&tiles), tiled-roofed tombs, hypogaea, catacombs, amphorae, masonry tombs, vaulted tombs, relief sarcophagi, lead/wooden coffins, plastered tombs	7 continued: N: S. Bou Said, a-round St. Monique, D. Karita, M'cidfa, S: Le Kram; Bir Kniss-ia; W: B-Zitoun 2 abandoned & reoccupied: W: Bir Jebbana (4th-late 6th c.), Yasmina (5th–7th c.) 3–4 new: NE: Theod. wall (430-mid-6th c.), Falbe 44 (late 4th–5th c.) Koudiat Zateur, Dar Bou Kris, Saniet Khodja	NE (St. Monique, M?; late 4th-late 6th c., Damous el Karita, late 4th–6th c., M?); NW (M'cidfa, late 4th-late 6th c., M), W (La Malga, Bir Ftouha, early 6th–7th c., M?); S (Bir el-Knissia, later M)	several insulae (5th–7th c.), circus (late 6th–7th c.), Sayda-cemetery (6th–7th c.), theatre, odeum, harbor (5th–7th c.)	basilicae II ('Bigua'); IV (= Dermech I, 1 tomb); VII (= Dermech III; 1 byz. tomb); XVIII (=rotunda); Sayda-church?	caissons, <i>mensae</i> , mosaic epitaphs, flat stone covers, slabs for mausolea, small <i>tituli</i> for <i>loculi</i> ? sarcophagi

Tab. 1 (Continued)

Site	Late Antique tomb type	continued/new extra-urban necropoleis	extra-urban coemeterial churches	new intra-urban burial fields	burials in intra-urban churches	(epigraphic) tomb signaling
Ammaedara (P)	<i>formae</i> , cist tombs, <i>areae</i> , tile-roofed tombs	5 or 6 continued? (N; E, SE, S; NW; W)	N (basilica IV, M), E (basilica II, M) SE (basilica VI)	around basilica I (4th–6th); around basilica III+VII, M (byz.) around VIII, M, with new houses & workshops	basilica I (4th–6th, M), basilica III (byz.)	mosaic epitaphs, flat stone covers, <i>cupae</i> , <i>loculus</i> -epitaphs on columns, <i>mensae</i>
Theveste (P)	<i>formae</i> , cist tombs (stone&tiles), tile-roofed tombs, sarcophagi, relief sarcophagi, 'catacombs', chapels?, <i>areae</i> , wooden/lead coffins	4 continued: NE: Carthage-road, N: Hr. Rohbane, SW: byz.; NW: Saadane, Cam-bon, 4th–6th c.) 2 new (N: Draa Rahou, 5th–6th c., E: Si Ferradj)	NE (in and around St. Crispina, M, mid-4th–7th c.)	near amphitheater, near tetrapylon, in/around 'Minerva' temple (byz.) baths (byz.)	perhaps in/around 'Minerva' temple (byz.?)	<i>arulae</i> , <i>mensae</i> , <i>cupae</i> , caissons, sarcophagi, mosaic epitaphs, flat stone covers, tituli for loculi and arcosolia
Sufetula (B)	<i>formae</i> , cist tombs (stone & 'carreaux de terre cuite', sarcophagi, relief sarcophagi)	2 or 3 continued (N and S; W: around basilica VI (6th c.)	SW: basilica VI (6th c.; M) SE: basilica VII (6th c.); S: 'basilica' IX (byz.)	around basilicae I, II, IV (4th c.-?), V, VIII, NW sector: (4th c.-?)	basilicae I (5th–6th c.), II (5th–6th c., M), III (6th–7th c.), IV (6th c., M), V (4th–7th c., M); VIII (6th–7th c. M)	mosaic epitaphs, flat stone covers, 'carreaux de terre cuite'
Mactaris (B)	<i>formae</i> , cist tombs (stone&tile), sarcophagi, wooden coffins	1, 2 continued (N: necropolis A= Ain-el-Bab; S: necropolis B; NE: necropolis C)	N: 'Rutilius-basilica' I	S: around schola-basilica II; E: around basilica III?, NE: around basilica? V; in/ around great baths	'Hildegans-basilica' III; S: schola-basilica II basilica IV 'thermes nord-Ouest', basilica? V	mosaic epitaphs, flat stone covers, inscribed stone <i>mensae</i> , <i>cupae</i>
Hadrumentum (B)	catacombs, <i>formae</i> , hypogaea, amphorae, <i>areae</i> , relief sarcophagi	3 continued (N, W: lycée technique, W & S: catacombs 2nd–5th c.)	W: burial church, urban position not sure; S: burial basilica IV	SW (maison des masques), W (maison de Vergile et des muses)	basilica I near casbah?; II near arsenal	<i>loculi tituli</i> (mo-saic&stone), flat stone covers, painted & mosaic epitaphs

Tab. 1 (Continued)

Site	Late Antique tomb type	continued/new extra-urban necropoleis	extra-urban coemeterial churches	new intra-urban burial fields	burials in intra-urban churches	(epigraphic) tomb signaling
Leptiminus (B)	<i>formae</i> , cist tombs (stone&tile&plastered), tile-roofed tombs, amphorae, jugs, relief sarcophagi, vaulted 'cat-acombs' with <i>cubicula</i> , wooden coffins, reused hypogaea & <i>areae</i>	several burial spots continued at Dharet Slama (SE: Sites 250, 10, 200, 304=catacomb complex, 4th–6th c.)	no	2 (NW: Christian <i>area</i> or cemetery at Dar el Kaid; church with cemetery near bath)	1 or 2? (basilica II at Dar el Kaid; cemeterial basilica I near bath?)	mosaic epitaphs, sarcophagi, <i>cupae</i> , painted epitaphs? (hypogaeum 1)
Taparura (B)	<i>formae</i> , cist tombs (stone & tile), <i>areae</i> , amphorae, tile-roofed tombs, amphorae	1–2 continued (N: 'Buttes Meghzani; NE: St. Henri)	1 or 2 (N: 'Buttes Meghzani)	not recorded	not recorded	mosaic epitaphs, <i>cupae</i> , flat stone covers
Thaenae (B)	<i>formae</i> , cist tombs (tiles & stone), amphorae, vaulted (painted) funerary chambers, reoccurred mausolea	3 or 4 continued (NW: 2nd–5th c. tombs 900m NW of wall; 200m NW of wall spots T6–8; N: spot T5; NE: spot T9 at Taparura gate	not recorded	NE: spot T10 just inside the wall	1 (50m S of lighthouse, early 5th–6th c.)	mosaic epitaphs, caissons, flat marble covers, lintels for funerary chambers

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Traditionelle Elemente in der christlichen Grabkultur Ägyptens

Spätantike Grabkultur in Ägypten: Bestattungssitten, Grabmarkierung und Grabtypen

Gibt es koptische Mumien? Diese Frage würde man wohl als erste stellen, wenn von traditionellen Elementen in der spätantiken Grabkultur Ägyptens die Rede ist. Während noch in den 90er Jahren des 20. Jahrhunderts Ulrike Horak,¹ die sich systematisch mit diesem Thema beschäftigt hat, den Begriff ‚Mumien‘ mit Anführungszeichen versah, sind seither zahlreiche und differenzierte Beiträge² entstanden, die die Behandlung der Toten, auch der Christen,³ in der Spätantike untersucht haben. Ein kurzer Blick auf den derzeitigen Kenntnisstand soll gleichsam als Hintergrundfolie vorausgeschickt werden.

Die Bestattung von Toten im kaiserzeitlichen Ägypten zeichnet sich aus durch Mumienporträts, Stuckmasken, bemalte Leichentücher und eine kunstvolle Umwicklung der mumifizierten Leichen, wobei diese kostspielige Form nur auf schätzungsweise ein Prozent der Bevölkerung zutreffen dürfte. Ende des 3., Anfang des 4. Jhs. n. Chr. setzt sich allmählich eine einfache Konservierung mittels Salzes, Wacholders, Weihrauchs etc. durch, auch die Ausstattung mit Bildern läuft aus; diese einfache Behandlung bleibt bis in die arabische Zeit hinein üblich (Naturmumien). Man hüllte die Toten dann in Kleider und andere, oft zweitverwendete Textilien, und verschnürte sie zu kompakten Bündeln, bettete sie auf Kissen und bedeckte sie mit Tüchern, band sie schließlich auf Totenbrettern fest. In der Tradition der römischen Mumien gibt es neben der Bestattung in der Kleidung auch die körperbetonte Umwicklung der Leichen mit verschiedenartigen Bändern – je nach Region, Zeitstellung und sozialem Status –, gegebenenfalls sind Kopf- und Fußteil eigens hervorgehoben. Die so hergerichteten Leichen gelangten – häufig in Gruppen – in die Erde/Sand (*fossae*), selten in einen Holzsarg, und wurden mit Steinplatten, Ziegeln u. ä. abgedeckt und so geschützt. Zum Gedächtnis der Toten konnten Grabsteine (Stelen) aufgestellt werden, allerdings ist dieser direkte Zusammenhang zwischen Grab und Erinnerungsmal so gut wie nirgends erhalten (geblieben). Neben diesen einfachen Grabanlagen sind auch

1 HORAK 1995.

2 Gute Übersichten bieten: LEMBKE/FLUCK/VITTMANN 2004, 120 f.; GESSLER-LÖHR 2007, 255–257; GESSLER-LÖHR 2010, 310f.; GESSLER-LÖHR 2012, 644–683; vgl. auch SEVERIN 1998.

3 Kirchliche Stellungnahmen: BAUMEISTER 1974–1975; KRAUSE 1983; GASTGEBER 2003.

in Ägypten aufwendigere Bestattungen in Hypogäen, Mausoleen, ferner in Grabkapellen bekannt.⁴

Auch wenn die Frage nach der ägyptischen Mumifizierung und ihrer Fortsetzung in der Spätantike derzeit im Vordergrund des Interesses steht, soll es in diesem Beitrag um einen anderen Aspekt der Grabkultur gehen, nämlich speziell um Grabstelen dieser Epoche, verbunden mit einem lokalen Schwerpunkt auf dem Fayyum. Die Beschränkung auf diese Region erfolgt zum einen aus Platz- und Zeitgründen, zum anderen aber deshalb, weil die Vielfalt aller diesbezüglichen Objekte aus dem spätantiken Ägypten den Bearbeiter vor erhebliche Probleme stellt. Fehlende oder unsichere Angaben zu den Stücken selbst und praktisch durchgängig keine Hinweise zum Fundkontext. Für die Region des Fayyum sind diese grundsätzlich schlechten Voraussetzungen dadurch etwas abgemildert, dass einige Grabstelen mit einigermaßen gesicherter Herkunftsangabe eine gewisse Einheitlichkeit zeigen, die wenigstens ansatzweise eine Typologie erlaubt; Hinweise auf Bemalung, Beschädigung oder Ergänzungen fehlen fast immer, so dass man weitgehend auf mehr oder weniger gute Abbildungen angewiesen ist. Eine weitere Einschränkung hinsichtlich traditioneller Elemente besteht in diesem Beitrag darin, dass die Frage auf diese auf Beispiele in der Ikonographie bezogen und dadurch konzentriert wird – und auch dies ist nur in einer Auswahl möglich. Besonders aussagekräftig erscheinen dafür die folgenden Exempla: das Anchzeichen, die altägyptische Hieroglyphe für Leben, der Orantengestus mit seinen stilistischen Eigentümlichkeiten sowie die Figurengruppe von Mutter und Kind, da sie für die Herleitung der christlichen stillenden Gottesmutter eine große Rolle gespielt hat. Die dargelegten Einschränkungen bedingen, dass nur ein kleiner Ausschnitt der Grabkultur erfasst werden kann. Grabstelen sind lediglich eine Komponente neben und mit anderen – von der einfachen Markierung bis hin zum aufwendigen Mausoleum.

Die Bestattung der Toten – sei es in Kleidern oder in einer kompletten Wicklung – erfolgte unabhängig von der Religion, und auch die Friedhöfe sind diesbezüglich unspezifisch bzw. religiös neutral, lediglich die Friedhöfe der Klöster (Mönchsfriedhöfe) sind per se christlich. Auch die Sitte, die Toten mit Beigaben zu versehen (z. B. Alltagsgegenstände), wird aus der Tradition übernommen, unterschiedlich sind nur die Objekte: statt Götterfiguren finden sich kleine Kreuze oder andere Zeichen und Symbole, auch Inschriften. Allerdings scheint bei christlichen Bestattungen allgemein die Ost-West-Orientierung zu überwiegen. Der eingangszitierte Aufsatz von U. Horak war in doppelter Hinsicht wegweisend: er stellte den Begriff Mumien für die koptische Zeit indirekt, gleichsam intuitiv infrage – wenn man ihn an den Mumien pharaonischer Zeit misst, deren Hauptmerkmal die Entnahme der Organe ist; für die Spätantike (koptische Zeit) hat sich ja inzwischen

4 GROSSMANN 2002, 315–347; GASTGEBER 2003; HUBER 2018.



Abb. 1: Karte Ägyptens mit der von Diokletian eingeführten Provinzeinteilung und Markierung der im vorliegenden Beitrag genannten Fund- und Standorte.

die Bezeichnung ‚Naturmumie‘ als zutreffender erwiesen.⁵ Das entscheidende Verdienst ihrer Arbeit aber war, dass sie alle damals zugänglichen Nachrichten über diese späte Zeit gesammelt und geordnet hat und damit einzelne frühere Studien (Alfred L. Schmitz, Warren R. Dawson, Grafton E. Smith, Herbert E. Winlock, Walter E. Crum, auch Martin Krause) weit überholt hat. Sie hat vor allem die alten Grabungsberichte durchforstet (Albert J. Gayet, Theodor Graf, Robert Forrer, Franz und Wladimir Bock, Carl M. Kaufmann), zum Teil auch wörtlich zitiert und dadurch viele konkrete Details des Zustandes der Toten leicht zugänglich gemacht. Die bedeutendsten Hinweise verdanken wir für *Antinoë*⁶ A. Gayet, für Achmim/*Panopolis* R. Forrer, auch W. Bock; darunter finden sich berühmte Einzelfunde (‚Mumien‘ der *Euphemiaan*, der *Thais* und des *Serapion*, der *Leukyone* und *Mysithis*). Frau Horak listet auch die erhaltenen ‚Mumien‘ sowie Abbildungen von solchen auf, z. B. die Wiedergabe des toten Bischofs von *Alexandria*, Timotheus (gest. 395 n. Chr.), als gewickelte Leiche in der Alexandrinischen Weltchronik. Die Aufstellung der Fundorte ist umfangreich (Abb. 1), dazu gehören auch Bawit, Theben, Deir-el Bahari,

5 Naturmumien entstehen im Unterschied zu den ägyptischen Mumien ohne künstliche Eingriffe, vor allem durch den Prozess der Austrocknung. Beispiele siehe bei CASTEL 1979 und PROMIŃSKA 1979.

6 Zu *Antinoë* speziell: DEL FRANCA BAROCAS 1998; LINTZ/COUDERT 2013.

Sakkara, Hawara, Abu Fana und andere mehr. Einige Nekropolen christlicher Zeit haben durch neuere Forschungen besondere Bedeutung erlangt und sollen noch abschließend erwähnt werden: Bereits 1984 stellte C. Wilfred Griggs⁷ die Nekropole von Seila (Fag al-Gamus im Fayyum) vor. In der Oase Kharga liegt die offenbar rein christliche Anlage von El-Bagawat mit fast 300 oberirdischen Grabbauten, zu denen unterirdische Begräbnisse mit ‚Mumien‘ gehören.⁸ In Theben-West (Deir el-Bahit) werden seit Jahren Mönchsfriedhöfe ausgegraben und publiziert.⁹ Und in Karara und Sharuna wurden die Grabungen Hermann Rankes (1913/14) seit 2008 durch Béatrice Huber¹⁰ wieder aufgenommen und fortlaufend veröffentlicht mit sehr differenzierten Ergebnissen für die Bestattungsweise, u. a. für die Details der unterschiedlichen Wicklungen. Auch der weltweit einzige bemalte Holzсарg aus Karara (der Pfauensarg), schon 1913 entdeckt, und heute in Heidelberg, konnte neu bearbeitet und eingeordnet werden.¹¹

Spätantike Grabstelen aus dem Fayyum

Wie für die meisten Grabstelen in Ägypten sind auch für jene aus dem Fayyum die genauen Fundorte und Fundumstände nicht bekannt. Das ist für den ursprünglichen Kontext und im Besonderen für den architektonischen Verbund ein unersetzlicher Verlust. Deshalb können nur die Spuren von Abarbeitungen an den Stelen selbst gelegentliche Hinweise liefern, z. B. auf die mögliche Aufstellung in einer Nische. Bianca Tudor¹² hat sich der Mühe unterzogen, die vorliegenden Grabungsberichte daraufhin zu untersuchen, ob sie verwendbare Nachrichten enthalten; was sie für das Gebiet des Fayyum ermitteln konnte, fasse ich kurz zusammen:

Aus *Krokodilopolis/Arsinoe/Medinet al Fayyum* kamen christliche Grabstelen nach Berlin,¹³ aus Hawara gelangte eine in das Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge;¹⁴ keine Stelen, aber christliche Bestattungen sind bisher bekannt aus Hawel, aus Karanis (Kom Aushim), aus Deir al-Banat (aber „christian mummified bodies“),¹⁵ aus Dayr el-Naqlun (aber *loculi*), Fag al-Gamus (Seila),¹⁶ Tebtynis, Tall Umm al-Buraygat.¹⁷ Somit beschreibt die Herkunftsangabe ‚Fayyum‘ immer nur ein Gebiet. Weiterhin gründen sich Zuschreibungen an diese Region auf das Material (Kalkstein),

7 GRIGGS 1990; vgl. Tudor, p. 49.

8 GROSSMANN 2002, 315–347.

9 EICHNER 2018.

10 Karara: HUBER 2018.

11 Pfauensarg: HUBER/NAUERTH 2018.

12 Tudor 45–50, 163, 199, 228.

13 Tudor 45.

14 Tudor 49.

15 Tudor 47.

16 Tudor 49.

17 Tudor 50.

den Stelentyp (*aedicula*), die Ikonographie und den Stil, ferner – so vorhanden – auf sprachliche Besonderheiten der Inschriften, die zunächst das Griechische bevorzugen, später überwiegt das Koptische. Den Eigenheiten der Grabformulare widmet Frau Tudor längere Überlegungen¹⁸ und bezieht auch Parallelen aus anderen geographischen Gebieten mit ein. Die vorrangige Unterscheidung nach Materialien – Kalkstein für Unter- und Mittelägypten, Sandstein für Oberägypten – geht schon auf die Arbeit von Dora Zuntz zurück.¹⁹ Die hier vorgestellte Auswahl an Stelen vornehmlich aus dem Fayyum möchte nur an kleinen ikonographischen Veränderungen (Anch, Orans, Mutter-Kind) aufzeigen, wie traditionelle Elemente weiterentwickelt und in den christlichen Bereich integriert werden.

Das Anchkreuz

Klaus Parlasca hat in einem Beitrag für die Festschrift M. Krause 1995 eine Gruppe spätantiker Grabreliefs vorgestellt,²⁰ die ikonographisch und stilistisch erkennbar eng verwandt sind. Die Herkunftsangaben sind unsicher, für die Stele in Berlin²¹ ist aber das Fayyum als Provenienz gut möglich (Abb. 2). Die rechteckigen Denkmäler verbindet ein profilierter Rahmen, teilweise ein oberer doppelter Zahnschnitt, ein flächenfüllendes Weinrankengeflecht und in der unteren Mitte eine Rundbogennische, über der sich bei drei Exemplaren die Büste des Gottes Harpokrates befindet. Bei der vierten, der Berliner Stele, sitzt stattdessen auf dem Rundbogen ein Anchzeichen mit einer Blüte in der Schlaufe. Während die Weinranken ein dionysisches Element darstellen und die Nische als Hadesportal verstanden werden kann und die Büste des Harpokrates die Stelen als pagan ausweisen, wird das an seiner Stelle gesetzte Anchkreuz wohl christlich zu deuten sein. Da die gemeinsamen stilistischen Merkmale – entgegen früheren Spätdatierungen – am besten in das 3./4. Jh. n. Chr. passen, wird in der Berliner Stele mit dem Anch das bis jetzt früheste bekannte christliche Grabmonument in Ägypten zu erkennen sein.

Eine klare Adaption des altägyptischen Anchzeichens in den christlichen Kontext zeigen zwei Kalkstein-Stelen im Koptischen Museum in Kairo, deren Herkunft

18 Tudor 163, 199, 228.

19 ZUNTZ 1932.

20 (1) Alexandria, Griechisch-Römisches Museum, Inv. Nr. 13709 (alt 221), wohl aus Erment, ca. 1888 ins Ägyptische Museum Kairo gekommen. (2) Kairo, Koptisches Museum, dort seit 1939, [Crum 8624](#). – Kairo, Koptisches Museum, dort seit 1939, [Crum 8625](#), beide wohl aus Erment. Alle abgebildet im Beitrag von PARLASCA 1995.

21 Berlin, Museum für Spätantike und Byzantinische Kunst, [Inv. Nr. 4721](#), 26 × 19,5 cm, Kalkstein; VON FALCK et al. 1996, Kat. Nr. 63 (S. Schaten) mit Bibliographie, besonders WULFF 1909, Nr. 111; ZUNTZ 1932, 33, diese auch grundsätzlich zur Eingruppierung der Berliner Stelen; zu den frühesten christlichen Anchzeichen jetzt FLUCK 2017, 15.



Abb. 2: Fayyum(?), Grabstele mit Anchkreuz (MBK 4721; Staatliche Museen zu Berlin).

unbekannt ist. Auf der rechteckigen Stele²² ist in Ritztechnik eine *aedicula* angedeutet, im oberen Teil flankieren zwei Henkelkreuze ein Staurogramm und im unteren Teil ist ein Boot dargestellt, auf der Zwischenleiste (Architrav) liest man *Petros Monachos*. Die andere Stele²³ wurde erkennbar aus einem Block herausgearbeitet, was auf einen ursprünglichen architektonischen Verbund hinweisen dürfte, z. B. eine Nische. Im flachen Relief sind eine *aedicula* mit Podium (?), Säulen und Giebel mit Akroteren dargestellt, in der Fläche rahmen zwei Henkelkreuze ein Werkzeug; in den Schlaufen befinden sich griechische Kreuze, im Giebfeld ebenfalls ein Kreuz (beschädigt). Auf dem Architrav steht der Name *Parmontes*, auf dem Sockel *Tekton*, d. h. Zimmermann, worauf dann das Werkzeug zu beziehen ist. Die Stele wurde mehrfach ausgestellt. Eine christliche Deutung der *Olympios*-Stele in Brooklyn²⁴ scheint dagegen höchst unwahrscheinlich, da das Anzeichen ober-

22 Kairo, Koptisches Museum, Inv. Nr. 7730, 39 × 30 cm, Kalkstein; Crum 8574; ATALLA 1989, 45; RUTSCHOWSCAYA/BÉNAZETH 2000, Kat. Nr. 108.

23 Kairo, Koptisches Museum, Inv. Nr. 8016, 42 × 35 cm, Kalkstein; Crum 8566; SAFWAT EL-ALFY 1984, o. S.; RUTSCHOWSCAYA/BÉNAZETH 2000, Kat. Nr. 107.

24 Brooklyn Museum, Acc. No. 40.301, 17,8 × 29 cm, Kalkstein, rote Farbreste, Inschrift Olympios [...], aus dem Fayyum; COONEY 1941, Nr. 36; COONEY 1943, Nr. 13; BECKWITH 1963, Nr. 78.

halb der rechten Säule allein nicht ausreicht, um in dem in einer *aedicula* stehenden nackten Oranten mit Siegerkranz und wohl einer Palme in der Rechten einen Christen zu sehen – dies zumal angesichts der langen altägyptischen Tradition des Lebenszeichens.

Die Orans in einer *aedicula* (einfacher Typ)

Die Grabstelen mit Oranten sind im Fayyum in verschiedenen Varianten besonders häufig vertreten. Diese stehen meistens in einer Arkade mit Giebel oder unter einem Rundbogen. Die überwiegende Mehrzahl weist christliche Kennzeichen auf, sei es durch eindeutige inschriftliche Grabformulare oder durch entsprechende Symbole. Nur wenige Exemplare verraten keine konfessionellen Hinweise, wobei aber eine nur aufgemalte (und heute verschwundene) Beschriftung nicht ausgeschlossen ist. Viele Objekte haben unregelmäßige Kanten oder Abarbeitungen, was auf eine ursprüngliche architektonische Einbindung deutet, z. B. in einer Nische. Über diesen Kontext ist leider so gut wie nichts bekannt. Hinsichtlich des Reliefstiles kann man allerdings bemerkenswerte Unterschiede feststellen.

Drei Stelen in Kairo repräsentieren den konfessionell nicht näher definierten Typ mit Orans in einer *aedicula*, die Giebel sind unterschiedlich gestaltet mit Akroteren in der Form ausladender Palmetten (Crum 8685),²⁵ mit Muschel im Giebel (Crum 8686)²⁶ und mit einer den Architrav überschneidenden Orantin, die von einem Kind begleitet wird.²⁷ Alle drei tragen das prinzipiell gleiche übliche Gewand (lange Tunika), den vor der Brust sich bauschenden Schal, dessen Enden hinter den Armen herunterfallen. Der Kopf ist wohl bedeckt (*palla*). Die stilistische Behandlung der Kleidung fällt unterschiedlich aus, die Fußstellung ist die ‚normale‘, die Arme sind weit geöffnet, nicht rechtwinkelig abgebogen (wie bei der ägyptischen Ka-Haltung). Die häufig reproduzierte Stele Crum 8686 zeigt die Orantin zwischen zwei aufgehängten Lampenschalen, Stele Crum 8685 eine mit auffälliger Lockenfrisur und einem angedeuteten Nimbus (?). Die Lampen charakterisieren sicher einen Innenraum. Ob sich damit die Funktion als Grabstele vereinbaren lässt und welcher Raum dann gemeint wäre, bleibt unklar. Eine weitere Stele (Crum 8684)²⁸ mit einer Orans unter einem ornamentalen Rundbogen ist dank der Inschrift als

25 Kairo, Koptisches Museum, 71 × 68 cm, Kalkstein. Fayyum (Label), *Sakkara* (?), Crum 8685; KAMEL 1987, Nr. 245.

26 Kairo, Koptisches Museum, Inv. Nr. 8703, 77 × 59 cm, Kalkstein. Fayyum (Label), *Sakkara* (?), Crum 8686; KAMEL 1987, Nr. 246; BECKWITH 1963, Nr. 118; RUTSCHOWSCAYA/BÉNAZETH 2000, Kat. Nr. 104; TÖRÖK 2005a, Kat. Nr. 126; GABRA/EATON-KRAUSS 2006, Abb. 110.

27 Kairo, Koptisches Museum, 63 × 36 cm, Kalkstein. Fayyum, Crum 8701.

28 Kairo, Koptisches Museum, 41 × 29 cm, Kalkstein. Fayyum (Label), *Sakkara* (?), Crum 8684; KAMEL 1987, Nr. 165. Zu den Inschriften generell siehe BRUNSCH 1995.

das Grabmonument einer Frau gesichert, die mit einer deutlich verzierten Tunika (*clavi*) bekleidet ist.

Die folgenden drei Stelen sind in Aufbau, Ikonographie und Stil besonders eng verwandt und vor allem aufgrund des verchristlichten Anzeichens konfessionell festgelegt. Die bekannteste ist die Beter-Stele der *Rhodia*, heute in Berlin (Abb. 3).²⁹ Der Architrav mit der Inschrift ruht auf zwei Säulen, im Giebel sitzt ein Henkelkreuz mit einer Blüte in der Schlaufe, an den Hasten hängen Alpha und Omega als Pendilien. Leider verschwinden die Füße in der Bodenleiste, aber die Arme sind, obwohl nur zur Hälfte erhalten, betend erhoben. Die Parallele in Kairo ([Crum 8697](#))³⁰ zeigt ebenfalls eine Orans, im Giebel ist das Anch durch ein griechisches Kreuz zwischen Alpha und Omega ersetzt. Abweichend ist die Stellung der Füße und Arme, die Füße wenden sich nach ägyptischer Manier im Profil nach rechts, die Arme winkeln rechteckig ab in der ägyptischen Tradition der Ka-Haltung. Verwandt ist auch die *Thekla*-Stele ([Crum 8703](#)),³¹ deren Giebel wie bei der *Rhodia*-Stele ein Anch mit Alpha und Omega umschließt, im Bildfeld hier eine Mutter mit Kind (s. u.). Bemerkenswert ist die holzschnittartige Behandlung der verschiedenen Gewänder, die bisher nur bei diesen drei Stelen aus dem Fayyum bekannt ist.

Eine weitgehende Übereinstimmung besteht auch in Ikonographie und Stil zwischen zwei Beter-Stelen in Kairo³² und Berlin,³³ letztere für eine *Theodora* bestimmt (Abb. 4); beide kommen ebenfalls aus dem Fayyum. Die Orans steht jeweils in einer Arkade unter einer Muschel. Säulen mit Kapitellen und Basen flankieren sie. Die Kleidung besteht aus einer langen Tunika, einem über die Arme fallenden Schal (Kairo, [Crum 8687](#)) mit Fransen und einer voluminösen Kopfbedeckung; über den erhobenen Armen je ein griechisches Kreuz. Aus den palmettenartigen Akroteren steigen antithetische Tauben auf. Bei der Berliner Stele ist oberhalb des Giebels eine beschriftete *tabula ansata* angebracht, bei der Kairener Stele ist dieser Teil

29 Berlin, Museum für Spätantike und Byzantinische Kunst, [Inv. Nr. 9666](#), 73 × 44 cm, 1935 aus dem Ägyptischen Museum überwiesen, Kalkstein, aus dem Fayyum; BECKWITH 1963, Nr. 114; EFFENBERGER/SEVERIN 1992, Nr. 68: sie erwägen wegen der Dicke und Plastizität, dass es sich um eine selbständige Stele handelt, die nicht z. B. in einer Nische eingelassen war; VON FALCK et al. 1996, Kat. Nr. 66 (S. Schaten); RUTSCHOWSCAYA/BÉNAZETH 2000, Kat. Nr. 105; TÖRÖK 2005b, Abb. 4.

30 Kairo, Koptisches Museum, 45 × 33 cm, Kalkstein; [Crum 8697](#); KAMEL 1987, Nr. 108; ATALLA 1989, 118; PELSMAEKERS 1992, 2140.

31 Kairo, Koptisches Museum, 45 × 37 cm, Kalkstein; [Crum 8703](#); KAMEL 1987, Nr. 110.

32 Kairo, Koptisches Museum, [Inv. Nr. 8004](#), jetzt Alexandria, National Museum, [Inv. Nr. 833](#) (so TÖRÖK 2005a, Kat. Nr. 124), 70 × 45 cm, Kalkstein, Label Karnak (?); [Crum 8687](#); KAMEL 1987, Nr. 104; SAFWAT EL-ALFY 1984, o. S.; ATALLA 1989, 118; THOMAS 2000, Abb. 31; TÖRÖK 2005a, 172 (Detail), Kat. Nr. 124.

33 Berlin, Museum für Spätantike und Byzantinische Kunst, [Inv. Nr. 4723](#), 75 × 57 cm, Kalkstein, Fayyum; VON FALCK et al. 1996, Kat. Nr. 64 (A. Effenberger) mit Bibliographie, besonders WULFF 1909, Nr. 74; ZUNTZ 1932, 23, 34; TÖRÖK 2005b, Abb. 3 (Achtung, die Bildunterschriften sind vertauscht); EFFENBERGER/SEVERIN 1992, Nr. 67 (dort ursprüngliche Anbringung in einer Nische vermutet). Inschrift: „Frieden der ausruhenden Theodora“.



Abb. 3: Fayyum, *Rhodia*-Stele, Orans in einfacher *aedicula* (MBK 9666; Staatliche Museen zu Berlin).



Abb. 4: Fayyum, *Theodora*-Stele, Orans in einfacher *aedicula* (MBK 4723; Staatliche Museen zu Berlin).

möglicherweise verloren. Bemerkenswert ist die in flachem Relief hinter der Orantin angedeutete gitterartige Schranke, wohl ein Hinweis auf eine entsprechende Grabgestaltung. Die Kanten sind bei beiden Denkmälern unregelmäßig gebrochen, was wie die fehlende Fußpartie auf einen ursprünglichen architektonischen Verbund hindeutet (z. B. die Rückwand einer Nische).

Die Orans in einer erweiterten *aedicula*

In diesem Abschnitt sind Grabstelen aus dem Fayyum zusammengestellt, die zwar auch eine Beterfigur aufweisen, aber durch vielfältige Ausgestaltung der ursprünglichen *aedicula*-Rahmung erweitert wurden und erheblich umfangreichere Inschriften tragen; darunter befindet sich auch die bisher einzig bekannte datierte Stele, die des *Pusei* und/bzw. *Kosmas* in Berlin.³⁴ Im unteren Teil steht die Orans

³⁴ Berlin, Museum für Spätantike und Byzantinische Kunst, Inv. Nr. 4477, 59 × 26 cm, Kalkstein, aus Medinet-al-Fayyum, datiert auf 703 n. Chr.; EFFENBERGER/SEVERIN 1992, Nr. 70; VON FALCK et al. 1996, Kat. Nr. 67 (A. Effenberger) mit Bibliographie, besonders WULFF 1909, Nr. 77; ZUNTZ 1932, 23, 30.

leicht nach links gewandt, hier ein Jugendlicher in Tunika zwischen zwei Säulen, die durch einen Blattbogen (Lorbeer?) verbunden werden, dessen Spitzen mittig zusammentreffen. Armhaltung, Fußstellung und die leichte Körperdrehung wirken unägyptisch, d. h. ‚normal‘. Das obere Feld, durch drei Profiltrillen getrennt, enthält eine heute verwaschene griechische Inschrift, die liturgische Formeln anklängen lässt: „Gott, unserer (Väter), lass die Seele deines Dieners Pusei und (bzw.) Kosmas ausruhen. Lass sie auch eingehen in den Schoß Abrahams und Isaaks und Jakobs. Er starb im Herrn am 15. Pharmouti 16 (Jahre alt) im 419 Jahr seit Diokletian. Amen.“ Dies ist das Jahr der Märtyrer seit Diokletians Verfolgung, ab 284 n. Chr. gezählt. Bild und Inschrift beziehen sich auf eine Person, genannt werden aber zwei Namen, möglicherweise der koptische und griechische Name eines einzigen Toten (diese Praxis ist gut bekannt).

Eine abgewandelte Form dieses Stelentyps repräsentieren zwei Exemplare in Kairo, das eine jetzt in Alexandria.³⁵ Über dem Bildfeld und dem Inschriftentableau findet sich hier noch ein ornamentierter Bogen über einer Muschelnische, der bei der Stele (Crum 8688)³⁶ sogar die Andeutung von Kassetten erkennen lässt, also zwischen den Palmetten-Akroteren räumliche Tiefe vermitteln soll (ein echter gesprengter Giebel!). Die untere Hälfte ist bei beiden Stelen abgebrochen. Die Orans steht jeweils zwischen pflanzlichen Gebilden, vermutlich Palmzweigen, die einem Gefäß entwachsen. Nur die Inschrift der *Tomanna*-Stele lässt sich entziffern und besitzt wieder liturgische Anklänge, die der anderen Stele ist unkenntlich verblasst.

Schließlich sind noch zwei weitere Stelen in Berlin erwähnenswert, die aus dem Fayyum stammen und sich durch ein relativ flaches Relief auszeichnen. Bei beiden ist der Name der Verstorbenen überliefert, *Erai* (Abb. 5)³⁷ und *Tomeli*.³⁸ Die Inschrift verteilt sich jeweils auf der Architektur, nämlich dem Bogen bzw. Giebel und auf einer Säule bzw. einer *tabula ansata*, sie enthält aber nur einen Friedenswunsch: Für *Tomeli*: „Frieden der im Herrn ruhenden Tomeli, sie entschlief“; für *Erai*: „Erai aus Piam, sie legte sich zur Ruhe am 16. Epep“ (in koptisch). Gemeinsam

35 Kairo, Koptisches Museum, Inv. Nr. 8600, jetzt Alexandria, National Museum, 832; 53 × 30 cm, Kalkstein, Fayyum; *Tomanna*-Stele; Crum 8698; KAMEL 1987, Nr. 173; RUTSCHOWSCAYA/BÉNAZETH 2000, Kat. Nr. 103; TÖRÖK 2005a, Kat. Nr. 125; *Tomanna*-Stele: „Seigneur, donne le repos à l'âme de ta servante Tomanna ; elle s'est reposée dans le Seigneur, le 13 de Pharmouti 2^e indict. dans la paix“.

36 Kairo, Koptisches Museum, 37 × 28 cm, Kalkstein; Crum 8688; KAMEL 1987, Nr. 197.

37 Berlin, Museum für Spätantike und Byzantinische Kunst, Inv. Nr. 4476, 38 × 26 cm, Kalkstein; VON FALCK et al. 1996, Kat. Nr. 68 (S. Schaten) mit Bibliographie, besonders WULFF 1909, Nr. 76; *Erai*-Stele; Inschriftentext: „Evai aus Piam. Sie legte sich am 16. Epep zur Ruhe“.

38 Berlin, Museum für Spätantike und Byzantinische Kunst, Inv. Nr. 4470, 27 × 23 cm, Kalkstein; VON FALCK et al. 1996, Kat. Nr. 65 (S. Schaten) mit Bibliographie, besonders WULFF 1909, Nr. 75; *Tomeli*-Stele; Inschriftentext: „In Frieden der im Herrn ruhenden Tomeli. Sie entschlief“.



Abb. 5: Fayyum, *Erai-Stele*, Orans in erweiterter *aedicula* (MBK 4476; Staatliche Museen zu Berlin).



Abb. 6: Fayyum, Stele mit Mutter-Kind-Bild (MBK 4726; Staatliche Museen zu Berlin).

ist bei beiden Denkmälern die Muschel im Giebel bzw. der Bogen und ein fülliges Blattwerk, das jeden räumlichen Eindruck zur Fläche hin überspielt.

Das Mutter-Kind-Bild und andere Gruppen

Die vermutlich bekannteste Darstellung dieses Typs ist jene Grabstele³⁹ in Berlin (Abb. 6), die lange Zeit und vereinzelt heute noch als Maria mit dem Jesuskind ‚gehandelt‘ wird. Seit auf dem unteren Teil die Reste einer Grabinschrift nachgewiesen werden konnten, ist diese Deutung aber endgültig obsolet. Es handelt sich um das zunächst ‚neutrale‘ Bild einer Mutter, die ihr Kind stillt, ein Entwurf, der in Ägypten eine lange Tradition hat und bis in griechisch-römische Zeit belegt ist (Stich-

³⁹ Berlin, Museum für Spätantike und Byzantinische Kunst, [Inv. Nr. 4726](#), 55 × 34,5 cm, Kalkstein, aus Medinet-al-Fayyum; VON FALCK et al. 1996, Kat. Nr. 61 (A. Effenberger) mit der älteren umfangreichen Literatur, schon WULFF 1909, Nr. 79, zweifelte an der Deutung auf Maria; THOMAS 2000, Abb. 111.

wort ‚Isis und Harpokrates‘).⁴⁰ Die Berliner Stele wurde links abgearbeitet, womöglich war sie wie andere Beispiele ebenfalls in einer Nische eingelassen. Auch war sie bunt bemalt, wie Spuren in Rotbraun und Grün nahelegen. In Ritztechnik ist eine auf einem Klappstuhl mit Kissen sitzende Frau wiedergegeben, die offensichtlich ihr Kind stillt, das sie auf dem linken Arm hält. Säulen mit Kapitell und Basis rahmen sie. Rechts und links des leicht geneigten Kopfes finden sich – etwas tiefer eingeritzt – zwei griechische Kreuze. Sie könnten nachträglich angebracht worden sein, da die Formel der Inschrift „...21 Jahre alt. Keiner ist unsterblich, sei frohen Muts“ auf heidnischen wie christlichen Grabmonumenten verwendet werden konnte.

In Kairo befinden sich zwei weitere Grabstelen mit dem Bildmotiv ‚Mutter und Kind‘, das in einer *aedicula* eingefügt ist, einmal mit Rundbogen,⁴¹ das andere Mal mit Giebel.⁴² Beide Mütter sitzen und stillen ihr Kind. In stilistischer Hinsicht sind sie extrem unterschiedlich ausgeführt worden, zum einen nahezu vollplastisch (Crum 8702), zum anderen wie die oben besprochene *Rhodia*-Stele holzschnittartig (Crum 8703). Letztere nennt auf dem Architrav den Namen *Thekla*, im Giebel sitzt ein Anchkreuz, das durch die beigefügten Symbole Alpha und Omega christlich adaptiert wurde.

Eine andere familiäre Konstellation begegnet auf zwei Kalkstein-Stelen aus dem Fayyum, einer Stele für Vater und Tochter (Abb. 7),⁴³ und einer für Bruder und Schwester (Abb. 8),⁴⁴ wie die Inschriften bekunden. Die jeweiligen Merkmale sind sehr aufschlussreich: Beide besitzen eine rechteckige Form, auch wenn es sich im Falle von *Hierax* und *Tiesis* (Tersi) eher um eine eingefasste, aber als *aedicula* konzipierte Stele handelt; anders die auch ursprünglich rechteckig angelegte Stele mit zwei benachbarten Arkaden, in denen *Anba Kir* (?) und seine Schwester *Johanne* betend stehen. Von *Hierax* und *Tiesis* wird nur ihr Alter (42 bzw. 5 Jahre)

40 Die Darstellung der stehenden oder thronenden Göttin Isis, die das Horuskind (Harpokrates) stillt, war in Ägypten von den Anfängen bis in die römische Zeit vor allem in der Kleinplastik weit verbreitet. Sie gilt als ikonographische Vorlage der stillenden Gottesmutter Maria (Isis lactans-Maria lactans), wobei die möglichen inhaltlichen Implikationen diskussionswürdig bleiben; beiden liegt das allgemeine Motiv einer innigen Mutter-Kind-Beziehung zugrunde. Grundlegend hierzu siehe LANGENER 1996.

41 Kairo, Koptisches Museum, Inv. Nr. 8003, 71 × 35 cm, Kalkstein; Crum 8702; ATALLA 1989, 35, dort noch: „Virgin Mary and the infant upon her knees“ (!); THOMAS 2000, Abb. 30; RUTSCHOWSCAYA/BÉNAZETH 2000, Kat. Nr. 106; TÖRÖK 2005a, Kat. Nr. 107.

42 Kairo, Koptisches Museum, 45 × 37 cm, Kalkstein; Fayyum; Crum 8703; Kamel 1987, Nr. 110.

43 Musée du Louvre, Inv. Nr. 21137, 44,5 × 36,7 cm, Stele des *Hierax* und seiner Tochter *Tiesis*; BOSSON/AUFRÈRES 1999, Kat. Nr. 61: dort wird für das im Griechischen unbekanntes *Tiesis* eine koptische Vorlage vermutet; BÉNAZETH/RUTSCHOWSCAYA 2009, Kat. Nr. 167 (D. Bénazeth).

44 Musée du Louvre, Inv. Nr. 21147, 45 × 36 cm, Stele der Geschwister *Anba Kir* und *Johanne*; BOSSON/AUFRÈRES 1999, Kat. Nr. 62; RUTSCHOWSCAYA/BÉNAZETH 2000, 23, Kat. Nr. 25; BÉNAZETH/RUTSCHOWSCAYA 2009, Kat. Nr. 23.



Abb. 7: Fayyum, Stele des *Hierax* und seiner Tochter *Tiesis* (E21137; Musée du Louvre).



Abb. 8: Fayyum, Stele der Geschwister *Anba Kir* und *Johanne* (E21147; Musée du Louvre).

angegeben, im Giebel sind noch die Spuren eines Anchzeichens zu erkennen, während die Reste rechts und links der Giebelschrägen nicht mehr zu identifizieren sind, vielleicht waren es Vögel (Pfauen oder Tauben). Der Vater rechts führt die kleine Tochter mit der bekannten Hinführungs-Schutzgeste. Die Fußstellung der beiden Figuren ist ägyptisch (profil-parallel), die Kleidung dagegen (Tuniken, Schal, *palla*) ist untypisch, d. h. allgemein. Allein aufgrund des Anchzeichens, das offenbar keine Spezifizierung z. B. durch Alpha und Omega erfahren hat, und angesichts des sonst jedenfalls in der Grabkunst so nicht belegten Bildmotivs wird man die Stele nicht christlich deuten, sondern sie als ambivalent bezeichnen. Anders ist die Geschwister-Stele zu beurteilen – hier legt die bekannte Grabformel die christliche Konfession der beiden fest: „Seigneur, donne le repos à l’âme de tes serviteurs Anba Kir (?) et Jeanne (sa) sœur, ils se sont reposés dans la paix le – 1 de Pharmouthi 15^e in(dict)“.⁴⁵ Stilistisch auffallend sind die übergroßen Hände, aber eine ‚normale‘ Stellung der Füße, die in den unteren Rahmen einschneiden. Bemerkenswert auch das ‚flache‘ Relief, das offenbar nur angelegt wurde, denn in den Bögen waren wohl Blätter geplant und an den Säulen Kapitelle sowie darüber Akrotere.

⁴⁵ So die französische Übersetzung des Katalogs. Eine griechische Übersetzung ist z. Z. nicht verfügbar, die Abbildungen erlauben keine korrekte Textwiedergabe.

Anikonische Grabstelen

Aus dem Fayyum (und anderswo) sind *aedicula*-Stelen bekannt, die keinen figürlichen Schmuck, sondern das Kreuzsymbol zwischen den Säulen wiedergeben⁴⁶ und zwar in aller Regel in der Art der normalen griechischen und lateinischen Formen – nicht als Anchkreuz. Sie knüpfen damit nicht unmittelbar an die hier vorgestellten traditionellen Elemente an und sollen auch nur abschließend erwähnt werden. Da die Kreuze stets ausgestellte Hasten besitzen und teilweise auf Treppensockeln – profil oder zentral – stehen, kann man sie generell mit dem Jerusalemer Triumphkreuz assoziieren, wozu auch die Inschriften passen. Bemerkenswert ist auch, dass sie gelegentlich als Blattkreuze (Lebensbaummotiv) variiert werden.

Zu den Inschriften

Der Kontext der Grabstelen ist, wie eingangs erwähnt, selten bekannt. Nur gelegentlich weisen Spuren von Abarbeitungen darauf hin, dass einige ursprünglich im Verbund wie z. B. in einer Nische standen. Unbearbeitete glatte Flächen am unteren Ende zeigen an, dass die Objekte im Boden (Sand) verankert waren. Farbspuren sind ebenfalls selten erhalten, wie etwa bei der Berliner Stele mit Mutter und Kind, oder bei der Auffindung vermerkt worden; sie sollten aber stets als möglich einkalkuliert werden.

Wenn sich bis heute Inschriften in griechischer oder koptischer Sprache finden, was nur bei etwa der Hälfte des gegenwärtig bekannten Bestandes der Fall ist, dann sind sie mehr oder weniger tief eingeritzt oder erhaben reliefiert. Die Position auf der Grabstele präsentiert sich als variabel: prinzipiell können alle Flächen, die nicht von architektonischen oder figürlichen Teilen bedeckt sind, Inschriften aufnehmen. In Anlehnung an die bestehende Praxis eignet sich dazu besonders eine eigene *tabula ansata* oder bei Stelen mit Giebeln die entsprechende Stelle auf dem Architrav. Auch andere Teile der Architektur wie Säulen oder Giebelfelder tragen manchmal Inschriften. Hauptbestandteil ist natürlich der Name des Toten, in der Häufigkeit folgt das Todesdatum; Anspielungen auf Beruf oder Stand gehören in

46 Hierzu zählen etwa: die Grabstele der *Theodote* in Berlin, Museum für Spätantike und Byzantinische Kunst, *Inv. Nr. 4483*, 46 × 27 cm; VON FALCK et al. 1996, Kat. Nr. 75; Kairo, Koptisches Museum, 62 × 32 cm, Kalkstein, Fayyum: Crum 8584; vgl. auch aus Erment die Grabstele der *Maria*: Berlin, Museum für Spätantike und Byzantinische Kunst, *Inv. Nr. 4728*, 39,5 × 21,5 cm; VON FALCK et al. 1996, Kat. Nr. 81; Grabstele von *Theodoros* und *Kosman* in Berlin, Museum für Spätantike und Byzantinische Kunst, *Inv. Nr. 1/66*; jetzt im Katalog FLUCK/HELMECKE/O'CONNELL 2015, 239 Kat. Nr. 297: offenbar war hier ein Kreuzmotiv angelegt, das durch die Inschrift umgearbeitet wurde; vgl. auch die *Hanna*-Stele in Straßburg, Institut d'Égyptologie de l'Université, *Inv. Nr. 1687*, 42,5 × 25,5 cm; DU BOURGUET et al. 1964, Kat. Nr. 60; THOMAS 2000, Abb. 29; dazu vgl. Crum 8587, auch die Stele Crum 8423 mit Inschrift.

der Regel nicht dazu. Andere Erweiterungen enthalten Formulierungen aus der Liturgie, speziell von Gebeten, oder sind Friedenswünsche. Lange Texte sind selten, nicht zuletzt stellen sie besondere Anforderungen an Ausdauer und Geschick des Handwerkers.

Zusammenfassung

Der Beitrag stellt sich der Frage, wie traditionelle Elemente der ägyptischen Kunst in der Spätantike weiterleben, genauer wie sie dem christlichen Umfeld gerecht werden. An Beispielen der Grabkultur, den Stelen, wird gezeigt, wie einige Besonderheiten der Ikonographie sich verändern oder adoptiert werden. So übernimmt das altägyptische Anchzeichen, das die Bedeutung ‚Leben‘ hat, als eine formale Variante die inhaltliche Bedeutung des christlichen Kreuzes, das ebenfalls für ‚Leben‘ steht. Bei dem Motiv der Oranten sind es stilistische Anzeichen wie Haltung der Arme oder Stellung der Füße, die eine Veränderung signalisieren, während Aufbau und Komposition stabil bleiben. Am interessantesten ist die vieldiskutierte Verwandtschaft der Komposition von Mutter und Kind im Typ der Lactans. Diese hatte in Ägypten ihre bedeutendste Ausprägung in den Darstellungen der Göttin Isis gefunden, die den Harpokrates stillt. Da nun das Bild der stillenden Gottesmutter Maria zuerst in Ägypten aufkommt und relativ weit verbreitet ist, liegt ein Bezug, wenn nicht gar eine Abhängigkeit nahe. Allerdings sollte abgesehen von der formalen Analogie eine inhaltliche Entsprechung im Hinblick auf das Theologumenon ‚Gottesmutter Maria‘ stets sorgfältig geprüft werden, denn nicht jede Mutter-Kind-Darstellung im Motiv der Lactans ist per se eine Maria lactans, was an der Berliner Stele deutlich wird. Insgesamt lässt sich beobachten, dass Religiosität durchaus ikonographisch sichtbar werden kann.

Hinsichtlich der Materialität sind die Erkenntnisse begrenzt. Da in Ägypten das jeweils anstehende Gestein für die Bearbeitung genutzt wird, bestehen die hier vorrangig behandelten Grabstelen vor allem des Fayyum durchweg aus Kalkstein, der plastische Dekorationen und inschriftliche Zeugnisse in Ritztechnik, Relief und/oder Malerei aufnehmen kann.

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Abbildungsnachweise

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DAVIDE BIANCHI

Funerary Customs in Sacred Spaces

Privileged and Monastic Burials in the Provinces
of *Palaestina* and *Arabia*

Introduction

In the last few decades, the study of funerary customs in churches has become an interesting issue of Late Antique archaeology.¹ The analysis of burials is fundamental not only for understanding the ecclesiastical architecture, but it also gives significant insight into the religious and cultural aspects of Early Christian funerary practices. Furthermore, the burial contexts reflect the cultural beliefs about death and their archaeological and bio-anthropological analysis offer new data on the societies of Late Antiquity.² According to the Church's doctrine on the issue of the resurrection of the body after death, the predominant funeral custom in Christian cemeteries became inhumation, and archaeological records point out the implementation of this practice.³ The custom of burying inside churches was common from the 4th c. AD, when both high status members of the clergy and lay society expressed their desire to be buried as near as possible to the tombs or relics of martyrs, usually laid near the altar.⁴ The practice spread rapidly as shown by archaeological contexts and homilies of the church fathers until the second half of the 6th c. AD when the synodal councils began to oppose the funerary custom of burial in churches.⁵ Regarding the provinces of *Palaestina* and *Arabia*, it is worth mentioning that graves, at and in churches, are detectable in some cases, but most of the ecclesiastical buildings, had no burial places. This evidence shows that the custom of inhumations in churches, while common, was by no means universally practised, and the vast majority of the Christian population were buried in ordinary cemeteries.

- 1 The literature on the subject is extensive; for studies on burials within churches see KÖTTING 1965; DUVAL 1988; SCHOLZ 1998; VOLP 2002; YASIN 2009, 46–100; see also contributions ARBEITER, ARDELEANU, FELLE, GATIER, MAINARDIS, MERTEN, OSNABRÜGGE, PRIEN, VALEVA and ZIMMERMANN in this volume.
- 2 On the topic, see FOX/TRITSAROLI 2019, 103–110.
- 3 More in general on this issue, see KYRIAKAKIS 1974; VELKOVSKA 2001.
- 4 CHAVARRÍA ARNAU 2011, 183f.
- 5 On theological requirements regarding the burials within churches see SCHOLZ 1998, 271–285.

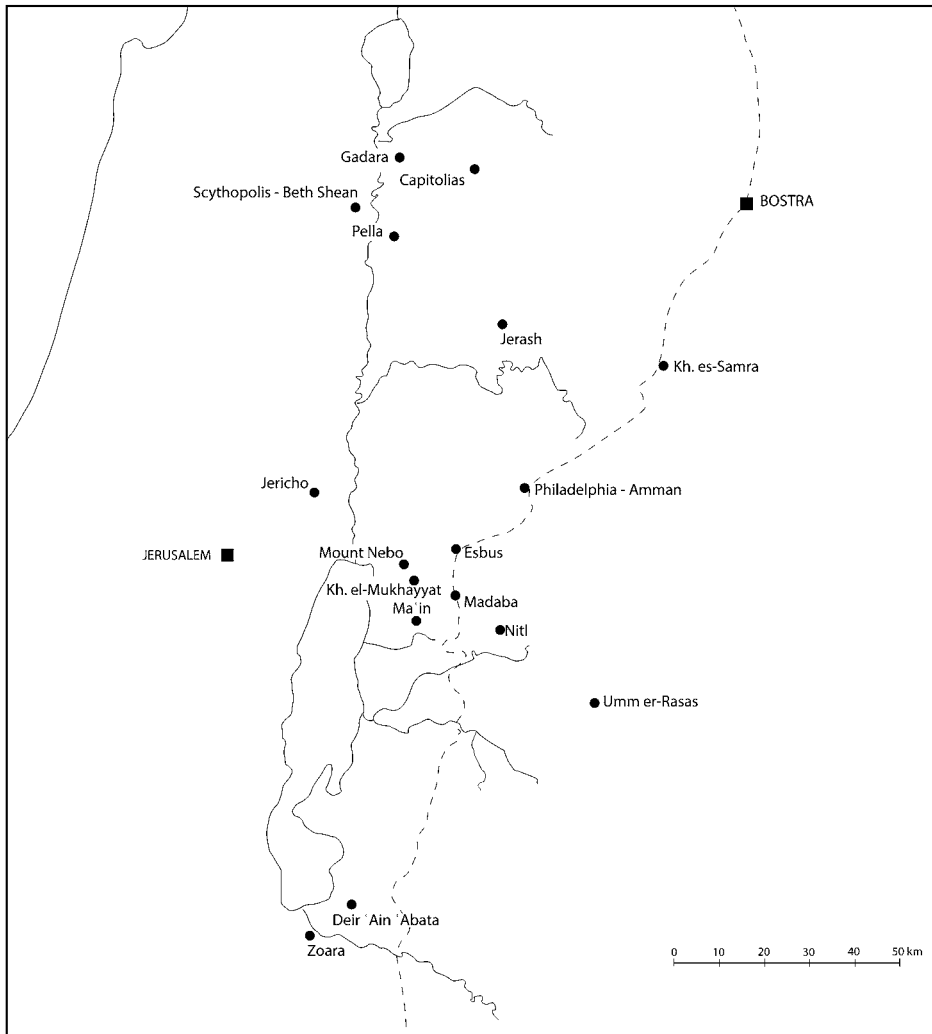


Fig. 1: Map of the provinces of *Palaestina* and *Arabia* with sites mentioned in the text.

This paper intends to analyse a group of burials found in rural churches and monastic complexes in the provinces of *Palaestina* and *Arabia* (Fig. 1). It will discuss the typological characteristics of the burials, which in some cases, such as the monastery of Mt Nebo, are enriched by new data from recent excavations and bio-archaeological analysis.⁶ The study will also take into consideration a more holistic documentation that includes epigraphic, spatial, social, and bio-archaeological analysis in order to highlight peculiar aspects of mortuary habits in the region under examination.

The chosen case studies are located in the Southern Levant, precisely in the Roman provinces of *Palaestina* and *Arabia*, which are situated on the East and West of the River Jordan. In Late Antiquity, after the reform of Emperor Diocletian in AD 295, the borders of these provinces were partially modified.⁷ The province of *Arabia*, whose territories were included between the capital Bosra and the Madaba region, was extended slightly to the north, while its territories south of the Wadi Hasa were included in the province of *Palaestina*. The latter was then divided after AD 429 in three units: *Palaestina Prima* with its capital *Caesarea*, *Palaestina Secunda* in the North with the territories of Galilee and the cities of the *Decapolis* and its capital *Scythopolis* and *Palaestina Tertia* or *Salutaris* in the South with its capital *Petra*.⁸

Numerous studies have examined burials within the churches of these provinces, but they have often focused on a few isolated cases resulting in the lack of a unitary corpus dedicated to this region. Haim Goldfus, whose dissertation focused on the territory of modern Israel, remains an indispensable publication for the study of the burials in churches and monastic contexts in Byzantine Palestine.⁹ A more general overview of funeral practices in Israel is summarized in the chapter on Palestine in Late Antiquity in the book by Hans-Peter Kuhn.¹⁰ Particularly interesting are the bio-archaeological investigations in some funerary contexts and necropolises of Christian Palestine mentioned by Sherry C. Fox and Paraskevi Tritsaroli, carried out on the bone remains found in the mass burial of Mamilla Cave, in the crypt of the Khan el-Ahmar monastery and in an Early Byzantine sewer in Ashkelon.¹¹ On the phenomenon of the so-called *inventio* of tombs of Christian saints and martyrs, it is important to mention the contribution of Leah Di Segni on the development of Christian cult sites on tombs of the second temple period.¹² For the study of funerary customs in sacred spaces of the province of *Arabia*, a fundamental study is given by Anne Michel's monograph, with a large catalogue of churches and useful bibliographical references.¹³ Christoph Eger has collected more recent studies on the subject in his article devoted to the rock chamber necropolis of Khirbet Yajuz.¹⁴ Together with Michael Mackensen, he also published the proceedings of a conference on death and burial in the Near East, in which several burial contexts from sacred spaces are mentioned.¹⁵ For instance the study of Robert Schick in this volume deals with the types of burials in churches in Jordan in the Byzantine

7 On this topic, see CANOVA 1954, LVIII–LIX; BEJOR 1993, 563.

8 On this topic, see HAMARNEH 2003, 29–34.

9 GOLDFUS 1997.

10 KUHNEN 1990, 345–351.

11 FOX/TRITSAROLI 2019, 111, 117f. For further information on individual case studies, see NAGAR 2002; HERSHKOVITZ et al. 1993; SMITH/KAHILA 1992.

12 DI SEGNI 2006–2007.

13 MICHEL 2001.

14 EGER 2018.

15 EGER/MACKENSEN 2018.

and Early Islamic periods, including some data from the excavations at the Quwaysmah South Church.¹⁶ Excellent insights are provided by epigraphical studies of the funerary *stelai* found in the necropolises of the el-Karak region and Ghor es-Safi with information on the death of the deceased, their age at the time of death and some chronological data.¹⁷

Framing the Burial Space at Mt Nebo and in Lot's Sanctuary

The first case study concerns the burials in the monastery of Mt Nebo, with two distinct typologies: primary tombs and ossuaries; the latter contain multiple skeletons. The Memorial of Moses on Mt Nebo is one of the most renowned Byzantine monasteries in Jordan.¹⁸ The three naves-monastic church is located in the centre of the *coenobium* and was erected in the second half of the 5th c. AD. The basilica was enlarged with the addition of a triconchial presbytery in the late 5th – early 6th c. AD and later completely rebuilt in the late 6th c. AD; some restoration works were carried out in the church after the earthquake that struck the area in AD 749.¹⁹ It is worth mentioning that the ecclesiastical building has a funerary connotation because it was built on the site linked to the death of Moses and many graves were found inside the church.²⁰ Among these burials a peculiar empty tomb that was discovered in recent excavations provides new data concerning the meaning and the location of funerary structures within the monastery church (Fig. 2).²¹ This tomb is located along the axis of the church's main nave, exactly on the highest peak of the mountain's spur. The interior of the tomb was found empty, devoid of organic residues or grave goods, showing that the burial had been closed after its construction. The funerary structure is ca. 19 cm deep and made up of a lower row of local stone coated with red plaster and with some architectural fragments of re-used alabaster marble. The archaeological stratigraphy together with coins and pottery sherds allow dating the construction of the tomb to the second half of the 5th c. AD. The typology and the location of this tomb suggest a peculiar purpose, perhaps devotional, in connection with the biblical episode regarding the death of the biblical prophet.²²

16 SCHICK 2018.

17 CANOVA 1954; MEIMARIS/KRITIKAKOU-NIKOLAROPOULOU 2005.

18 For an introduction to the archaeological site and to the excavations of monastery of Mt Nebo, see SALLER 1941; PICCIRILLO/ALLIATA 1998 and BIANCHI 2018b.

19 More in detail on the architectural phases of the memorial church for Moses and on the archaeological data, see BIANCHI 2021, 70–80.

20 For more on funerary practices, see SANMORÌ 1998, 413–417.

21 BIANCHI 2018a, 39–42; for a detailed description of the tomb structure and the archaeological context, see BIANCHI 2019.

22 Deut. 34, 5.



Fig. 2: Mt Nebo Church, detail of the burial found in nave and the tombs nos. 72–74 behind it.



Fig. 3: Mt Nebo, tomb no. 73.

The location of the empty tomb provides new evidence to understand the other fourteen funerary structures built around that focus.²³ This privileged burial was originally set under the presbytery of the oldest ecclesiastical building erected on Mt Nebo, which was internally divided into three naves.²⁴ Behind the presbytery, archaeologists found a room with a funerary purpose dated to the first phase of the basilica with three tombs under the mosaic floor (nos. 72–74).²⁵ The central tomb (no. 73) contained the bones belonging to a single man while the lateral ones (nos. 72 and 74) were polysomic burials (Fig. 3).²⁶ It should be noted that tomb no. 73, arranged following the same axis as the privileged burial, seems to be a potential tomb *ad sanctos*.²⁷ Furthermore, the presence of a single skeleton confirms the affluent character of this tomb, perhaps intended for the body of a high representative of the monastic clergy. The lateral tombs (nos. 72–74) may have been destined for a limited group of monks who, in the capacity of their particular status or for having held prestigious monastic assignments, could have been buried near the privileged tomb. Sylvester Saller formulated a possible interpretation, based on lit-

23 In detail, the excavation of the church nave and the analysis of the perimeter walls allow a new hypothesis on the architectural evolution of the basilica of Nebo; see BIANCHI 2019; BIANCHI 2018b.

24 BIANCHI 2018a, 44, fig. 6.

25 The three burials are ca. 3m deep. See SANMORI 1998, 411f. For the architectural analysis of the tombs, see ALLIATA/BIANCHI 1998, 189.

26 SALLER 1941, 38 reports that the lateral tombs each contained the skeletons of eight bodies.

27 The burial *ad sanctos* is generally considered to be the custom of being buried next to the tombs of martyrs and saints. On this practice, see FIOCCHI NICOLAI 2016, 619–670; on critical discussion of the concept, see YASIN 2009.

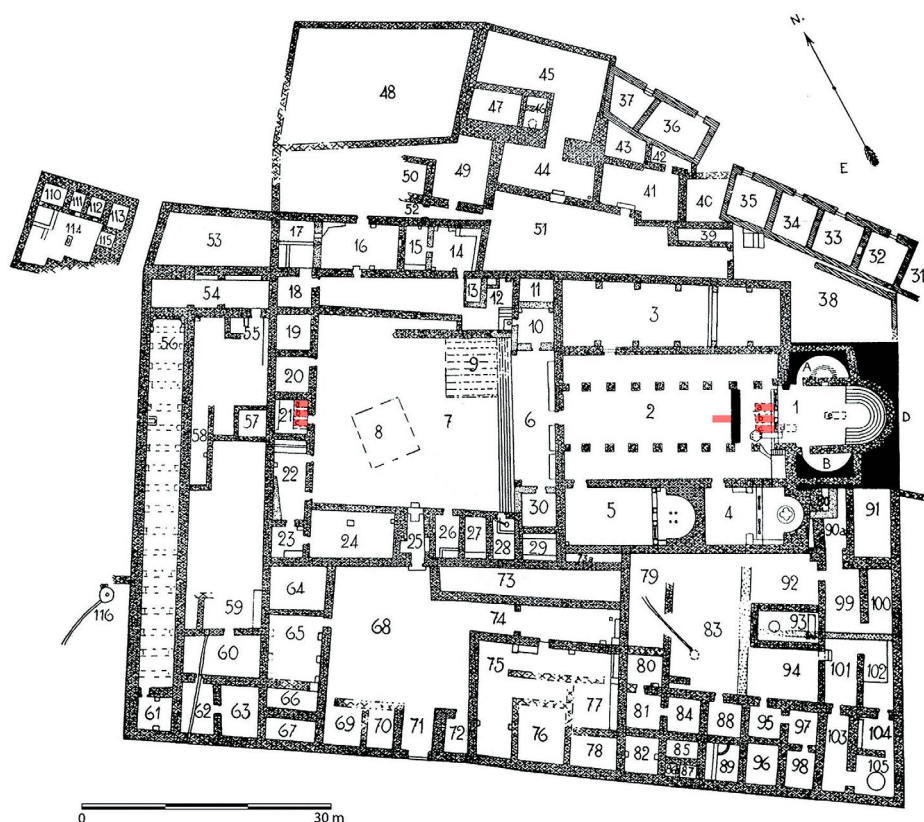


Fig. 4: Mt Nebo, plan of the monastic complex with the tombs found inside the church and in room no. 21 highlighted in red.

erary sources, of this peculiar three-tombs-arrangement.²⁸ Indeed, although no epitaph was found at the tombs, the *Life of Peter the Iberian* by John Rufus recalls that Bishop Peter, who visited Mt Nebo in 430 and 477 AD, died in a monastery near Gaza and was then buried in a tomb flanked by two others, intended for his disciples.²⁹ However, the lack of archaeological evidence so far leaves the question open.

Room no. 21, most likely contemporary to the room with tombs nos. 72–74 located in the *atrium* opposite the basilica, in line with the burials of the nave, was also configured as a funerary chamber with three collective burials containing the bones of more than 100 bodies (Fig. 4).³⁰ In addition to the same number, also the

28 SALLER 1941, 38–39.

29 Joh. Rufus. *V. Petri Ib.*, nr. 142. Transl. by HORN/PHENIX 2008, 273–275; BIANCHI 2018a, 42f., no. 26.

30 SANMORÌ 1998, 414 discusses the definition of this room, preferring not to consider it as a funeral chapel, due to the lack of an altar or liturgical supplies suitable for the celebration of Eucharistic rite; ALLIATA/BIANCHI 1998, 152–154 already proposed the construc-

tombs of room no. 21 have the so-called *pellaiikon* typology as tombs nos. 72–74.³¹ The funerary chamber was probably equipped with a system of some glass votive cups, as suggested by the metal wick-holders recovered in the excavation of S. Saller.³² The discovery of some almost intact upper skeletons and many buckles connected to lacerations of leather belts suggests that the burials had a primary character and that they have been used over time.³³ The peculiar place of the room suggests a potential connection with the privileged burial, but its location outside the church and the large number of bodies buried, strongly suggests that these funerary structures were intended for the burial of simple monks or perhaps of some lay donors.³⁴

The loss and alteration of the bones from the tombs excavated by S. Saller in the 1930s did not make the bio-archaeological study of human remains possible. However, radiocarbon dating and isotopic analysis were carried out on the skeletal remains found in the so-called funerary chapel of *hegumenos* Robebus located to the east of the main *coenobium*. The structure consists of a quadrangular room of 4.50 × 5.50 m, with a mosaic floor that includes an epitaph recalling the burial of the 'holy fathers' (beginning of the 6th c. AD) (Fig. 5).³⁵ Two hatches in the floor led to two funerary crypts divided into two distinct rooms in which multiple burials and fragments of oil lamps were found.³⁶ Between 2007 and 2010, Margaret Judd analysed the skeletal remains from the east crypt of the funerary chapel (Fig. 6).³⁷

The bio-archaeological analysis of dimorphic cranial features reveals that the burials contained skeletons of at least 73 bodies, but the anthropologists could estimate the age for only 46 individuals, presumed to have been monks. The age

tion of the two funerary chambers in the same chronological horizon. Recent archaeological investigations confirm this hypothesis. See SALLER 1941, 35–39, 126f.

31 Both tombs nos. 72–74 and in room 21 were closed by slabs of which one was perforated to facilitate the reopening of the burial. More in detail on the *pellaiikon* typology, see SALLER 1941, 37f.

32 SALLER 1941, 126, fig. 18, no. 3.

33 SALLER 1941, 126, fig. 18, nos. 1–2.

34 The tombs of room 21 have the same *pellaiikon* typology of tombs nos. 72–74. See in detail, SANMORI 1998, 414.

35 The inscription (I.Jordanie II 116 = SEG XL 1538) reads: Ἐπὶ τοῦ [θε]οσε[βεστάτου] | Ῥοβέβου [πρεσβ(υτέρου) καὶ ἡγουμέ-] | νου ἐκ θεμελίων ἐκτίσθη | ὁ τ[ό]πος τῶ[ν] πρεσβ(υτέρων) τῶν ἀνα- | πεπαυμέ[νων] ἐν ἀγίοις. (In the days of the most God-fearing priest and *hegumenos* Robebus, the [tomb of the priests] who are resting [among the saints] was built [from the foundations?; trans. by L. Di Segni]. DI SEGNI 1998, 437f., no. 34, n. 38 suggests that these tombs were intended to contain a few selected bodies and not collective burials. See also contribution GATIER in this volume.

36 PICCIRILLO/ALLIATA 1990, 403–404.

37 I would like to thank M. JUDD from the Department of Anthropology, University of Pittsburgh for sharing with me some information on her study and for sending me her last articles. For detailed analyzes, see JUDD 2007; JUDD 2008; JUDD 2010; JUDD/GREGORICKA/FORAN 2019; JUDD 2020.

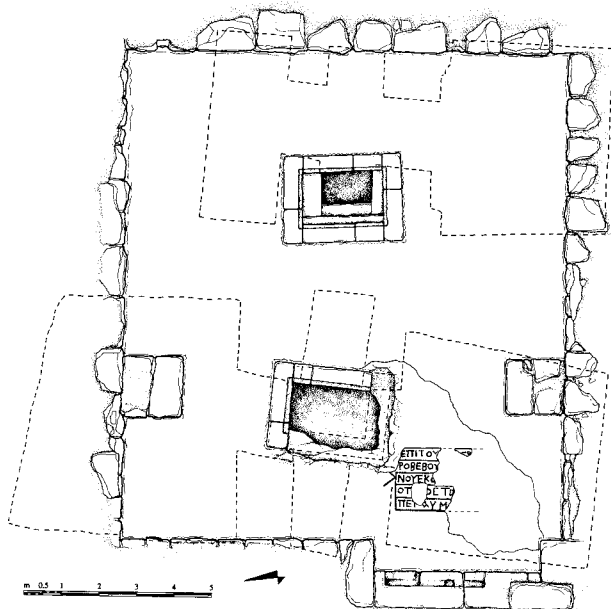


Fig. 5: Mt Nebo, plan of Robebus chapel.



Fig. 6: Mt Nebo, east crypt, south chamber of Robebus chapel, prior excavation.

ranges of the deceased were between 15 and 18 (one skeleton), 18 and 25 (four skeletons), 25 and 35 (twenty-one skeletons), 35 and 50 (nineteen skeletons one of which perhaps a female) and over 50 (one skeleton).³⁸ This data is interesting because very few female skeletons have been recovered in the monasteries of the provinces of *Palaestina* and *Arabia*, as for example at Deir 'Ain 'Abata.³⁹ Furthermore, the disposition of the bones shows that the deposition of the bodies did not occur simultaneously, but access to the crypt and burials continued over time. This practice is particularly evident through the addition of new bodies, which resulted in a disordered assembly of the skeletal remains (Fig. 7).⁴⁰ Among the most interesting results of the bio-archaeological analysis, M. Judd mentions that a number of skulls and ribs had small portions cut out after the burial – i.e. *postmortem* – seemingly as relics for other monks or pilgrims.⁴¹ The custom of reopening the tombs, especially those of monks who

had led a pious and charismatic life, to allow the burial of other bodies or the removal of fragments of bones is mentioned in some episodes of the *Spiritual Meadow* by John Moschus and in the *Life of Stephen the Sabaite* by Leontius of Damascus.⁴²

The isotopic examination of the bones also provided data on the monks' diet, suggesting that about half of the skeletal samples examined belonged to men who in their childhood consumed water and foodstuffs from the wider geographical context of the Arabian Peninsula before they reached the monastery of Nebo.⁴³ If the deceased buried in the funerary chapel of Robebus were monks, it is therefore



Fig. 7: Mt Nebo, Skeletal remains found in east crypt, north chamber of Robebus chapel.

³⁸ JUDD/GREGORICKA/FORAN 2019, 457f., tab. 2.

³⁹ GRUSPIER 2012, 421–448. Although bio-archaeological evidence does not allow affirming the sex of the skeleton with certainty, hagiographic sources recall the presence of women in male monastic communities, whose identity was often hidden by the monastic habit like the episodes of St Mary/Marinos and Matrona of *Perge* who disguised themselves as men to be admitted to monastic life. On the topic see, TALBOT 1996, 1–64.

⁴⁰ A really interesting fact is that many bones were laid in anatomical order, but not in anatomical position. JUDD 2008, 524.

⁴¹ JUDD 2008, 525 mentions that discs of bone had been removed from at least five of the skulls selected for this funerary practice.

⁴² Jo. Mosch, 91; Vit. S. Steph. 26, 2, 4. On this topic, see BIANCHI 2018a, 38.

⁴³ JUDD/GREGORICKA/FORAN 2019, 464.

possible to imagine a particularly heterogeneous ethnic component of the monastic community.

The topographical arrangement of the burials at Mt Nebo seems to find a parallel in some monasteries in the Judean Desert. The analysis of these monasteries by H. Goldfus shows that there was a division of the burial plots according to the monastic hierarchy.⁴⁴ Burials were reserved for the *hegumenos* and the leaders of the monastic community in the most prominent place of the church, while for ordinary members of the monastic clergy and possible lay people, the cumulative burials were located outside the inhabited areas of the monastic complex.⁴⁵

The funerary practice of collective burials in monastic complexes is also attested in the sanctuary of Lot at Deir 'Ain 'Abata, close to the village of Zoara-Ghor es-Safi in Jordan.⁴⁶ In the excavation area K.II, located to north of the monastic church, one disused cistern was converted into a communal burial chamber for the burial of twenty-eight adult males, most presumably monks, one adult female and three children.⁴⁷ Bio-archaeological analysis of the skeletal remains shows that a high percentage of the bodies presents signs of pathologies of chronic illnesses, suggesting that the monastery may have served as a hospice or hospital.⁴⁸ To the north of the cistern, there were several cist burials containing the single inhumations of one foetus, one infant, four children and one adult.⁴⁹ The most interesting archaeological evidence is the position of the tombs and common burial that was extremely close to the sacred cave set at the end of the church's north aisle. Since this place was the focus of the pilgrims' devotion, it is reasonable to assume that the deceased had intended to be buried next to this holy spot. The sacredness of the cave is also indicated by two secondary burials located in the back of the structure, with skeletal remains of two males, probably serving in some capacity as relics.⁵⁰

Familial Burials in Palestinian Ecclesiastical Complexes

In order to understand who could be buried in monastic foundations, special attention should be paid to funerary inscriptions, which in many cases indicate that the tombs could not have been intended only for monks. A good occurrence of fe-

44 This practice is particularly well attested in the monasteries of Euthymius and Martyrius, see GOLDFUS 2006, 415–417. More in details on these two monastic complexes, see HIRSCHFELD 1993; MAGEN 2015.

45 GOLDFUS 2006, 417.

46 More in detail on the excavation reports, see POLITIS 2012a.

47 For the analytical description of archaeological stratigraphy, see POLITIS 2012b, 145–150.

48 The severity of some skeletal traumata would suggest that some of these individuals were not self-sufficient, but they needed other people' physical assistance. GRUSPIER 2012, 447.

49 GRUSPIER 2012, 421–424.

50 GRUSPIER 2012, 447f. points out that many small bones of the skeletons are absent, in particular from hands and feet.

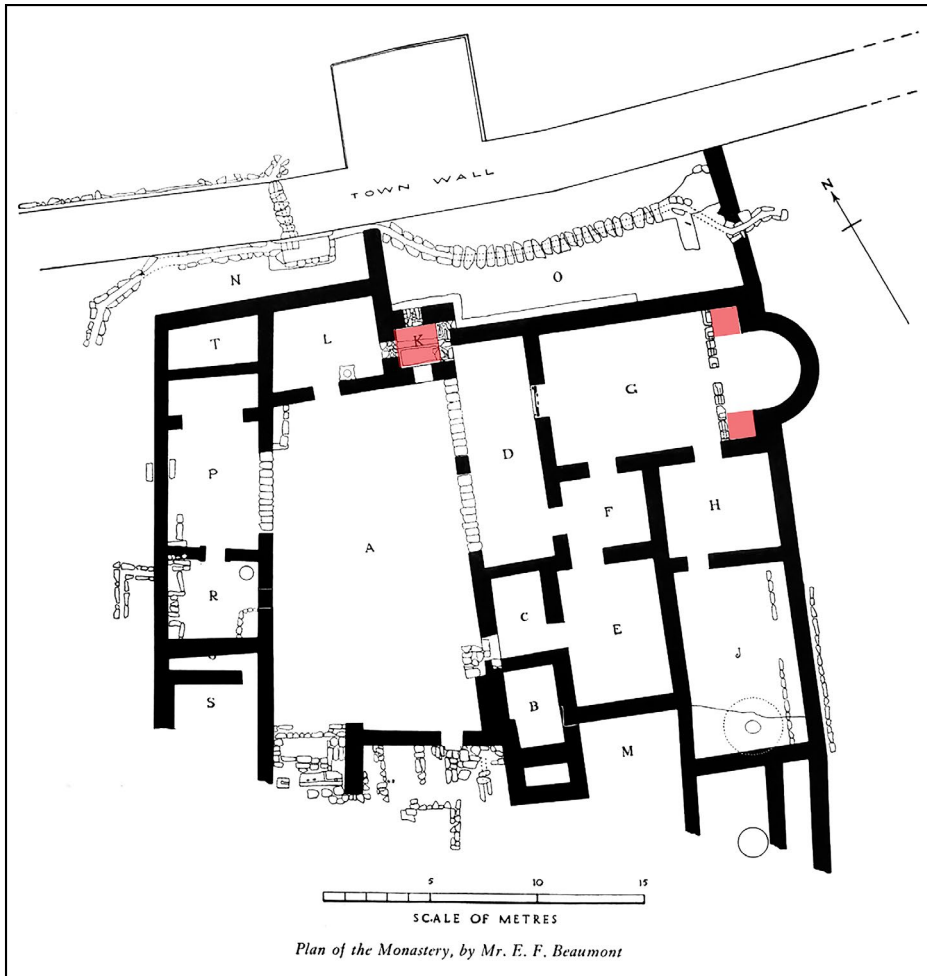


Fig. 8: *Scythopolis/Beth Shean*, plan of the monastery of Lady Mary with the funerary areas highlighted in red.

male names and lay titles on epitaphs and skeletons of women and children were found in churches in the lower Galilee and in the Negev as in Rehovot, *Nessana*, and Shivta, suggesting burials of lay people.⁵¹ The inhumation of lay members of the society would presumably be attributed to their direct financial involvement in founding and funding the monastic complex. Through their donations, people claimed for themselves the right to be buried in ecclesiastical buildings and in some cases, this privilege could be extended to other family members or even to future generations.⁵² Most likely, the lay founders or financiers chose to be buried in

51 GOLDFUS 1997, 176–236 discussed this topic in detail in his dissertation.

52 For similar evidence of distinct familial burial zones within Late Antique cemeteries and burial churches, see contributions ARDELEANU, MAINARDIS and MERTEN in this volume.

monastic foundations so that the monks could pray continually and constantly for their soul. An interesting case study of lay burials in ecclesiastical contexts is the monastery of *Kyria Maria* at *Scythopolis*/Beth Shean in Galilee.⁵³ The monastery, located in the northern part of the city, consists of two wings with several monastic rooms and a chapel arranged around a central courtyard (Fig. 8).⁵⁴ Many of the rooms in the monastery have mosaic floors of excellent technique, most of which date from the second half of the 6th c. AD.⁵⁵ Seven mosaic inscriptions that include information on the benefactors' identity were identified in the monastic complex; in particular, the inscription in the room in front of the chapel bears the name of the female donor Lady Mary (*Kyria Maria*), who contributed financially to the construction of the western wing.⁵⁶ According to L. Di Segni this sector of the monastery was built to accommodate a recluse monk named Elias.⁵⁷ Two burials are located inside the chapel in the presbytery area, a particularly privileged area given the proximity to the altar in order to gain the blessing and prayers for the deceased. Two very detailed mosaic inscriptions inform not only about the type of burial and the practice of reopening the tombs to bury new deceased, but also the right of the founders or benefactors to be buried in the monastery they financed (Fig. 9).⁵⁸ Both burials seem to have a familial character: in the northern inscription the recluse Elias buried his sister who died on 10th April AD 567, but the tomb was reopened later as indicated by the remainder of the mosaic inscription and the skeletal remains belonging to four individuals.⁵⁹ In the southern inscription, placed over a

53 For a detailed report on the excavation, see FITZGERALD 1939. See also TSAFRIR/FOERSTER 1997 for the urban planning of *Scythopolis* in the Byzantine age.

54 FITZGERALD 1939, 2–5. DI SEGNI 2017, 67 n. 24 proposes a review of the construction phases of the building and she suggests that the eastern wing of the monastery was built in the first phase, and the western one was added later.

55 FITZGERALD 1939, 5–10; GOLDFUS 1997, 217.

56 The inscription reads: + Χ(ριστ)ἔ ὁ θ(εὸς) Σωτήρ τοῦ κόσμου, ἐλέησον | τὴν φιλ(ώ)χ(ριστο)ν κυρ(ι)αν Μαρίαν κ(αι) τὸν | ταύτης υἱὸν Μάξιμον, κ(αι) ἀνα- | παύσον τοὺς αὐτῶν γ(ο)νεῖς, | εὐχαῖς πάντων τῶν ἁγίων· Ἀμήν. (O Christ the God, saviour of the world, have mercy upon the Christ-loving Lady Mary and her son Maximos, and grant rest to their forefathers, through the prayers of all the saints, amen; trans. by FitzGerald). FITZGERALD 1939, 14, n. 3. DI SEGNI 2017, 67 suggests that this wing was built to accommodate a recluse monk named Elias.

57 DI SEGNI 2017, 67.

58 FITZGERALD 1939, 14f., n. 3f.

59 The inscription SEG VIII 40 reads: + ὅπου ἐστὶν τό στεφαν(ο)σταυρί(ο)ν | ἐκ(ε)ῖ κεῖτ(αι) τὸ πελλαϊκόν τοῦ | στόματος τοῦ μνημ(ε)ίου | ἔχον κρικ<ε>ία. Ἐνθα κατέθ(η)κα | τὴν φιλόχ(ριστό)ν μου ἀδελφὴν | Γεωργίαν ἐγὼ Ἥλ(ε)ίας ἐλάχιστ[ος] | ἐλέει Θε(ο)ῦ ἐ(γ)κλ(ει)στός· ἀν(ε)πά- | (η) δὲ μην(ι) Μαῖω | τετάρτη, Ἰνδικτι(ῶ)νος | πεντεκ[αιδ]εκάτης, | ἡμέρα δὲ ἦν [τῆς Μ]εσο(ο)- | πεντηκοστ[ῆς] “+ (Where the wreath-cross is, there lies the *pellaiikon* of the mouth of the tomb, having rings. There have I laid my Christ-Loving sister Georgia, I Elias, by the mercy of God a most lowly recluse; now she died on the fourth day in the month of May of the fifteenth indiction, moreover it was the day of Mesopentecost; trans. by FitzGerald). After FITZGERALD 1939, 15.

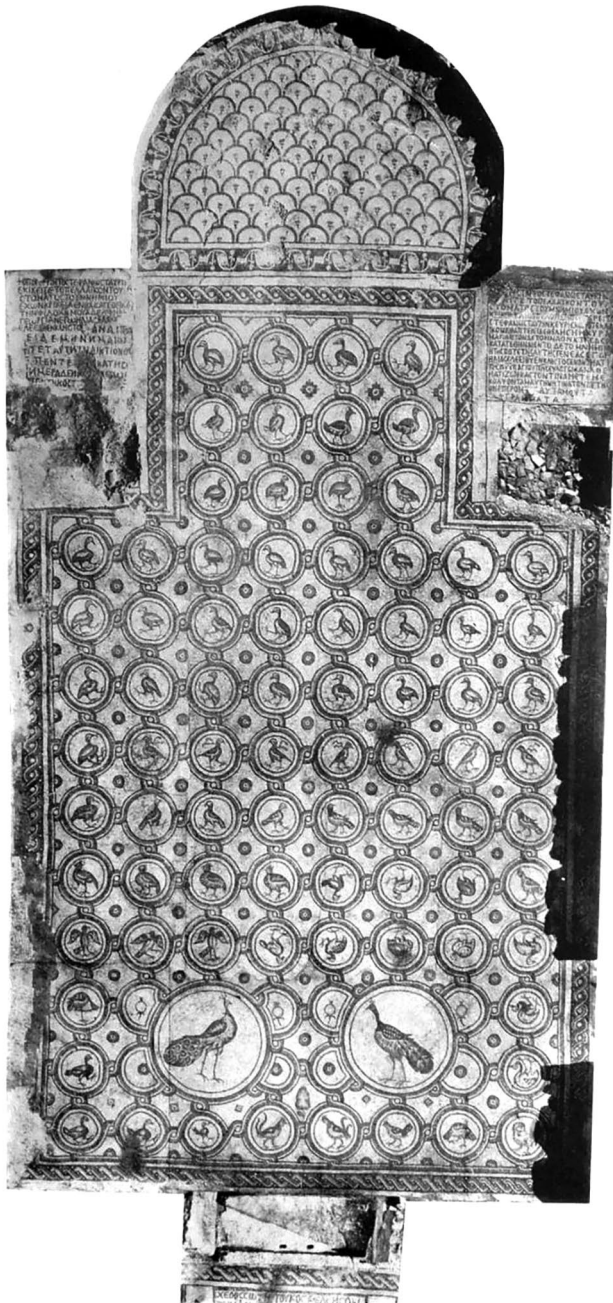


Fig. 9: *Scythopolis/Beth Shean*, chapel in the monastery of Lady Mary.

burial containing two individuals, the right of the benefactress Lady Mary and her descendants to be buried in the church is made explicit.⁶⁰ The tomb seems to have been a private family burial place for Lady Mary's heirs, whose burial privilege was strongly reaffirmed in the epitaph through an anathema against anyone who would have hindered this practice or removed the inscription.⁶¹

A funerary chamber was built in the north-eastern corner of the courtyard; some bones and two skulls were found under the fragments of the mosaic floor, which according to Gerald M. FitzGerald was intentionally broken in some parts to allow the tomb to be reopened. In front of the entrance to the room, a mosaic inscription invokes Christ for the protection of Lord John, *gloriosissimus* ex-prefect and his blessed house, who is most likely identified as another donor of the monastery together with other benefactors mentioned in a second inscription set at the southern edge of the hall in front of the chapel.⁶² Given the proximity of the inscription to the funerary chamber, it is possible that Lord John, like Lady Mary, wished to be buried together with his heirs in the monastic complex.

60 The inscription [SEG VIII 39](#) reads: [+ὄπο]υ ἐστὶν τό στεφαν(ο)σταυρί(ο)ν | [ἐκ(ε)ῖ κ]εῖτ(αι) τὸ πελλαϊκόν τοῦ | στόματος τοῦ μνημ(ε)ίου ἔχ(ο)ν | κρικ<ε> ἰα· καὶ ὁ βουλόμενος ἐπ(αι) ρει τὸ | στεφαν(ο)σταυρί(ο)ν κ(αι) εὐρίσκει το πελλα- | ῖκὸν κ(αι) θάπτει. Εἰ δέ θελήσῃ ἡ κυρ(ι)α | Μαρία (ἡ) τόνδε τὸν ναὸν κτ(ι)σασα | κατατεθῆναι ἐν τ(ῶ)δε τ(ῶ) μνημ(ε)ίῳ, | ἢ τ(ι)ς ποτέ τῆς αὐτῆς γενεᾶς, ἐγὼ | Ἥλ(ε)ίας, ἐλέει θε(ο)ῦ ἐ(γ)κλ(ει)στός, ἐν ὀνόματι | Π(ατ) ρ(ός) κ(αι) Υ(ίο)ῦ κ(αι) Ἁγίου | Πν(εύματος) εὐλογῶ κ(αι) ἀναθε- | ματίζω ἕκαστόν τινα μετ' ἐμέ | κ(ω)λύοντα ἢ αὐτήν ἢ τινα τ(ῶ)ν αὐτῆς | ἢ κ(αι) ἐπ(αι)ροντα ταῦτά μου τὰ | + γράμματα + (+ Where the wreath-cross is, there lies the *pellaikon* of the mouth of the tomb, having rings; and he who wishes lifts up the wreath-cross and finds the *pellaikon* and buries the dead. But if Lady Mary, who founded this church, desires to be laid in this tomb – or anyone of her family at any time – I, Elias, by the mercy of God a recluse, in the name of Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost curse and anathematize everyone after me that hinders her or any of hers, or that takes up this my + inscription +; trans. by FitzGerald). After FITZGERALD 1939, 14f.

61 Through the mosaic inscription, it was possible to visually reiterate the privilege of burial.

62 The inscription in front of the burial chamber reads: + Χ(ριστ)ὲ ὁ θε(ός)ς ἡμῶν, σκέπη κ(αι) ἀντιλημψίς γενοῦ | κυρ(ι)οῦ Ἰωάννου ἐνδοξ(ο)τάτου ἀπὸ ἐπάρχων κ(αι) τοῦ | εὐλογημένου αὐτοῦ οἴκου, εὐχ(αῖ)ς τῶν Ἁγίων· + Ἀμήν (O Christ our God, be the protector and succour of Lord John, *gloriosissimus* ex-prefect, and of all his blessed house, through the prayers of the saints, amen.; trans. by L. Di Segni). After FITZGERALD 1939, 14, no. 2. DI SEGNI 2017, 68 discusses the inscription in detail and suggests that John was a member of the senatorial aristocracy. The second one reads: + Πρ(οσφορά) (?) ὑπὲρ [μν]ήμης κ(αι) τελ(ε)ίας ἐν | Χ(ριστ)ῶ ἀναπαύσεως Ζωσίμου | Ἰλουστρίου κ(αι) σωτηρίας κ(αι) ἀντιλήμψεως Ἰωάννου | ἐνδοξ(ο)τάτου ἀπὸ ἐπάρχων κ(αι) Πέτρου | κ(αι) Ἀναστασίου φιλοχρίστων | κομίτων κ(αι) παντὸς τοῦ εὐλογ(η)μέν(ου) | αὐτῶν οἴκου, εὐχ[αῖ]ς τῶν Ἁγίων· Ἀμήν + (Offering for the memory and perfect rest in Christ of the *illustri*s Zosimos, and the preservation and succour of John, *gloriosissimus* ex-prefect, and of Petros and Anastasios, Christ-loving *comites*, and of all their blessed house, through the prayers of the saints, amen; trans. by L. Di Segni). After FITZGERALD 1939, 13f., no. 1; DI SEGNI 2017, 68.

The practice of family burials within churches is also attested in the Negev, particularly in *Nessana*/Tell Nitzana, where some epitaphs over the graves in the two aisles of the North Church, recall the burial of members of an important local family: the priest and *hegumenos* Sergios, his son Patricius and the daughter of the latter, Maria.⁶³

Funerary Goods in Umm er-Rasas

Archaeological evidence suggests that the privilege of being buried within churches was granted to a limited number of people in this area. In addition to epitaphs, an indicator of the presence of subjects not related to the clergy can come from funerary goods. Well known is the Roman and Late Antique custom of dressing the deceased in clothes that they used to wear during their life, and of equipping them with objects that belonged to them and to their status.⁶⁴ In Umm er-Rasas several burials in the churches of the northern district of the settlement were found.⁶⁵ The excavations in the church of Bishop Sergios, in the Court Church, in the St Stephen basilica and in the Aedicula Church show several pit tombs built with blocks of masonry stones with an east-west orientation and covered by large slabs as well as a hypogean funerary chapel.⁶⁶ In most of the cases the bodies, at least two or more per tomb, were laid supine with their head turned to the West and accompanied by funerary goods, mainly jewels. The most significant case of possible lay burials is in the so-called Court Church, dated to the beginning of the 7th c. AD, where two rectangular pit tombs covered with four stone slabs and characterized by the usual east-west orientation were recognized.⁶⁷ Inside the polysomic burials, archaeologists found the skeletons of sixteen bodies and a large group of funerary goods, including necklaces of glass paste beads, a bone crest needle, finger-rings, bracelets, copper crosses, and small fragments of iron chain metallic bracelets, which were probably worn by the deceased at the time of the burial (Fig. 10).⁶⁸ The presence of three iron buckles with a fixed fitting, typically belonging to male clothes, suggests that the bodies were men.⁶⁹ In addition to the personal jewellery items, glass ves-

63 For the description of the excavations of the church, see COLT 1962, 17–20; in greater detail on the burials, GOLDFUS 1997, 82–87; for the [epitaph of Sergios and Patricius](#), see COLT 1962, 140f., no. 12; for [Maria's epitaph](#), see COLT 1962, 140f., no. 14.

64 This issue is extensively studied, see VIELLA 2020, 140–151 with further literature; EGER 2003. For the Jordanian context an interesting comparison are the funerary goods found in the rock chamber necropolis of Khirbet Yajuz; see EGER 2018, 156–161.

65 For a general study on the church's excavations in Umm er-Rasas, see PICCIRILLO/ALLIATA 1994.

66 On this topic, see BIANCHI 2018a, 51.

67 PICCIRILLO 1991, 345f., fig. 10; ALLIATA 1991, 379.

68 ALLIATA 1991, 369, 379–382.

69 EGER 2018, 165; EGER 2003, 163–178.



Fig. 10: Umm er-Rasas, funerary goods found in the burials of the Court Church.



Fig. 11: Umm er-Rasas, funerary goods found in the burial of the Aedicula Church.

sels and *balsamaria* were found in the burial places of the Aedicula Church at Umm er-Rasas (Fig. 11)⁷⁰. These vitreous finds, which may have had a ritual function, are not isolated cases in the province of *Arabia* as shown by the juglets found in a tomb close to the Western Church of Ma'in some of which were eulogia glass vessels.⁷¹ Unfortunately, no bio-archaeological investigation has so far been carried out on the bones to identify their biological sex; however, the privileged burial place inside the churches of the ecclesiastical complex of St Stephen would suggest that members of the local elite could be buried in these tombs.

Conclusions

The interpretation of the funerary customs in churches of the Provinces of *Palaestina* and *Arabia* is a complex issue due to the lack of archaeologically well-dated burials, and by the limited presence of funerary goods and epitaphs. Indeed, in many cases the absence of these key-elements does not allow knowing the identity and the status of the deceased. Therefore, an interdisciplinary approach to the analysis of the funerary contexts, which contemplates not only the archaeological data of the tombs with their grave goods, but also the epigraphic records, the shape and structure of the burials, their topographical distribution and the anthropological study of the organic remains is essential.

It is important to mention that the discovery of numerous cemetery areas in the provinces of *Palaestina* and *Arabia* of the Byzantine era, characterized by tombstones that contain information on the deceased, the age and the cause of death, shows that most of the population were buried in the necropolises and not in churches.⁷²

Almost all the burials in the churches of the provinces of *Palaestina* and *Arabia* are multiple depositions where several bodies are accumulated or moved, disturbing the original burial sequence. The analysis of the burials presented in this paper shows that their presence and position was not accidental. Indeed, the location of the burial within the church and its structural configuration are factors that in Christian funerary contexts begin to assume a decisive importance in the social differentiation of the deceased. The most common type of burial analysed is that of

70 For the analysis of these objects, see ALLIATA 1991, 369, 372–378.

71 For the analysis of the excavation of the western church of Ma'in, see PICCIRILLO 1985, 349; MICHEL 2001, 371–373. For more details on the glass vessels with other *comparanda* in Jordan, see BARAG 1985, 367–374. Some of the finger-rings and bracelets found in the burials of the Aedicula Church at Umm er-Rasas still encircled the bones of the hands and the arms of the deceased. For glass and jewellery as grave goods in other Late Antique contexts, see contributions ARDELEANU, PRIEN and MERTEN in this volume.

72 Christian cemeteries with hundreds of tombstones on the south side of Ghor es-Safi, Khirbet es-Samra, and Karak have been identified in the territory of present-day Jordan. On this topic, see SCHICK 2018, 177f.; on funerary epigraphy in Early Byzantine *Arabia*, see contribution GATIER in this volume.

ordinary people (clergy or lay) set below the church pavement in the nave, in the side aisles, outside the church or in special funeral chambers, reserving the area of the *presbyterium* for the clergy or for the so-called sepulchres *ad sanctos*. The epigraphic evidence suggests that an ecclesiastical authority governed burial habits in sacred spaces through specific rules. In some cases, as in the case of the monastery of *Kyria Maria* at Beth Shean, in addition to donating or financially supporting these ecclesiastical complexes, lay members of society could found a monastery that would become a family chapel whose members might have had the right to be buried there. However, from the limited cases known so far only a small number of people had this privilege. Unfortunately, the identities of the buried individuals are known from inscriptions only in a few cases.

In monastic complexes, a particular role was linked to the hierarchy of the clergy, and it is possible to assume that individuals buried alone in the most prominent part of the church held high ecclesiastical ranks. The recent bio-archaeological investigations on the skeletal remains carried out in particular in the funerary contexts of Mt Nebo and of Lot's sanctuary in Deir 'Ain 'Abata are particularly useful for scientific research. The results of the analysis can add new data not only on the state of health of the deceased, on their diet and origin, but also on the internal social structure of the monastic community. Indeed, the results of isotopic analysis suggests that almost half of the people buried at Mt Nebo spent their childhood in a non local context, showing that these people arrived at the Memorial of Moses sometime later in life.⁷³ These elements indicate that the two monastic shrines had not only local importance, but that they were crossroads of monks and pilgrims from a wider regional context.

The burials inside the monastic and rural churches are very interesting case studies within the funerary landscapes of the Late Antique Levant. The investigation of these sepulchral realities, which involved numerous disciplines of funerary research, has allowed not only to better define the funerary customs in the context under examination, but also their social, devotional and commemorative implications.

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PIERRE-LOUIS GATIER

L'épigraphie et les pratiques funéraires dans la province protobyzantine d'Arabie (IV^e–VII^e s. apr. J.-C.)

Introduction

Dans les années récentes, les travaux d'archéologie funéraire au Proche-Orient ont connu un essor nouveau surtout orienté vers la période phare du Haut-Empire romain.¹ Publiée il y a une vingtaine d'années, la thèse d'Annie Sartre-Fauriat sur les tombeaux de l'actuelle Syrie du Sud – région parfois définie comme le Hauran et correspondant approximativement au Nord de la province d'Arabie – avait ouvert la voie et déjà s'était intéressée à la période protobyzantine.² Face à la rareté des publications de fouilles en ce domaine, sa méthode consistait à réunir les descriptions des voyageurs, la documentation épigraphique et les observations personnelles de terrain issues de ses prospections régionales. Depuis lors, d'autres travaux de terrain plus ponctuels ont eu lieu, dont des fouilles de nécropoles et de tombeaux d'époque protobyzantine, mais presque exclusivement dans la partie jordanienne de la province d'Arabie, sur des sites comme Yajuz et Khirbat al-Samra. Ils ont été publiés de façon plus ou moins complète, et ont aussi produit de nouvelles études d'une ambition plus limitée que la thèse d'A. Sartre-Fauriat, visant, sinon la synthèse, du moins la confrontation des informations.³

La province tardo-antique d'Arabie, avec pour capitale *Bostra*, la moderne Bosra/Buṣrā, s'étend sur la partie méridionale de la Syrie actuelle et sur la moitié nord de la Jordanie. Dans l'Antiquité tardive, à l'époque protobyzantine, c'est à dire entre les années 330 et les années 630 apr. J.-C., le territoire de l'Arabie est assez différent de ce qu'il avait été en 106 après J.-C., au moment de l'annexion du royaume nabatéen et de sa rédaction en province. Comme celui des provinces voisines de Palestine, il résulte de plusieurs découpages et changements de frontières. Ici, je retiendrai le découpage provincial final, dans la première moitié du V^e s. apr. J.-C., avec une frontière sud qui a été remontée au wadi Mujib, vers la latitude médiane de la mer Morte.⁴ Cette Arabie réduite reste celle que définissent par la suite des

1 DE JONG 2017.

2 SARTRE-FAURIAT 2001, vol. 2, particulièrement 213–229. Je remercie Annie Sartre-Fauriat et Maurice Sartre, et de même Julien Aliquot et Jean-Baptiste Yon de leur aide généreuse pour les illustrations du présent article.

3 EGER/MACKENSEN 2018. Voir EGER 2018 et SCHICK 2018.

4 SARTRE 1982, 64–75; DI SEGNI 2018.

documents du VI^e s. apr. J.-C., comme les listes civiles du *Synekdémos* de Hiéroklys et de *l'Opuscule géographique* de Georges de Chypre ou la liste ecclésiastique de la *Notitia Antiochena*.⁵ À cette époque, deux régions voisines d'où proviennent une grande quantité d'inscriptions funéraires chrétiennes ne faisaient plus partie de la province d'Arabie, mais avaient été rattachées à la province de Palestine Troisième :

– d'une part le Sud de la mer Morte autour des cités antiques de Zôora et Phainô, secteur connu par la publication, due à Yiannis Meimaris et son équipe,⁶ de plus de 450 stèles chrétiennes inscrites en grec et de 75 stèles juives inscrites en araméen ou très rarement bilingues, à laquelle on peut ajouter quelques publications supplémentaires,⁷ sans parler des nombreuses stèles inédites dispersées ; le secteur de Zôora rattaché à la Palestine sous la Tétrarchie, en même temps que des cités plus méridionales comme Pétra, a continué par la suite à utiliser l'ère de la province d'Arabie ;

– d'autre part le pays de Moab, autour des cités de *Charachmoba* (moderne Karak/Kéarak) et d'Aréopolis (moderne Rabba), connu par la publication de 428 textes grecs par Reginetta Canova en 1954,⁸ complétée par diverses publications séparées,⁹ qui ne suffisent pas, là encore, à prendre en compte tous les textes funéraires inédits et dispersés ; ce pays de Moab, rattaché à la Palestine Troisième dans la première moitié du V^e s. apr. J.-C., a continué lui aussi à utiliser l'ère de la province d'Arabie.

Ces considérations de géographie historique pourraient sembler inutiles, formalistes et vétilleuses, dans la mesure où beaucoup de savants s'habituent à travailler soit dans les limites des frontières politiques ou militaires modernes, soit en regroupant l'Arabie avec les provinces antiques de Palestine, mais parfois en négligeant le Hauran dans le Nord de la province d'Arabie, aujourd'hui en Syrie du Sud avec sa bordure jordanienne. Ces délimitations ont leurs justifications et il n'est pas besoin de rappeler que les phénomènes culturels se jouent des appartenances administratives et des limites provinciales : on se doute que l'attribution de Zôora et du pays de Moab à la Palestine n'a pas bouleversé l'ensemble des habitudes funéraires de ces régions. Toutefois, il me semble que les appartenances religieuses

5 HONIGMANN 1925.

6 I.Zoora Ia–c, trois ouvrages publiés entre 2005 et 2016. La plupart des inscriptions proviennent de la nécropole de Zôora (al-Naq'a) et quelques-unes des sites de Feinan, l'ancienne *Phaino*, et de Khirbat Qazone. Voir BE 2006, 492; BE 2009, 529–530; BE 2017, 615.

7 BADER/HABASH 2012 (SEG LXII 1697); BADER/HABASH 2013 (SEG LXII 1635); ZELLMANN-ROHRER 2019.

8 I.Moab. Le terme biblique de « pays de Moab » ne s'employait plus dans la géographie civile romaine et byzantine.

9 MOUTERDE 1957; CORBO 1963–1964; PICCIRILLO 1989, 112f. n° 10 (attribué à tort à Madaba où il a été retrouvé), 117f. n°s 18f., de Kéarak ou sa région (SEG XXXIX 1668, 1669, 1670); PICCIRILLO 2003 (SEG LIII 1900); MEIMARIS/MAHASNEH/KRITIKAKOU-NIKOLAROPOULOU 2007; ALIQUOT/AL-SHDAIFAT/WEBER 2014 (SEG LXIV 1831–1837); GATIER et al. 2017, 347, n° 9 (J. Aliquot); ALIQUOT 2018; ALIQUOT/AL-SHDAIFAT 2020.



Fig. 1: La province protobyzantine d'Arabie dans ses frontières du milieu du 5^e s. apr. J.-C.

ont du sens et que la création du patriarcat de Jérusalem en 451 apr. J.-C. a institué ou conforté une forte séparation entre l'Arabie, restée soumise au patriarche d'Antioche, et les trois provinces de Palestine, dépendantes de Jérusalem. La province d'Arabie, recentrée autour de *Bostra* à partir de la deuxième moitié du 5^e s. apr. J.-C., est cohérente, géographiquement et culturellement (Fig. 1). Rappelons pour la bonne compréhension de la situation, que la *chôra* de la cité de *Bostra* est particulièrement vaste et qu'elle s'étend loin vers le sud, à l'intérieur de l'actuelle Jordanie, en englobant des sites archéologiques importants, comme Rihab, Khirbat al-Samra¹⁰ et Umm al-Jimāl, tous trois riches d'inscriptions.

En dessinant les contours de l'épigraphie funéraire chrétienne, et en m'intéressant particulièrement aux stèles, je m'attacherai à montrer les évolutions par rapport à la période précédente – le Haut-Empire ou époque impériale – et à définir les particularités qui distinguent l'Arabie des régions voisines. Il sera aussi question du découpage micro-régional qui permet de reconnaître des typologies

¹⁰ Le nom du site, « la ruine sombre », se rencontre sous les formes Khirbat al-Samra/Khirbet es-Samra ou simplement Samra dans la littérature moderne.

locales. Les limites de l'exercice sont bien connues, même si l'avancement rapide de la publication des volumes du corpus en Jordanie et surtout en Syrie – grâce au zèle et au talent de Maurice Sartre et d'A. Sartre-Fauriat – offre une documentation abondante de première importance.¹¹ D'une part, l'épigraphie, particulièrement l'épigraphie funéraire, s'intéresse à des documents qui ont été trouvés de manière aléatoire, souvent à la suite de pillages, et qui sont plus ou moins décontextualisés, presque jamais associés avec la tombe ou le tombeau où ils figuraient à l'origine. Qui plus est, les rares inscriptions funéraires issues de fouilles régulières ont bien souvent été découvertes en usage secondaire, parce qu'elles avaient été remployées auparavant. D'autre part, les travaux archéologiques souffrent, dans la zone qui me concerne ici, d'insuffisances : petit nombre de nécropoles et de tombeaux fouillés et publiés,¹² datations souvent imprécises (« Roman-Byzantine ») – dues parfois à l'habitude constante de réutiliser les mêmes tombeaux et les mêmes tombes pendant des siècles – rareté des études bio-anthropologiques et surtout pillages massifs, anciens et récents.¹³ Il y a un siècle environ, au cours d'une visite en 1924, le Père Raphaël Savignac pouvait observer à Khirbat al-Samra des stèles funéraires apparemment proches de leur emplacement initial, peut-être simplement renversées, mais aussi une nécropole déjà largement ravagée.¹⁴

L'épigraphie funéraire chrétienne

Épitaphes, « inscriptions de propriété » et donations funéraires

La première question pourrait être : qu'est-ce qu'une inscription funéraire ? Plutôt que d'y répondre de manière globale et universelle, restons dans l'Arabie protobyzantine où les inscriptions que l'on peut définir comme funéraires se répartissent en trois catégories. On trouve d'une part des épitaphes, c'est-à-dire des inscriptions du type « ci-gît untel » qui sont gravées sur des stèles, ou plus rarement sur des sarcophages ou des linteaux de monuments, alors qu'on ne connaît pas ou presque pas, semble-t-il, en Arabie à l'époque protobyzantine, de plaque d'obturation de *loculus* inscrite.¹⁵ Ces épitaphes peuvent être plus ou moins développées, parfois réduites à un nom unique, à peine plus bavardes que les stèles anépigraphes ornées d'une simple croix qu'on trouve dans les mêmes sites.

11 <https://igls.mom.fr> (consulté le 10/02/2021).

12 EGER 2018, 149f., résume la situation et signale les travaux disponibles et les sites concernés, essentiellement en Jordanie.

13 On pourrait multiplier les exemples. L'aire sépulcrale de Zizia, selon PICCIRILLO 2002, 382, a été « sistematicamente saccheggiata da tombaroli senza scrupoli ».

14 SAVIGNAC 1925.

15 On peut cependant hésiter en ce qui concerne certaines épitaphes lapidaires aux allures de plaques, épaisses et plus larges que hautes, par exemple I.Gerasa 354.

On trouve d'autre part des textes qu'A. Sartre-Fauriat définit comme « inscriptions de propriété », « cartouches de propriété », ou « inscriptions de fondation », qui sont en général des dédicaces gravées sur des linteaux ou d'autres blocs de murs de tombeaux monumentaux, hypogées ou mausolées.¹⁶ Ces inscriptions du type « untel a fait le tombeau » désignent le propriétaire ou le fondateur, mais parfois aussi les occupants du bâtiment sépulcral. Les « inscriptions de propriété » peuvent apparaître souvent comme des épitaphes développées, en ne se distinguant pas toujours très bien des épitaphes simples, avec des formulaires du type « ci-git untel qui a fait le tombeau ». Mais elles peuvent également être plus amples et, par exemple, en Arabie, les épigrammes funéraires semblent pratiquement réservées à ces « inscriptions de fondation » ou « de propriété ». Au IV^e et au début du V^e s. apr. J.-C., elles sont presque exclues des stèles d'Arabie, alors qu'elles ne sont pas rares sur les stèles protobyzantines du pays de Moab.

À Umm al-Jimāl, village ou plutôt bourg de la *chôra* de *Bostra*, une célèbre épigramme témoigne de cette catégorie de textes funéraires :¹⁷

Ιουλιανου τóδε μνήμα, μακρῶ βεβαρημέν[ου] ὕπν[ω],
 ᾧ Ἄγαθος δείματο πατήρ κατὰ δάκρυ[ον] εἶ[βω]ν,
 κοιμητηρίου παρὰ τέρμα κοινου λαοῦ Χριστου
 ὄφρ' αὐτὸν αἰδοιοεν ἀμείνων εἰς αἰὲ λαός
 ἀμφά{ι}δια, Ἀγάθω πάροιθεν πρεσβυτέρω
 πιστόντ·α· ἔοντ' ἀγαπητόν, ἐτέων ἰβ' ὄντα.
 ἔτο(υς) σλθ'.

Ce tombeau (est celui) de Ioulianos, alourdi par un long sommeil, pour qui Agathos son père, en versant des larmes, l'a construit près de la clôture du cimetière de la communauté du peuple du Christ, pour que le meilleur peuple le célèbre pour toujours publiquement, lui qui était auparavant (le fils) fidèle (et) bien aimé d'Agathos le prêtre et qui était âgé de douze ans, en l'an 239 [344/345 apr. J.-C.] (trad. N. Bader, *I.Jordanie V,1 323*).

L'épigramme apprend l'existence, à une date relativement haute, d'un *koimeterion* (κοιμητήριον) chrétien dans le bourg. Ce terme formé à partir du verbe *κεῖμαι*, « reposer, être couché », est presque exclusivement réservé au vocabulaire chrétien. Ici, il ne doit pas être traduit « cimetière ». Éric Rebillard, dans une étude approfondie du mot *κοιμητήριον/coemeterium* et de son usage dans la littérature et dans les inscriptions du monde antique, a observé que le sens de « nécropole chrétienne,

16 SARTRE-FAURIAT 2001, vol. 2, 104–138.

17 Je redonne le texte, dont l'établissement crée encore des difficultés, et la traduction tels qu'ils sont fournis par *I.Jordanie V,1 323*. Sur le contenu du texte et sa citation évangélique, voir AGOSTI 2016, 134 f.; AGOSTI 2018, 316 f.

cimetière » n'apparaissait que très rarement et pas avant le VI^e s. apr. J.-C. Généralement, comme on le constate dans l'épigraphie chrétienne d'autres régions, il désigne une « tombe » ou un « tombeau » et, parfois, une tombe sainte aménagée pour être vénérée, en particulier celle d'un martyr, ce que l'on nomme un *martyrion*.¹⁸ À Umm al-Jimāl, au IV^e s. apr. J.-C., le contenu de l'épigramme semble exclure la notion de *martyrion*. Tout en laissant de côté, pour l'instant, les autres difficultés d'établissement et de traduction de ce texte,¹⁹ on pourrait au troisième vers rattacher κοινοῦ (adjectif plutôt que substantif) à κοιμητηρίου, et traduire « tombeau commun du peuple du Christ », plutôt que « cimetière de la communauté du peuple du Christ ». De la même façon, il convient probablement de traduire au premier vers μνημα par « tombe » plutôt que « tombeau ». Le jeune Ioulianos était enseveli dans une tombe individuelle ou familiale aménagée à l'intérieur d'un plus vaste tombeau, le κοιμητήριον.

Cette inscription [I.Jordanie V,1 323](#), a été trouvée dans le secteur nord-ouest de l'agglomération d'Umm al-Jimāl, à l'intérieur du mur d'enceinte, dans un complexe ecclésial que les archéologues ont nommé depuis lors « église de Julianos », bien que le bâtiment même de l'église soit certainement postérieur à l'inscription et que l'ensemble comporte plusieurs phases.²⁰ À moins que les deux blocs de ce linteau aient été déplacés, le texte montrerait que le tombeau commun, c'est-à-dire collectif, avait été construit dans ce secteur par les chrétiens, à une époque où, même s'ils n'étaient peut-être pas majoritaires dans le bourg, ils pouvaient imposer certaines de leurs pratiques. Le tombeau se trouvait donc à l'intérieur de l'agglomération et non pas hors les murs, comme l'auraient voulu les usages précédents. On peut supposer que ce tombeau était d'abord destiné au clergé et qu'il n'était pas sans rapport avec un édifice cultuel, peut-être le prédécesseur de « l'église de Julianos ».

Quoi qu'il en soit, le « cimetière », comme nécropole aménagée et délimitée pour la communauté chrétienne d'Umm al-Jimāl, doit disparaître de la littérature savante, remplacé par un « tombeau ». D'ailleurs, les nécropoles d'Umm al-Jimāl, telles qu'elles ont été étudiées il y a quelques années,²¹ ne présentent nulle part l'apparence de cet introuvable cimetière chrétien. Elles sont éparpillées à l'extérieur du bourg tout autour de l'enceinte et le long des différentes routes et voies d'accès. Elles ne sont pas entourées par des murs et leurs installations – tombeaux monumentaux en petit nombre mêlés à de nombreuses tombes à fosse ou à ciste – remontent à l'époque impériale romaine. Avec des réoccupations de tombes anciennes, c'est un enchevêtrement constant, qui dure sans interruption jusqu'à l'époque que les auteurs de l'étude considèrent comme « Early Byzantine », terme

18 REBILLARD 1993; SARTRE-FAURIAT 2001, vol. 2, 225f.

19 Faudrait-il donner un sens moral abstrait à παρὰ τέρμα ?

20 MICHEL 2001, 169; l'église aurait été construite sur une ancienne maison [ce qui reste à confirmer] et, de plus, elle aurait été remaniée.

21 CHEYNEY et al. 2009, 355, 357f. Voir la liste des cinq tombeaux monumentaux, SARTRE-FAURIAT 2001, vol. 1, 201–212, tous d'époque impériale.

qui chez eux désigne le IV^e et le V^e s. apr. J.-C. Par ailleurs, les inhumations postérieures, celles des VI^e et VII^e s. apr. J.-C., ne semblent pas, à l'heure actuelle, avoir été retrouvées sur le site ou dans ses environs.

Dans l'ensemble de la province, les inscriptions dites « de propriété » ou « de fondation », sont diverses, mais elles se concentrent essentiellement dans le nord. Les tombeaux-pigeonniers du Hauran, par exemple, presque tous érigés dans le courant du IV^e s. et au début du V^e s. apr. J.-C., ont livré neuf textes de ce type, souvent des épigrammes. A. Sartre-Fauriat et M. Sartre considèrent que tous ces tombeaux-pigeonniers du Hauran appartenaient à des chrétiens,²² même si le plus ancien bâtiment de ce type que l'on connaisse se trouvait dans la nécropole sud de Philadelphie (moderne Amman), était indubitablement païen et datait de l'époque romaine.²³ Ailleurs en Arabie, les inscriptions funéraires « de propriété » comprennent aussi, à l'époque protobyzantine, des mosaïques de pavement inscrites qui identifient des tombes collectives de moines dans des ensembles monastiques, comme la chapelle dite « de Robebos » à l'est du couvent du Mont Nébo ou comme un monastère à Kfeir Abu Sarbut près de Madaba.²⁴

Il me semble qu'il existe une troisième catégorie d'inscriptions qui pourraient être considérées comme funéraires : celles que je nommerai les donations funéraires, du type « (offert) pour le repos, ὑπὲρ ἀναπαύσεως, d'untel ». Cette catégorie ne paraît pas avoir été suffisamment reconnue et caractérisée à ce jour. Les inscriptions se rencontrent sur divers éléments du mobilier liturgique, mais aussi principalement sur des mosaïques d'églises, et donc, dans les régions de l'Arabie où l'on a retrouvé ces mosaïques en grand nombre, essentiellement en Jordanie. Assez clairement, les personnes dont le repos est demandé sont décédées.²⁵ Elles-mêmes, peut-être par testament, ou bien le plus souvent des membres de leur famille à la suite de leur décès, ont fait un don pour construire ou décorer un bâtiment chrétien. À Gérasa, en 559 apr. J.-C., sur une mosaïque de l'église dite « de l'évêque Isaïe », la dédicace précise que le bâtiment a été construit et orné « grâce à l'offrande des clarissimes Béroios et Eulampia, pour leur protection et celle de leurs enfants et pour le repos de leurs parents ».²⁶ La différence est nette entre *soteria*,

22 SARTRE-FAURIAT 2001, vol. 2, 71; SARTRE 2017, 259f.

23 GATIER/VÉRILHAC 1989, avec la correction AGOSTI 2018, 311, n. 30.

24 DI SEGNI 1998, 437f. n° 34 (SEG XL 1538); I.Jordanie II 116; cfr. la contribution BIANCHI dans ce volume. Le tombeau du monastère Saint-Cyrique de *Bostra* est connu par une inscription lapidaire, épitaphe d'une religieuse, Georgia, fille de Martyrios: IGLS XIII,1 9283; c'est par erreur que l'on attribue à une autre religieuse l'épitaphe IGLS XIII,1 9353, de *Bostra*; cfr. les idées concernant les propriétaires des tombes dans les catacombes de Rome dans les contributions FELLE et ZIMMERMANN dans ce volume.

25 FEISSEL 1976, 277f.

26 SEG XXXVII 1541: « ἐκ προσφορᾶς Βηροίου καὶ Εὐλαμπίας λαμπ(ροτάτων) ὑπὲρ σωτηρίας αὐτῶν τε καὶ τῶν αὐτῶν τέκνων καὶ ἀναπαύσεως γονέων αὐτῶν ». Voir aussi I.Jordanie II 16: « ὑπὲρ σωτηρίας Ραβαθας Ἀναστασίας κ(αὶ) ὑπὲρ ἀναπαύσεως Ἰωάννου Ἀναστασίου κ(αὶ) ὑπὲρ ὄν προσένικεν, Κ(ύριος) γινόςκι τῶ ὠνόματα ».

σωτηρία, « salut immédiat, protection », qui s'applique à la préservation ou la protection des vivants, et *anapausis*, ἀνάπαυσις, qui désigne le repos *post mortem*. Sur les mosaïques des églises de Rihab, dans la *chôra* de *Bostra*, plusieurs dédicaces sont faites pour le repos des parents des donateurs.²⁷

La formule ὑπὲρ μνήμης καὶ ἀναπαύσεως, « en mémoire et pour le repos », qui se rencontre dans tout l'Orient chrétien, concerne clairement des défunts. En Arabie, on la trouve par exemple sur un encensoir en bronze provenant de Jordanie, ὑπὲρ μνήμης καὶ ἀναπαύσεως Ἐφυμίας καὶ Προσδοκίας καὶ ὃν Κύριος γινώσκει τὰ ὄν(όματα), « en mémoire et pour le repos d'Euphémie et de Prosdocie et aussi de ceux dont le Seigneur connaît les noms »,²⁸ et également sur une mosaïque de Ayoun Mousa/Ύyun Musa au Nébo.²⁹ Il est significatif de rencontrer une formule similaire sur une « inscription de fondation » d'un tombeau du Trachôn.³⁰ De même, ὑπὲρ μνήμης οὐ εἰς μνήμην, « pour le souvenir/à la mémoire/en mémoire », simplement suivis d'un nom de personne, se rapportent très probablement à un défunt.³¹ Une variante, ὑπὲρ εἰρήνης καὶ ἀναπαύσεως, « pour la paix et le repos », semble elle-aussi désigner des défunts,³² mais ailleurs l'association d'*eirènè* (εἰρήνη) à *sôteria* (σωτηρία) pose la question de la signification, funéraire ou non, de cette « paix ».³³ Parfois, l'inscription de donation funéraire se présente simplement comme une prière, « Seigneur, donne le repos à untel ». Cette invocation ne fait aucune allusion à une offrande, ce qui rapproche ce formulaire de celui des épitaphes.³⁴ D'une manière différente, une « inscription de propriété » de *Zorava* (moderne Ezra'), probable linteau de tombeau, réunit des traits d'une simple épitaphe et d'une donation funéraire en indiquant que le défunt, le curiale Théodore, attend les récompenses du prophète Élie, c'est-à-dire les bénéfices de ses dons au sanctuaire du prophète.³⁵

Le contenu funéraire de ces différents formulaires de donation est bien particulier, dans la mesure où ces inscriptions placées dans des églises sont dépourvues de relation spatiale directe avec les tombes des donateurs. Ces donations qui appartiennent à une épigraphie funéraire diffuse et qu'on connaît surtout au VI^e s. apr. J.-C., peuvent remplacer partiellement les épitaphes. Elles permettent la commémoration des défunts sans accès direct à leurs tombes et sans proximité avec leurs

27 PICCIRILLO 1981, 67–96; voir nos 2A–B, 4, 5, 8A.

28 MONDÉSERT 1960, 119–123, objet acheté à Amman.

29 I.Jordanie II 96.

30 IGLS XV 288: « μνημῖον ἐς ἀνάπαυσιν καὶ μνήμην ».

31 I.Jordanie II 143.

32 I.Jordanie II 161.

33 I.Jordanie II 84: « ὑπὲρ εἰρήνης κ[αὶ] σωτηρίας τοῦ δ[ού(λου)] σου Ἀνωσα (?) [κ(αὶ) π]αντὸς τοῦ εὐλόγη[μέ]νου αὐτοῦ οἴκου ». DI SEGNI 1998, 437f., n° 35 (SEG XL 1537, qui y voit une signification funéraire): « ὑπὲρ εἰρήνης καὶ σωτηρίας τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶ(ν) Προκαπῆ πρεσβ(υτέρου) ».

34 À Rihab, PICCIRILLO 1981, 86f. (SEG XXX 1716): « Κ(ύρι)ε ἀνάπαυσον Ἰωάννην Ἀζιζέου ». À Samra, GATIER 1998, 384 n° 71.

35 IGLS XV 181.

cadavres. On doit les distinguer nettement des autres inscriptions de donation, comme les ex-votos, de type ὑπὲρ εὐχῆς, et les demandes d'aide, de type Κ(ύρι)ε βοήθει, qui concernent des vivants et qui sont simplement votives.

Les inscriptions chrétiennes

Si une inscription « chrétienne » peut se définir comme tout texte dont le caractère chrétien est volontaire et assumé, il convient de s'interroger sur ce qui permet d'identifier précisément une inscription funéraire chrétienne. Par défaut, je dirai « païen » tout texte où il n'y a aucun indice de christianisme, même s'il ne montre aucune trace de polythéisme. Pour la zone géographique envisagée ici, on ne connaît pas d'inscription chrétienne, funéraire ou non, antérieure à la Paix de l'Église, ce qui ressemble à la situation de Zôora, où la plus ancienne stèle chrétienne, légèrement antérieure, daterait de 309 apr. J.-C. et la suivante de 323/324 apr. J.-C.³⁶ Dans de nombreux cas, la question de l'identification d'une inscription chrétienne ne se pose pas, par exemple sur une mosaïque d'église. De la même façon, les inscriptions juives de Zôora se reconnaissent assez facilement, entre autres parce que, sur ce site, elles seules utilisent l'araméen. Dans l'Arabie, à l'intérieur de ses frontières du milieu du V^e s. apr. J.-C., il existe des communautés juives, en particulier dans le Hauran, mais les très rares textes funéraires juifs, difficiles à dater, ne portent ni signe ni formulaire particuliers.³⁷ Toutefois, le judaïsme du défunt y est clairement affirmé. L'incertitude porte le plus souvent sur la distinction entre les textes funéraires « païens » et chrétiens, particulièrement pour le IV^e s. apr. J.-C. – le siècle où le christianisme s'impose et où disparaissent les traces de paganisme – et surtout pour le Hauran, la zone nord de l'Arabie, où les « inscriptions de fondation » de tombeaux sont nombreuses.

Souvent, on reconnaît les inscriptions funéraires chrétiennes grâce à des signes et des symboles particuliers, ou bien au moyen de l'ononastique, ou encore d'après le formulaire utilisé. Le christogramme *chi-rho*, les croix, simples ou monogrammatiques, les symboles *alpha-oméga*, *iota-chi*, *chi-mu-gamma* se rencontrent souvent. Les deux chiffres, *koppa-théta*, ϥθ, 99, isopsépie de Ἀμήν, *Amen*, sont plus rares.³⁸ Mais les palmes n'ont rien de spécifiquement chrétien et

³⁶ I.Zoora Ia 1, 3.

³⁷ Voir IGLS XIV, vol. 1, 18f.; IGLS XV, vol. 1, n° 34 (A. Sartre-Fauriat et M. Sartre). À Tafas, sans date, stèle d'un « craignant-dieu », IGLS XIV 282; à Néapolis-Sheikh Meskīn, IGLS XIV 408, sans date, fondation d'un tombeau; à *Philippopolis*/Shahba, IGLS XV 440, linteau du Ἰουδέων μνημα, sans date. Voir SARTRE-FAURIAT 2001, vol. 2, 219. Cfr. la même observation concernant les formulaires des inscriptions chrétiennes et juives quasi identiques dans les contributions CUBAS DÍAZ et NUZZO dans ce volume.

³⁸ Tombeau-pigeonnier de Bassos à *Maximianoupolis* (moderne Shaqqa), SARTRE-FAURIAT 2001, vol. 1, 170–173; SGO IV 22/21/01. SARTRE 2017, 263f.: l'épigramme « puise sans

les colombes, présentes sur des stèles à Zôora ou dans le pays de Moab, ne se retrouvent pas en Arabie proto-byzantine. On n'oubliera pas l'éventualité du rajout d'une croix sur une inscription ou un monument qui n'en comprenait pas à l'origine, sorte de christianisation à posteriori qu'on peut observer entre autres sur une stèle de Samra.³⁹

L'onomastique aide à faire la distinction, dans la mesure où il existe quelques noms typiquement chrétiens, en dépit du fait que les noms païens traditionnels, y compris beaucoup de noms théophores, sont également portés par des chrétiens. Sont chrétiens quelques-uns des anthroponymes de l'Ancien ou du Nouveau Testament,⁴⁰ des noms de martyrs ou qui font allusion à des fêtes chrétiennes : par exemple Anastasios, Georgios, Martyrios, Élias, Hésaias, Thomas, Iohannès, Paulos, Pétrios, Sergios et Stéphanos masculins, ou Anastasia et Maria féminins. Tout ceci est assez bien connu et documenté.⁴¹ Néanmoins, certains noms restent problématiques : faut-il considérer qu'une Gauloise ensevelie à Imtan en 342/343 apr. J.-C. est chrétienne, du seul fait que son nom de Stercoria exprime l'idée que le corps est une enveloppe charnelle méprisable, alors que « l'inscription de fondation » de son tombeau ne fournit aucun autre élément distinctif ?⁴²

On s'attendrait à ce que le formulaire funéraire reflète les croyances et les appartenances. M. Sartre a rappelé cependant que le conservatisme primait en ce domaine et que les textes funéraires étaient peu explicites. Il a montré le caractère erroné de deux affirmations de Frank Trombley, plusieurs fois répétées dans son ouvrage sur la christianisation.⁴³ F. Trombley considérait que la formule ἐνθάδε κίτε/κεῖται, « ci-gît », serait chrétienne ; et que la formule θάρσι, οὐδὶς ἀθάνατος, « courage, personne n'est immortel », qu'on trouve parfois réduite à son premier mot « courage », appartiendrait au contraire aux milieux païens. On voit désormais à quel point cette dernière formule, qu'on rencontre fréquemment dans toute l'épigraphie chrétienne, est habituelle sur les stèles chrétiennes de Zôora.⁴⁴ De même, il

hésiter dans le répertoire mythologique païen en faisant allusion au domaine où règne 'le blond Rhadamanthe', tout en invoquant la Vierge et 'le Dieu toujours vivant'. Voir aussi BE 1998, 504.

39 GATIER 1998, 373, n° 27. SARTRE-FAURIAT 2001, vol. 1, 214 n. 8, 224, donne un exemple à *Bos-tria*, IGLS XIII,1 9431.

40 Quelques-uns des noms bibliques demeurent ambigus, juifs ou chrétiens.

41 I.Tyr nécropole, p. 143–145; GATIER 1998, 366; I.Zoora Ia, p. 29–33; IGLS XIV 564.

42 YON/GATIER 2009, 206 f.; pour Maurice Sartre, l'éditeur, Stercoria serait chrétienne. Le nom peut cependant appartenir à n'importe quelle enfant adoptée après avoir été exposée.

43 TROMBLEY 1993–1994.

44 Un exemple parmi d'autres, IGLS XV 286, connu depuis Waddington: voir TROMBLEY 1994, vol. 2, 370–371, avec des explications embarrassées sur un phénomène « transitionnel » entre paganisme et christianisme. SARTRE-FAURIAT 2001, vol. 2, 221; dans le Hauran, θάρσι seul se rencontre entre 154 et 440 apr. J.-C., avec οὐδὶς ἀθάνατος à partir de 335 apr. J.-C. et sur des inscriptions du IV^e s. apr. J.-C., quand elles sont datées.



Fig. 2 : I.Syrie 2406, de Majdal an-Naidat.

est vain de chercher un caractère « crypto-chrétien » à ἐνθάδε κίτε.⁴⁵ En revanche, certains mots comme les deux verbes ἀναπαύομαι et κοιμῶμαι, avec le sens de « se reposer », ainsi que des noms construits sur les mêmes racines, appartiennent typiquement au vocabulaire chrétien. Le terme ἀνάπαυμα, « repos, lieu de repos », dans une épigramme gravée sur un linteau et datée de 419–420 apr. J.-C., à Salkhad dans le Hauran, me paraît un bon indice de christianisme pour cette « inscription de fondation » discutée.⁴⁶

La situation est plus complexe en ce qui concerne les textes les plus élaborés, comme les épigrammes. On y trouve des références à l'immortalité qui ne me semblent pas toutes chrétiennes, mais encore des évocations de la mythologie classique qui bien souvent appartiennent à la culture de l'élite, la *paideia*, sans être des manifestations de paganisme.⁴⁷ Un tombeau-tour à Majdal an-Naidat, dans le Hauran, est typique de ces difficultés. Alors que la principale inscription, une longue épigramme, ne comporte pas d'indication de christianisme, une inscription latérale, avec un texte gnomique d'un type commun, « passe et ne sois pas envieux », est ornée d'une croix (Fig. 2), et de plus un beau sarcophage de basalte décoré de croix est abrité dans le tombeau.⁴⁸ Autre exemple, le texte en prose « de fondation » d'un tombeau-pigeonnier d'Aire (moderne Sanamein), élevé en 354 apr. J.-C., μνημοσύνης ἔνεκα, a un formulaire ordinaire, mais les chrismes et l'invocation Χρηστὲ βοήθει qui encadrent le cartouche inscrit permettent de le caractériser comme chrétien.⁴⁹ Dans le domaine des images, un sarcophage de plomb de Gérasa

45 TROMBLEY 1994, vol. 2, 354.

46 I.Syria PAES IIIA 160; TROMBLEY 1994, vol. 2, 324 (remarques sans fondement); SARTRE-FAURIAT 2001, vol. 2, 29f.; SARTRE 2017, 258 n. 3.

47 SARTRE-FAURIAT 2001, vol. 2, 217f., parle d'« inscriptions qui mêlent formules païennes et formules chrétiennes »; on pourrait dire plutôt que ce sont des inscriptions chrétiennes qui puisent dans l'ensemble des ressources culturelles de la *paideia*, y compris la mythologie; voir AGOSTI 2016 et AGOSTI 2018.

48 I.Syrie 2401 (= SGO IV 22/33/01); I.Syrie 2406. Voir SARTRE-FAURIAT 2001, vol. 1, 90–92 (pour le bâtiment), 238 (pour le sarcophage).

49 IGLS XIV 564. Voir SARTRE 2017, 259.

illustre bien ce phénomène, puisqu'il est orné, d'une part de croix, et d'autre part de médaillons figurant le mythe d'Alceste et Admète, fréquemment représenté dans l'iconographie funéraire de l'ensemble du monde méditerranéen antique.⁵⁰

Pour une étude régionale

Je distinguerai quatre ensembles régionaux, très inégaux par le nombre d'inscriptions et de monuments funéraires et également par les dimensions, depuis un site villageois comme Khirbat al-Samra jusqu'à une vaste zone comme le Hauran – au sens large – qui regroupe toute la moitié nord de la province. Caractérisés par des types d'inscriptions différents, ces ensembles, qui sont ici répartis du sud au nord, sont plus culturels que géographiques. Il sera question des deux premières catégories d'inscriptions funéraires, celles qui sont directement liées à des tombes : les épitaphes et les « inscriptions de propriété » ou « de fondation ».

Le Sud de la province : la région de Mèdaba

Cette région qui s'étend depuis Mèdaba (moderne Madaba) jusqu'au wadi Mujib, au nord du pays de Moab, correspond approximativement au territoire de la cité puis de l'évêché de Mèdaba. Les inscriptions funéraires y sont très peu nombreuses à l'époque romaine, hormis quatre « inscriptions de propriété » de cette époque, provenant du site même de Madaba, et une ou deux stèles.⁵¹

À l'époque proto-byzantine, différents sites de cette région ont livré des épitaphes chrétiennes, toutes gravées sur des stèles ornées de croix. Outre six stèles chrétiennes inscrites qui proviennent de Madaba,⁵² les autres épitaphes appartiennent à des bourgs ou des villages. De Zizia vient une stèle inscrite,⁵³ de Ma'in six,⁵⁴ de Dhiban trois.⁵⁵ Un fragment de stèle analogue a également été découvert au Mont Nébo.⁵⁶

50 HAZIM 2002.

51 [I.Jordanie II 118, 119, 120, 121](#). La stèle [I.Jordanie II, 122](#), n'est pas datable; la stèle d'Umm el-Walid, [I.Jordanie II 176](#), date de l'époque impériale. Le sarcophage inscrit de Dhiban, [I.Jordanie II 183](#), pourrait remonter à l'époque impériale.

52 [I.Jordanie II 123, 124](#); PICCIRILLO 1989, 108–115 n^{os} 1–4 (PICCIRILLO 1989, n^o 10 appartient au pays de Moab, PICCIRILLO 1989, n^o 11 n'est pas inédit); [SEG XXXIX 1664, 1665, 1666, 1667](#).

53 PICCIRILLO 2002 (SEG LII 1742). Il faut peut-être corriger la lecture et comprendre Δορία, nominatif féminin d'un nom indigène, plutôt que Δωρία avec oméga (Piccirillo), ou le génitif Δωριᾶ du nom grec rare Δωρίας (SEG).

54 [I.Jordanie II 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169](#).

55 [I.Jordanie II 180, 181, 182](#).

56 [I.Jordanie II 89](#).

On rencontre trois types de formules funéraires, toutes très simples. Sur les stèles de Dhiban, le mot *στήλη* est suivi du nom, du patronyme et de l'âge du défunt, ce qui se retrouve sur une des stèles de Madaba⁵⁷ et qui apparente ces épitaphes à certaines des plus simples du pays de Moab, la région voisine.⁵⁸ À Madaba, on rencontre deux inscriptions qui présentent deux variantes de la formule d'encouragement avec *θάρασι* (Fig. 3). Enfin, les autres épitaphes, à Madaba et sur les autres sites, se limitent au simple nom du défunt, en général sans patronyme.

Par ailleurs, le Père Michele Piccirillo avait eu le mérite de repérer dans les sites de cette région méridionale de l'Arabie chrétienne quelques stèles anépigraphes gravées d'une croix, parfois très simple, parfois élaborée, et il les avait publiées, alors que ce type d'objet passe en général totalement inaperçu. Au moins deux avaient été trouvées à l'extérieur du monastère du Mont Nébo ; cinq provenaient de Madaba, une de Fay-saliyah/Kufeir al-Wakhyan, une de Nitl, au moins treize de Zizia et une de Yadudeh, plus au nord.⁵⁹ Il est probable que beaucoup de stèles anépigraphes ont échappé à l'œil des observateurs, mais, dans le pays de Moab, R. Canova en avait signalé et elle avait photographié un grand ensemble provenant du site de Maḥaiy.⁶⁰



Fig. 3 : Stèle de Madaba, PICCIRILLO 1989, 109f. n° 1.

Philadelphie et Gérasa

On ne connaît d'inscription funéraire de la période hellénistique ni à Philadelphie, ni à Gérasa (modernes Amman et Jerash/Jarash), deux des cités anciennement hellénisées de la Décapole. À Philadelphie, l'épigraphie est globalement très pauvre : les textes funéraires de l'époque romaine sont très rares et ceux de l'époque pro-

57 PICCIRILLO 1989, 112 n° 4, pl. 5, 9. Voir la correction, GATIER 1998, 365.

58 I.Moab, 93, 115, par exemple (avec, en plus, le participe *ζήσας* devant l'âge).

59 PICCIRILLO 1989, 112–118; SANMORI 1998, 417, 422; PICCIRILLO 2002, 7 stèles dessinées, 13 sur la photo.

60 I.Moab, voir p. 341–350.

tobyzantine nous échappent.⁶¹ Notons cependant un hypogée chrétien illustré de scènes évangéliques peintes, dont une résurrection de Lazare et une guérison de l'aveugle-né.⁶² Par ailleurs, le site de Yajuz, village de carrefour au nord de la *chôra* de Philadelphie, n'a pas fourni de texte funéraire, mais il donne un bon exemple de tombeau privilégié associé à l'église chrétienne de plan basilical construite immédiatement au nord. Une inscription, sur la mosaïque de pavement d'une salle considérée comme le narthex de cette basilique, nomme ce bâtiment « le saint *martyrion* du saint athlète et martyr Théodore et de (saint) Cyrique ».⁶³ Elle pourrait dater de 508/509 apr. J.-C. Le tombeau, défini comme « rock chamber necropolis », est un grand hypogée comprenant deux salles avec un total de seize fosses, dans lequel ont été retrouvés les restes d'au moins 132 squelettes d'adultes et d'enfants.⁶⁴ Le mobilier bien préservé, daté des V^e–VII^e s. apr. J.-C., contient des objets d'importation et des boucles de ceinture qui rangent leurs propriétaires dans le milieu social des notables, mais seule une croix gravée au-dessus d'un passage entre les deux salles du tombeau permet de caractériser comme chrétiens ses occupants.

À Gérasa, tout au contraire de Philadelphie, le hasard des préservations fait que l'épigraphie funéraire d'époque impériale romaine est assez abondante, avec environ une cinquantaine de textes dans cette série.⁶⁵ Les stèles sont extrêmement rares, remplacées par des plaques ou autres blocs inscrits de monuments et par des autels funéraires qui ont été retrouvés relativement nombreux, parfois à l'intérieur d'hypogées.⁶⁶ On connaît aussi quelques sarcophages et colonnes qui portent des textes funéraires. Gérasa se caractérise à l'époque romaine par la forte prédominance des inscriptions funéraires en langue latine ou bien, quand elles sont en grec, de tradition latine, par exemple avec des invocations aux Dieux Mânes, en latin ou en grec.⁶⁷ Cela s'explique par la présence dans la ville de l'*officium* du procureur équestre de la province, et donc par celle d'affranchis impériaux et de militaires. La grande majorité des textes funéraires de la Gérasa romaine concerne ces deux milieux sociaux, l'administration et l'armée. En revanche, les tombeaux de famille des notables géraséniens de cette époque, qui se trouvent probablement sur leurs propriétés rurales, sont mal connus et les sépultures des classes populaires également, bien que certains sites de la *chôra* aient fourni quelques stèles.

À une date qui reste à préciser dans le III^e s. apr. J.-C., l'*officium* du procureur a dû quitter Gérasa avec probablement les militaires qui lui étaient attachés. Même si

61 I.Jordanie II 33, 34, 35, 51; GATIER/VÉRILHAC 1989.

62 I.Jordanie II 47.

63 KHALIL 1998; inscription déchiffrée par Denis Feissel, BE 2000, 682 (=SEG XLVIII 1918).

64 EGER 2018.

65 I.Gerasa 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, avec quelques autres publications postérieures.

66 C'est le cas de deux autels funéraires inédits de militaires romains que je publierai.

67 Trois cas en latin, trois en grec, dont un inédit.

l'on a des indices postérieurs de la présence de troupes, ces deux catégories sociales disparaissent alors du répertoire funéraire. Tandis que l'épigraphie protobyzantine de Gerasa est abondante et riche, essentiellement grâce à la bonne préservation de nombreuses mosaïques d'église, on ne connaît que trois épitaphes grecques de cette époque, toutes lapidaires : la stèle « + D'Eulogios, fils d'Étienne, orfèvre + », le bloc « ΑΩ IC XC + Tombe de Thomas, pandouriste » (Fig. 4) et la stèle « De Matrôna, fille d'Héraclius, changeur + ». ⁶⁸



Fig. 4 : Bloc inscrit de Gerasa, [I.Gerasa 354](#).

Cette minuscule série a l'avantage d'une grande cohérence. Les défunts appartiennent au monde des gens de métier, comme ceux qu'on rencontre à la même époque dans la nécropole de Tyr, en Phénicie Maritime. ⁶⁹ On peut ajouter à cet ensemble une inscription en araméen christo-palestinien, sur un bloc qui aurait servi à obturer un tombeau. ⁷⁰ À mes yeux, il faut probablement l'attribuer à un monastère et au tombeau collectif des moines.

Un cas particulier : Khirbat al-Samra

Le village de Khirbat al-Samra, ou simplement Samra (probablement l'antique Adeitha), dans le nord-est de la Jordanie, qui appartenait au vaste territoire de la cité de *Bostra*, constitue un cas particulier. Il peut être rangé dans le groupe des bourgs ou gros villages, avec son mur d'enceinte et ses nombreuses églises. On y a

⁶⁸ [I.Gerasa 353, 354](#); GATIER 1985, 311–312.

⁶⁹ [I.Tyr nécropole](#), p. 152–161.

⁷⁰ MACLER 1907, 16–21; MILIK 1953, 527–528.



Fig. 5 : Stèle « païenne » de Samra, GATIER 1998, 368f. n° 7.

découvert une grande nécropole dont 692 tombes à fosse ou à ciste ont été fouillées (Fig. 9).⁷¹ Cependant, on n'y connaît aucun tombeau monumental, mausolée ou hypogée. Ont été retrouvées et publiées environ 32 stèles « païennes », c'est-à-dire d'époque romaine, des II^e, III^e et peut-être IV^e s. apr. J.-C., sans qu'on puisse être plus précis (Fig. 5). Ces stèles en basalte ou plus rarement en calcaire, parallélépipédiques ou parfois cintrées, du type du Hauran,⁷² sans aucune trace de christianisme, portent des inscriptions en grec, absolument semblables à celles d'un village voisin, Rihab, ou à celles des sites environnants, comme Umm al-Jimāl. Le formulaire simple comporte en général le nom suivi du patronyme et de l'âge du défunt, mais parfois l'un des deux derniers éléments a disparu. Il arrive aussi que le texte soit légèrement plus développé, avec la mention d'une fonction ou d'un état comme celui de « vétéran », ou avec θάρσι, ou encore avec le participe ζήσας. On peut aussi ajouter à ces épitaphes « païennes » une poignée de stèles inscrites en nabatéen, avec le nom et le patronyme du défunt.⁷³ L'une des tombes non pillées, au mobilier bien préservé et

daté de la fin du III^e s. apr. J.-C., n'a malheureusement pas d'épitaphe, mais elle confirme matériellement l'existence de cette phase chronologique.⁷⁴

La spécificité de Samra tient de la présence d'un autre groupe très original d'épitaphes, celles qui sont chrétiennes. On y a en effet trouvé 36 stèles ornées de croix et inscrites en grec, ainsi que 86 autres stèles chrétiennes inscrites en araméen christo-palestinien,⁷⁵ qui appartiennent à un type totalement différent de celui des 32 épitaphes que je qualifie de « païennes » et que j'attribue à la période romaine. Ce sont de simples galets ou petits fragments de blocs mal taillés, sans forme géo-

71 SAVIGNAC 1925; HUMBERT/DESREUMAUX 1998. Sur les inscriptions, DESREUMAUX 1998, GATIER 1998, NABULSI et al. 2014, BADER et al. 2017. Sur la nécropole, parmi une production abondante, NABULSI 1997 et NABULSI 1998; NABULSI et al. 2007, NABULSI et al. 2009 et NABULSI et al. 2014; NABULSI/SCHÖNROCK-NABULSI 2016.

72 SARTRE-FAURIAT 2001, vol. 2, 103.

73 HUMBERT/DESREUMAUX 1998, 543f. (F. Zayadine); NABULSI et al. 2014, 154-156, 159 n. 14 (M. Macdonald).

74 EGER/NABULSI/AHRENS 2011.

75 Forme d'araméen écrite avec un alphabet très proche du syriaque et différente du nabatéen et aussi du judéo-araméen de Zôora.

métrique précise, avec dans l'une ou l'autre langue uniquement le nom du défunt, sans patronyme, sans âge et sans autre indication : le degré zéro de l'épigraphie. Les noms sont au nominatif et au génitif, peut-être à l'occasion au vocatif. Une seule stèle est datée (Fig. 6), de 562/563 apr. J.-C. (457 de l'ère d'Arabie).⁷⁶ 800 autres stèles chrétiennes patiemment inventoriées par leurs découvreurs ont exactement la même apparence, mais elles sont anépigraphes, simplement ornées de croix très souvent bifides,⁷⁷ dont la typologie ne permet pas d'établir de classement chronologique. Il n'y a aucun argument, qu'il s'agisse du mobilier archéologique ou des inscriptions, pour faire descendre tard dans le VII^e s. apr. J.-C. la datation des dernières tombes et des dernières stèles de Samra.

Selon Abdalla Nabulsi, les découvertes ne représentent qu'une petite partie d'un ensemble d'environ 6000 tombes pour au moins 7000 sépultures. La division de la nécropole par le Père Savignac en deux sous-ensembles, l'un dit « quartier gréco-arabe » à l'ouest et l'autre « quartier gréco-syrien » au sud, reposait sur l'apparente répartition des stèles funéraires retrouvées à proximité de leur emplacement d'origine. Du « quartier gréco-arabe » seraient venues les stèles païennes en grec et du « quartier gréco-syrien » les stèles chrétiennes en grec et en araméen.⁷⁸ Cependant, les travaux d'A. Nabulsi et son équipe ont montré que les tombes des époques romaine et protobyzantine étaient mêlées, qu'il y avait fréquemment des réutilisations de sépultures et que ce qu'on avait considéré comme le mur d'enceinte d'un cimetière n'enfermait pas la nécropole.⁷⁹ Il n'est plus question de quartiers d'un cimetière, mais d'une nécropole qui s'est étendue progressivement, en même temps que certaines des tombes étaient remployées et réoccupées. La nécropole de Samra s'est développée très nettement à l'écart de la dizaine d'églises, qui sont restées groupées dans le bourg enfermé dans son mur d'enceinte et dont aucune ne semble contenir de tombe. Ainsi, ici comme dans le reste de l'Arabie, on ne connaît pas d'église proprement cimétériale.

Le type des épitaphes chrétiennes de Samra est original, avec des blocs négligés et peu taillés, des textes émaciés, un répertoire décoratif de croix bien particulier et surtout l'usage de l'ara-



Fig. 6 : Stèle chrétienne de Samra, NABULSI et al. 2014, 151f.

76 BE 2009, 529; NABULSI et al. 2014, 151f. (Gatier).

77 HUMBERT/DESREUMAUX 1998, 281–357.

78 SAVIGNAC 1925, 117–119.

79 NABULSI/SCHÖNROCK-NABULSI 2016, entre autres.

méen christo-palestinien, ailleurs quasiment réservé aux moines. Toutefois, l'épigraphie du site à la période précédente, « païenne » ou « romaine », montre déjà quelques textes minimalistes, limités au nom unique du défunt, annonceurs de ceux de la période « chrétienne ». ⁸⁰ La question de la continuité dans le domaine de l'épigraphie funéraire du site reste posée, mais les découvertes postérieures à la grande publication de 1998 tendent à diminuer la rupture formelle entre les inscriptions « païennes » et « chrétiennes ». ⁸¹

Si, exceptionnellement par rapport au reste de la province, les stèles funéraires chrétiennes proto-byzantines sont plus nombreuses à Samra que les romaines païennes, la proportion du nombre d'épithames par rapport au nombre de tombes est extrêmement faible dans les deux groupes d'inscriptions. À toute époque, les gens de Samra ont peu pratiqué l'épigraphie funéraire et, à la période proto-byzantine, les stèles anépigraphes ont partiellement servi de substitut aux stèles à épithames.

Le Hauran

Dans son étude fondamentale parue en 2001 sur les tombeaux du Hauran, A. Sartre-Fauriat a réuni la documentation funéraire sur la longue période qui va du I^{er} s. av. J.-C. au VII^e s. apr. J.-C., mais qui est dominée quantitativement par l'époque impériale du II^e et du III^e s. apr. J.-C. Elle a répertorié les monuments, mausolées ou hypogées, mais aussi les sarcophages, bustes et statues funéraires. Pour l'époque romaine, accompagnant ces sculptures et monuments, des centaines d'inscriptions funéraires, épithames et « inscriptions de propriété », ont été retrouvées à la fois dans les différentes villes chefs-lieux de cités de la partie nord de la province et dans les villages de leurs territoires. ⁸² A. Sartre-Fauriat comptait, dans la zone qu'elle prenait en compte, toutes époques confondues, 1651 stèles en grec, dont seulement 32 portent une date, et 400 « inscriptions de propriété » ou « de fondation » gravées sur des blocs ou des linteaux de tombeaux. ⁸³ En revanche, les inscriptions funéraires chrétiennes qui appartiennent à ces deux catégories sont extrêmement rares, de même que les autres documents funéraires contemporains.

Quelle que soit l'époque, les inscriptions funéraires ne sont qu'exceptionnellement datées, mais « il y a beaucoup plus d'inscriptions datées de toute nature au IV^e s. qu'à d'autres moments », et A. Sartre-Fauriat compte quinze stèles datées de ce siècle pour six seulement des V^e et VI^e s. apr. J.-C. ⁸⁴ De plus, il n'y a dans

⁸⁰ GATIER 1998, 372 n^{os} 23f.; NABULSI et al. 2014, 152f. (Gatier).

⁸¹ NABULSI et al. 2014, BADER et al. 2017.

⁸² SARTRE-FAURIAT 2001.

⁸³ SARTRE-FAURIAT 2001, vol. 2, 103f., 108, 139, 144, 150 (avec des nombres légèrement différents).

⁸⁴ SARTRE-FAURIAT 2001, vol. 2, 150.

cette région que trois sarcophages ostensiblement chrétiens, parce qu'ornés de croix, un dans le tombeau-tour de Majdal an-Naidat et deux dans le tombeau probablement épiscopal accolé à l'est de la basilique est du « sérail » de Qanawāt (ancienne *Canatha*).⁸⁵ Dans ce dernier tombeau, deux autres des cuves funéraires d'évêques n'ont pas de signes chrétiens, mais sont des remplois de sarcophages d'époque romaine. Quant aux représentations sculptées des défunts, elles ont totalement disparu du répertoire chrétien, alors qu'elles étaient assez répandues à l'époque impériale.

Le bourg d'Umm al-Jimāl, dont il a été question ci-dessus,⁸⁶ constitue un bon exemple des gros villages du Hauran antique, avec des stèles de basalte parallélépipédiques typiques du style régional, souvent cintrées quand il s'agit d'épithaphes des femmes. Environ 500 de ces stèles sont inscrites en grec, ce qui constitue le plus important ensemble de stèles de la région, devant les cités de *Bostra* et *Adraha* qui en comptent environ 204 et 185.⁸⁷ Leur formulaire est très simple, avec en général un nom au nominatif, un patronyme au génitif et un âge, auxquels s'ajoutent parfois une occupation ou un statut (Fig. 7). En supplément, le site a livré 30 stèles funéraires inscrites en naba-

téen, n'indiquant guère que le nom et le patronyme du défunt, sans son âge. Cette abondance d'épithaphes s'explique entre autres par le hasard des conditions de préservation : le déplacement et le remploi comme matériaux de construction dans les bâtiments du bourg romano-byzantin de blocs provenant d'un premier village nabatéo-romain abandonné, qui se trouvait immédiatement à côté du nouveau bourg. Sur l'ensemble considérable des stèles, on ne peut considérer comme chrétiennes que deux d'entre elles qui sont ornées de croix. L'une comporte la formule d'encouragement développée, « Courage, Léontia, sur terre personne n'est immor-



Fig. 7 : Stèle « païenne » d'Umm al-Jimāl, *I.Jordanie V*, 1 48.

85 SARTRE-FAURIAT 2001, vol. 1, 90–92, 236–238. Voir, pour Majdal, supra, le paragraphe « Les inscriptions chrétiennes »; pour *Canatha*, AMER et al. 1982, 271–272.

86 Voir supra le paragraphe « L'épigraphie funéraire chrétienne : épithaphes, « inscriptions de propriété » et donations funéraires ».

87 *I.Jordanie V*, 1 152–624. SARTRE-FAURIAT 2001, vol. 2, 105.

tel », tandis que l'autre concerne un prêtre.⁸⁸ En ajoutant le linteau mentionnant le *koimeterion*, ces inscriptions constituent à elles trois la totalité de l'épigraphie funéraire chrétienne de ce bourg qui contient une quinzaine d'églises, dont aucune n'a conservé une inscription de donation funéraire, ni non plus la moindre mosaïque inscrite.

Le cas de Rihab, autre bourg de la *chôra* de *Bostra*, est légèrement différent de celui d'Umm al-Jimāl. Le site a livré de nombreuses inscriptions, dont certaines, chrétiennes, appartiennent aux pavements de mosaïque d'une dizaine d'églises.⁸⁹ Quant aux inscriptions lapidaires publiées, elles comprennent quelques stèles funéraires en nabatéen et 61 en grec, dont aucune n'est chrétienne.⁹⁰ Tout se passe comme s'il n'y avait pas d'épigraphie funéraire chrétienne à Rihab, en dehors des donations funéraires bien représentées dans les textes des mosaïques. Un autre exemple peut être fourni par le site de Dafyana/Dafianeh, dans le territoire de *Bostra* à l'est d'Umm al-Jimāl, d'où proviennent onze stèles sans date du type hauranais que nous dirions « païennes ».⁹¹ Une seule stèle, récemment publiée, est datée : l'épithaphe en 312/313 apr. J.-C. d'un certain Bennios fils de Germanos, un militaire mort dans le Pont dont les restes ont été rapatriés par son serviteur et qui est « le premier mis au tombeau » ou « le premier enseveli ».⁹² Ce texte que je rangerai dans le groupe « païen » montre l'usage d'une stèle, peut-être liée à un tombeau construit, comme cela semble fréquent dans le Hauran,⁹³ à moins qu'il s'agisse du premier marqueur d'un terrain familial destiné à des tombes à fosse ou à ciste. Il n'y a pas d'inscription funéraire chrétienne connue dans ce village.

Dans l'ensemble du Hauran, A. Sartre-Fauriat ne répertorie qu'onze stèles et une trentaine d'« inscriptions de propriété » portant des croix ou chrismes, dont une dizaine concerne des tombeaux de prêtres ou de religieux chrétiens.⁹⁴ Aucune de ces stèles n'est datée, mais six parmi ces inscriptions de propriété marquées de signes chrétiens portent une date entre 389 et 606 apr. J.-C. Dans la région, la rareté des inscriptions et des monuments funéraires clairement chrétiens est telle qu'A. Sartre-Fauriat pense que les chrétiens du Hauran négligeaient ou évitaient d'afficher des signes distinctifs sur leurs tombeaux et sur leurs stèles, de même que les adeptes d'autres croyances, paganisme et judaïsme.⁹⁵ Elle recherche dans le voca-

88 [I.Jordanie V,1 331](#): « θάρσι, Λεοντία, ἐπὶ γῆς οὐδὶς ἀθάνατος » (formule qui se retrouve sur une douzaine de stèles de la région et qui n'a pas de connotation particulièrement chrétienne, SARTRE-FAURIAT 2001, vol. 2, 221); [I.Jordanie V,1 631](#).

89 PICCIRILLO 1981; MICHEL 2001, 212–222.

90 GATIER 1998, 361, 363f., 394–410.

91 [I.Jordanie V,1 684, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694](#).

92 AL-HUSAN/ALIQUOT 2015, 497: « Ἐνθάδε πρῶτος ἐτάφη Βέννιος Γερμανοῦ ».

93 SARTRE-FAURIAT 2001, vol. 2, 117, des stèles sont parfois placées dans le couloir d'accès de tombeaux ou devant leurs façades.

94 SARTRE-FAURIAT 2001, vol. 2, 213f. n. 3f.

95 SARTRE-FAURIAT 2001, vol. 2, 214; SARTRE 2017, 264f., invoque « le souci de ne pas se distinguer ».



Fig. 8 : IGLS XV 268, de Harrân.

bulaire et le contenu des textes, en particulier les épigrammes, des indications permettant de reconnaître comme chrétiens les commanditaires des tombeaux ou les défunts.⁹⁶

Les arguments ne sont pas toujours décisifs et l'on pourrait discuter de plusieurs des exemples fournis. Les épitaphes juives sont si rares et si mal datées qu'il n'est pas possible de les prendre en compte dans la démonstration et, de plus, le défunt y est bien défini comme juif.⁹⁷ Il n'est pas avéré que certaines formules religieuses, comme l'évocation de l'éternité, placent plusieurs textes du côté du christianisme plutôt que du paganisme tardif.⁹⁸ Des croix et des chrismes sont-ils gravés sur certains blocs ?⁹⁹ Le préfet du prétoire Maiorinus, bénéficiaire d'un tombeau-pigeonnier à Boṣrā al-Ḥarīrī qui se placerait autour de 365 apr. J.-C., est-il chrétien ?¹⁰⁰ De plus, il reste à démontrer que les tombeaux-pigeonniers du IV^e s. apr. J.-C. sont tous ou majoritairement des monuments chrétiens. Même si Bassos, propriétaire de l'un de ces bâtiments, est clairement chrétien et s'il ne néglige pas de le faire savoir, sans le souci de discrétion qui serait typique de la région, il n'y a pas de raison d'amalguer tous les tombeaux de ce type et de les considérer comme chrétiens.¹⁰¹

Quoi qu'il en soit, si l'on accepte comme chrétiens tous les textes qu'A. Sartre-Fauriat reconnaît comme tels, ou si l'on se montre plus restrictif, le nombre total de ces textes varie peu et le constat de forte diminution de l'épigraphie funéraire – d'abord

96 SARTRE-FAURIAT 2001, vol. 2, 217–226.

97 Voir supra le paragraphe « Les inscriptions chrétiennes ».

98 IGLS XV 216, à Zorava (moderne Ezra'); voir SARTRE-FAURIAT 2001, vol. 2, 218.

99 Par exemple IGLS XIII,1 9375, 9397; IGLS XIV 393, IGLS XV 527.

100 IGLS XV 241f.; voir SARTRE-FAURIAT 2001, vol. 2, 201; SARTRE 2017, 259f.

101 Voir supra les paragraphes « L'épigraphie funéraire chrétienne : épitaphes, « inscriptions de propriété » et donations funéraires » et « Les inscriptions chrétiennes ». À Zorava (Ezra'), un autre tombeau-pigeonnier pourrait être chrétien, IGLS XV 201, texte où la faveur de Dieu est demandée.

les stèles,¹⁰² puis à la fin du IV^e s. apr. J.-C. les « inscriptions de propriété » des tombeaux – reste le même. On retiendra cependant que, parmi les rares inscriptions ou monuments funéraires clairement chrétiens de l'époque protobyzantine, une proportion importante concerne des membres du clergé.¹⁰³ À Harrân par exemple, un tombeau placé près d'une église a été construit pour le prêtre Aumos (Fig. 8).¹⁰⁴ Des tombes monastiques, comme celle de *Bostra* dont il a été question ci-dessus, se rencontrent également.¹⁰⁵

Évolutions

Mesure et rythmes

On ne connaît pas dans la province d'Arabie de l'époque protobyzantine, du moins si l'on choisit ses limites géographiques de la fin de la période, la véritable explosion de l'épigraphie funéraire chrétienne qui s'observe légèrement plus au sud, en Palestine Troisième, dans le pays de Moab et à Zôora, où se multiplient les stèles chrétiennes – ou juives à Zôora – dans les quelques petites villes, chefs-lieux de cités, comme dans les villages. Le Néguev également a livré de nombreuses inscriptions funéraires chrétiennes, dont beaucoup proviennent de dalles d'obturation ou de pavement. En Arabie, il s'agit d'un recul global de cette épigraphie funéraire qui se manifeste particulièrement dans le Hauran. Dans cette partie septentrionale de la province, on perd presque totalement l'habitude des stèles funéraires, peut-être à la fin du III^e s. ou au début du IV^e s. apr. J.-C., et celle des « inscriptions de fondation » des tombeaux, peut-être au début du V^e s. apr. J.-C.

Le petit nombre des textes datés ne permet pas de préciser cette périodisation, mais l'on peut se demander si ce déclin, en particulier en ce qui concerne les stèles funéraires, est régulier ou bien discontinu et s'il n'y a pas un renouveau des stèles au VI^e s. apr. J.-C. comme l'indiqueraient de rares textes datés. Nancy Benovitz, en comptant les épitaphes grecques datées entre 300 et 700 apr. J.-C. dans les trois provinces de Palestine et dans celle d'Arabie, veut montrer que la pandémie de peste bubonique dite « peste de Justinien » qui débute en 541 apr. J.-C. se reflète

102 DE JONG 2017, 213–215, utilise l'autel funéraire de *Bostra*, IGLS XIII,1 9396, pour démontrer la persistance à *Bostra* de l'habitude ancienne des tombes militaires, mais la date de 320/321 apr. J.-C. est douteuse, voir IGLS XIII,2 p. 22. Par ailleurs, les autels funéraires me semblent disparaître au milieu du III^e s. apr. J.-C.

103 SARTRE-FAURIAT 2001, vol. 2, 160.

104 IGLS XV 268.

105 Voir supra le paragraphe « L'épigraphie funéraire chrétienne : épitaphes, « inscriptions de propriété ». SARTRE-FAURIAT 2001, vol. 2, 20, 31f., 183. Il n'y a pas de raison de considérer le *martyrion* de saint Serge à Rakham/Raham, IGLS XIII,2 9837, comme un tombeau plutôt qu'un bâtiment cultuel: le terme de *koinon* qui désigne la communauté qui l'a construit convient à une collectivité villageoise et non pas monastique.

dans l'épigraphie funéraire.¹⁰⁶ Elle réunit 282 « objets » nommant 304 individus et aboutit à un tableau où, entre 290 et 510 apr. J.-C., il y a moins de cinq ou six épitaphes datées par décennie. À partir de 510 apr. J.-C. le rythme s'accélère avec un maximum de 30 épitaphes dans la décennie 540 apr. J.-C., puis un ralentissement à un niveau élevé entre 550 et 590 apr. J.-C., suivi d'une nouvelle poussée dans la décennie 590 apr. J.-C., avec 28 épitaphes, et enfin une diminution progressive, malgré un rebond dans les années 640 apr. J.-C., au début de la période islamique. Un autre tableau, où les épitaphes datées sont regroupées par année, entre 500 et 700 apr. J.-C., s'efforce d'en déduire les vagues de l'épidémie, qui seraient au nombre de dix entre 541 et 700 apr. J.-C. Outre le point central de cette enquête, la recherche de témoignages chiffrés sur la mortalité due à la peste, l'étude statistique montrerait selon l'auteure que l'épidémie a développé l'usage des épitaphes dans la seconde moitié du VI^e s. apr. J.-C.

Des objections à cette étude et à ses conclusions peuvent être présentées, dont la critique du périmètre chronologique et géographique du corpus choisi, le manque d'actualisation des sources épigraphiques et l'absence de définition du terme « épitaphe ».¹⁰⁷ Si les inscriptions qui ne portent pas de date, mais qui sont datables par d'autres critères, avaient été prises en compte, le résultat aurait peut-être été différent. Néanmoins, malgré ses limites, cette étude donne des indications utiles. Par exemple, les inscriptions funéraires en grec des débuts de l'époque islamique, entre 640 apr. J.-C. et 700, sont au nombre de 23 dans son tableau de la p. 495 ; pour ma part, dans un article publié en 2011, j'en comptais 25, dont six problématiques, toutes issues du Néguev et du pays de Moab, donc sans aucun texte provenant de la province d'Arabie, ce qui témoigne de la disparition de l'épigraphie funéraire en grec au VII^e s. apr. J.-C.¹⁰⁸ Le principal résultat à mes yeux consiste en la mise en valeur du renouveau au VI^e s. apr. J.-C. des épitaphes datées, dès le début du siècle, mais avec une forte accélération entre 540 et 620 apr. J.-C. De ce fait, on serait tenté, à titre d'hypothèse, d'attribuer à cette période, parmi les stèles chrétiennes non datées, celles qui ne montrent pas ou peu de continuité avec celles de l'époque romaine : plutôt les épitaphes de la région de Mèdaba ou celles de Samra que celles de Gérasa ou du Hauran.

Leah di Segni a consacré plusieurs articles à l'étude quantitative des inscriptions datées, qu'elle a récapitulée récemment, en s'intéressant particulièrement aux constructions, mais en regroupant aussi dans certains graphiques toutes les inscriptions datées, y compris les funéraires, des huit premiers siècles de notre ère.¹⁰⁹ On pourrait soulever à propos de la composition de l'ensemble les mêmes objections que celles que suscite l'article de N. Benovitz, mais là encore ce travail

¹⁰⁶ BENOVIKZ 2014; voir les tableaux des p. 495f.

¹⁰⁷ L'auteure, qui a choisi de ne pas tenir compte des deux premiers volumes des I.Zoora Ia–b, parus en 2005 et 2008, ne connaît pas les volumes des IGLS postérieurs à 2009.

¹⁰⁸ GATIER 2011, 8f.

¹⁰⁹ DI SEGNI 2017, 609f., fig. 1–3.

apporte des éléments de réflexion sur l'*epigraphic habit*. Dans la figure 2, les inscriptions datées sont classées par siècle, en excluant les épitaphes de Zôora et en distinguant le Hauran du reste des régions prises en compte.¹¹⁰ Sans surprise, on observe une croissance du nombre des textes datés du I^{er} au II^e s., une diminution au III^e s., une augmentation à nouveau au IV^e s., une nouvelle diminution au V^e s., suivie d'une très forte poussée au VI^e s. apr. J.-C. Suit un recul au VII^e s. apr. J.-C., avec néanmoins une quantité d'inscriptions datées supérieure à celle de tous les autres siècles hormis le IV^e et le VI^e apr. J.-C. – résultat qui éveille le doute – puis un effondrement au VIII^e s. apr. J.-C. En somme, le nombre des inscriptions datées par siècle suivrait une courbe de progression presque constante du I^{er} au VI^e s. apr. J.-C., malgré deux tassements au III^e et au V^e s. apr. J.-C. Pour mon propos, je retiendrai, d'une part, la très forte représentation du Hauran dans les inscriptions du IV^e s. apr. J.-C., ce qui est probablement dû à l'épigraphie funéraire des « inscriptions de propriété », et d'autre part, plus globalement, l'importance des inscriptions datées du VI^e s. apr. J.-C., qui sont plus de deux fois plus nombreuses que celles du IV^e s. apr. J.-C., l'autre siècle le plus représenté. Ainsi, les inscriptions funéraires datées d'Arabie reflètent l'*epigraphic habit* du IV^e et du V^e s., mais pas du tout celle du VI^e s. apr. J.-C.

Le tableau 3 de l'article de L. Di Segni relativise ces différents chiffrages et statistiques. Il correspond au tableau 2 auquel ont été rajoutées les épitaphes grecques du seul site de Zôora. Ces dernières sont si nombreuses, particulièrement au V^e s. apr. J.-C., qu'elles changent la tendance en faisant de ce V^e s. apr. J.-C. le second en nombre d'inscriptions datées, à peine dépassé par le VI^e s. apr. J.-C. C'est démontrer une nouvelle fois que les inscriptions funéraires datées ne reflètent qu'imparfaitement le total des inscriptions funéraires, sans parler du total des inhumations comme on le vérifie à Samra.

Demeures des morts

Trois sortes de lieux d'inhumation sont connus dans l'Arabie proto-byzantine, les tombeaux construits, les nécropoles de tombes à fosse ou à ciste et les sanctuaires chrétiens. Les tombeaux construits, ou parfois creusés et construits, mausolées et hypogées, sont la plupart du temps isolés et plus rarement intégrés à des nécropoles. Il n'est pas utile ici de reprendre les typologies établies, mais on peut rappeler que les tombeaux monumentaux de type mausolée, typiques du Hauran, disparaissent de l'épigraphie au début du V^e s. apr. J.-C. Il est probable qu'on n'en construit plus à partir de cette époque. Cependant, ces tombeaux monumentaux, de même que les tombeaux souterrains, semblent, quand ils ont été fouillés, fournir du mobilier largement étalé dans le temps. On a l'impression que les morts à l'époque proto-byzan-

110 Probablement la Syrie du Sud actuelle, sans les zones jordaniennes du Hauran.

tine étaient en priorité déposés dans des tombeaux anciens, alors que les restes des occupants antérieurs avaient été regroupés ou déplacés pour laisser des espaces libres dans ces tombeaux. Peut-être ne jugeait-on pas nécessaire l'ajout d'une inscription sur un tombeau familial ancien.

Ces pratiques se retrouvent dans le cas des nécropoles où, comme l'a montré A. Nabulsi à Khirbat al-Samra (Fig. 9),¹¹¹ les tombes à fosse et à ciste sont très souvent occupées par plusieurs défunts, au fil des périodes différentes, tandis que de nouvelles tombes empiètent sur les anciennes. On remarque aussi une absence de respect pour les épitaphes anciennes, ainsi qu'en témoignent, à Rihab, le remploi sans scrupules des stèles funéraires d'époque romaine comme matériau de construction dans les églises et, à Umm al-Jimāl, leur recyclage dans les murs des maisons tardo-antiques.

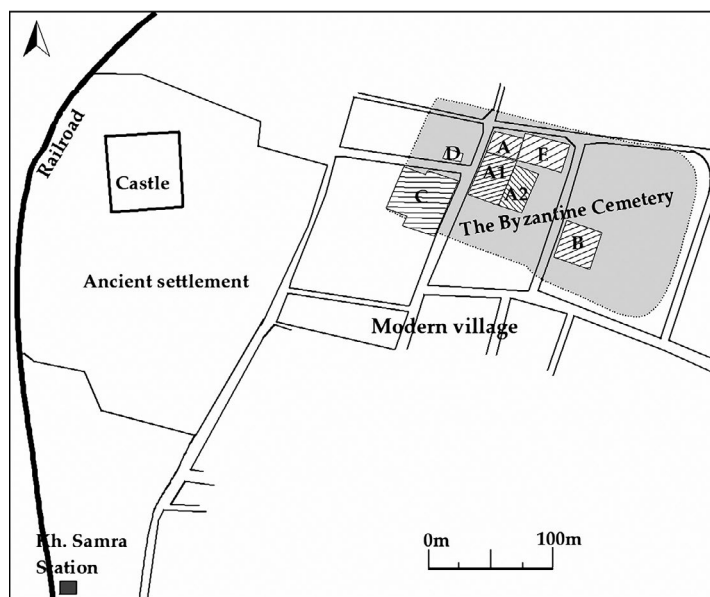


Fig. 9 : Plan général de Khirbat al-Samra.

Les nécropoles et les tombeaux construits ne présentent pas d'originalité particulière à l'époque protobyzantine et la continuité avec la période précédente paraît telle que les évolutions nous échappent. En revanche, la présence dans des nécropoles de stèles anépigraphes, simplement marquées d'une croix constitue une nouveauté considérable, même si elle ne s'observe pour le moment qu'à Samra et dans la région de Madaba. C'est une manière de christianiser la tombe en laissant le défunt dans l'anonymat d'un regroupement familial. On imagine la nécropole de Samra hérissée de petites stèles ornées de croix, la plupart anépigraphes, avec ce-

111 Voir supra le paragraphe « Un cas particulier : Khirbat al-Samra ».

pendant quelques inscriptions où les noms uniques sont reconnus d'abord dans le groupe familial. Les stèles inscrites doivent servir essentiellement à préciser l'emplacement et les limites d'un ensemble de tombes de famille.¹¹²

L'usage des sanctuaires chrétiens comme lieux d'inhumation est une autre réelle nouveauté, bien différente des quelques cas de voisinage entre un sanctuaire païen et un tombeau que l'on rencontre dans le Proche-Orient romain. Les « tombes privilégiées » chrétiennes sont situées dans l'église ou ses annexes, à moins qu'elles se trouvent à proximité immédiate, dans des tombeaux en communication avec le bâtiment de culte ; les inhumations *ad sanctos*, c'est-à-dire près de la tombe ou des reliques d'un martyr constituent l'une des catégories de ces inhumations privilégiées. Cette nouveauté n'est d'ailleurs pas propre à l'Arabie, au Proche-Orient ou à la Méditerranée orientale, mais elle se rencontre dans l'ensemble du monde romain ou post-romain christianisé de l'Antiquité tardive, avec des particularités régionales.¹¹³ En Arabie, les archéologues n'y prêtent attention que depuis peu, et les deux principaux ouvrages qui concernent les églises de Jordanie n'en parlent pratiquement pas.¹¹⁴ Récemment, Christoph Eger, Robert Schick et Davide Bianchi ont abordé le sujet des « church burials » de la province d'Arabie, et particulièrement de la Jordanie.¹¹⁵

C. Eger a annoncé qu'il préparait la liste des églises qui faisaient partie de la province d'Arabie et qui présentent des installations funéraires. Selon lui, sur les 150 églises jordaniennes de la province, deux douzaines seulement entreraient dans cette liste. Mis à part l'hypogée de Yajuz, très caractéristique dans son association à un *martyrion*,¹¹⁶ celui de l'église sud de Nitl dans la région de Madaba et celui de l'église Saint-Georges de Rihab, les constructions funéraires qu'il cite sont de simples tombes à ciste en tout petit nombre dans le sol des églises et C. Eger précise qu'il n'y a pas en Arabie, contrairement à la Palestine Troisième, d'église entièrement utilisée pour des inhumations. On peut ajouter qu'il n'y a pas non plus d'église cimétériale entourée d'une nécropole. À Umm ar-Rsas/Umm al-Rasas, au sud de Madaba, dans les quatre églises qui composent le complexe ecclésial Saint-Étienne, sept tombes ont été aménagées dans les pavements.¹¹⁷ Dans le monastère et sanctuaire de pèlerinage du Mont Nébo, à Siyagha, ainsi que dans les divers établissements monastiques environnants, un nombre relativement important de tombes dispersées et d'ossuaires a été retrouvé ; de même, une chapelle funéraire

112 Pour le phénomène très répandu de marquage des tombes familiales tardo-antiques : cfr. les contributions ARDELEANU, BIANCHI, CUBAS DÍAZ, FELLE, VALEVA et ZIMMERMANN dans ce volume.

113 Cfr. les contributions ARBEITER, ARDELEANU, BIANCHI, FELLE, MAINARDIS, MERTEN, PRIEN, VALEVA et ZIMMERMANN dans ce volume.

114 MICHEL 2001; DUVAL 2003.

115 EGER 2018; SCHICK 2018; BIANCHI 2018; cfr. la contribution de BIANCHI dans ce volume.

116 Voir supra le paragraphe « Philadelphie et Gérasa ».

117 MICHEL 2001, 381-397.

rectangulaire, dite « chapelle de Robebos », située à proximité du monastère recouvrait une crypte qui recueillait les ossements d'au moins 57 personnes, adultes et enfants.¹¹⁸ R. Schick attire l'attention sur le cas de Quweisme/Quwaysma, près d'Amman, où un tombeau contenant six ou sept individus est aménagé sous une salle annexe de l'église inférieure du village.¹¹⁹ On fera la différence entre deux types de tombes privilégiées. On pourrait qualifier de funéraires, me semble-t-il, les seules églises ou chapelles qui abritent ou sont reliées à un tombeau important, de type hypogée ou chambre souterraine, par opposition à celles où sont disposées quelques tombes à fosse ou à ciste. Les unes ont été construites en fonction du tombeau préexistant ou attendu, les autres ont accueilli des tombes occasionnelles. Parmi les premières, plusieurs, à Nitl, à Gérasa, à Yajuz en particulier, se présentent comme des basiliques à nef unique.

Déjà, Jean-Pierre Sodini avait fait remarquer, il y a une quarantaine d'années, qu'en Orient les bénéficiaires des tombes privilégiées étaient des privilégiés, en général en petite quantité, moines et membres du clergé, mais aussi fondateurs.¹²⁰ Les 132 personnes ou plus qui ont été dénombrées dans l'hypogée de Yajuz, même si leur nombre paraît important, peuvent fort bien appartenir à la famille et à l'entourage du fondateur. Le Hauran, où les fouilles récentes des églises sont rares, n'a pour le moment fourni que peu d'exemples de ces tombes privilégiées, en-dehors du témoignage des inscriptions, quand le bâtiment ou la tombe ont disparu. Les clercs et les moines au Nébo et dans le Hauran, les occupants des sarcophages de Qanawāt et le jeune Ioulianos inhumé dans le *koimeterion* d'Umm al-Jimāl bénéficiaient tous de ces inhumations privilégiées que l'épigraphie aide parfois à repérer.

On peut s'interroger sur le rapport entre les tombes privilégiées et les donations funéraires mentionnées sur les mosaïques ou sur le mobilier des églises, « pour le repos d'untel ». Rien ne semble très clair sur ce point et l'on a prêté parfois à tort un sens funéraire à des inscriptions de donations votives. Par exemple, à Gérasa, l'église à nef unique dite « mortuary church », à laquelle est reliée une grotte certainement sépulcrale, accessible par un passage dans le mur sud, contient une mosaïque inscrite où le donateur anonyme dit qu'il a fait son offrande « pour la protection de son père et de sa mère », ce qui n'est pas funéraire.¹²¹ Il se peut que le donateur ait offert une partie de l'église ou sa totalité pour y aménager un tombeau du vivant même de ses parents, mais cela reste à démontrer et l'église funéraire pourrait être antérieure à la pose de cette mosaïque. De même à Nitl, le complexe ecclésial abrite un hypogée qui a été considéré comme le tombeau familial d'une branche des Jafnides (dits parfois « Ghassanides »), à partir d'une inscription « pour

118 SANMORI 1998, 413–424.

119 MICHEL 2001, 290–293.

120 SODINI 1986.

121 I.Gerasa 333: « [Υ]πὲρ σω[τ]ηρίας πατρὸς [καὶ μ]ητρὸς τὰ ὑμῶν [ὕμ]ιν μετὰ εὐχαριστίας [προ]σένιγκα ». Sur le bâtiment, KRAELING 1938, 254 f. (J. W. Crowfoot); MICHEL 2001, 259–261.

la protection du clarissime Thaalaba le phylarque », un membre de la dynastie. D. Feissel a montré cependant que l'inscription n'avait pas de caractère funéraire et que rien ne démontrait que le tombeau était celui de Thaalaba en personne. Cela n'empêche pas que ce dernier, avec d'autres donateurs nommés sur les mosaïques, ait pu aménager cette église pour en faire un mausolée familial et même qu'il ait pu y être enseveli par la suite, mais ça reste à démontrer.¹²²

Au monastère dit de Kaianos à Ayoun Mousa/ʿUyun Musa au Nébo, l'église a connu deux phases et on y a identifié deux tombes qui paraissent appartenir à la première période définie comme funéraire.¹²³ Sur la mosaïque inférieure, une des inscriptions mentionne « le repos » de deux personnages dont l'un est un moine ;¹²⁴ la mosaïque supérieure, de la phase la plus récente, comporte aussi une inscription du même type, « pour le repos du prêtre Théodore » ;¹²⁵ dans les deux phases, plusieurs autres inscriptions de donation n'ont pas de caractère funéraire. Cette église, ici une petite basilique à trois nefs, serait la seule où l'on peut établir un lien physique entre, d'une part, des inscriptions de donation funéraire, « pour le repos d'untel » et, d'autre part, des tombes privilégiées où reposeraient éventuellement les personnes en question. Mis à part ce cas particulier, dans un contexte monastique, je ferais l'hypothèse que les inscriptions de donation funéraire ne concernent pas des défunts ensevelis à proximité et qu'elles constituent le substitut plutôt que le complément d'une inhumation privilégiée. Les recherches devront cependant se poursuivre. Il est frappant de constater cependant que sur la plupart des tombes privilégiées, hormis celles du clergé, on a omis de mentionner le nom des occupants, alors que c'est le nom et le geste du donateur qui sont mis en valeur.

Chrétiens et païens

Dans le domaine funéraire, la christianisation des inscriptions et de leurs supports au cours de la période protobyzantine est un phénomène important qui entraîne un changement considérable par rapport à l'époque impériale. Le caractère chrétien de la sépulture et de son occupant se manifeste par les moyens que nous avons évoqués ci-dessus : des signes, croix, chrismes ou autres, ou des formules. Les stèles anépigraphes constituent une autre manifestation de cette « identité » chrétiennes. Nous ne savons pas toujours repérer, en particulier sur les tombeaux construits mal conservés, ces signes chrétiens, mais je ferais l'hypothèse qu'à partir de Constantin les chrétiens d'Arabie ont, comme ceux de Zôora ou du pays de

122 PICCIRILLO 2001; BE 2003, 606, BE 2005, 552 (D. Feissel).

123 PICCIRILLO/ALLIATA 1998, 244–250, 316–319, 356–358, 418. Voir DI SEGNI 1998, 451–456 n^{os} 58–59; cfr. la contribution BIANCHI dans ce volume.

124 I. *Jordanie II*, 96c; DI SEGNI 1998, 451 n^o 58: « Ὑπὲρ μνήμης Καιανοῦ [καὶ ἀναπ]αύσῃως τοῦ πατρὸς ἡ[μῶν] Παβέβου καὶ Ἰανίου [καὶ ὑ]πὲρ σωτηρίας Κασισήου ».

125 DI SEGNI 1998, 451 n^o 64.

Moab, clairement tenu à affirmer l'appartenance de leurs défunts à la communauté religieuse nouvelle. En revanche, en Arabie, contrairement à ce qui se passe Zôora et au pays de Moab, où il n'y a pratiquement pas d'inscriptions funéraires antérieures au IV^e s. apr. J.-C., l'effondrement numérique de l'épigraphie funéraire au IV^e et au V^e s. apr. J.-C. contraste fortement avec son importance antérieure.

On pourrait admettre que sur les 2000 textes funéraires du Hauran, très rarement datables, « un nombre important appartient au IV^e s., et sans doute encore au début du V^e s. apr. J.-C. » et que nombre d'entre eux concernent des chrétiens que nous ne savons pas reconnaître, puisque « les chrétiens ne sentent aucunement le besoin de se différencier du reste de la population ». ¹²⁶ Cependant, je ne pense pas que cette explication soit satisfaisante et qu'on puisse considérer que, dans un domaine aussi important que le rapport à la mort, le nouveau contexte religieux du IV^e s. apr. J.-C., celui de la Paix de l'Église et du christianisme conquérant, favorise la discrétion. L'épigraphie funéraire reste un bon moyen d'apprécier la christianisation, quand on dispose d'éléments de datation, même imprécis. Il m'apparaît en particulier que la présence bien visible des notables chrétiens comme fondateurs ou propriétaires de tombeaux dès le milieu du IV^e s. apr. J.-C. montre la nouvelle nécessité pour les familles de donner aux morts une sépulture chrétienne qui leur permette le repos éternel et de le faire savoir. Je ferais hypothèse de considérer qu'en Arabie, à cette époque, les textes funéraires qui ne présentent aucun caractère chrétien ni juif – en mettant de côté les monuments endommagés – appartiennent à des tombes d'adeptes de la religion traditionnelle, que nous dirons païens ou polythéistes. Il semblerait en effet, même si l'ensemble est faible et mal daté, que les juifs eux-aussi affichaient leur appartenance, alors qu'on ne discerne pas de militantisme païen dans l'épigraphie funéraire. On peut remarquer l'absence de l'onomaistique proprement chrétienne dans les textes funéraires neutres ou indéterminés, sans signes chrétiens. On devrait donc admettre la réalité de la raréfaction relativement ancienne des textes funéraires, sans attribuer au IV^e ou au V^e s. apr. J.-C. beaucoup des inscriptions funéraires sans date.

Néanmoins, le rapport de causalité entre la christianisation et la raréfaction des épitaphes reste incertain et l'on pourrait se contenter d'explications régionales en insistant sur les disparités entre les sites, sur les spécificités locales et sur les particularismes. De même, les études détaillées sur les transformations des rituels à l'époque protobyzantine manquent. Les recherches sur la disparition des incinérations, qui ne semblent pas avoir été très nombreuses à l'époque romaine, ¹²⁷ sur la persistance ou non des dépôts funéraires, ¹²⁸ sur l'éventuelle survie de certains rituels païens, comme l'obole ou les libations, ¹²⁹ n'en sont qu'à leurs débuts.

126 SARTRE 2017, 264.

127 NABULSI 2019.

128 NABULSI 1997.

129 Entre autres, SANMORI 1998, 417: plusieurs des tombes du monastère du Mont Nébo, à Siyagha, indéniablement chrétiennes, contenaient des monnaies.

Conclusion

Dans la province d'Arabie, l'épigraphie funéraire protobyzantine connaît un recul considérable, en nombre comme en contenu, par rapport à la période précédente. La disparition de l'épigraphie funéraire, qui n'est qu'un aspect de l'affaiblissement de l'*epigraphic habit*, est aussi l'une des manifestations de la transformation des habitudes funéraires qui accompagne la christianisation. C'est la deuxième moitié du IV^e s. et le début du V^e s. apr. J.-C. qui constitue le moment de transition, avec la construction des derniers tombeaux monumentaux des membres des élites, certains chrétiens, d'autres non. À l'époque protobyzantine, les épitaphes sur des stèles funéraires deviennent également très rares dès le IV^e s. apr. J.-C.; elles paraissent connaître un certain renouveau au VI^e s. apr. J.-C., mais elles appartiennent à des types locaux relativement standardisés, différents selon les sites. Pour les inhumations du commun, la disparition des stèles funéraires individuelles et nominatives est très visible en Arabie et surtout dans sa partie nord, alors que plus au sud, dans le pays de Moab et à Zôora, on assiste au contraire à l'émergence d'une abondante épigraphie funéraire chrétienne sur stèles. En Arabie, l'apparition des stèles funéraires anépigraphes marquées d'une croix sert dans certaines nécropoles de substitut aux stèles inscrites. De même, le développement des inhumations privilégiées dans les églises et leurs annexes, l'émergence d'églises funéraires privées ou familiales, mais aussi l'essor des donations faites aux églises pour le repos des défunts remplacent partiellement chez les notables les tombeaux coûteux et ostentatoires. Une nouvelle façon de montrer l'importance et la générosité des grandes familles, tout en entretenant le souvenir de leurs défunts, se manifeste dans certains lieux de culte et de pèlerinage. Il n'empêche que le recul de l'épigraphie funéraire s'accroît au début de l'époque islamique en même temps que disparaissent pour longtemps les marqueurs de tombes chrétiens, et particulièrement les stèles ornées de croix.

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SYLVAIN DESTEPHEN

The Funerary Epigraphic Landscape of Late Antique *Asia Minor*

Introduction

The creation of burial spaces is consubstantial to humankind, but in Antiquity inscribing texts associated to tombs was a common practice only in the Mediterranean.¹ Production of epitaphs steadily increased in the Greek world from the classical period onwards and spread across the Roman Empire. Half a million Greek and Latin inscriptions, mainly epitaphs, attest to a cultural phenomenon of great chronological and geographical dimensions. In the regions under Roman rule, the epigraphic habit became a characteristic of the middle and upper classes, who were concerned with perpetuating the remembrance and descentance of the dead. Even though funerary inscriptions were sometimes modest, the ‘materiality of mourning’ rarely expressed a lower social position.² In other words, the great majority of the Roman world’s population, who were poor and illiterate, were buried without epitaphs. Consequently, the distribution and numbers of funerary inscriptions can be deceptive, since they show an epigraphic practice which was geographically widespread, but socially more limited. Inscriptions were clearly present in public space in the form of official texts inscribed on behalf of rulers, but they were much more present in private space with a huge number of funerary inscriptions that far exceeded all other categories of inscriptions. For instance, according to an inventory made at the beginning of the last century, epitaphs represented about two-thirds of the Hellenistic and Roman inscriptions of *Kyzikos* on the Propontis.³ This flourishing Greek city is exemplary in the constant dominance of funerary inscriptions but, of course, this imbalance is not specific to Greek epigraphy nor limited to *Asia Minor*. The present study will focus on Greek funerary inscriptions of Late Antique *Asia Minor* in the period of sustained epigraphic production from the 3rd until the mid-6th c. AD. Indeed, *Asia Minor* is the region of the Roman East where inscribing texts remained vigorous for the longest period. Epigraphic resilience gives

- 1 For having emended this paper I want to express my gratitude towards Michael Featherstone and Stephen Mitchell.
- 2 NEWBY/TOULSON 2019.
- 3 HASLUCK 1910, 263–295; HABICHT 2014; more broadly MITCHELL 2017a, 276f. Sadly, the epigraphic corpus of *Kyzikos* is still incomplete, and one relies upon the volumes edited by Elmar Schwertheim (I. *Kyzikos*; I. *Miletupolis*). An updating, comprehensive edition of the inscriptions of *Kyzikos* is greatly needed and waited. See already comments and corrections of ROBERT/ROBERT 1980, 432–442.

evidence of social stability and provides a unique opportunity to examine the evolution of epitaphs on the basis of extensive documentation. After a brief examination of the main characteristics of funerary inscriptions in Late Antique *Asia Minor*, the paper will examine changes in the decoration and text of epitaphs which document religious and funerary transformations in later Roman society.

Changes in *Asia Minor's* Late Antique Epigraphy

Dominance of funerary epigraphy was reinforced in Late Antiquity as the Roman epigraphic habit underwent a number of major alterations. It is unnecessary to repeat the topic of a previous paper presented at the 49th symposium of the Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies held in Oxford in March 2016, and I shall limit myself to briefly recalling the main conclusions of this research devoted to a phenomenon that I have called the process of 'Byzantinisation' of Late Antique epigraphy.⁴ The evolution can be characterised by five major features that explain why funerary inscriptions represented a huge part of the epigraphic production in Late Antiquity. The first major feature is a global, irreversible and definitive decrease of the inscriptions produced in the later Roman Empire compared to the previous period. Examination of the corpus of inscriptions of any part of *Asia Minor* reveals a dramatic decrease in epigraphic production. Every city was affected, even the largest cities of *Ionia* and *Caria* such as *Ephesos*, *Smyrna*, *Miletos* and *Aphrodisias* (Fig. 1). The number of inscriptions produced from the 4th to the 7th c. AD was modest compared to the texts inscribed during the Hellenistic and above all Roman period. The latter can be truly regarded as the epigraphic golden age of *Asia Minor* and spanned the 1st to the 3rd c. AD.⁵ Generally speaking, whatever the region or city under scrutiny, inscriptions produced in Late Antiquity represent only 5 to 10 % of all texts inscribed in Antiquity: the decrease was therefore steep and impressive.⁶

The spectacular and definitive decline of inscriptions was not limited to *Asia Minor*, far from it. In a previous paper published in 2011, I studied the geographical and chronological distribution of Latin and Greek inscriptions in the Central Balkans, that is, from the Adriatic and Thrace to the Danube Valley and Higher Macedonia.⁷ According to a careful examination of local corpora of inscriptions

4 DESTEPHEN 2020.

5 In *Ephesos*, among 2590 Greek and Latin inscriptions, 210 were inscribed in Late Antiquity; in *Smyrna*, 45 out of 905 inscriptions belong to the same period; in *Miletos*, 65 out of 1580; in *Aphrodisias*, 254 out of 1703. Counting are based upon I. Aphrodisias Late Ant.; I. Ephesos; I. Milet; I. Smyrna.

6 Many more figures and examples are provided by MITCHELL 2017a, 273–275.

7 DESTEPHEN 2011. See also the remarkable, pioneering survey of GEROV 1980; for archaeological evidence of Late Antique tombs (including some inscriptions) see the contribution VALEVA in this volume.

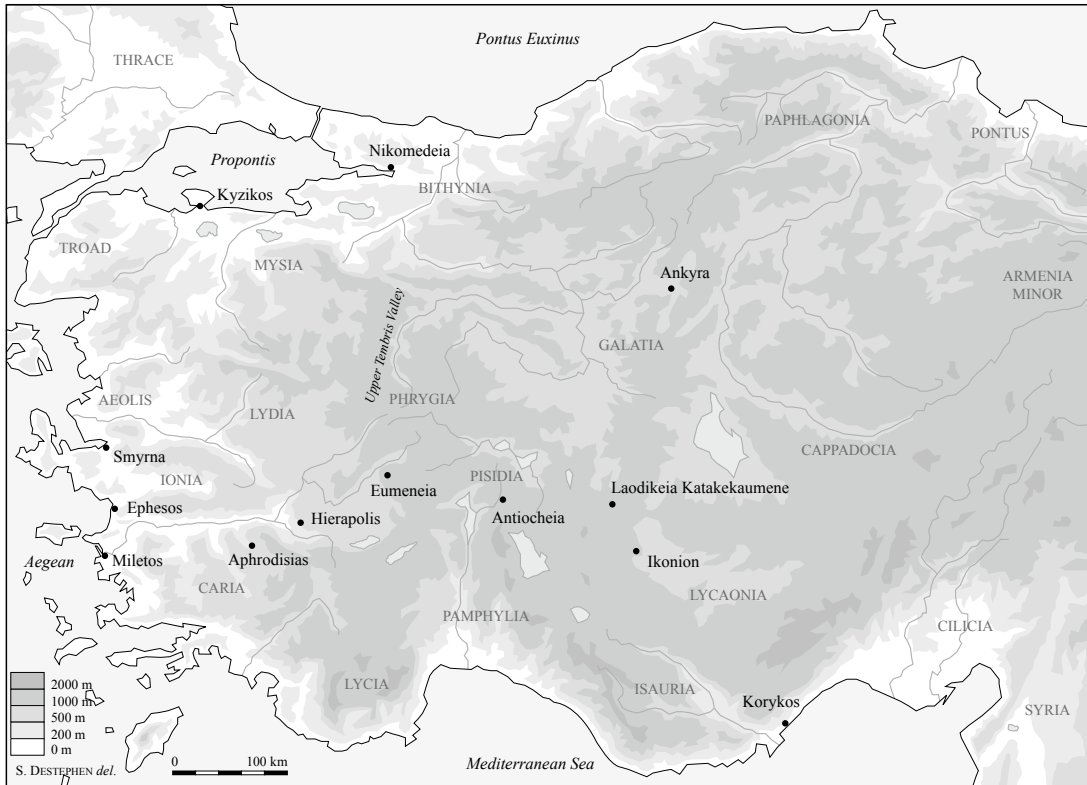


Fig. 1: Map of *Asia Minor*.

and main epigraphic and archaeological journals, I was able to count and locate some 1600 Latin inscriptions and about 3300 Greek texts inscribed on stone from the time of Augustus, who definitively seized personal power in 27 BC, to the Severan dynasty, which ended in 235 AD. For the Late Antique period in the same region, I counted about 135 Latin inscriptions and some 500 Greek inscriptions: Latin epigraphic production was diminished to a twelfth and Greek to a sixth in volume. This striking difference can be explained by the scale and location of the barbarian invasions, which primarily plagued Latin-speaking Danubian provinces, whilst Greek-speaking regions were relatively less affected though by no means spared.⁸ If the considerable drop in epigraphic production in the Balkans can be explained by insecurity, on the other hand, *Asia Minor* also experienced a significant plunge in the number of inscriptions, even though it was less affected by attack and sacking by rampaging barbarians. Since the political and military situation will not suffice to explain the general decline of the Roman epigraphic habit, we must look for other explanations.

⁸ The political and military situation of the Balkans in Late Antiquity has been investigated by BAVANT 2004, 320–341; SARANTIS 2016.

It is worth noting that in Late Antiquity inscriptions became rarer in the Central Balkans and increasingly expressed the position and view of privileged citizens. This phenomenon is perceptible across the Roman Empire and evidenced in *Asia Minor*. I shall call this second feature the ‘elitisation’ of Late Antique epigraphy. We have seen in the introduction of this paper that inscribing inscriptions, even funerary, remained a social and cultural practice limited to the socially and culturally privileged part of the Graeco-Roman population in *Asia Minor*. In Late Antiquity, epigraphic decrease affected the upper classes to a lesser degree, since they became proportionally more conspicuous. Public and private inscriptions displayed municipal elites, officials of the Roman State, which was more bureaucratic than previously, and membership in the senatorial order that had increased. Elitisation of Late Antique inscriptions also took on a spatial dimension as epigraphic production tended to be concentrated in some urban centres where the civil elite lived and remained attached to the social practice of epigraphy. The third characteristic of Late Antique inscriptions is directly related to the process of elitisation: a strong and distinctive inclination to epigrams. I shall call this phenomenon the ‘metrification’ of Late Antique epigraphy. The later Roman ruling class had versified honorary and funerary inscriptions commissioned with an unprecedented passion. Poetry on stone was an important cultural marker that reflected the Late Antique elite’s strong attachment, at least in form, to classical literature.⁹ However, it should be noted that versified inscriptions were rare compared to the great amount of prose inscriptions.

Christianisation and standardisation are the last two main characteristics of Late Antique epigraphy and had a direct influence on the funerary epigraphy treated in this study. *Asia Minor* shares with the city of Rome the particularity of preserving the largest corpus of early Christian inscriptions. Here, ‘early Christian’ refers precisely to the period before the Roman State legalised Christianity. I have counted in *Asia Minor* about 280 inscriptions prior to the emperor Constantine, to which Norbert Zimmermann has added a dozen more in *Ephesos*, Roger Bagnall three or four in *Smyrna*, and Peter Thonemann half a dozen in *Phrygia*.¹⁰ The quantity of early Christian inscriptions, almost all epitaphs, proves the precociousness and extent of the process of Christianisation in *Asia Minor*. Due to this unusual religious context, it is hardly surprising to note, from Constantine’s rule onwards, a remarkable expansion of Christian inscriptions with a strong presence of Christian clergy. This is a collateral aspect of the elitisation of Late Antique epigraphy. The final characteristic of inscriptions of Late Antiquity is an increasing standardisation, although this term is not quite satisfactory. Whilst there was a large array and great

⁹ DESTEPHEN 2020, 25–28.

¹⁰ DESTEPHEN 2010a; ZIMMERMANN 2011, 402–404; ZIMMERMANN 2016, 751–753; BAGNALL et al. 2016, 45–47; MAMA XI nos 37, 41, 44, 82, 139, 150, 164 (nos 17, 40, 165, 177 and 181 may be early Christian or Jewish inscriptions). See also TABBERNEE 2013, 287–301; MITCHELL 2014.

diversity of Hellenistic and early Roman inscriptions – even though we have seen that epitaphs already represented the bulk of the epigraphic production in these periods – epigraphic diversity considerably decreased during the last centuries of Antiquity in favour of epitaphs. Imperial, municipal and public inscriptions diminished considerably, except in a few metropolises such as *Ephesos* in *Ionia*, *Aphrodisias* in *Caria* or *Hierapolis* in *Phrygia*.¹¹ In most cities, epitaphs represent more than 90 % of the preserved Late Antique inscriptions. In other words, studying inscriptions of Late Antiquity mainly involves dealing with funerary inscriptions. Obviously, epitaphs were not the longest, most sophisticated nor decorative texts on stone, but they formed the epigraphic landscape that surrounded the men and women of Late Antiquity in *Asia Minor*.

Religious Perspectives

First of all, we must recall that followers of traditional cults (i.e. the pagan religion according to the Christian phraseology in Latin) did not express religious beliefs on epitaphs or did so occasionally with the words θεοῖς καταχθονίοις, which are the Greek equivalent of the Latin words *dis manibus* (*sacrum*), ‘consecrated to the gods Manes’. This epigraphic formula was exceptionally widespread in the Latin-speaking provinces and in the Greek-speaking provinces close to the Latin world, but it was quite exceptional in *Asia Minor*. Consequently, ordinary epitaphs of *Asia Minor* had no religious flavour at all. As everyone was faithful to the traditional cults, it was pointless to mention this on tombstones. In this regard, Christians were different from the rest of their neighbours, whom they considered to be ‘Hellenes’ in the Greek-speaking half of the Roman world. Religious affiliation was discreetly manifested on epitaphs by particular formulas, symbols or names which had become blatantly Christian in the Constantinian period and even more so from the Theodosian dynasty onwards. Before this, the assertion of a conspicuous Christian identity appeared only on some epitaphs in *Phrygia* (Upper Tembris Valley and region of *Eumenia*) and *Lycaonia* (region of *Ikonion*) at the end of the 2nd and during the 3rd c. AD. The increase of such epitaphs would provide compelling evidence that the new religion rapidly expanded in these regions before the Roman State authorised it.¹² However, openly Christian inscriptions, which some historians called ‘phanerochristian’ inscriptions, remained rare before Constantine’s reign, except in *Phrygia* and *Lycaonia*.¹³ By contrast, in the rest of the Roman world (Rome and its suburbs excepted), the confessionalisation of Christian gravestones was an

11 See FEISSEL 1999; ROUECHÉ 1989; ROUECHÉ 2009; RITTI 2017.

12 MITCHELL 1993, 58–62.

13 GIBSON 1978; CHIRICAT 2013. Adjective “phanerochristian” was coined by CALDER 1922–1923, and more recently reused by several scholars, for instance MCKECHNIE 1999, 439. However, the term seems to have little success in epigraphic and historical scholarship.

epigraphic phenomenon that appeared mainly in the 4th c. AD and became widespread only in the 5th to 6th c. AD.

For all these reasons, the study of the Christianisation process of funerary epigraphy in *Asia Minor* requires one to seek reliable chronological clues, an arduous task. Already before Constantine, funerary inscriptions in *Asia Minor* rarely used provincial eras and Roman and Macedonian calendars were often ignored. Therefore, the precise dating of an epitaph is in most cases impossible. In Late Antiquity, time reckoning in inscriptions according to the system established by the emperor Diocletian spread progressively, especially from Justinian's reign onwards, most in public inscriptions, though not exclusively.¹⁴ In the case of epitaphs, dating relies upon more uncertain criteria: palaeography remains a useful but risky method due to distinct and diachronic epigraphic traditions which coexisted and endured in *Asia Minor*. *Nomina gentilicia* are more interesting, as they disappeared after the 4th c. AD with the exception of the *nomen gentilicium* Flavius, which was related to the Roman ruling class from Constantine until the end of the early Byzantine period.¹⁵ As the funerary formula *μνήμης χάριν*, 'in remembrance', predated Christianity and was usually associated with the deceased who bore a *nomen gentilicium*, it is hazardous to date an epitaph with this formula after the 4th c. AD.

The presence of *μνήμης χάριν* on Christian tombstones shows the persistence of a non-denominational formulaic language in early Christian epigraphy, although the letter *chi* of *χάριν* could sometimes be replaced by a discreet cross in some Christian communities of southern *Lycaonia*.¹⁶ As conversion to Christianity was spreading, a more distinctive religious phraseology developed on epitaphs in *Asia Minor* as in the rest of the Later Roman Empire. This is the case of the expression *ἐνθάδε κεῖται*, which enunciated Christian belief in carnal resurrection and eternal salvation from the 3rd c. AD onwards. Even though the same formula had already appeared here and there on pagan epitaphs, it became common in the 4th and 5th c. AD after the triumph of Christianity over traditional cults in Greek-speaking areas.¹⁷ Both the standardisation and Christianisation of epitaphs, first limited and then generalised, also propelled the use of votive *formulae* addressed to divine or holy persons of Christianity (*Κύριε, Χριστέ, Θεοτόκε*, etc. *βοήθει*). Whilst early funerary *formulae* were neutral with regard to religion, these new votive *formulae* indicated the progressive and profound Christianisation of Late Antique epitaphs and the society which produced them. Using Christian funerary and votive *formulae* became flagrant from the Theodosian dynasty onwards.

However, the full standardisation of the funerary landscape was never achieved, as some Christian epitaphs were highlighted by several distinctive ele-

14 FEISSEL 1992, 394f.; FEISSEL 1995, 375–379.

15 KEENAN 1973; BAGNALL/CAMERON/SCHWARTZ 1987, 36–40; CAMERON 1988; SALWAY 1994, 137–140; BLANCO-PÉREZ 2016.

16 BREYTENBACH/ZIMMERMANN 2018, 18–20.

17 CARLETTI 2008, 139f.

ments: an elaborate decoration, a sophisticated language and biblical quotations. Elegant carved ornaments clearly indicated funeral expense, but it is worth noting that the fine early Christian door- or portico-shaped stelae found in *Phrygia* and *Lycaonia* disappeared as early as the fourth century.¹⁸ Moreover, ornamentation was greatly reduced during the 5th and 6th c. AD to the point that even the *tabula ansata*, so common in the High Empire, became rare at the end of Antiquity. On the other hand, crosses of all shapes, especially Latin crosses, gradually spread throughout Christian epitaphs. First discreetly in the 3rd to 4th c. AD, and mostly limited to a single design on epitaphs, crosses progressively surfaced in every sort of inscription. As we have seen in epigraphic votive *formulae*, propagation of crosses also evidenced the full conversion of Late Antique society to Christianity. However, it was only from the 5th to 6th c. AD onwards that crosses multiplied on inscriptions, funerary and non-funerary alike, to the point that crosses preceded and ended texts and adorned names of divine, holy and even living or dead persons.¹⁹ The systematic carving of crosses also manifested the increasing uniformity of Christian epigraphy.

Obviously, conversion of Late Antique society to Christianity did not suppress social and cultural distinctions which continued to appear on funerary monuments through the conspicuous selection of prestigious literary and scriptural references. We have already noted the abundant flowering of epigrams in Late Antiquity. The process of 'metrification' of Late Antique epigraphy reveals a claim to classical culture that manifested itself in using a poetic language borrowed from Homer with varying degrees of talent and inspiration. Versified epitaphs, either Christian or pagan, honorary or funerary, clearly belonged to a cultural and social elite. The four-volume corpus lavishly edited by Reinhold Merkelbach and Josef Stauber has shown how appreciated epigrams were among civil and religious elites alike: the upper class of Late Antique society and Church displayed and shared their delight in epigrams. The 250 or so Late Antique epigrams collected by R. Merkelbach and J. Stauber in *Asia Minor* are concentrated in provincial capitals where local aristocracy was settled and provide further evidence of epigraphic elitisation in Late Antiquity. However, epigrams became relatively rare after the 5th c. AD and quite exceptional after Justinian's demise.²⁰

A final mark of distinction in Late Antique epigraphy was a conspicuous biblical culture displayed on stone. Antonio Felle edited in 2006 a fine corpus of inscriptions with biblical quotations that gives us a precise idea of the importance of the Bible

18 In-depth study of WAELKENS 1986; more recently LOCHMANN 2003; KELP 2013.

19 On early Christian inscriptions see DESTEPHEN 2010a, 165f. with the previous bibliography; on early Byzantine inscriptions, an overview had been provided by DESTEPHEN 2020, 23f.

20 SGO I–IV. On the relations between Late Antique epigrams and society, see AGOSTI 2006–2007; AGOSTI 2010. Regional overviews in THONEMANN 2014; SIRONEN 2017; ZIMMERMANN 2019.

in funerary epigraphy of *Asia Minor* as well as of the rest of the Roman world. Just as picking Homeric words or verses was reserved for a narrow socio-cultural elite, so biblical references appeared only on a small number of Christian epitaphs.²¹ As biblical quotations were generally limited and strongly stereotyped, they were a kind of scriptural cliché and proved that the funerary standardisation affected all social strata, including the ecclesiastical hierarchy. However, the form, decoration and language of epitaphs specified the connection between the Late Antique funerary landscape and the social position of the dead.

Funerary Perspectives

We have seen that funerary inscriptions, as all types of inscriptions, became far less numerous in Late Antiquity, but they represent the bulk of Late Antique inscriptions since the epigraphic plunge primarily affected public inscriptions. Unsurprisingly, this is also the situation in central Anatolia where the low density of population, at least until the mid-20th century, permitted the preservation of inscriptions in large numbers. By contrast, in densely populated areas on the Mediterranean coast, ancient epitaphs often disappeared because they were reused as building materials by urban and rural populations. Similarly, Late Antique epitaphs are now rare in large cities with a long history, such as *Smyrna* in *Ionia* or *Nikomedeia* in *Bithynia*.²² Even in inland areas, especially if they were fertile, pervasive human presence and economic development have obliterated much of the funerary heritage of the Greek, Roman, and Byzantine periods. In Late Antiquity, in accordance with the long Graeco-Roman funerary tradition, burials were often situated on the outskirts of urban centres. As remoteness caused poor surveillance and encouraged theft, threats of fines and curses were repeatedly and ineffectively uttered against grave robbers until the 4th c. AD.²³ In addition, the small size and square shape of tombstones contributed to their displacement and destruction if necessary. For instance, in *Aphrodisias* of *Caria*, the ancient necropoleis that surrounded the city were turned into fields and vineyards. Tombstones were probably removed to facilitate agricultural work and reused as ready-made materials for utility buildings or dwellings. Nevertheless, the maintenance or elimination of ancient necropoleis can only be explained by local circumstances and does not reflect any overall phenomenon of systematic destruction or the epigraphic heritage. Therefore, the preservation or disappearance of epitaphs, sarcophagi and tombs reflects random situations.

21 FELLE 2006, 198–233.

22 Several essays dealing with ancient necropoleis and burial places of *Asia Minor* have been collected by BRANDT et al. 2017.

23 E.g. RITTI 2004, 539–548; HARTER-UIBOPUU 2014.

Consequently, most Late Antique epitaphs of *Asia Minor* are primarily found in regions that were abandoned, isolated or neglected in later Byzantine and Ottoman times. However, as the population has continued increasing in Anatolia since the second half of the 20th c., formerly preserved archaeological areas are now endangered by demographic growth and economic development. For instance, Antiocheia in *Pisidia* possessed an impressive archaeological and epigraphic heritage in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as evidenced by the notebooks of the epigraphist and biblical scholar William M. Ramsay (1851–1939).²⁴ But a great many of the inscriptions known to W. Ramsay are disappeared for good when one compares his notebooks with the corpus of inscriptions of *Antiocheia* in *Pisidia* published at the beginning of the 21st c.²⁵

Thanks to the tireless and patient work of several generations of scholars, the scientific community has at its disposal thousands of Late Antique funerary inscriptions in *Asia Minor*. However, despite the high number of surviving epigraphic documents, Late Antique epitaphs give us just as distorted a picture of the Roman society as do the Hellenistic and Early Roman epitaphs. Though the process of elitisation is still evident on tombstones, the overall decrease in epigraphic production has made this more difficult in public inscriptions. Although epitaphs are modest monuments, and very modest indeed when made of tiles or fragments of stone, they were architectural and epigraphic expressions of relatively favoured social strata. In Anatolia, individuals known by Late Antique epitaphs belonged to the middle and upper classes of civic magistrates, landowners, soldiers, craftsmen and shopkeepers. However, the Anatolian municipal notability was modest compared to the glittering elite of the major urban centres of *Asia Minor*. It is no surprise that we find very few members of the senatorial order on epitaphs in the small cities of Late Antique Anatolia.²⁶

Shall we assume that most of the dead known by epitaphs in small Anatolian cities belonged to the Late Antique middle or lower class? On the one hand, middle class is a rather anachronistic social category for Late Antiquity, and we should preferably speak of a local elite. On the other hand, we have seen that humble people, who were demographically dominant in Antiquity, are almost invisible on epitaphs. Moreover, in spite of its amplification in the 4th to 6th c. AD, the senatorial order was too small to be considered the only component of the upper class. This notion needs to be extended to all categories that locally exercised a socio-economic, political or cultural dominance. The high proportion of Christian clerics evidenced by inscriptions provides a relevant prosopographic clue which demonstrates that individuals known by Late Antique epitaphs mostly belonged to the local elite. The

24 RAMSAY 1916; RAMSAY 1918; RAMSAY 1924; RAMSAY 1926 (*inter alia*). See also CALDER 1912; ROBINSON 1925.

25 I. Antioche Pisidie Ramsay.

26 See the recent prosopographical, in-depth study of BEGASS 2018 on the eastern senatorial order in Late Antiquity.

Inscriptiones Christianae Graecae database, hosted by the Humboldt University in Berlin and part of the TOPOI project directed by Cilliers Breytenbach, is now available.²⁷ According to the database, which has been put online with an open access for several years now, about 10 % of some 4100 Late Antique inscriptions of *Phrygia* and *Lycaonia* refer to members of the Christian clergy. In the large Late Antique necropoleis of *Korykos* in *Cilicia*, 15 % of the Christian epitaphs were those of clerics.²⁸ In *Laodikeia Katakekaumene*, in the Eastern part of the province of *Pisidia*, 37 out of 99 Late Antique epitaphs name clerics, monks or nuns. In the most recent epigraphic corpus of *Ankyra* in *Galatia*, 10 % out of some 150 Late Antique and early Byzantine tombstones mention clerics. This social and religious peculiarity was not strictly related to any precociousness of Christianisation or density of episcopal sees in *Asia Minor*, for clerics are also overrepresented in Late Antique inscriptions of the Balkans and in many other regions of the Mediterranean.²⁹

Compared to the early Roman period, the Late Antique epigraphic landscape was narrower, less varied, deeply religious and dominated by clerics. The fact that this religious elite was also a cultural elite is evidenced by the relatively high proportion of clerics' epitaphs with poetic allusions or quotations. The predilection for funerary epigrams was not exclusively limited to pagans or the Christian laity. Members of the Church, men and women alike, appeared in verse inscriptions imitating Homer or some more recent and fashionable poets.³⁰ It should be noted that poetic epitaphs are associated with higher grades of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, i.e. priests and deacons, though not bishops, and date mostly from early Late Antiquity.³¹ Epitaphs of the highest clergy underwent a process of simplification which explains the increasing use of prose. Biblical quotations provide another epigraphic indication of a privileged cultural milieu, and obviously they are more present in epitaphs of clerics than those of laymen. Unlike versified epitaphs, which became rarer, biblical references multiplied on stone. Out of about 90 Late Antique inscriptions in *Asia Minor* with biblical quotations recorded by A. Felle, only a dozen were inscribed in the 4th to 5th c. AD. However, it should be noted that nearly half of the 90 inscriptions listed by A. Felle are undated.³² Moreover, inscriptions with scriptural quotations were mainly related to places of worship, and clerics preferred prosaic epitaphs. The decoration of tombstones followed the same evolution

27 OGEREAU/HUTTNER 2019.

28 On *Korykos*' necropoleis see MACHATSCHEK 1967, 21–26; see also the contribution by CUBAS DÍAZ in this volume.

29 See <http://repository.edition-topoi.org/collection/ICG> (06.06.2020) for *Phrygia* and *Lycaonia*; MAMA III for *Korykos*; MAMA I for *Laodikeia Katakekaumene (Pisidia)*; MITCHELL/FRENCH 2019, 123–246 for *Ankyra*; DESTEPHEN 2011, 140f. for the Balkans. For similar evidence from the Western Mediterranean see the contributions ARDELEANU, MERTEN, NUZZO and OSNABRÜGGE in this volume.

30 ZIMMERMANN 2019.

31 DESTEPHEN 2008, 293.

32 FELLE 2006, nos 118–138, 150–153, 417–469, 479–502.

towards greater plainness. In the age of Justinian, or perhaps as early as the Theodosian period, the epitaphs of clerics no longer differed from those of laymen: henceforth simplicity, brevity and repetitiveness prevailed.

However, epigraphic standardisation did not express any social levelling, and the Roman society was as strongly hierarchical in Late Antiquity as during the High Empire. Late Antique epitaphs, albeit simple and concise, remained visual and material expressions of respectability. For instance, in the necropoleis of *Korykos*, where some 600 Late Antique epitaphs have been preserved, this would represent some 3 % of the total population living in the city according to Sabine Hübner's hypothetical calculations, craftsmen and shopkeepers comprising the local socially dominant group.³³ There were of course also many clerics, since they played a key role in the Christianisation process of *Asia Minor*. In the time of Justinian, mass conversion was already completed and led to an unprecedented religious unity of population throughout the Mediterranean. In the field of funerary epigraphy, the 5th to 6th c. AD were characterised by simplification of decoration, disappearance of Homeric language, brevity of form, rise of abbreviations and use of crosses. It should be noted that the frequent use of crosses on tombstones was precocious in the early evangelised regions, such as the Anatolian plateau. In *Laodikeia (Phrygia)*, where most Christian epitaphs date from the 4th c. AD, 60 % already bore a cross. In the Late Antique necropoleis of *Korykos*, which yielded epitaphs mainly from the 5th to 6th c. AD, the proportion of funerary monuments with crosses reaches 85 %.³⁴ Epigraphic standardisation would appear formally to reduce social differences; but in fact, inscribing a stela, even a small, modest, repetitive one, remained a socially selective habit in Late Antiquity.

Conclusion

In *Asia Minor*, Christianisation appears to be *the* characteristic of Late Antique society's evolution, although some scholars seek to reduce the scope of it by invoking other phenomena regarded as more important, such as the barbarian invasions or the militarisation and bureaucratisation of the later Roman State. More recently, climatic and epidemiological disasters have become more fashionable due to their thunderous contemporary resonance. However, in the field of funerary epigraphy, one has to admit that Christianity exerted a strong and undeniable influence on epitaphs: onomastics, biblical quotations and the representation of crosses give evidence of the complete religious conversion of the population of *Asia Minor*.

33 Thorough examination and previous bibliography in HÜBNER 2005, 81–120; more recently, economic evidence has been carefully studied by DREXHAGE 2012; see also the contribution CUBAS DÍAZ in this volume.

34 MAMA I; MAMA III.

Christianity led to an extraordinary confessionalisation of epitaphs, whereas earlier tombstones had never mentioned traditional cults. The new religion was everywhere with ubiquitous crosses and spurred new funerary and votive *formulae* which constantly referred to rest, salvation and resurrection. As these Christian values and beliefs mostly relied upon individual behaviour, it is logical that Late Antique epitaphs differed from inscriptions of the High Empire by their mention of fewer and fewer dead people. Numerous relatives and extended families progressively vanished from funerary monuments and made way for standardised, individual Christian epitaphs.³⁵ The deceased were mentioned as members of a couple if they were adults or as related to parents if they were children. It is worth noting that, from Late Antiquity onwards, the number of epitaphs mentioning single individuals greatly increased whereas the epigraphic documentation was shrinking. As brief, individual epitaphs already existed in classical times, one might ask whether Late Antiquity marks less an epigraphic decline than a return to a greater simplicity on epitaphs. In any case, a radical difference appeared in the Christian funerary inscriptions at the end of Late Antiquity: the exclusive relationship which now united the faithful to God. Individuality disappeared in favour of confession.

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35 DESTEPHEN 2010b, 145f.; MITCHELL 2017b, 138f.

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Fig. 1 Sylvain Destephen.

JON C. CUBAS DÍAZ

Burying between *Lamos* and *Kalykadnos*

The Many Faces of the Late Antique Funerary Landscapes
of Eastern Rough Cilicia

Death and Burial in Late Antique *Asia Minor*: General Problems, Recent Developments and Research Perspectives

Funerary habits changed deeply in Late Antiquity.¹ These did not only include a shift in the custom of extramural burial, which doesn't seem to apply anymore to a similar extent, but also in the new connection between sacred and funerary spaces, which is closely related to the rise of Christianity. Churches became an integral part of many necropoleis, structuring these spaces and (in many cases) housing burials themselves. Although this phenomenon has traditionally been linked to the preference of burying *ad sanctos*, many of the churches housing burials did not include *martyria*.² These changes can also be observed in many landscapes and cities of *Asia Minor*, such as *Anemurion*, *Aphrodisias*, *Ephesos* and *Patara*.³

When we turn to *Asia Minor*, however, we should not forget that it is barely possible to sharply define the funerary landscapes of this large region in a brief and succinct manner. The historical region, encompassing a substantial part of modern-day Turkey, contains a wide variety of landscapes. While these all are understood as parts of '*Asia Minor*', essential differences clearly distinguish them

- 1 This publication originated in the Collaborative Research Centre 933 "Material Text Cultures. Materiality and Presence of Writing in Non-Typographic Societies" (subproject A01 "Lettered and Inscribed. Inscriptions in Urban Space in the Greco-Roman Period and Middle Ages"). The CRC 933 is funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG). I am grateful to Raphael Hunsucker, Katharine Cubas Díaz and especially Philipp Pilhofer for their comments on an earlier version of the manuscript, although any remaining errors are my own and should not tarnish the reputations of these esteemed persons.
- 2 As, however, some of the examples treated below will show, burial *ad sanctos* (or close to a church in general) was not always a primary aim. On *ad sanctos* burials see e.g.: DUVAL 1988 and (with a special focus on the Western Mediterranean) DUVAL/PICARD 1986. In this context the approach of A. M. Yasin is also of special interest: YASIN 2009.
- 3 On *Anemurion*: RUSSELL 1989, 1632–1637. On *Aphrodisias*: DALGIÇ/SOKOLICEK 2017, 276–279; DALGIÇ 2012, 367–396. On *Ephesos*: STESKAL 2013, 243–257. On *Patara*: PESCHLOW 2017b, 282–283, 286–287; PESCHLOW 2015, 463–473; PESCHLOW 2011, 29–31. Eric Ivison recently offered a brief yet comprehensive account on the funerary archaeology of Late Antique and Byzantine Anatolia, including some of the examples and references mentioned here: IVISON 2017, 160–175. For a comparison of Late Antique epigraphical practice in selected regions/sites of *Asia Minor*, see the contribution DESTEPHEN in this volume.

amongst each other. Notwithstanding the influence of the above-mentioned trans-regional phenomena, there was certainly no standardized and homogenous funerary landscape, as the funerary habits of these different landscapes are deeply rooted in micro-regional and local traditions. These traditions are rooted in different historical and cultural backgrounds. Some cities and regions were founded in a context of Greek colonization; others were more or less deeply hellenized later. Furthermore, they were not integrated into the Roman Empire to the same extent and at the same period in time.⁴

Hence, generalizations are not particularly helpful to adequately depict the situation in the region. Rather, these landscapes present very different funerary characteristics, distinguished by the preference for certain types of funerary monuments, their spatial setting, the use or ‘absence’ of inscriptions and decoration, the selection of grave goods and the pattern of reuse of pre-existing funerary monuments. These differences become evident through the consideration of regional phenomena. The characteristic Lycian barrel-vaulted sarcophagus-lids with pointed arches, for example, stemming from a regional tradition originating in the 4th c. BC, strongly influenced the design of Late Antique sarcophagi in this landscape.⁵ Other types of funerary monuments, such as hypogea, show regional differences also in building techniques. In *Phrygia* and *Cappadocia* they were often rock-cut, while those in *Nikaia* and *Sardis* were built with masonry or bricks.⁶ Although these supra-regional differences have been addressed in scholarship, micro-regional diversity became a topic of interest only recently.

Furthermore, the state of scholarly research distorts the bigger picture. While some – mostly coastal – regions have been studied intensively since the early 20th century, other regions, most of them lying in the interior of Anatolia, came into focus only in the last decades. The same applies to rural vs. urban settlements: cities like *Ephesos*, *Pergamon*, *Miletos* or *Sardis* have been studied much more intensively, and for much longer. Even in many of those well-studied sites, however, Late Antique funerary archaeology was not a particularly active field until the end of the 20th c.⁷

4 While cities like *Ephesos* became an integral part of the Roman Empire as early as 133 BC, other regions such as *Commagene* and Rough Cilicia remained part of a Hellenistic (client) kingdom until the last decades of the 1st c. AD. See PILHOFER 2018, 28–31, including relevant bibliographic references as well as epigraphic and literary sources.

5 The characteristic Lycian barrel-vaulted sarcophagi, which often included inscriptions in Lycian language and script, were a ‘popular’ funerary monument type in Hellenistic *Lycia*. The characteristic barrel-vault design kept being used for lids of sarcophagi built in Late Antiquity. Moreover, many older sarcophagi were reused in Late Antiquity, and in some cases churches were added to the old necropoleis (e.g. Upper Western Necropolis, *Kyaneai*, see HÜLDEN 2010). Furthermore, the heterogeneity of sarcophagi in *Asia Minor* is clearly shown in the *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage*: Rep. V, p. 109–117.

6 See also IVISON 2017, 164 f.

7 On *Ephesos* see: STESKAL 2013, 243–257. On *Miletos*: NIEWÖHNER 2018, 263–272; NIEWÖHNER 2007, 71–90. On *Pergamon* see: OTTEN 2017, 226–230 (with references). On *Sardis*

The last two decades also saw many studies on the mortuary archaeology of further urban settlements. The first comprehensive studies on rural settlements, such as Akören in *Cilicia Pedias*, have further facilitated a differentiated approach.⁸ Until now, the asymmetric state of research also biases the overall picture of Late Antique funerary archaeology. While rich funerary monuments have been intensively analysed in comprehensive iconographic and epigraphic studies, non-elite burials have been poorly treated. The same is true for the spatial setting of both.⁹ Fortunately, the consideration of anthropological studies has enriched our knowledge of funerary archaeology in general, and non-elite burials in particular, since the turn of the millennium, as several projects in *Ephesos* and Phrygian *Hierapolis* show.¹⁰ As a result, the field of Late Antique mortuary archaeology is now offering exciting new perspectives on *Asia Minor*, using interdisciplinary and regionally differentiated approaches to acknowledge the full complexity of the region.

Late Antique Rough Cilicia: Status Quaestionis

Cilicia is an ancient cultural landscape situated in the south of modern-day Turkey, bordering *Syria* in the east and *Pamphylia* in the west. The region is traditionally divided in *Cilicia Tracheia* to the west and *Cilicia Pedias* to the east. The geographical focus of this paper is the coastal part of eastern Rough Cilicia (*Cilicia Tracheia*) enclosed by the ‘olbian territory’ to the North, the river *Lamos* to the West and the *Kalykadnos* to the East. Just like many other landscapes of the eastern Mediterranean, *Cilicia* was the destination of several research expeditions in the 19th c.¹¹ In 1931, Josef Keil and Adolf Wilhelm published a companion of all visible inscriptions in most of the known settlements of the region, which they had recorded with impressive accuracy.¹² At about the same time, Ernst Herzfeld and Samuel Guyer analyzed the sacred architecture of Meriamlik and Korykos.¹³ A first project on the mortuary archaeology of the coastal settlements between *Lamos* and *Kalykadnos*

see: ROUSSEAU 2010; ROUSSEAU 2014; ROUSSEAU 2019. Further examples include *Assos* (BÖHLENDORF-ARSLAN 2013, 228–238; BÖHLENDORF-ARSLAN 2016, 63–87) and *Nikaia* (PESCHLOW 2017a, 207–209).

8 On Akören see: WULF-RHEIDT 2011, 189–204.

9 This imbalance can also be observed in important corpora like the *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage*, which mostly focuses on elite tombs and do not include any references on their spatial setting. See the volume on *Constantinople, Asia Minor, Thracia, Syria, Palaestina and Arabia: Rep. V*.

10 On *Ephesos* see: STESKAL/BJØRNSTAD 2018, 123–134. On *Hierapolis* in *Phrygia* see: KIESEWETTER 2017, 384–413.

11 BEAUFORT 1817; DE LABORDE 1838, 132–134; BARKER 1853; ČIHAČEV 1854; LANGLOIS 1861; HEBERDEY/WILHELM 1896; BENT 1891; HICKS 1891; BELL 1906a–e; BELL 1907.

12 MAMA III.

13 HERZFELD/GUYER 1930.

in the 1960s was carried out by an architect, Alois Machatschek, who delivered outstanding work with an architectural-historical approach.¹⁴ During the following decades, Semavi Eyice provided a first overview on the various rural settlements through several brief articles; apart from these publications, little substantial archaeological field research has been done.¹⁵ Therefore, no archaeological sites were systematically surveyed through intensive fieldwork and no comprehensive comparative studies were published. In the late 20th c., H. Hellenkemper, F. Hild, G. Dagron and D. Feissel also published noteworthy studies focusing on the epigraphic evidence of the region.¹⁶

This important work notwithstanding, researchers had to accomplish basic tasks in the last 20 years, as this region, replete with remarkably well-preserved artefacts and monuments, still constituted an enigma in many ways – albeit being recognized in scientific discourse for its enormous potential. In the last two decades, several field research projects with long-term goals started at central sites such as *Olba/Diokaisareia* and especially *Elaiussa Sebaste*, allowing a modern archaeological approach.¹⁷ Moreover, rural settlements moved into the spotlight of several research projects, and the first comparative research projects addressed fields of study that had been neglected.¹⁸ Also funerary archaeology gained new attention from scholars, and comprehensive comparative studies on several funerary monument types appeared.¹⁹ The main focus of these works, however, was on typological aspects, in terms of method, and on the Hellenistic and Roman Imperial periods, in terms of chronology. Accordingly, a new analysis of the earlier epochs that considers spatial and praxeological aspects is still lacking, as well as a comparative study on the Late Antique funerary landscapes of *Cilicia Tracheia* in general.

14 MACHATSCHEK 1967.

15 On the first mention and preliminary studies of the rural settlements see: EYICE 1981; EYICE 1986; EYICE 1988.

16 I.Cilicie; HELLENKEMPER/HILD 1986.

17 On Elaiussa Sebaste see: EQUINI SCHNEIDER 1999; EQUINI SCHNEIDER 2003 and EQUINI SCHNEIDER 2010, as well as the yearly excavation reports in *Araştırma Sonuçları Toplantısı*, since 2010. A detailed study of *Diokaisareia*'s necropoleis was newly published by J. Linnemann: LINNEMANN 2013. Furthermore, the volume of the *Tabula Imperii Byzantini* published in 1990 is still key for the assessment of the status quaestionis concerning *Cilicia* and *Isauria*: HILD/HELLENKEMPER 1990.

18 The proceedings of a first – and much needed – conference with an explicit focus on rural settlements have recently been published: AYDINOĞLU/MÖREL 2017. Previously, GÜNDER VARINLIOĞLU studied the region's rural settlements in depth (VARINLIOĞLU 2008b), while INA EICHNER focused on their domestic architecture (EICHNER 2011). Both have also published several articles highlighting the main results: EICHNER 2004; EICHNER 2009; EICHNER 2018; VARINLIOĞLU 2008a; VARINLIOĞLU 2013.

19 Yasemin Er Scarborough compiled a typology of the rock-cut and monumental built tombs of Hellenistic to Roman Rough Cilicia. Her studies were recently published as SCARBOROUGH 2017, based on her PhD-thesis defended at Cornell University in 1991.

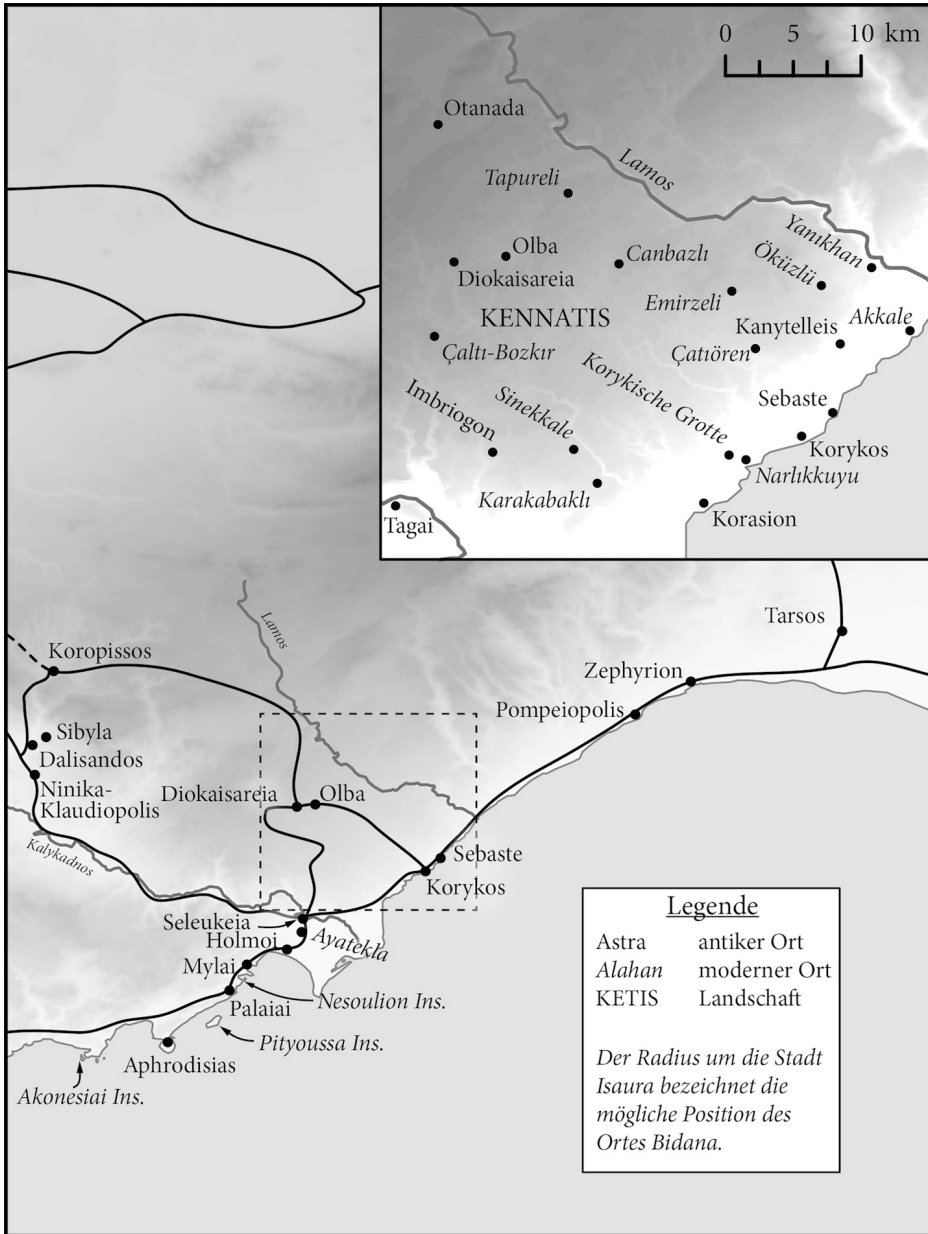


Fig. 1: Eastern Rough Cilicia.

This paper is a result of a project that aims to continue research from that point onwards, in order to acquire an overall and as complex as possible picture of Rough Cilicia’s mortuary landscapes by studying funerary spaces in the region’s settlements.²⁰ The main aim of this paper is to analyse the funerary spaces and habits

20 The complete results are presented in a monograph (CUBAS DÍAZ 2021).

in Late Antique Eastern Rough Cilicia. This includes funerary monuments in their own right, but also in relation to accompanying inscriptions and to their spatial location within settlements. The main goal is not, though, to present a typology of the funerary monuments with their archaeological attributes, nor to outline a presumed transition in *epigraphic habit*, but to develop an approach to mortuary landscapes which draws in archaeological and epigraphical findings and considers praxeological aspects.

For this purpose, it is crucial to focus on several case studies and to include settlements with presumedly different ‘characters’.²¹ Needless to say, however, the selection of those case studies is clearly limited by the current state of research. This paper will focus on *Korykos*, *Korasion*, Karakabaklı and Işıkkale, but also refer to other archaeological sites within the region under consideration (Fig. 1). By addressing these settlements, both general regional developments and micro-regional as well as local differences are analysed and discussed. Was the way funerary monuments were decorated, inscribed and positioned in space a result of a given tradition, new emerging preferences, or functional needs? And how was the function of these monuments and spaces influenced by collective dynamics, social structures or representational needs?

Korykos

Korykos/Kızkalesi, a coastal, medium-sized city midway between the *Lamos* and *Kalykadnos* rivers, is a good case to start our investigation with. Although the settlement is frequently referred to in scholarship, we still lack insights into most of its facets, as only limited archaeological work has been conducted and published so far.²² The city must have had a certain importance in early and middle Imperial times, for which several monumental public buildings, as well as its status as a naval port, provide evidence.²³ Unfortunately, the area *intra muros* has barely been studied and is in fact hard to deal with now, as agricultural and modern construction work have limited research possibilities in the last decades (Fig. 2).

21 It is certainly difficult to sharply define ‘character’ in this context. Many factors are considered, including differences in size, function, location and period of active inhabitation.

22 Although a field research project directed by Serra Durugönül was carried out in the beginning of this century, it lacks a final publication. However, besides the yearly reports, some results focusing on the discovery of the ‘Friedhofskirche’ were published by Gabriele Mietke (MIETKE 2009). Moreover, it is important to note that, since the works by Ernst Herzfeld and Samuel Guyer at the so-called cathedral and the so-called tomb church (HERZFELD/GUYER 1930), no further excavations have taken place.

23 On the archaeological record see: GUYER/HERZFELD 1930, 90–194 and CUBAS DÍAZ 2021, 55–58. On the status as a naval port see: PILHOFER 2018, 21.

The first known funerary monuments go back at least to the 1st c. BC. During that time, the spatial setting of funerary monuments was topography-oriented and covered the slope surrounding the city from the west up to the north and enclosing a small valley there. In its first phase, the necropolis mainly consisted of rock-cut tombs, but this changed in the 2nd c. AD. From then on, sarcophagi and *chamosoria* became by far the most common funerary monument group. They showed a high diversity in terms of ambition, from rather straight-forward forms of *chamosoria* up to free standing sarcophagi with substructures.

A second shift changed *Korykos*' funerary landscape in Late Antiquity, as churches not only became part of the necropoleis but also articulated them spatially together with the streets.²⁴ Well over 500 funerary monuments are still *in situ*, enabling us to analyse spatial aspects. Unfortunately, many of these tombs have been robbed – with only few exceptions. Therefore, anthropological studies and grave goods analysis are not possible at all; a problem *Korykos* has in common with most eastern Cilician sites.²⁵ The Late Antique evidence, extremely rich and diverse in many ways, has one further downside: while the late Hellenistic burials do make intensive use of figurative decoration – especially in the case of ambitious funerary monuments –, its use in Late Antiquity is fairly limited. Decoration was mainly reduced to simple religion-related motifs primarily consisting of Christian crosses in diverse forms, but also including christograms, staurograms, as well as Jewish menoroth.²⁶ In contrast to that, over 500 inscriptions are carved on Late

24 This is especially obvious in the case of the 'monastery church'. However, none of the necropolis-churches provide evidence indicating their function as a funerary space. This might well be the result of the lack of excavations, which can surely bias the overall picture to a certain degree. The above mentioned 'Friedhofskirche' did nonetheless integrate a previous rock-cut tomb, which presumably was staged as a saint's or martyr's tomb (MIETKE 2009, 130f.). Although the name of the so-called tomb-church strongly suggests the presence of intra-basilical burials, the only evidence found to support the legitimacy of this denomination are remains of two structures that were possibly thought to have served as a foundation for sarcophagi. The excavation work at the 'tomb-church' was published by E. Herzfeld and S. Guyer: HERZFELD/GUYER 1930, 126–130.

25 A noteworthy exception are the anthropological studies conducted in *Elaiussa Sebaste*, a coastal city located 4 km further to the east. There, the burials under the floor of the so-called Agora-Church could be analysed, as well as some rock-cut tombs including grave goods. The anthropological results obtained in the Agora-Church, published by Rita Vargiu and Robert R. Paine (VARGIU/PAINE 2010, 259–284), are of special interest: they show several burials in privileged positions that each include just one inhumation, while those in adjacent rooms and the side aisles include evidence from up to 45 bodies within one tomb. This contrasts with the inscriptions decorating some of the intensively or repeatedly used tombs, which just commemorate one person, and reminds us of the importance of anthropological studies as part of an interdisciplinary approach, as well as of the need to always carefully evaluate epigraphic evidence in its context.

26 In some cases, menoroth are used in relation to the inscriptions: MAMA III 205, 237, 344, 448, 679. In at least 8 other cases, menoroth are used as decorative motifs without a connection to epigrams. In 586 cases, crosses are used as a decorative motif, mostly (491) in

KORYKOS

GENERAL PLAN

LEGEND

- HOUSE TOMB
- ▣ ROCK-CUT TOMB
- SARCOPHAGUS / CHAMOSORION

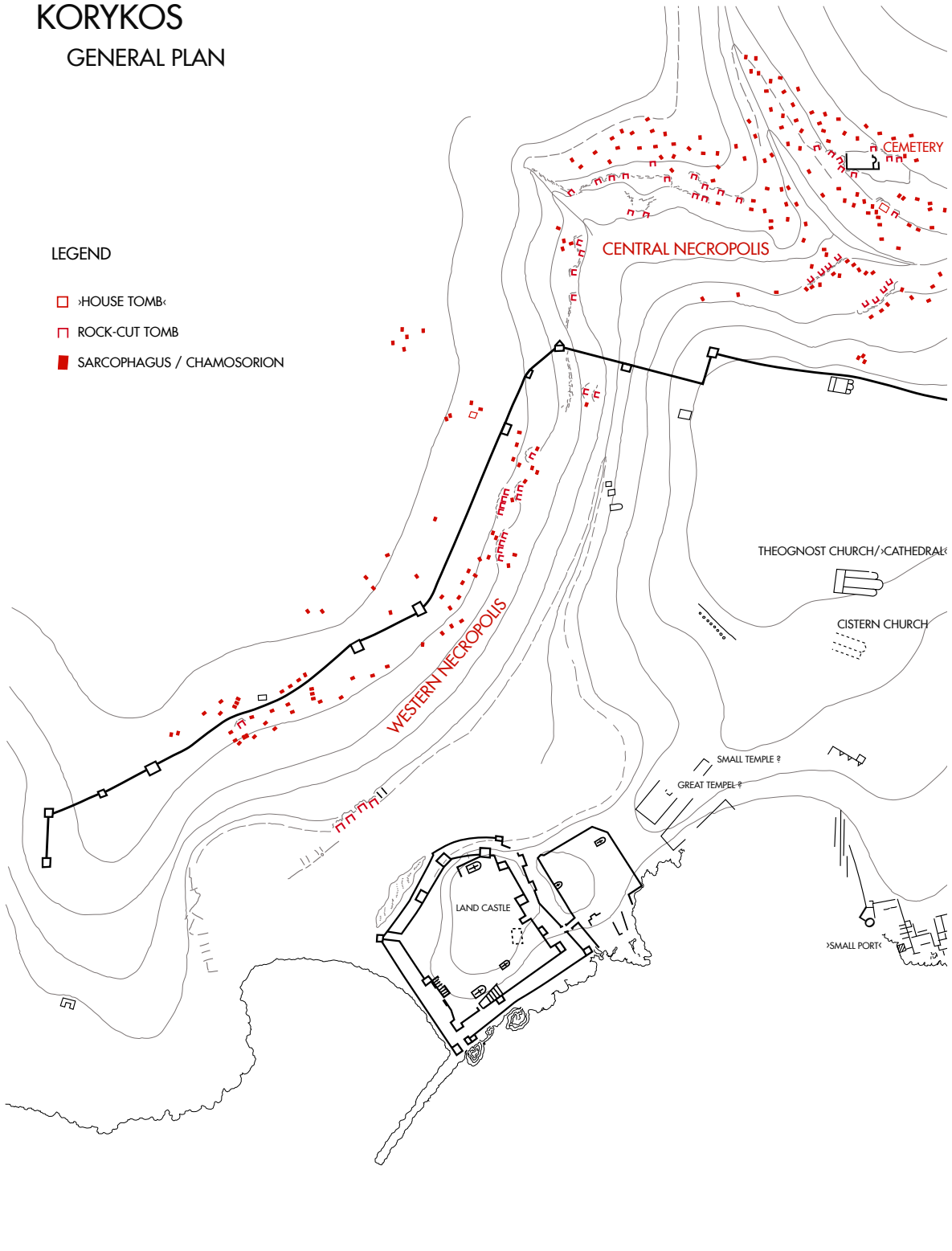
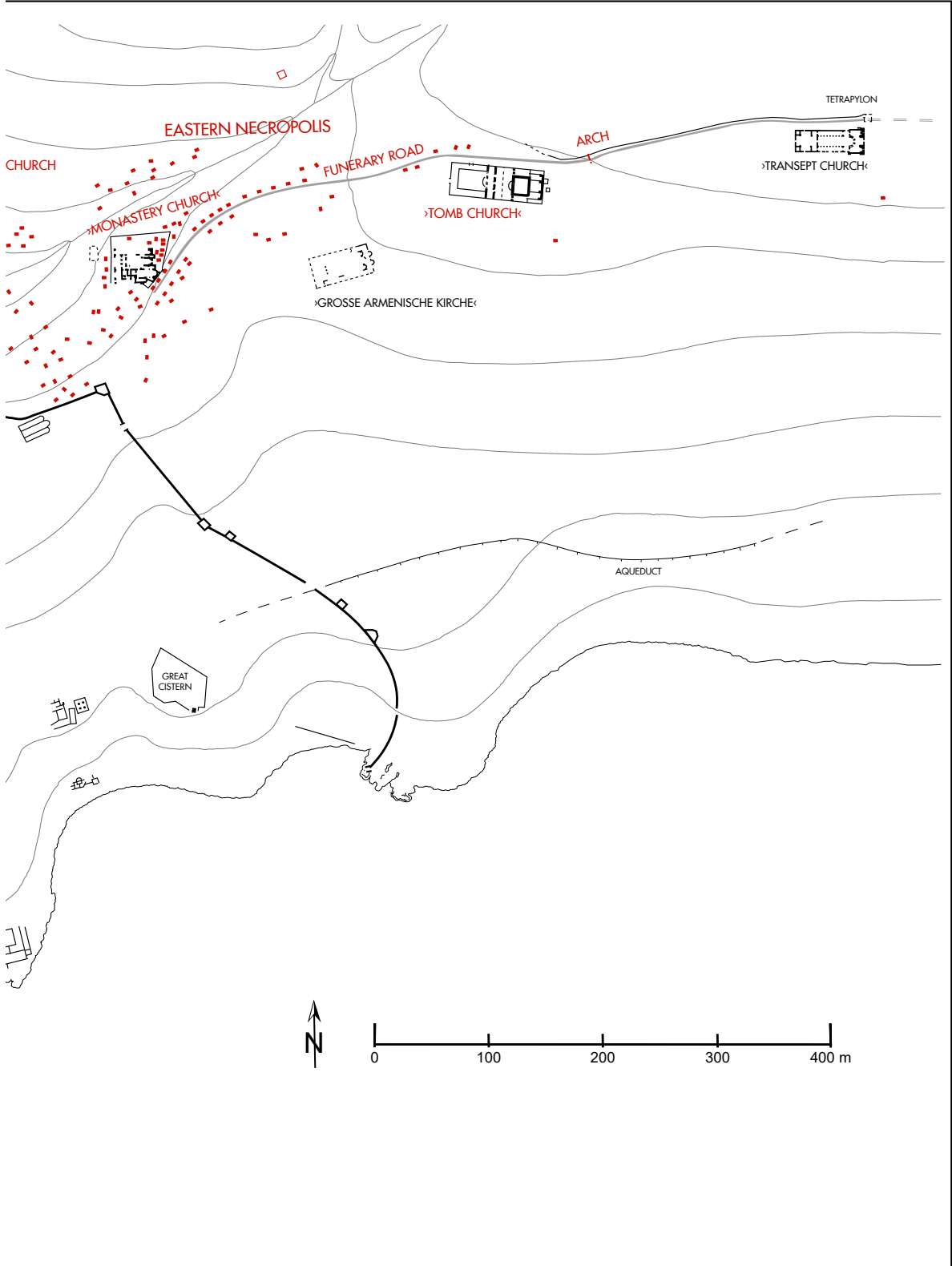


Fig. 2: Korykos, General Plan.



Antique funerary monuments, making epitaphs an integral part of the majority of the tombs;²⁷ even rather simple tombs were inscribed, which seems to show that epigraphy was used by a relatively diverse and broad social group.

Given the state of scholarship and the nature of the evidence, the approach to this site is based on the analysis of spatial and epigraphic aspects. The Late Antique epigraphic material lacks information suitable for dating it, as well as any reference to dates of death of the individuals honoured. Chronological indications in general are extremely rare: only three funerary inscriptions mention the indication.²⁸ As other necessary indications are missing, however, even these do not allow dating. Therefore, the dating possibilities are reduced to general linguistic and stylistic criteria, as well as indirect dating criteria such as the characteristics of the inscribed objects and monuments. Next to that, penalties and threats are also largely absent from the *epigraphic habit* of this city in Late Antiquity, with just four inscriptions including them.²⁹

In Late Antiquity, the epitaphs show a consistent *formula* which rarely varies in its structure.³⁰ The text itself is – with very few exceptions – framed by crosses, which were mostly carved in the same size as the letters and positioned just before the start and/or end of the inscription, but sometimes also included at the end of

close connection with epigrams. Staurograms: [MAMA III 312, 331, 548, 556, 740, 747, 765, 778](#). Christograms: [MAMA III 698, 740](#). A combination of both christogram and staurogram is also noteworthy: [MAMA III 420](#). On the archaeological record of the funerary landscapes see CUBAS DÍAZ 2021, 58–63; on the tombs and their decoration CUBAS DÍAZ 2021, 105–126.

27 The number of older funerary inscriptions is substantially lower, with under 100 examples. Besides the aforementioned publication by J. Keil and A. Wilhelm, Stefan Hagel and Kurt Tomaschitz published a Repertorium of the region's inscriptions (ETAM 22). The publication includes (nearly) all epigraphic texts published until the end of the 20th c. The analysis of the inscriptions in this paper mainly relates to J. Keil and A. Wilhelm's work, which includes contextualising information on key aspects for this paper's approach, such as the inscribed objects, their decoration and spatial context. The new epitaphs published by S. Hagel and K. Tomaschitz, however, are also considered, as well as further publications that have complemented and corrected the context and reading of many of these inscriptions ever since (e.g. WILLIAMS 1992; TOMASCHITZ 1998; PILHOFER 2017; PILHOFER 2019). For a detailed analysis of the funerary epigraphic record see CUBAS DÍAZ 2021, 63–70, 73–103.

28 [MAMA III 442, 443, 660](#).

29 [MAMA III 347, 504, 530c, 577a](#). Penalties and threats were included more often before Late Antiquity and are also widely attested in some of the region's settlements, such as *Elaiussa Sebaste* and *Kanytelleis*, as well as in Mut and Sinabiç in western Rough Cilicia. On the latter see PILHOFER 2018, 74 fn. 85. These inscriptions can be found in: ETAM 22.

30 Two inscriptions may serve as representative examples of the described similarity: [MAMA III 344](#): Θήκη | Εύσαμβατίου | Ιουδέου | πρεσβυτέρου | μυρεψοῦ (accompanied by two menoroth). [MAMA III 495](#): + Σωματοθήκη | Ἰωάννου καπίλου | πιπτακαρίου και Μαμμᾶ | πασ|τιλλαρίου. In contrast to the Late Antique epigraphic evidence, earlier inscriptions offer a far more heterogenous picture.

previous lines.³¹ Due to their position and size, they could be considered as punctuation marks and therefore as a part of the text. The text in a narrower sense begins with a term indicating the monument (e.g. *σωματοθήκη*; *θήκη*), followed by the information about the honoured person. The name of the deceased is mentioned first, in some cases followed by the filiation.³² If two or more individuals were commemorated, this part of the inscription is repeated and refers to them one after the other. *Formulae* such as *μνήμης χάριν* and *ἐνθάδε κίτε/ἐνθάδε κείται* are only rarely used.³³

An unusual characteristic of *Korykos* is that the profession of the deceased is regularly mentioned right after their name, i.e. in over 250 cases.³⁴ While the indication of the profession is present in at least a dozen other sites across the Eastern Mediterranean, most of them comprise 20 or fewer examples.³⁵

- 31 In *Korykos*, crosses mark the beginning and/or the end in 491 inscriptions.
- 32 In some cases, an explicit, textual self-definition of the deceased as Jewish is included following the name: *Ἰουδέου* (MAMA III 295, 344); *Εἰουδέων* (MAMA III 679). The explicit self-definition as Jewish was already used in Imperial times, as two further inscriptions show: *Ἰουδαῖος* (MAMA III 222); *Ἰουδαῖοι* (MAMA III 440). However, it is noteworthy that this term can in principle also denote a provenance from Judea.
- 33 *μνήμης χάριν* is only used in 12 inscriptions, of which none is Late Antique. *ἐνθάδε κίτε/ἐνθάδε κείται* is used in *Elaiussa Sebaste* (EQUINI SCHNEIDER 2010, no. 21) and *Korykos*: (MAMA III 218a, 222, 262, 304, 440, 672) in Late Antique as well as older inscriptions. The early use of *ἐνθάδε κείται* is well known from other cities and regions, such as *Attica* (e.g. IG II² 3155), *Philippoi* in *Macedonia* (I.Chr. Macédoine 246) and *Odessos* in *Moesia* (I.Chr. Bulgarien 134). However, this formula is downright characteristic for Late Antique epitaphs in other regions like *Galatia* (e.g. MAMA I 371). In *Philadelphia* in *Lydia*, the formula was used in both the Roman Imperial Era (TAM V,3 1902) and Late Antiquity (TAM V,3 1885), just like in *Korykos*.
- 34 Frank R. Trombley addressed the epigraphic evidence mentioning professional associations in a preliminary paper showing the evidence's potential: TROMBLEY 1987. Later, Hans-Joachim Drexhage provided an account on crafting professions and tradesmen in western Cilicia: DREXHAGE 2008; DREXHAGE 2012. Kai Ruffing's work on trading professions and craftsmen provided a rich material basis, including inscriptions and papyri from the Eastern Mediterranean, as well as a detailed analysis of their specialization level: RUFFING 2008. The numbers presented in the following paragraph do not include offices related to religion, mentioned in this footnote instead. All offices are Christian unless otherwise noted: 5 women and 26 men held the office of a deacon (*διάκονος*). Other clerical offices include: *ὑποδιάκονος* (5), *ἀρχιδιάκονος* (1), *πρεσβύτερος* (23; 2 of them Jewish), *πρωτοπρεσβύτερος* (3), *κληρικός* (1), *παραμονάριος* (2; 'caretaker'), *ψάλτης* (3; liturgical cantor), *πρωτοψάλτης* (1), *τροπόλογος* (1; reciter). For a more detailed account on professions and religious offices in *Korykos* see: CUBAS DÍAZ 2021, 64f., 67f., 89–92, 94–98.
- 35 In the region studied in this paper, *Diokaisareia* and *Korasion* present comparable evidence, although it is considerably smaller in number. Just outside the geographical boundaries of this paper, *Seleukeia o.K.* also provides a considerable number of examples. In other regions of *Asia Minor* examples include *Aphrodisias* and *Hierapolis*. Aside from Anatolia, the evidence in *Tyros* is especially interesting, as it includes 54 inscriptions. On *Diokaisareia* see: MAMA III 79, 82, 83, 84, 86, 89, 91, 93, 95, 99; Hicks 1891 Nr. 60. On *Korasion* see the references in the corresponding chapter of this paper.

The high amount of inscriptions mentioning a profession allows for a unique insight in the economic structures of this Late Antique city. Out of the more than 250 epitaphs including the profession of the deceased, 157 mention crafting professions. Their fields of work cover textiles (46), ceramics (24), food production (21), metalworking (18), leather production (13), stone processing (10), construction work (7), parfum production (5), purple snail fishing (4), glass production (2), timber production (2) and shipbuilding (2). 66 other epitaphs mention tradesmen. While 22 of these dealt with a wide range of products at a local or transregional level, the others specialized in food products (34), textiles (10) and metal (1). 22 further inscriptions commemorate service providers, working in the financial (11) and maritime sector (5), healthcare (3), arts (2) and surveying (1).³⁶

While the amount of different crafting and trading professions may well reflect local needs, others can arguably be related to regional and transregional trading activities. 15 wine merchants, for example, suggest such an activity,³⁷ as do the textile-related professions. The high amount of crafting occupations related to textiles and the great amount of highly specialized jobs amongst them is particularly striking;³⁸ it is noteworthy that this significance seems to correlate with the reputation Cilician textiles allegedly had.³⁹ In contrast, the crafting of ceramics was also wide-

On *Seleukeia o.K.* see: MAMA III 10, 11, 13, 16, 17, 21, 22, 24(?), 25, 26, 27, 30, 38, 40, 41, 46, 48. On *Aphrodisias* see: SEG XLIV 1753 (alternative reading in SEG XLIII 700). On *Hierapolis* see: SEG XLVI 1656; SEG XLVI 1671 adn; SEG XXXIII 1139; SEG XXXIV 1139; I.Hierapolis Judeich 133, 222. On *Tyros* see: I.Tyr nécropole 7, 8, 8bis, 11bis, 17B, 22, 24B, 25, 26, 28, 31, 33B, 39A, 39C, 43, 65A, 67, 68, 71, 72, 77A, 77B, 78, 80, 92, 95, 98, 103, 107B, 111, 118A, 118B, 122, 123, 124, 133, 137, 141, 143, 147, 152, 158, 166, 171, 178, 179, 182, 182bis, 186, 188, 197, 201, 202, 205. See also RUFFING 2008, 220–230; 256–278.

36 For a detailed analysis and list see: CUBAS DÍAZ 2021, 89–92. 202–214.

37 Two different terms were used for this profession: οἰνέμπορος (MAMA III 207, 282, 357, 363, 444, 467, 471, 552, 574, 652, 680) and οἰνηγός (MAMA III 271, 599, 682, 709).

38 The production of textiles was highly specialized, as is shown by the surprising amount of professions mentioned: woolworkers, wool- and cloth-carders, embroiderers, brocade-makers, breeches-makers, sailmakers, net-makers and various specialized menders. However, the textile-dealers' denomination does not attest a specialization. Woolworker: λαναριός (MAMA III 322, 392, 644); ἐριουργός (MAMA III 275a, 286, 323a, 334, 435). Linen-worker: λινοξός (MAMA III 457, 463, 701, 765). Wool-/cloth-carder: κτενῶς (MAMA III 327, 739); γναφεύς (MAMA III 361); ἀγναφάριος, ἀκναφάριος (MAMA III 252, 622, 767a). Embroiderer: πλουμάριος (MAMA III 285, 364b, 391, 403, 429, 441a, 496, 523, 665, 685). Breeches-maker: βρακάριος (MAMA III 406a, 597). Brocade-maker: Βαρβαρικαριός (MAMA III 266). Sailmaker: ἄρμενοράφος (MAMA III 293, 303, 537, 582, 604, 633, 656); ὀθονιακός (MAMA III 340, 368, 473, 558). Net-maker: σαγηνεύς (MAMA III 411a). Sack-maker: σακκῶς, σακκοποιός (MAMA III 470). Clothes-mender: ράπτης (MAMA III 554). Fishing net-mender: ράπτης, (ράπτου ρόβον; MAMA III 581). Contrast the linen-dealer: λινοπώλης (MAMA III 208, 400, 451a, 458, 563, 706, 720, 763, 770) and clothes-seller: ἱματισπράτης (MAMA III 619). A specialization degree similar to that of textiles can be observed in the leatherworking production, within which boots-making seems to have had a substantial importance.

39 Cilician goat hair products (κιλίκιον/cilicium) were known across the Mediterranean. On κιλίκιον see: LSJ, 951, s.v. Κιλίκιον. In contrast, and although *Korykos* is sometimes related

spread, but is consistently referred to with the term *kerameus*.⁴⁰ It is difficult, if at all possible, to decide whether this uniform denomination was due to the high variety of products the potters manufactured, or to a self-understanding as a collective. Statistical analysis and economic structures left aside, such a high amount of occurrences also shows the importance of the profession for self-depiction in Rough Cilicia.

As we have seen, two factors seem to play a central role in the decoration and inscription of the city's funerary monuments: religious and professional affiliation. That the vast majority of burials was decorated with either crosses or menoroth, visualizing the religious affiliation of the deceased, is not so surprising, especially regarding the Christian symbols. Conversely, frequent mentions of profession are quite a striking phenomenon emerging in Late Antique *Korykos*. Finding a suitable and cogent explanation proves to be challenging; although this phenomenon can arguably be related to the importance of trading activities, it is uncertain why it emerged precisely here. Many other important cities of the Eastern Mediterranean where the mention of the professional affiliation was not part of funerary inscriptions at all were presumably far deeper involved trading activities.

We will now discuss the Late Antique spatial contexts of the tombs, systematically studied here for the first time, in order to analyze whether these are consonant with our earlier results. More precisely put, it has to be established whether – and to what degree – an individual's religious affiliation or profession could lead to the clustering of burials.

Religious affiliation is often shown either through motifs or through self-definition, but was not an important spatial factor; Jewish funerary monuments were erected among those of the Christian majority.⁴¹ This is not particularly surprising,

to as the 'saffron capital of the ancient world', no inscription mentions a trading profession directly related to it, although five inscriptions mentioning perfumers may well be indirectly related (MAMA III 289a, 344, 448, 699, 712). On the importance of saffron see Williams 1994, 274, with n. 1; see also PILHOFER 2018, 57.

40 *κεραμεύς*: MAMA III 220b, 276, 283, 284, 326, 337, 346, 411a, 412, 470, 491, 492b, 512, 519, 627, 635, 640, 702, 705, 708, 726, 737. If we choose to read *λακανιορ(γοῦ)* or *λακανιορ(γῶν)* in MAMA III 367b, one example of a specialized ceramist could be given (*λακανιοργός*). The term *ὠστρακα(ρίου)* (MAMA III 718) is used in one inscription, but it is uncertain whether it refers to a maker of earthenware vessels, as – to my knowledge – no other published inscription elsewhere seems to mention this term. In evidence from other regions, several specializations within ceramic production are attested (e.g. RUFFING 2008, 170).

41 Most Late Antique Jewish tombs are in the area dominated and articulated by Christian churches. These include several sarcophagi solely decorated with menoroth, as well as seven inscribed sarcophagi (MAMA III 205, 237, 295, 344, 448, 607, 679). A clustering of Jewish burials can definitely not be observed. Before Late Antiquity, 2–3 sarcophagi were inscribed in the western – and oldest – part of *Korykos'* necropoleis (MAMA III 222, 262, 440). The dating of one of them, which may date from the 4th c. AD, has often been discussed (MAMA III 262).



Fig. 4: *Korykos*, Eastern Necropolis. Funerary Road, eastern part of the mapped Section (Fig. 4) including [MAMA III 350](#) (far left), [725](#) (2nd f.r.), [717](#) (far right), view to the North.

as there are no known examples of exclusively Jewish necropoleis in ancient *Asia Minor*.⁴² In *Korykos*, the habit of placing Jewish funerary monuments alongside those of Christians implicitly meant that churches also accentuated the space Jews were buried in. Logically, it is quite unlikely that the Christian sacred buildings themselves were key to this decision – this just seems to represent the ‘place to be’ at that time. A burial in this part of the necropolis, as close as possible to the ‘monastery church’ and the street leading there, was therefore regarded as privileged by the local – and maybe even the regional – population (Fig. 3–4).⁴³

The importance of professional affiliation is attested in many script-bearing tombs of the Late Antique necropoleis of *Korykos*. A closer analysis shows that this was a factor in positioning funerary monuments. Although not in each and every case, professional affiliation correlates with a burial in a certain zone of the necropolis. Most retail-dealers (κάπηλος; 15 out of 19) were buried in an area of the central necropolis enclosing the valley, as were most bootmakers (καλιγάριος; 8-9/11), while house builders (οικοδόμος) and sail- and linen-makers defined as ὀθονιακοί were buried in the Eastern Necropolis.⁴⁴ Therefore, the clustering of their funerary monuments spatially reinforces the epigraphical identification. The fact that two professional associations (σύστημα) even owned funerary monuments does not only underpin the social importance of displaying profession for *Korykos*’ inhabitants,

42 REBILLARD 2009, 20; TREBILCO 1991 is a comprehensive study of the Jewish communities in *Asia Minor*. This phenomenon holds also true for most parts of the Western Mediterranean (with noteworthy exceptions, such as some catacombs in Rome).

43 Most Late Antique epitaphs indicating a provenance other than *Korykos* (including settlements in Rough Cilicia, as well as others from across the Eastern Mediterranean) were inscribed in this area – especially in the Eastern Necropolis and the part of the Central Necropolis adjacent to the ‘monastery church’: e.g. [MAMA III 369, 388, 404, 432, 436, 442, 455, 457, 477, 490, 500, 511, 563, 610, 641, 650, 696, 706, 733, 735b, 742](#).

44 Inscriptions mentioning a κάπηλος: [MAMA III 209, 234, 240, 279, 296, 307b, 396, 439, 456, 474, 490, 495, 509, 560, 599, 603, 653, 677, 738](#). καλιγάριος: [MAMA III 235, 382, 399, 482, 550, 616, 625, 639, 661, 662, 671, 682](#). οικοδόμος: [MAMA III 486, 548, 724](#). ὀθονιακός: [MAMA III 340, 368, 473, 558](#).

but it also emphasizes its relevance for mortuary practices.⁴⁵ But why did the professional groups prefer different areas of the necropoleis for burial? The Western Necropolis seems not to have been particularly favored by any of the professional groups. No new tombs were positioned in this necropolis, where only older monuments were reused. This corroborates the impression that the Western Necropolis was the least popular one, and the decision to bury there therefore seems to be rather pragmatic, perhaps connected to a lack of other options. Within the Central and Eastern necropoleis the interpretation of the evidence is far more complex. The archaeological and epigraphic evidence discussed in this paper strongly suggests that the Eastern Necropolis was the highest regarded funerary space. To associate a profession with a certain wealth is not possible with certainty, but some examples seem to suggest that the choice of a certain area of the necropolis by a professional group is not generally related to the wealth presumably associated with it. There are several other explanatory models, two of which seem particularly suitable for this evidence. The first would involve a close connection with the sacred topography of the necropoleis; if the professional associations were linked to a certain church and ‘patron saint’, a burial in an area related to the church or in its vicinity could have been preferred. The second explanatory model is far more pragmatic: the choice of a certain area depended on the needs and expectations regarding self-representation of the professional association. Withal, this question still remains open.

Korasion

Korasion/Susanoğlu, a coastal settlement only few kilometers to the southwest, presents evidence comparable to *Korykos* (Fig. 5).⁴⁶ *Korasion* is a medium sized walled town (12 ha), which was (re?)founded in the second half of the 4th c. AD.⁴⁷ Although the settlement has been largely overbuilt during the last decades, some of its monumental buildings, as well as the epigraphic evidence, are known through early scholarship.⁴⁸ The fact that the city was (newly?) founded in Late Antiquity, as the epigraphic record suggests and the known datable evidence seems to confirm,

45 Two professional associations are mentioned in the funerary inscriptions. *MAMA III 770*: + Θήκη διαφέρουσα | τῷ συστήματι τῶν λημενητῶν | λινοπωλῶν τῆς Κωρυκαιοτῶν +. *MAMA III 771*: + Τοῦ συστέματος | τὸν εὐγενεστάτον | + τραπεζιτῶν +.

46 The evidence of this settlement was discussed in greater detail in a recently published paper: CUBAS DÍAZ 2020.

47 Luckily, an inscription provides evidence for a relatively precise dating between 367–375 AD (Hicks 1891 Nr. 31). See also BEAUFORT 1817, 239; KEIL/WILHELM 1915, 21f. fig. 7; *MAMA III*, p. 102, with n. 1.

48 The most complete early report on the evidence is again provided by J. Keil and A. Wilhelm (*MAMA III*, p. 102–117). Other reports and references in early scholarship include: BEAUFORT 1817; BENT 1891; KEIL/WILHELM 1915.

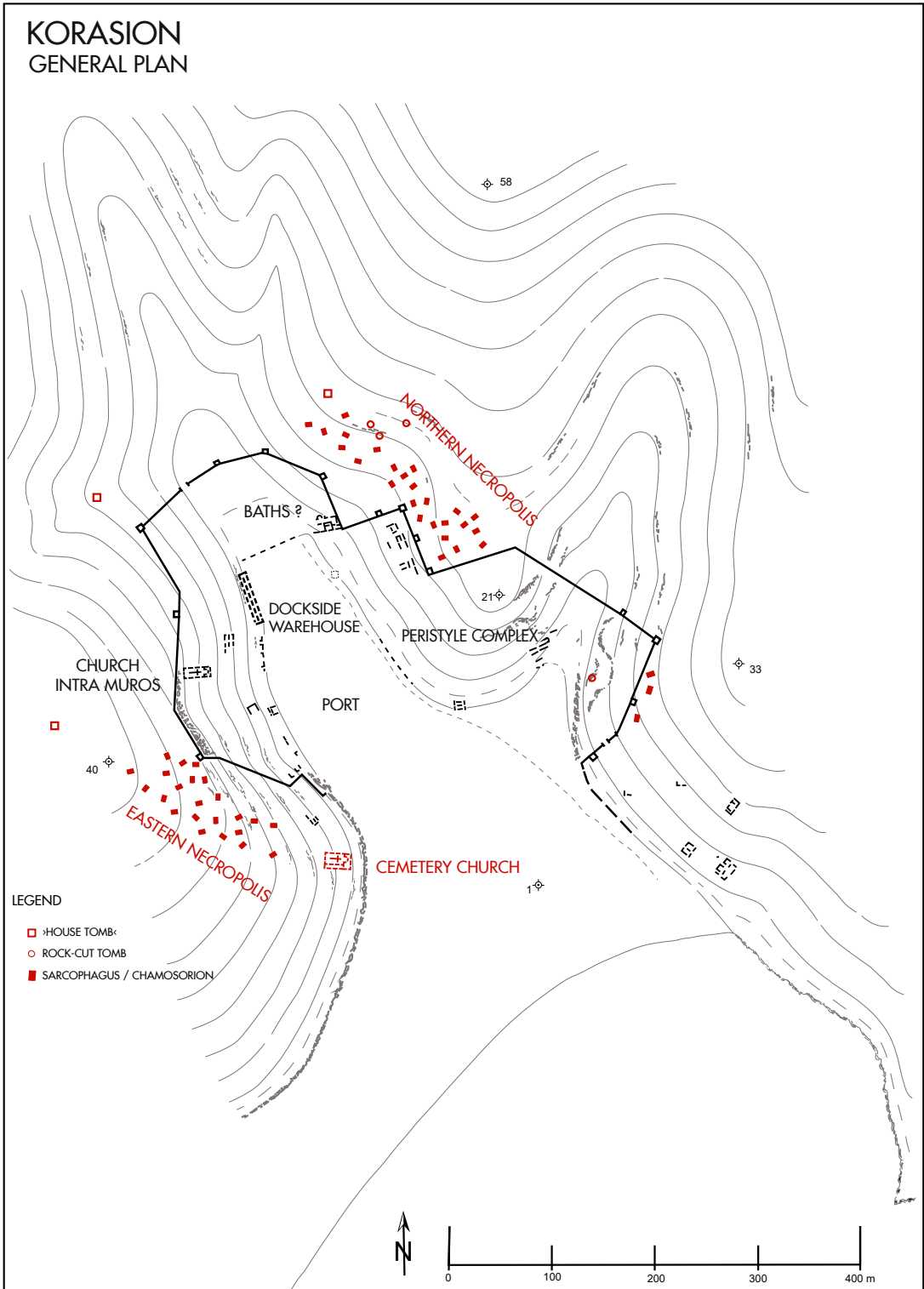


Fig. 5: *Korasion*, General Plan.

underlines the city's importance for our purpose. Presumably, *Korasion* provides evidence of a genuine Late Antique settlement, which may serve as intraregional comparative material in a territory mostly lacking datable evidence.⁴⁹

Korasion shows a very similar use of inscriptions, including the identical *formula*, the decoration and the importance of the professional affiliation.⁵⁰ Its Late Antique funerary landscape, mainly composed of a Western and Northern necropolis, primarily consist of sarcophagi with a spatial distribution comparable to *Korykos*.⁵¹ including a favored funerary space: the Western Necropolis and the 'cemetery church'.⁵² Also here the profession seems to be of some relevance, as the position of the tombs of the oil-merchants in the Western Necropolis suggests.⁵³ *Korasion* and *Korykos* obviously did not only share comparable economic and social structures, but also common funerary customs and depiction strategies, proving that the results from *Korykos* describe not just a local phenomenon.

Karakabaklı

Karakabaklı, a small settlement (4 ha) in the interior situated at the ancient road linking *Korasion* and *Diokaisareia*, might offer an interesting contrast.⁵⁴ The small settlement, composed of roughly 50 structures, acquired an urban character in Late Antiquity through several public buildings; two *tetrapyla* mark the southern and northern ends of the road section leading through the settlement. A church com-

49 On the significance of the (new?) foundation of the city in Late Antiquity see: CUBAS DÍAZ 2020, 352–355, 364 f. Single aspects were previously noted by G. Varinlioğlu and I. Eichner: VARINLIOĞLU 2008a, 294 f.; EICHNER 2011, 285 f.

50 Two inscriptions may serve as representative examples of the described similarity: MAMA III 136: + Σωματο|θή[κη] Θεωδό|ρου νομικοῦ. MAMA III 140: + Θήκη Θεωμᾶ | + Ίουλιανοῦ | + ἐλεωπόλου. A comprehensive analysis of the inscriptions can be found in: CUBAS DÍAZ 2020, 360–364. Two further inscriptions included in ETAM 22 should be considered in this paper: CIG 9201 and CIG 9203.

51 CUBAS DÍAZ 2020, 357–360.

52 The Western necropolis includes more ambitious funerary monuments (free-standing sarcophagi) and the tombs in it were re-inscribed more often than those in the Northern Necropolis. They also housed most individuals practising professions arguably associated with wealth, as well as the burials of 'foreigners'. For a detailed presentation of this evidence see: CUBAS DÍAZ 2020, 357–364.

53 All but one inscription mentioning oil-merchants were found there. ἐλαιωπώλης: MAMA III 139, 140, 162, 164a, 172. The other inscription (MAMA III 114) was documented in the Northern Necropolis.

54 On Karakabaklı and Işıkkale see especially: EICHNER 2011, 186–284; VARINLIOĞLU 2008a; VARINLIOĞLU 2008b, 53–74; VARINLIOĞLU 2013. See also CUBAS DÍAZ 2021, 44–48. A first schematic plan and preliminary description were provided by S. Eyice: EYICE 1981, 207 pl. 85.2. Furthermore, G. Dagron and O. Callot conducted substantial research in the area: DAGRON/CALLOT 1998.

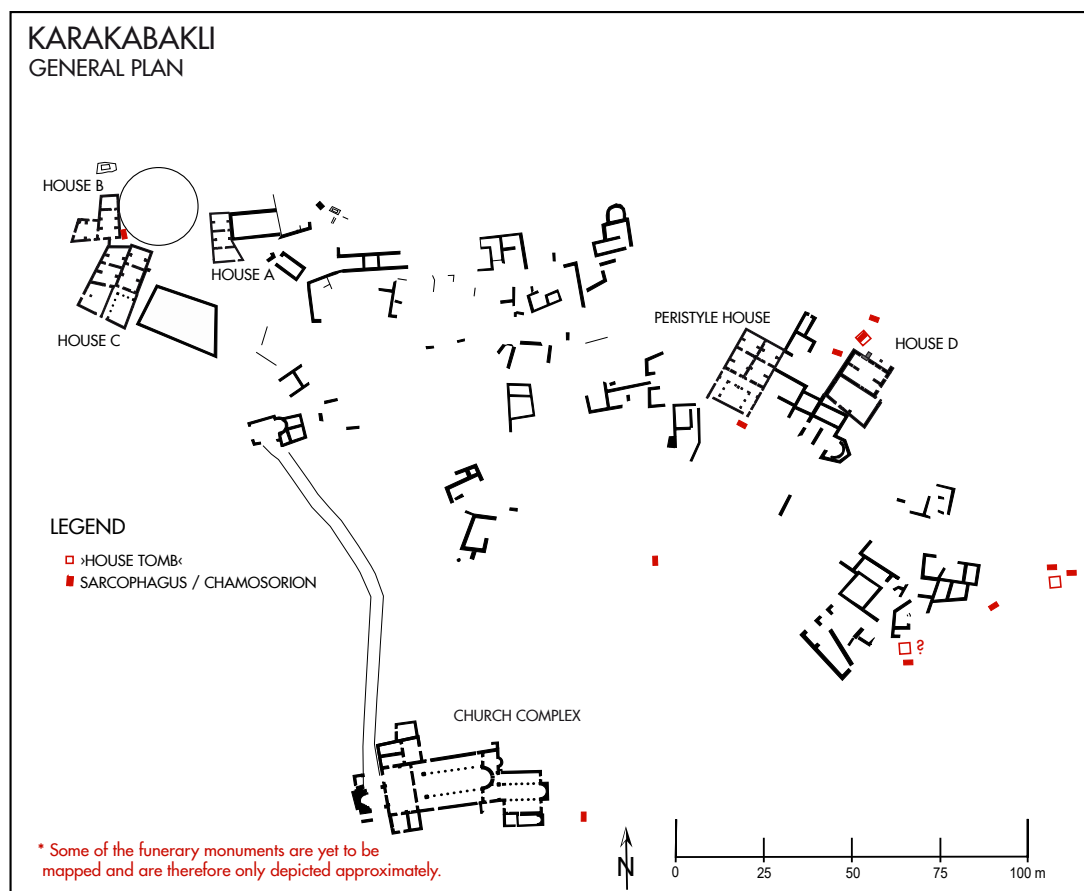


Fig. 6: Karakabaklı, General Plan.

plex is located in the east, next to the southern Tetrapylon.⁵⁵ Several early Byzantine houses in an astonishing state of conservation clearly attest the wealth of Karakabaklı's population through the ambitious building techniques applied.⁵⁶ Although a few scattered wall-fragments seem to date back to Imperial times, the settlement can be considered a predominantly, almost genuinely, Late Antique site (Fig. 6).⁵⁷

55 Stephan Westphalen analysed this complex thoroughly: WESTPHALEN 2008, 109–115. As only one single *chamosorion* was found in a radius of approx. 50m around the church, the evidence does not suggest a funerary function, proposed by several scholars (DAGRON/CALLOT 1998; WESTPHALEN 2008, 115). Several recent illegal digging activities within the church seem to confirm the lack of intra-basilical burials.

56 On the five residential complexes studied by I. Eichner see: EICHNER 2011, 186–257.

57 The scattered walls presumably formed a small group of earlier structures which cannot be reconstructed. Comprehensive studies on the building techniques and architectural decoration have provided broad evidence for the predominantly Late Antique dating. For a brief exemplified overview see: EICHNER 2018, 267–290. See also the detailed descriptions, explanations, and drawings in: EICHNER 2011, 191–257. VARINLIOĞLU 2008B, 38–69; VARINLIOĞLU 2013, 199–208. See also In contrast, Ü. Aydınoglu and Ü. Çakmak



Fig. 7: Karakabaklı, Sarcophagus lid in front of the Peristyle House.

Naturally, wealth was also demonstrated by the site's funerary monuments. Besides the common sarcophagi and *chamosoria*, the inhabitants also built *aedicula*-tombs. Regardless of typological classification, these funerary monuments bear witness to a certain prosperity of Karakabaklı's population. It is important to note that none of these monuments can be dated to the Imperial age or before. This chronological classification is strongly corroborated by their decoration, as most tombs were decorated with finely carved crosses showing the religious affiliation of the deceased as Christian (Fig. 7). None of the tombs, however, is inscribed, and neither has any other inscription been documented in the settlement. It is certain that the absence of inscriptions was not caused by a lack of means on the part of the inhabitants, as evidenced by the high quality of the houses, public buildings and the funerary monuments themselves. Implicitly, this means that the absence of inscriptions was a deliberate decision: whoever commissioned the funerary monuments in Karakabaklı renounced the use of writing. In this decision, the setting and position of the tombs may have been of considerable relevance. The funerary monuments were neither placed as close as possible to the church complex, nor along the monumental road, but next to the houses. Therefore, a clear relationship between houses and tombs – and therefore commissioners/users – is suggested by their extreme proximity to each other (Fig. 8a–b).

assume that an early farmstead, including the so-called peristyle-house and the surrounding buildings, developed into a village: AYDINOĞLU/ÇAKMAK 2011, 71–84.

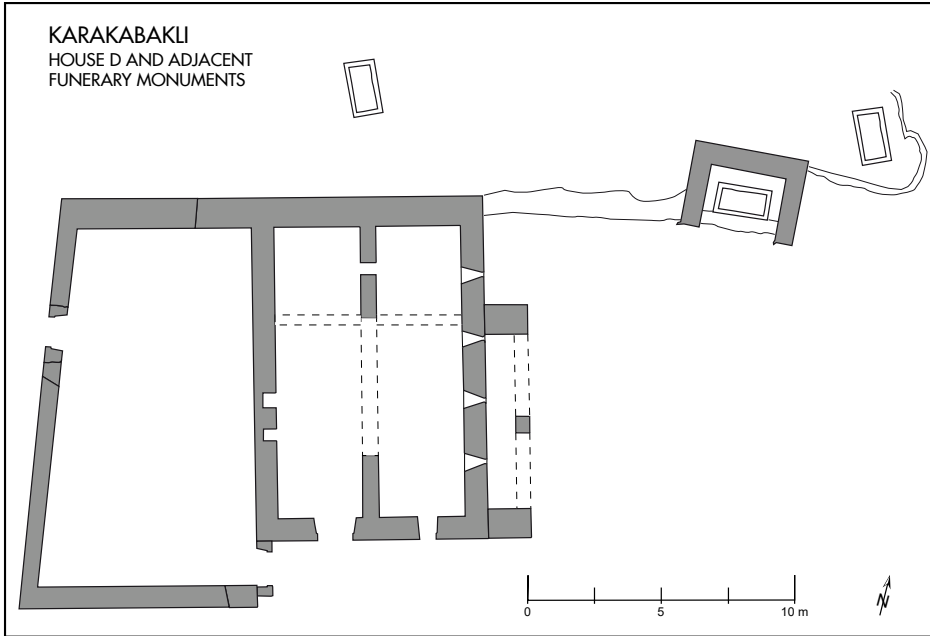


Fig. 8: a. Karakabaklı, House D and adjacent funerary monuments, Sketch. b. Karakabaklı, House D and adjacent funerary monuments, view to the North.

Possibly, this way of positioning the tombs had a direct influence on the potential functionality of inscriptions. First of all, the spatial arrangement seems to have shown to whom a funerary monument belonged, which might have made any mention of the name superfluous. Those living in the small settlement must have known to which family the house and the adjacent burial site belonged. Those traveling between *Korasion* and *Diokaisareia* will unlikely have left the road's course. Secondly, positioning the burials right next to the houses surely made any grave robbery quite improbable. Accordingly, the spatial setting of the funerary monuments may to some extent have deprived inscribed text of its pragmatic functions. Nevertheless, it is well known that inscriptions are not necessarily used pragmatically; the presence or absence of epitaphs, as well as their contents, is mainly linked to the different perceptions and the personal and collective vision of funerary customs. Yet, the functionality of inscriptions may also have been a factor.⁵⁸

Although Karakabaklı has some monumental elements, it may still well be characterized as a rural settlement. This could misleadingly favour the premature conclusion that funerary habits in *Korykos* and Karakabaklı differed largely because of the settlements' sizes, reducing this difference to a rural-urban dichotomy. Another rural settlement will prove this assumption to be far too generalizing and, therefore, mistaken.⁵⁹

Işıkkale

Işıkkale was a medium sized village covering an area slightly larger than Karakabaklı's (5 ha). The village consists of two very dissimilar cores, set at a distance of 200m but connected through a paved road that was monumentalized to some extent. While the western core of the settlement is formed by smaller structures, mostly built with rather simple techniques, the eastern part consists of ambitiously built, considerably bigger (housing) units (Fig. 9).⁶⁰ Threshing floors and presses provide information about the economic activities of the settlement. While it is certain that this site was previously inhabited, for which several structures provide evidence, agricultural production and building activities were clearly intensified in

58 For a more detailed interpretation see CUBAS DÍAZ 2021, 135–138.

59 In addition, it has to be noted that the funerary landscapes of some of the biggest cities in the studied region clearly differ, as the comparison of *Korykos* with *Elaiussa Sebaste* and *Diokaisareia* proves. On *Diokaisareia* see: LINNEMANN 2013. On *Elaiussa Sebaste*'s North-Eastern Necropolis see: EQUINI SCHNEIDER 2003. On the 'Agora-Church' see: EQUINI SCHNEIDER 2010. On the church in the Great Baths see: EQUINI SCHNEIDER 2013; EQUINI SCHNEIDER 2014; EQUINI SCHNEIDER 2015.

60 VARINLIOĞLU 2008a, 300–302; VARINLIOĞLU 2008b, 57–60; VARINLIOĞLU 2013, 206.

Late Antiquity, as a church complex in the eastern neighborhood, a tetrapylon and several threshing floors and press systems indicate.⁶¹

At first glance, the Late Antique funerary monuments of Işıkkale do not seem to follow the concept observed in Karakabaklı and may be (artificially) divided into three main groups. The first group consists of *chamosoria* and sarcophagi oriented alongside the main road leading to the church complex. A second group mainly consists of *chamosoria* in the eastern neighborhood, some of them with finely carved crosses, while the last and largest cluster is also formed by *chamosoria* and may be regarded as the Western Necropolis.⁶² Despite the lack of inscriptions, this funerary landscape is multilayered in many ways. A first and central differentiation regards the chronology. Some of the sarcophagi and *chamosoria* certainly date back to middle Imperial times, as their characteristics and decoration prove. These funerary monuments, which are part of the first group, were placed at the paved road, as they were in countless settlements throughout the Mediterranean in this era, as well as in some of this region's settlements, such as *Elaiussa Sebaste*.⁶³

Some of these were reused for burial purposes and bear witness to a Late Antique phase of this funerary space. Furthermore, some funerary monuments were clearly added in Late Antiquity, such as a freestanding sarcophagus with a lid decorated by a cross finely carved in relief (Fig. 10).⁶⁴ The custom to place funerary monuments at this road was not only relevant in Imperial times, but remained important in Late Antiquity. The evidence in Işıkkale thus includes an important element seemingly lacking in Karakabaklı: an earlier funerary tradition that was kept alive – possibly by the old-established population – in Late Antiquity.

In order to understand the spatial setting of the roadside tombs, one aspect is of central importance: the group of tombs in the church's proximity, positioned along the paved road a few meters to the north of the church, is not Late Antique, but part

61 The works of G. Varinlioğlu have developed a much more detailed picture of the settlement, its structures and chronology (VARINLIOĞLU 2008a, 303 fig. 6; VARINLIOĞLU 2008b, 212 fig. 20 f.; VARINLIOĞLU 2013, 205 fig. 16.7), also amending the plan by S. Eyice significantly (EYICE 1981, Taf. 84.2). For this paper the location of the *chamosoria* in the west is of particular importance. On the individual chronology of several buildings, key to understand the settlement's development, see the respective remarks in EICHNER 2011. On the church complex see: WESTPHALEN 2015, 535–552.

62 A brief description of these funerary spaces was presented in EICHNER 2011, 261. On the different building techniques used see: VARINLIOĞLU 2008b, 93–99.

63 On *Elaiussa Sebaste*'s North-Eastern Necropolis see: EQUINI SCHNEIDER 2003, 383–522.

64 The extremely flat pressed Egg-and-Dart motif on this sarcophagus strongly resembles the one decorating the entrance from the narthex to the main aisle of Karakabaklı's church complex. That provides evidence for a dating of this sarcophagus box – and not just the lid – in Late Antiquity. On this phenomenon see EICHNER 2011, 282–283. It is noteworthy that these funerary monuments were not positioned in the church's vicinity, but in the central section of the road.

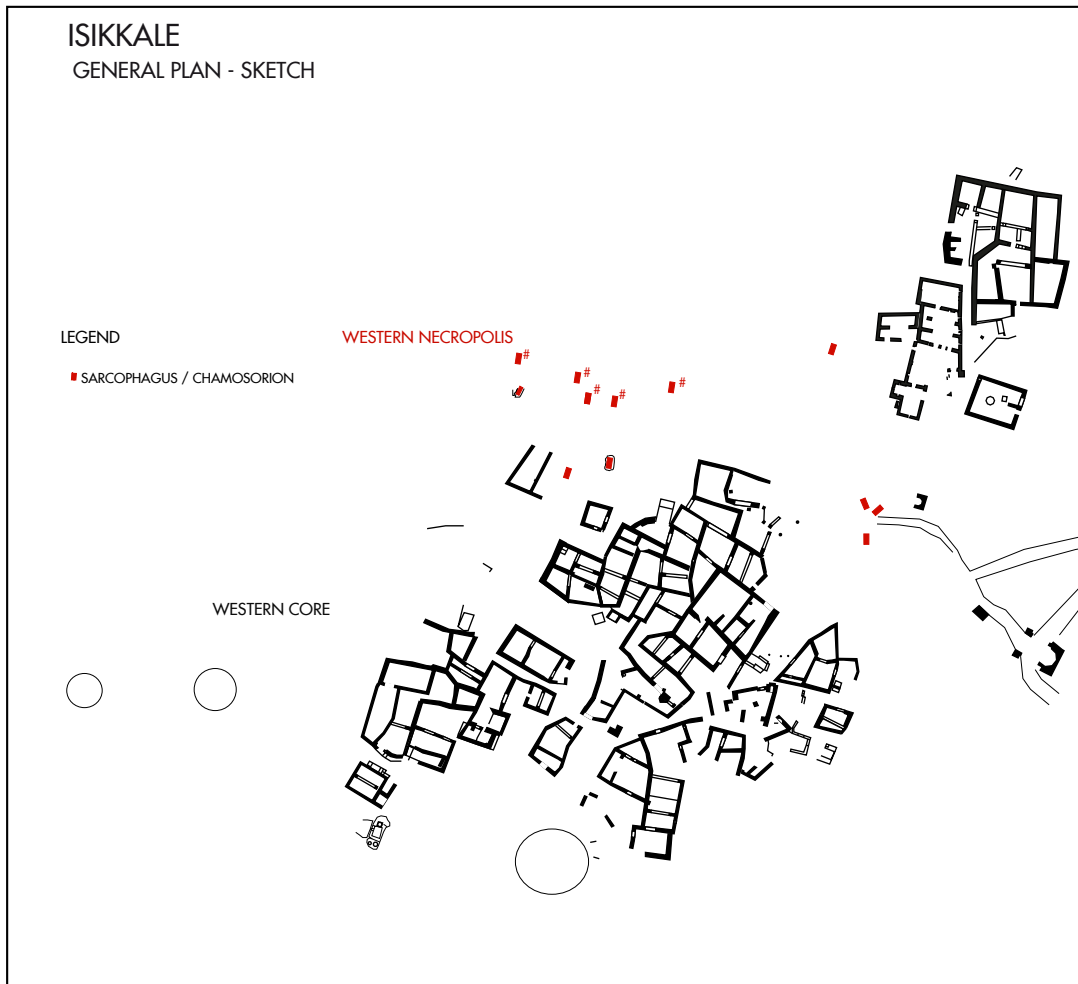
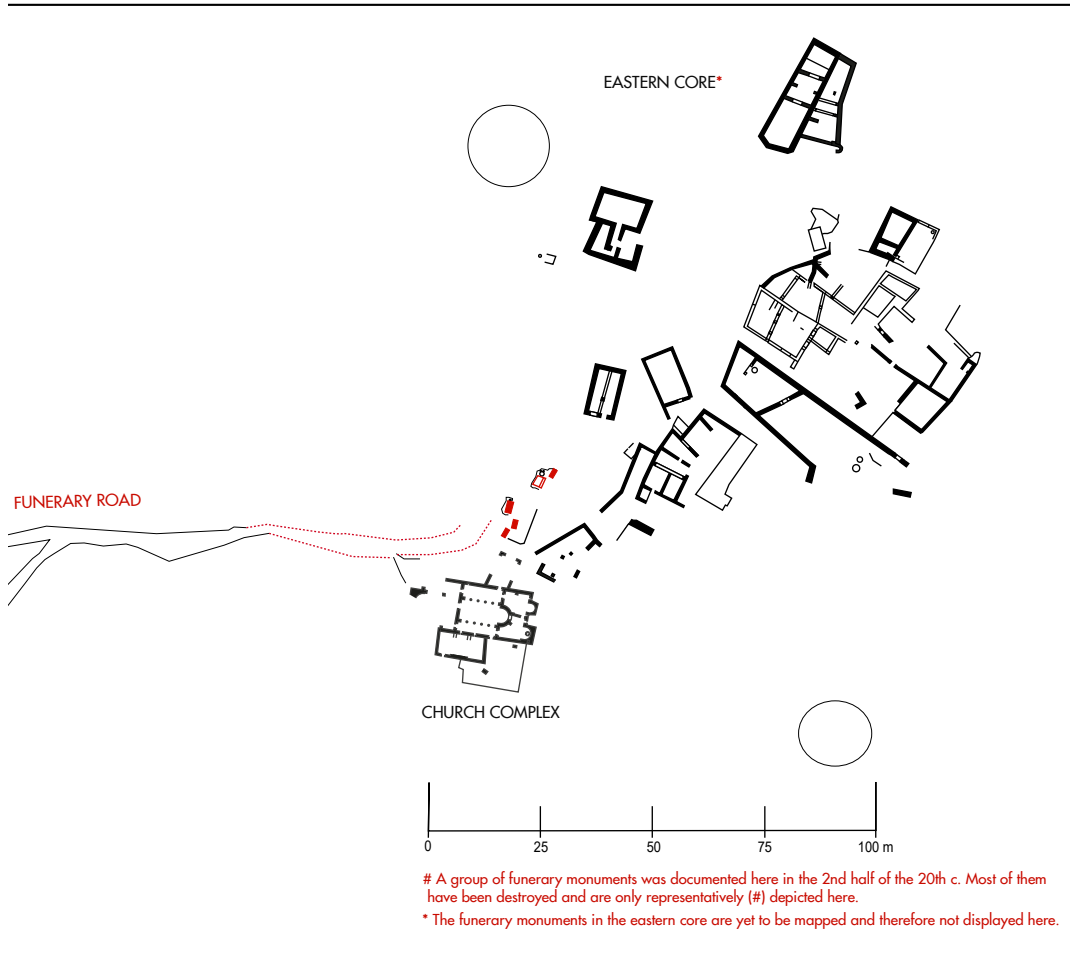


Fig. 9: Işıkkale, General Plan.

of the older funerary monuments that already flanked the road in Imperial times. Their position was in no way related to the church, built centuries later. Although a later reuse of older burials can not be ruled out in some cases, new tombs were not added here, which strongly suggests that burial in the church's vicinity was not an active goal. This is strongly underlined by the fact that some of these sarcophagi were partially destroyed to be reused as part of agricultural press-systems during this period.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ The Late Antique reuse of sarcophagi dating back to middle Imperial times as part of agricultural press-systems, possibly used for oil or wine production, was well documented at the main street in the church's vicinity: VARINLIOĞLU 2013, 309; VARINLIOĞLU 2008b, 54; fig. 15.



In contrast to the funerary road, the other two groups of funerary monuments seem to be genuinely Late Antique (Fig. 11).⁶⁶ Despite their synchrony and the preferred use of *chamosoria*, these funerary spaces present significant differences. While the Western Necropolis shows a spatial pattern comparable to *Korasion's* necropoleis, the burials in the Eastern core of *Işikkale* seem to be adjacent to the buildings.⁶⁷ It is noteworthy that recently recorded structures are thought to be two *aedicula*.⁶⁸

66 Their decoration provides evidence for this; while many of them show carved crosses, none of them show decoration or other characteristics that dates back to Imperial times.

67 The Western Necropolis borders the occidental core in the north and west and was partially destroyed when a modern road crossing it in the north was built.

68 AYDINOĞLU 2017, 67f. One of them, in the south-western end of the settlement, lacks the characteristic profiled arch impostes of the other *aedicula*-tombs and might well be a



Fig. 10: Işıkkale, Funerary Road (at the crossroads), Sarcophagus lid decorated with a cross.

Although we still lack a detailed plan of the funerary monuments of Işıkkale, we can plausibly argue that the Late Antique funerary concept of the eastern neighborhood resembles that of Karakabaklı.⁶⁹ This result correlates with their similarity in terms of architectural features and spatial setting.

Hence, Işıkkale does not only provide evidence for one group following the local tradition dating back to Imperial times and another one pursuing new Late Antique habits, but also shows how different conventions were developed concurrently. The question inevitably arises why different concepts were used simultaneously. Is this difference caused by a deliberate decision based on disparate burying or representation strategies? Or should it be interpreted as an expression of hierarchy or social stratification? This question is certainly worth being elaborated on in more detail. The substantial above-mentioned differences between the two cores might provide some hints about the creation and co-existence of these funerary spaces; as previously stated, the eastern core of Işıkkale shows a far more ambitious architecture, with houses consisting of substantially larger rooms. This suggests that the population of the eastern core was significantly wealthier. If we assume that

vaulted room instead. Unfortunately, the position of the remains of the other two examples cannot be defined due to the lack of a general plan. One of them is described as “at the northern end of the settlement”.

⁶⁹ As a detailed plan of Işıkkale’s tombs in the eastern core is still lacking, the connection between the buildings and the tombs should be reevaluated once suitable documentation is available.



Fig. 11: Işıkkale, Western Necropolis, Chamosorion (including lid decorated with a cross).

the two cores of the settlement were home to two distinct communities or social groups, it seems plausible that a certain funerary space belonged to each of them. However, it remains uncertain whether these two groups decided to follow different spatial funerary concepts just because of wealth disparities.

According to a traditional approach, positioning the burials in a church's proximity is believed to be (most often) decisive. The lack of a church in the western settlement core would deprive its population from this option and make an alternative funerary concept necessary. We can certainly rule out such an argumentation. If a burial close to the basilica would have been so highly regarded, there would have been a larger number of tombs in or around the church. Moreover, if this way of positioning tombs was for the goal, why were some of the pre-existing sarcophagi from Imperial times in closest proximity to the church partially destroyed, and reused in agricultural production as part of press systems?⁷⁰ Be that as it may, the similarity between the eastern core of Işıkkale and Karakabaklı strongly suggests that their inhabitants shared a common vision, not only regarding house architecture and urbanism, but also – to a certain degree – regarding burial and commemoration.

Above all, Işıkkale provides evidence for conceptual differences of funerary spaces not only at a micro-regional, but also at a local level. Nevertheless, Işıkkale

70 On the coexistence of different funerary habits in Cilician settlements see CUBAS DÍAZ 2021, 134f.

and Karakabaklı also share two important characteristics. First of all, neither settlement seem to strive for a separation of the space of the living from that of the dead. On the contrary, the evidence – also in Karakabaklı – strongly suggests that the opposite was pursued, connecting these two spaces, so clearly separated in previous tradition. Apparently, the dead were still perceived in a very direct way as part of their families and communities. Secondly, positioning burials in a church's proximity was seemingly not so important.

Conclusions

The discussed settlements allow an insight into the multifaceted funerary landscapes of Late Antique Rough Cilicia, which present a far more nuanced diversity than might be anticipated.⁷¹ Furthermore, they clearly show the potential of combined archaeological and epigraphic approaches when analysing evidence of mortuary practices. The Jewish and Christian communities of *Korykos* obviously shared similar ideas regarding the conception, use and function of funerary monuments. This is clearly attested by the choice of the type of monument, as well as the inscriptions' *formulae*, the use of decorative motifs and the spatial setting of the tombs. A relatively large social group of both religious communities took the use of inscriptions and the display of the professional affiliation as a central aspect in this context. The decision of some members of the Jewish community to place their burials in a manifestly Christian-influenced spatial setting might seem surprising at first. However, at a second glance, it reveals a lot about what was arguably the main function of Late Antique funerary monuments in *Korykos*, i.e. to visualize the status of the deceased/commissioners in a prestigious space, such as the funerary road and the vicinity of the 'monastery church', hoping for a strong interaction with viewers.

The funerary preferences and concepts followed in *Korykos* were also applied in *Korasion*, to a great extent, as the archaeological and epigraphic evidence of this settlement (founded in Late Antiquity) proves. However, this was not the case in other settlements of the region. In *Elaiussa Sebaste* the epigraphic evidence is scarce compared to the two above-mentioned settlements and does not include the mention of professions. However, it does comprise intensively used intra-basilical burials. In Karakabaklı, tombs were mostly placed adjacent to the houses and do not strive for proximity to a church at all, while the funerary spaces in *Işıkkale* even manifest differences at a local level, combining new Late Antique customs with traditional, long-established elements dating back to Imperial times (i.e. roadside burials). As the comparison of these settlements shows, concepts can clearly differ at a microregional – and even local – level, depending both on the character of the

71 Settlements such as *Diokaisareia* and *Elaiussa Sebaste* could also have been elaborately treated in this paper, but were referred to only in passing for the sake of brevity.

settlement and the needs and expectations of communities and individuals. While burials in *Korykos* aimed at an intensive as possible visibility and interaction, and highlighted professional affiliations, those in Karakabaklı link the traditionally separated spaces of the dead and the living and keep the deceased present in the community's daily life, underpinning family bonds.

Accordingly, the funerary landscapes of Rough Cilicia offer a heterogenous picture, with some sites developing regional trends, several settlements adopting them, and others ignoring them and strictly following local traditions, or developing new customs.

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Figure Credits

- Fig. 1** PILHOFER 2018, 5 Abb. 1.2.
- Fig. 2** Jon C. Cubas Díaz after drawings from MAMA III.
- Fig. 3** Jon C. Cubas Díaz.
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- Fig. 5** Jon C. Cubas Díaz after diverse drawings (esp. MAMA III).
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JEREMY OTT

Burying at Corinth in Late Antiquity

Evidence from the Late 5th to the Early 7th Century

Introduction

Corinth provides unusually rich documentation for burial practices during Late Antiquity as revealed by more than 700 graves, one of the largest bodies of evidence in Greece, excavated over the course of a century.¹ This paper assesses the mortuary record from the late 5th to early 7th c. AD, a period in which the construction of massive basilicas testifies to Christianity's emergence as the dominant religion at Corinth, additional major building activity occurred in the erection of a Late Antique city wall, and both earthquakes and the plague presented significant challenges.² After an overview of the state of the field for the study of Late Antique burials in Greece, each excavated burial zone at Corinth from the late 5th to early 7th c. AD is summarized, followed by an analysis of the topographic development of Corinth's burial grounds. Lastly, categories of evidence are addressed in regard to tomb types, objects accompanying the dead, and epitaphs, incorporating material from additional sites within the province of *Achaëa* (primarily the southern Greek mainland), of which Corinth was capital, for comparison.

- 1 I thank the organizers for hosting a much needed conference, and extend a special thanks to the staff of Corinth Excavations and the Publications Office of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens for the use of images and assistance in procuring them.
- 2 Most of the Corinthian material presented in this paper was studied within the author's 2016 doctoral thesis, "Mortuary Practices in Late Antique Corinth", which examines burial practices at Corinth from approximately the late 5th to 9th c. AD. Although coinciding with what is often considered the conclusion of the Early Byzantine period in Greece around the beginning of the 7th c. AD, the end bracket of this paper's chronological scope is somewhat arbitrary: A continuous evolution of burial practices of the late 6th and early 7th c. AD. is apparent at Corinth into the 8th c. AD, and on the basis of more limited evidence, even into the 9th c. AD. See SLANE 2017 for Corinthian burial practices of the 1st to 5th c. AD. (in addition to limited 6th c. AD activity) as documented within Early Roman chamber tombs. Overviews of Corinth's Late Antique burials have appeared in SANDERS 2005, 430–437 (incorporating important new chronologies) and IVisON 1996.



Fig. 1: Map indicating Greek sites mentioned in text. 1. Corinth; 2. *Lechaion*; 3. *Isthmia*; 4. *Kenchreai*; 5. *Argos*; 6. Andritsa Cave; 7. *Olympia*; 8. Athens; 9. *Delion*; 10. Thebes; 11. *Thessaloniki*; 12. *Eleutherna*; 13. *Delphi*; 14. Limori.

State of the Field: Late Antique Burials from Greece

The study of Late Antique burials within the territory of modern Greece has made significant advancements during the past 25 years. Once published inconsistently within archaeological reports and rarely subject to further investigation, or with a focus on solely the most extraordinary tombs, burials of this era are now increasingly treated as contexts worthy of analysis in their own right, and are examined through the same interdisciplinary approaches applied to other periods of research in mortuary archaeology.³

Since the late 1990s, advanced studies on Late Antique cemeteries in long articles and monographs dedicated to them, or analyzing them within the context of site histories, have shed new light on sites including Corinth, *Isthmia*, *Argos*, Athens, *Olympia*, *Thessaloniki*, Limori (Macedonia), and *Eleutherna* (Crete) (Fig. 1).⁴ Although the largest ancient cities on the Greek mainland have historically dominated the scholarly discussion, the picture is therefore becoming somewhat more diverse in regard to site type and location, importantly adding to our knowledge the practices of smaller and more geographically dispersed communities like those at *Isthmia*, *Olympia*, Limori, and *Eleutherna*.

Research in specialized categories of evidence, along with new approaches, is providing further insight into the mortuary sphere. The study of classes of objects from daily life has become an avenue for the investigation and publication of mortuary artifacts; work in Late Antique ceramics is especially prominent in this regard, while less progress has been made in jewelry and clothing accessories.⁵ In addition to traditional approaches for analyzing human skeletal remains, DNA and stable isotope analyses have emerged as promising sources of information, although their application to Late Antique burials so far has been limited.⁶ Across the

3 For the most recent overview of burial practices in Late Antique Greece, see POULOU-PADIMITRIOU/TZAVELLA/OTT 2012. Laskaris provides a useful analysis of evidence published into the 1980s for burials belonging to Late Antiquity and later periods in his 1991 dissertation, which was published in a revised version (LASKARIS 2000).

4 Corinth: BOOKIDIS/STROUD 1997, SLANE 2017; *Isthmia*: RIFE 2012; *Olympia*: VIDA/VÖLLING 2000, VÖLLING/RETTNER 2018; *Eleutherna*: THEMELES 2000; THEMELES 2004; *Argos*: OIKONOMOU-LANIADO 2003, METAXAS 2015; *Thessaloniki*: MARKE 2006; PAZARAS 2009; Athens: TZAVELLA 2008.

5 On ceramics, see especially the many papers in PAPANIKOLA-MPAKIRTZE/KOUSOULAKOU 2010. For jewelry and clothing accessories, the publication of *Argos'* mortuary artifacts (METAXAS 2015) is particularly notable; see also the great breadth of items from mortuary and non-mortuary contexts in PAPANIKOLA-MPAKIRTZE 2002. For glass and jewelry as grave goods in other Late Antique contexts, see the contributions ARDELEANU, BIANCHI, PRIEN and MERTEN in this volume.

6 For the state of research on human osteoarchaeology in Greece across chronological periods, see NIKITA/TRIANTAPHYLLOU 2017. BOURBOU 2010 offers an excellent synthesis of data for the latter years of Late Antiquity and beyond. See also FOX/TRITSAROLI 2019 for an overview of skeletal remains of the 4th to 7th c. AD within the Eastern Mediterranean.

many types of evidence and approaches within the scope of research on Greece's Late Antique burials, coordination amongst researchers, and publication with an aim to integrate results, is increasingly necessary.

Corinth's Late Antique Cemeteries: Distribution and Main Characteristics

The urban center of Corinth, situated on relatively flat, terraced land to the north of the acropolis of Acrocorinth, possessed all of the edifices and amenities one would expect of a major city during the Roman and Late Antique phases of its development (Fig. 2).⁷ The *pomerium* which was laid out upon the foundation of Corinth as a Roman colony would have defined the city's boundaries, probably well within the circuit of the destroyed Classical city wall at east, south, and west, while at north extending to the edge of the lower terrace and approximately coinciding with the northern line of the Classical wall's ruins.⁸ Roman burial grounds, known especially from the northern cemetery, the general vicinity of the amphitheater, and on the roads leading out from the city presumably all lay outside the *pomerium*, which on the basis of tomb locations seems to have been respected until at least the late 4th c. AD and perhaps as late as the early 6th c. AD. Changes in urban space, including the abandonment or repurposing of various parts of the city center, occurred gradually from the late 4th c. AD onward, although there is also clear evidence for the maintenance and renovation of some buildings. Christian basilicas first appeared in the 6th c. AD, when at least four of these structures, two of them holding a cemetery function (the Kodratos and Kraneion Basilicas), were built. Also most likely in the 6th c. AD, a new, reduced Late Antique fortification circuit, protecting only part of the land within the *pomerium* and completely excluding the Forum, was erected; as the space of the living contracted, the burial places for the dead appear to have largely shifted inward to zones at the inner edge of Corinth's vast northern cemetery, and in an inconsistent manner to areas at the periphery of the smaller community. Each cemetery zone of the late 5th to early 7th c. AD is considered below beginning with one of the earliest at the ruined Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore, followed by graves in and

At Corinth, KENNEDY 2016 has recently applied stable isotope analysis to the skeletal remains of 6th to 8th c. AD burials to study migration. DNA analysis of Late Antique individuals in Greece is at a very early stage, as demonstrated by the incomplete results obtained from a pilot study on late 6th to early 7th c. AD burials near *Delphi*: KONIAVITOU et al. 2008.

7 BROWN 2018 provides an extensive consideration of historical and archaeological evidence for Late Antique Corinth. See also ATHANASOULIS 2013 for a useful summary of the archaeological evidence, including recent discoveries, and for issues of Christianization and the interpretation of the archaeological record, SANDERS 2004 and SANDERS 2005.

8 On the relationship between the *pomerium* and Corinth's cemeteries see WALBANK 1997, 107–109.

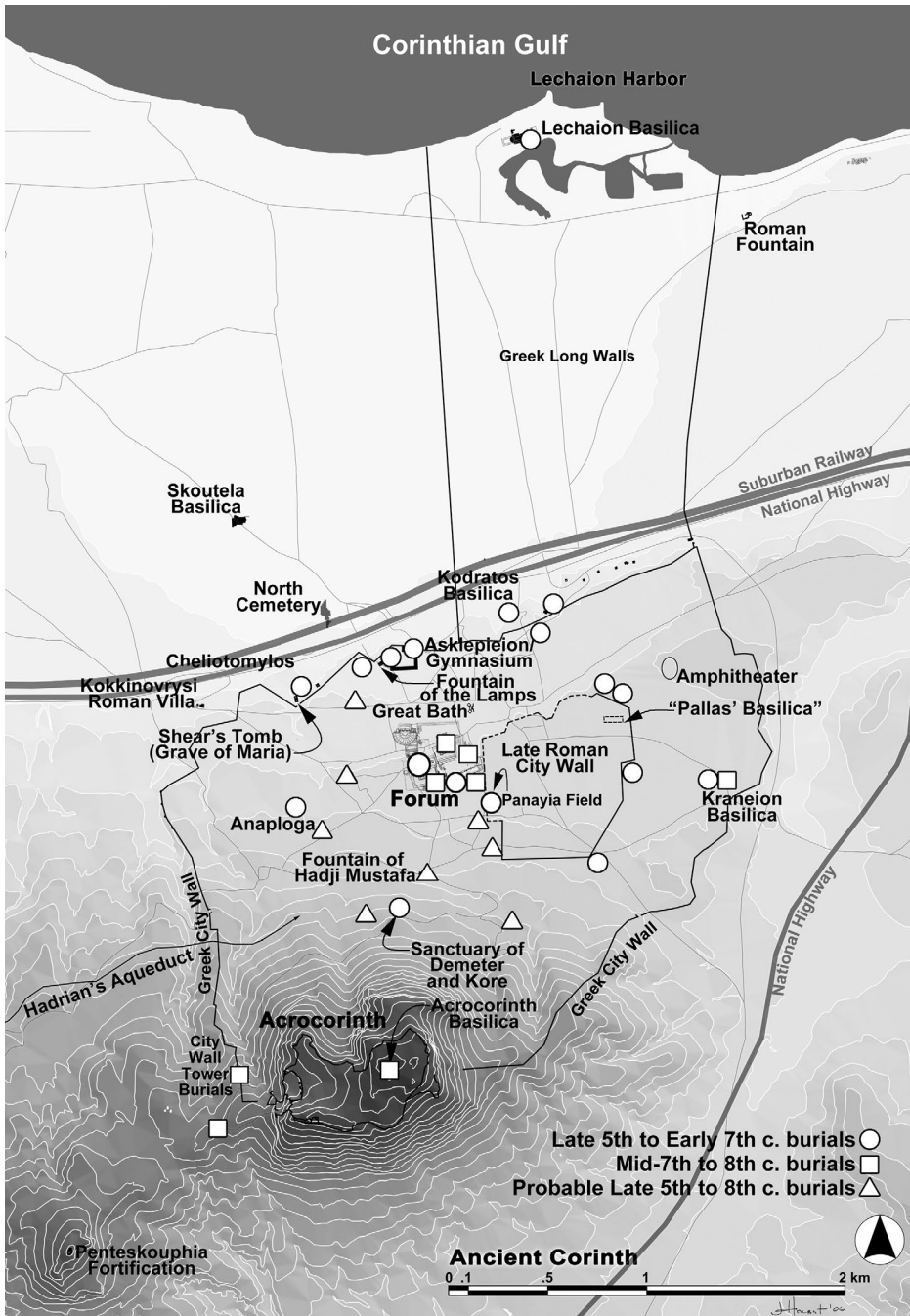


Fig. 2: Map of Corinth.

near Early Roman chamber tombs, burials in the Asklepieion/Gymnasium Area and adjacent mortuary spaces, the cemetery basilicas, graves just beyond the contracted Late Antique city wall, and finally, isolated locations.

Although Hellenistic graves have been documented on the north slope of Acrocorinth, it was only in Late Antiquity when mortuary activity returned to this area; by the end of the 4th c. AD burials occurred at least occasionally on the lower slope.⁹ More significantly, amongst the ruins of the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore, which was destroyed and abandoned at the end of the 4th c. AD, some 25 graves were installed in the late 5th to 6th c. AD as attested by lamps found above them and a glass bottle and lekythos retrieved from two graves.¹⁰ All but one grave (a simple pit) were of tiles pitched in the form of a tent, and all held single interments consisting of adults as well as children. Already in these graves the primary characteristics of the layout of the deceased at Corinth in the 6th to 7th c. AD are evident: An east-west orientation (head at west), and hands typically crossed over the pelvis.¹¹ Although these burials were sited at a ruined sanctuary, the act of burying here seems not to have related directly to the previous religious function of the complex; rather, the availability of space serving no other purpose, level ground and easy access by road would have encouraged mortuary use of this and perhaps other areas of Acrocorinth's north slope in Late Antiquity.¹²

Turning to Corinth's northern perimeter, in multiple locations a short distance north of the cliff of Corinth's southern terrace, and at the southern edge of Corinth's vast northern cemetery, large chamber tombs dating mainly to the 1st and 2nd c. AD were sporadically revisited for burial as late as the 6th c. following periods of inactivity.¹³ A small number of 6th c. AD single burial tile graves were placed within the ruins of these much earlier chamber tombs or close beside them, while the well-made cist grave of Maria, known from her ornately framed epitaph, was inserted

9 BOOKIDIS/STROUD 1997, 390. A two-handled flask of the late 4th c. AD accompanied the dead within an isolated cist grave.

10 For the sanctuary's graves, see BOOKIDIS/STROUD 1997, 381–391 and for revised chronologies, SLANE 2008. A child's grave (BOOKIDIS/STROUD 2008, 383, no. 1) located at a short distance from the main burial clusters produced the only other objects deposited with certainty: a bronze cylinder, two bronze hair rings, and a bronze rattle.

11 BOOKIDIS/STROUD 2008, 382. SLANE 2017, 239 interprets a shift within a reused Early Roman chamber tomb to a burial orientation with head at west in the first half of the 5th c. AD, slightly earlier than the graves at the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore, as evidence for a newly introduced Christian mortuary practice at Corinth.

12 BOOKIDIS/STROUD 1997, 389; SLANE 2008, 492. The suggestion (BOOKIDIS/STROUD 1997, 391) that the sanctuary may have been attractive as a burial ground due to a site-specific memory of spiritual protection for woman and children is now no longer considered tenable by Bookidis due to the presence of adult male burials; I thank Nancy Bookidis for this information (personal communication, 18 November 2015). Alternatively, SLANE 2008, 492 retains the possibility that a belief in a form of numinous protection may have drawn burials to the area.

13 For similarly reused tombs see the contribution CUBAS DÍAZ in this volume.

within one chamber tomb's floor (Fig. 2, within 'Shear's Tomb').¹⁴ Late activity at another Early Roman chamber tomb is indicated by its decoration with painted Christian symbols, which perhaps date to the 5th c. AD.¹⁵ Still farther west, 6th c. AD epitaphs recovered at Kokkinovrysi, where a Roman villa has also been discovered, suggest that additional burials were made either here in the plain, or on the terrace which overlooked the area.¹⁶

Below Corinth's theater and just within the line of the Classical city wall's ruins, the sunken area of Lerna Court along with the Asklepieion on the high ground to its east, and raised land to its southwest which includes a building identified as Corinth's Gymnasium, became used for burial beginning in the early 6th c. AD (Fig. 3). The area had already lost most of its previous character: Following a period of abandonment, in the late 5th or early 6th c. AD Lerna Court was turned into a dumping ground where a layer approximately one meter deep was created through the deposition of refuse along with natural soil accumulation.¹⁷ At about the same time or slightly earlier, the temple terrace became used for the reworking and removal of the temple's architectural members, and probably the turning of some pieces into lime.¹⁸

14 For the eastern group of tombs, see SLANE 2017, 11, 13, 15, 223. The grave of Maria was published in WALBANK/WALBANK 2006.

15 PALLAS 1975, fig. 14.

16 SEG XXIX 310, 316, 325, 326.

17 Although ROEBUCK 1951, 90 considered the dump to have lasted from circa 400 AD until the installation of graves at the site shortly afterward, a later date is preferable on the basis of numismatic and lychnological evidence: Coins of Marcianus (AD 450–457) (Coin 1932-410) and Leo I. (AD 457–474) (Coin 1932-305), the first found resting on the court's gutter and the second on a foundation block beneath a layer of debris and animal bones, and two 'East Greek' lamps (L-2997, L-2999), commonly dated to the 6th c. AD (BAILEY 1988, Q3331-Q3332), discovered close to the floor level of the court and adjacent abaton but not clearly associated with any grave. One of these lamps (L-2997) was specifically attributed by the excavator to a debris-filled layer which is probably the same one that extended across much of the court (Corinth Notebook 0136, 85). Similar dumping activity has been revealed at multiple locations within the Gymnasium in the 5th to 6th c. AD (WISEMAN 1969, 71, 75; WISEMAN 1972, 4 n. 15, 7 n. 24).

18 A *terminus post quem* for the breaking down of the temple's blocks and the reduction of the remains to lime is provided by coins of Arcadius (395–408) (Coin 1931-158, Coin 1931-241) discovered just above the sanctuary's rock surface and beneath a series of burned layers topping a marble chip layer; additional coins of Theodosius II (408–450) were found near rock level at the temple's periphery (ROTHAUS 2000, 44) and may reasonably be associated with this industrial activity. ROTHAUS 2000, 43–44, 48 illustrates some of the terracotta lamps discovered within the chip and burned layers, places them in the late 4th to early 5th c. AD, and interprets them as polytheist votives. Lamps L2700, L2832, L2842, and L2865 are, however, best dated to the middle to late 5th c. AD, and incorporate features that should not be earlier than circa 450 AD including chi-rho and cross monograms on their disks, disks with multiple fill holes, and pierced handles that occur in Attic versions which were both imported and emulated within local Corinthian copies (KARIVIERI 1996, 29, 67). It remains a question as to whether these lamps should

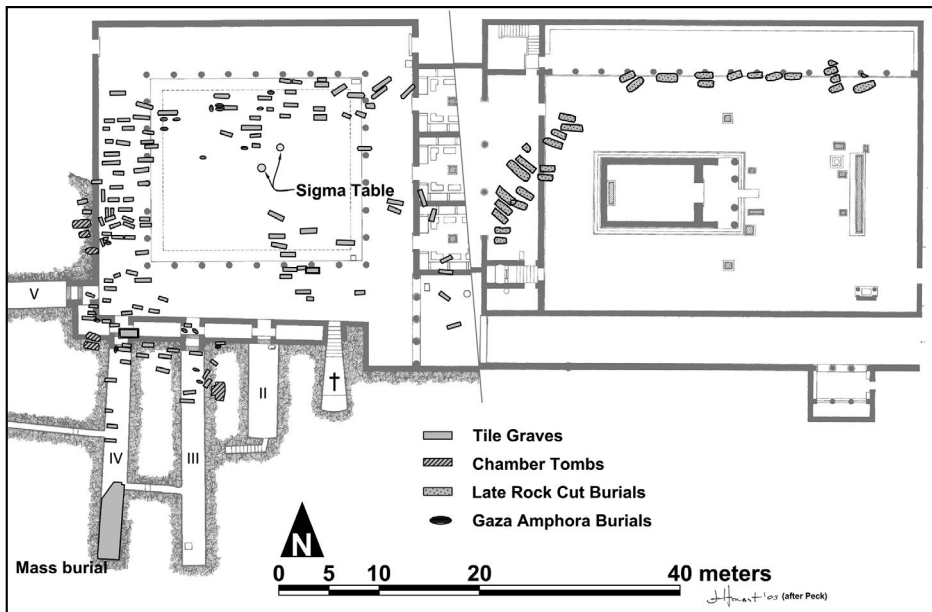


Fig. 3: Plan of Lerna Court and the Asklepieion.

At least fifteen tombs were cut into the rock surface at the north edge of the Asklepieion terrace; in imitation of fully built Late Antique vaulted tombs, this type incorporates a vertical entry shaft at east leading to a small horizontal chamber, and in place of the bricked vault is topped by a superstructure of stuccoed earth and rubble (as in the Gymnasium area, Fig. 4.1–2). Two additional small groups of rock-cut tombs lay close to the terrace's west edge, and more tombs of this type, in addition to simpler horizontal chambers, were carved out of the rock face and softer yellow marl along Lerna Court's east and west sides. Within the fill which lay above Lerna Court, some 100 burials were made in pitched tile graves, and nearly 20 more in amphorae containing infants (Fig. 5); similar burials extended into the sheltered northern portions of Reservoirs III and IV, which extended from the court into the hillside. While not all of the tile graves are well documented, the many graves of this type with lengths of 1.3 m or less, in addition to the amphora burials, suggest that at least half of the court and associated reservoir burials belong to infants and children. A few of the tile graves in the reservoirs were topped at surface by stuccoed mounds like those above the rock-cut tombs, and it is likely that many of the tile graves within the court were marked in a similar way. At the court's center, a fragment of a marble sigma table may provide evidence for offerings related to mortuary cult, although the heavily disturbed fill from which

be considered votives deposited following the removal of the temple's blocks, or if they were employed by laborers and instead offer a date for their work.

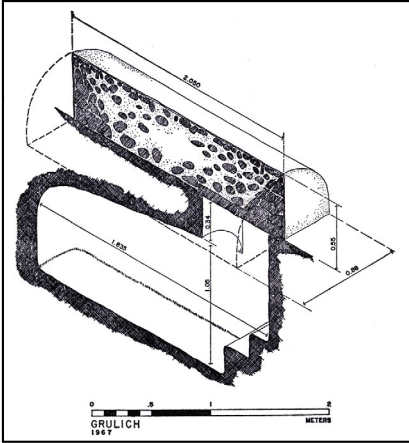


Fig. 4.1: Isometric view of a rock-cut tomb from the Gymnasium area.



Fig. 4.2: View of large cutting containing rock-cut tombs from the Gymnasium area.



Fig. 5: Amphora burials and tile graves in Lerna Court.

it was recovered does not permit a direct association with the cemetery phase of the court, which would become the setting for a Christian chapel in the late 9th or 10th c. AD.

In contrast to the use of the northern portions of the reservoirs for tile graves and amphora burials, the southern area of Reservoir IV became the setting for what appear to be approximately 100 primary burials discovered by the excavator as a mass of human remains, at least some of which were articulated skeletons, rising to a height of 0,4 to 0,6 m above the reservoir's floor.¹⁹ Although the enclosed, cavernous interiors of the reservoirs are not typical burial environments of this era, they do find comparison, and perhaps a source of inspiration, in Corinth's re-used Early Roman chamber tombs.

¹⁹ Corinth Notebook 0136, 105, 125. Reservoir II also yielded burials for which there is little documentation; they might be similar to those at the rear of Reservoir IV, or of significantly later date. Still less documentation exists for possible burials discovered within Reservoir V.

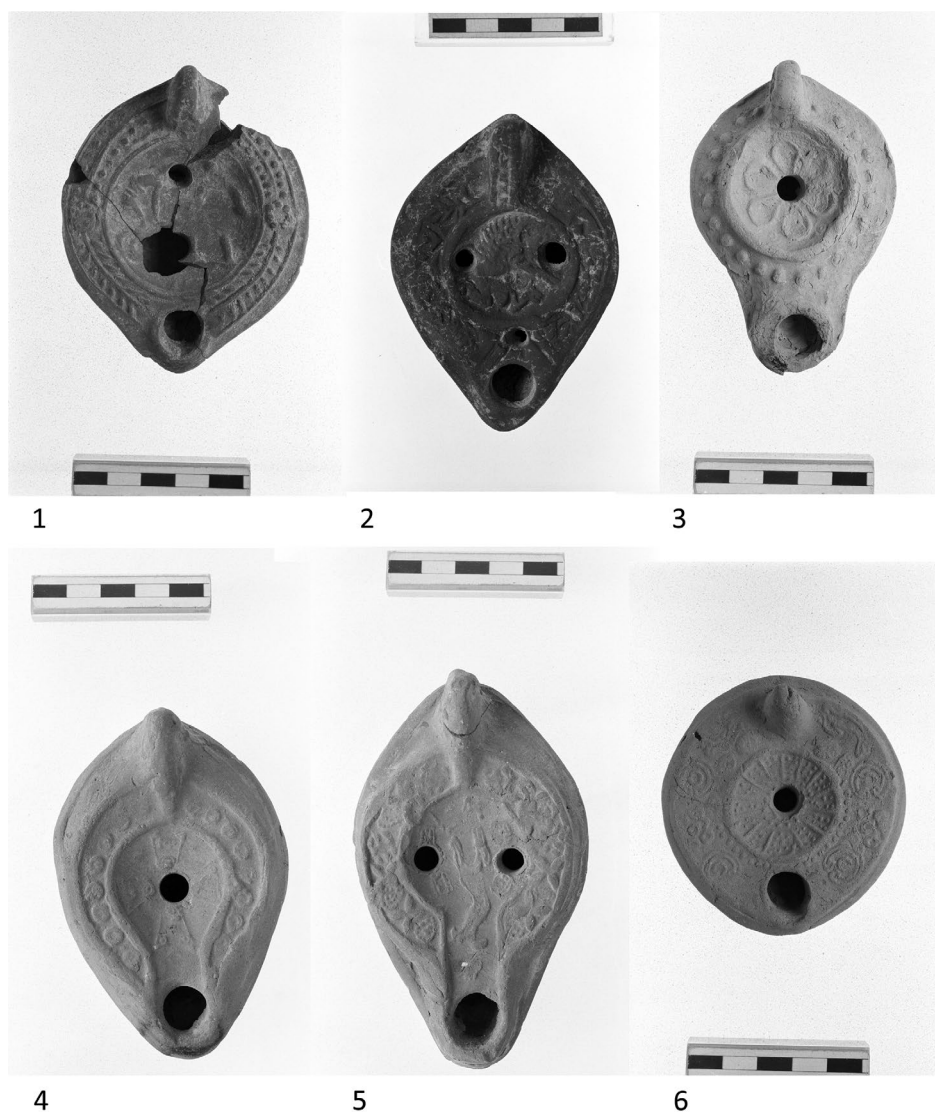


Fig. 6: 1–3. Lamps from approximate surface level in vicinity of graves within northern part of Lerna Court Reservoir IV; Fig. 6.4–6. Lamps discovered beside Asklepieion rock-cut tomb (Grave 1931-031).

Objects excavated in relation to the burials of this complex consist chiefly of ceramic vessels and terra cotta lamps; only a few items of jewelry and clothing accessories were discovered. A small number of lamps preserved *in situ* above graves in the reservoirs and also beside rock-cut tombs on the Asklepieion terrace provide evidence for what must have been a ubiquitous practice (Fig. 6).

Many more lamps, at least some of them probably mortuary offerings, were recovered within the disturbed fill above Lerna Court, and in a few cases seem to have been placed directly beside or above tile graves within the dug pit. Ceramic



Fig. 7: 1–9. Mug, lekythoi, and pitchers from Asklepieion rock-cut tombs (Grave 1931-026, Grave 1931-028, Grave 1931-029, Grave 1931-048, Grave 1931-052); Fig. 7.10. Mug from Lerna Court tile grave (Grave 1933-060).

vessels, the vast majority of them pitchers and lekythoi, were deposited in approximately half of the rock-cut graves (Fig. 7, Objects 1–9); some 50 similar vessels were recovered from the burials in the southern part of Reservoir IV (Fig. 8, Objects 1–6). In contrast, the only pottery associated with tile graves consists of a single mug (Fig. 7, Object 10) and a broken jug.²⁰ Although it is possible that excavation standards of the 1930s may have overlooked small pieces of jewelry and clothing ac-

²⁰ The field notes for one tile grave (Grave 1933-060) state that the mug was found at the grave's southwest corner; whether this vessel was inside the grave or outside, against its tiles, is not clear (Corinth Notebook 0136, 74). The broken jug, from Grave 1932-036, was not saved.

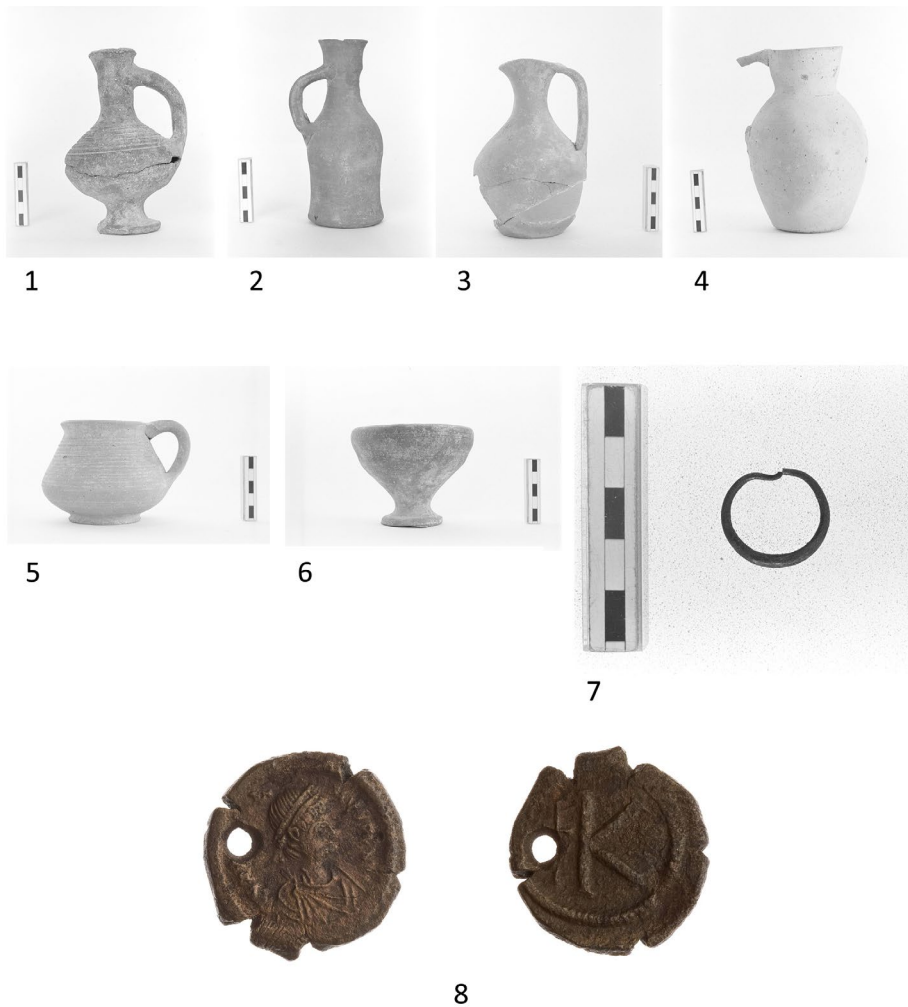


Fig. 8: Selection of objects from burials at rear of Lerna Court Reservoir IV: 8.1–6 lekythoi, pitcher, mug, cup or bowl; 8.7 bronze earring; 8.8 bronze half follis of Anastasius I. (collectively Grave 1933-111).

cessories, their near total absence in the graves here is notable: Bronze earrings were discovered in only two of the court's tile graves, and one bronze earring, in addition to a pierced coin of Anastasius I. which was probably worn on a necklace, were the sole pieces recovered amongst the large number of burials at the rear of Reservoir IV (Fig. 8. Objects 7–8).²¹

21 The coin of Anastasius I. appears to have been pierced in such a way as to bring the cross on its reverse to the top when suspended, presumably for supernatural protection. During the author's study of the ceramics of Reservoir IV within Corinth's museum, a bronze belt buckle in the form of a flattened oval was found to have been placed within one of the saved pots, although a lack of documentation does not permit a secure attribution to these burials.

While the vast majority of tile graves in the court and its reservoirs cannot be directly dated, many of the burial amphorae are of the Gaza type, predominant at Corinth in the late 5th to 6th c. AD,²² and the various lamps occasionally recovered in association with tile graves offer dates not before the late 5th c. at earliest, and in most cases belong fully to the 6th c. AD. Ceramic vessels, deposited with the inhumations at the rear of Reservoir IV and also found in rock-cut tombs, are of widely distributed types of the 6th to early 7th c. AD; a relatively late chronology for at least some of the Reservoir IV inhumations, once thought to be a mass burial resulting from the Justinianic plague, is confirmed by re-dated coins of Justin II. (AD 565–578) retrieved from that space.²³ A displaced epitaph from AD 524 which was discovered in the area of the court and most likely belonged to a rock-cut tomb provides the earliest clear date of mortuary activity in the area, and suggests some degree of parallel development of rock-cut tombs and tile graves in this complex.²⁴

Lamps that can be bracketed within the late 6th to mid-7th c. AD, in addition to pottery of the late 6th to early 7th c. AD, enable the rock-cut tombs on the Asklepieion terrace to be placed alongside the latest inhumations from Reservoir IV and perhaps slightly beyond. The periphery of the Asklepieion's rock surface thus appears to be one of the last spaces used for burial in this area, following after some interval the removal of the temple's blocks. Whether superstitious attitudes toward the former site of the temple caused it to be avoided while burials were made in the court remains a question; it may at least be suggested that the partial exploitation of the terrace that finally takes place represents a common form of cemetery development, beginning at the periphery of an open space, and occurring shortly before the mortuary use of the entire area ceased.²⁵

Finally, trenches dug within the high ground of the Gymnasium, located southwest of Lerna Court and the Asklepieion, revealed dense zones of graves from the cliff edge to a substantial fortification (the 'Epistyle Wall') at south which seems to have been respected as a cemetery boundary and perhaps defined the northern limit of the city in this district when the first graves were laid here.²⁶ These graves display a somewhat different pattern of distribution in comparison to Lerna Court

22 SLANE/SANDERS 2005, 290.

23 SANDERS 2005, 434.

24 KENT 1966, no. 548 = SEG XXXI 288.

25 ROTHHAUS 2000, 52 contends that the burials were made to nullify a threatening presence within the center of the temple area, whereas ROEBUCK 1951, 161 much earlier believed that the temple was avoided out of fear of supernatural forces.

26 Test trenches in the northern area of the Gymnasium (then called the 'Hill of Zeus') which were excavated in 1933 exposed some 50 rock-cut tombs, 17 tile graves, and one infant amphora burial. For the preliminary excavation reports on graves revealed at the Gymnasium from 1965 to 1970 see WISEMAN 1967a; WISEMAN 1967b; WISEMAN 1969; WISEMAN 1972. Still more graves, in what is presumably a continuation of the same burial ground, were uncovered to the west of the Gymnasium in 1896, and were described simply as vaulted tombs containing coarse red pottery (RICHARDSON 1897, 459). For a summary of

and the Asklepieion: Rock-cut chamber tombs with entry shafts and also simpler rock-cut cists, often laid out in rows, and in one case grouped within a large cutting in the rock, constitute a majority of graves alongside small clusters of tile graves and the occasional infant amphora burial (Fig. 4.1–2). The stuccoed mounds above many of the rock-cut tombs are exceptionally well preserved, and lamps unearthed beside the mounds and within them testify to both commemorative ritual and, post-use, the recycling of cemetery debris. Raised “pillows” were at least occasionally carved out of the rock at the west ends of both chamber tombs and cist grave interiors. Although the pottery, primarily lekythoi and pitchers of the 6th to early 7th c. AD, which was recovered from the rock-cut tombs is generally similar to that in the Lerna Court and Asklepieion complex, the modest amount of jewelry and clothing accessories from the Gymnasium graves stands in contrast to the nearly complete absence of these objects at this adjacent site.²⁷

Some 550 m east of the Asklepieion and in the plain, the Kodratos Basilica was built in the 6th c. AD upon an earlier burial ground which may have been believed to hold the remains of the 3rd c. AD martyr Kodratos and his followers; graves were installed within and beside the building including, unusually, the floor of its nave.²⁸ Although most of these cannot be closely dated, the cist graves, lined with fine marble slabs in multiple colors and often possessing built pillows at their west ends, are clearly of Late Antique origin on the basis of their epitaphs, which include such notable individuals as the *lamprotatos* Gratos and also the bishop Eustathios, who lay within an unusually well-appointed tomb incorporating an elaborate pipe installation for libations at its west end. At least some of the graves were altered after their original construction: The letter style of the first line of bishop Eustathios’ epitaph seems unusually early, possessing some characteristics closer to the 4th or 5th than the 6th c. AD; relocation of the bishop’s remains, and an addition to his epitaph, may offer an explanation.²⁹ Libation holes were provided for at least two more graves in the basilica, one an anonymous child’s grave, and the other crudely drilled through the epitaph of a young woman

scholarship on the Epistyle Wall, see BROWN 2018, 156. WISEMAN 1967b, 418 suggests the potential role of this wall as an urban and cemetery boundary.

- 27 In addition to terracotta lamps and some miscellaneous jugs, there are a very small number of mugs, plates, and unguentaria. A single metal vessel was recovered from one rock-cut tomb during the course of the 1933 ‘Hill of Zeus’ excavations in the Gymnasium area, but unfortunately it could not be located within Corinth’s museum storeroom. Improved excavation practices in the 1960s may play some role in the apparently more frequent occurrence of jewelry and clothing accessories within the Gymnasium’s graves.
- 28 For the basilica’s excavation reports: STIKAS 1964; STIKAS 1966. BROWN 2018, 132–133 offers a useful overview of the evidence for a possible dedication of this basilica to St. Kodratos.
- 29 For the dating of the bishop’s epitaph and potential tomb relocation, see SIRONEN 2018, 206 and WALBANK 2010, n. 54. The epitaph was inscribed on two large, coffered ceiling panels which STIKAS 1964 attributed to a nearby mausoleum.

named Paulina, potentially at a significant interval following the inscribing of her tomb marker.³⁰

On the terrace overlooking the Kodratos Basilica, a dense cemetery area, which probably developed in response to the basilica's presence, was primarily uncovered during rescue excavations in the 2000s.³¹ Nearly all of the more than 200 graves are slab-covered, rock-cut cists, a type seen in the Gymnasium area but made more elaborate here through the use of plastered interiors on all tombs except for those furnished even more luxuriously with partial linings of terracotta or marble plaques and tile floors, seemingly emulating highly ornate cists like those installed within the Kodratos Basilica. Pillows built from plaques or simply carved from the natural rock lie at the west end of the vast majority of tombs, nearly all of which received multiple burials. Approximately one third of the tombs contained objects including pitchers, jugs, and lekythoi of the 6th to early 7th c. AD typically deposited as one or two vessels per tomb; a small amount of jewelry and clothing accessories was also recovered from these graves.

Corinth's other cemetery basilica, the 6th c. AD Kraneion Basilica, was constructed some 500 m east of the contracted Late Antique city wall within a neighborhood famous for its burial ground since the classical period.³² Funerary chambers attached to the basilica's outer walls became the setting for numerous built tombs of both cist and vaulted types, many of them revetted with marble slabs or plastered on the interior; the vaults were topped by marble-lined, platform-like projections which rose slightly above floor level and may have received terracotta lamps or provided a surface for commemorative meals.³³ The most conspicuous mortuary space was, however, a triconch room on the basilica's south side which contained a vaulted tomb that was likely used by one of Corinth's elite families.³⁴ North of the basilica's apse, a large vaulted room pre-dating the basilica and containing a brick cist continued to be accessible, receiving an additional cist grave and a grave cut into hardpan.³⁵ At least some of the other funerary chambers similarly remained in use, or were re-used, until at least the late 7th c. AD.³⁶

30 For other examples of Late Antique libation holes, even on Christian epitaphs, see the contribution ARDELEANU in this volume.

31 MELETI 2013, 208 graves were excavated by the Greek archaeological service in the 2000s; in 1964, rescue excavations conducted by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens had revealed a small number of graves directly north of this area.

32 The excavation of the basilica is documented in a series of excavation reports: SHELLEY 1943; PALLAS 1970; PALLAS 1972; PALLAS 1976; PALLAS 1977.

33 PALLAS 1959, 205.

34 SHELLEY 1943, 181 noted that the vaulted tomb in the triconch room "had quite a number of burials," and PALLAS 1990, 783 considered it to be most likely a family tomb.

35 SHELLEY 1943, 176–178.

36 For late 7th c. AD activity, see the Syracuse type belt buckle, iron light striker, and two coins of Constans II. noted in PALLAS 1981.

The densest, and most extensive, known burial ground located within the vicinity of Corinth's Late Antique city wall lies outside the wall's northeast segment, where excavation in multiple areas has exposed numerous cist graves along with a small number of vaulted tombs, tile graves, and infant amphora burials.³⁷ The outlines of many more unexcavated graves are visible at surface level, creating the image of a vast zone packed with burials, likely in response to the presence of an unexcavated *martyrium* or Christian basilica, commonly known as 'Pallas' Basilica', just within the line of the city wall.³⁸ The status of this place as an especially desirable burial location in proximity to a holy site is further supported by the retrieval of gold thread belonging to an ornate burial garment from one grave, and the discovery of an epitaph from the general area stating a tomb's unusually expensive purchase price of two *solidi*.³⁹ Roughly half of the cist graves here produced pottery of the 6th to early 7th c. AD consisting primarily of lekythoi, pitchers, and mugs. Glass vessels and jewelry were noted to be within some tombs, while terracotta lamps were dispersed throughout the area of the cemetery.

Outside the approximate midpoint of the Late Antique city wall's eastern segment, test trenches in the 1930s revealed 22 graves, primarily of the pitched tile type, close to and sometimes abutting the wall's external face.⁴⁰ Although these burials are not directly datable, the terracotta lamps that were frequently found in the earth around the graves, whether objects of mortuary ritual or deposited in the fill preceding the burials, are generally of types dating broadly from the late 5th to 6th c. AD; if the city wall is indeed Justinianic then a slightly later *terminus post quem* of AD 527 for these graves would apply. Of 20 graves with known lengths, 15 possess lengths of 1,3 m or less, indicating a relatively high percentage of child burials which include a few instances of infant burial in amphorae.

Land near ruined structures which probably lay outside the southeast and southwest segments of Corinth's Late Antique wall was at least occasionally used for burial, as evidenced by an infant amphora burial, likely of the late 6th c. AD, inserted within waterworks just beyond the circuit's southeast corner, and the placement of three infant amphora burials of perhaps slightly later date against the external wall of a Late Antique structure at the Panayia Field site.⁴¹ To the north of these last burials,

37 SKARMOUTSOU 2010.

38 For this Christian building see the summary in BROWN 2018, 139.

39 The gold thread: SKARMOUTSOU 2010, 714. The epitaph (SEG XXIX 319) belonging to Polychronios the *singoulios*, was found to the northeast of the *martyrium* or basilica, and to the south of the Amphitheater, and likely originates from a grave somewhere in this area.

40 These burials were first mentioned briefly in GREGORY 1979, 273 in connection to a 6th c. AD coin hoard. Proximity to the Late Antique city wall, and perhaps even to a specific grave, would have provided the hoard with an easily remembered location.

41 The infant burial in a Gaza amphora at the Kakavi Spring was inserted within a cutting in the corner of a vaulted chamber which may have reminded Late Antique Corinthians of a vaulted tomb. That amphora is an advanced version of MAJCHEREK 1995, 168 Form 3, which ends in the late 6th c. AD, and arguably belongs near the end of this form. The Gaza

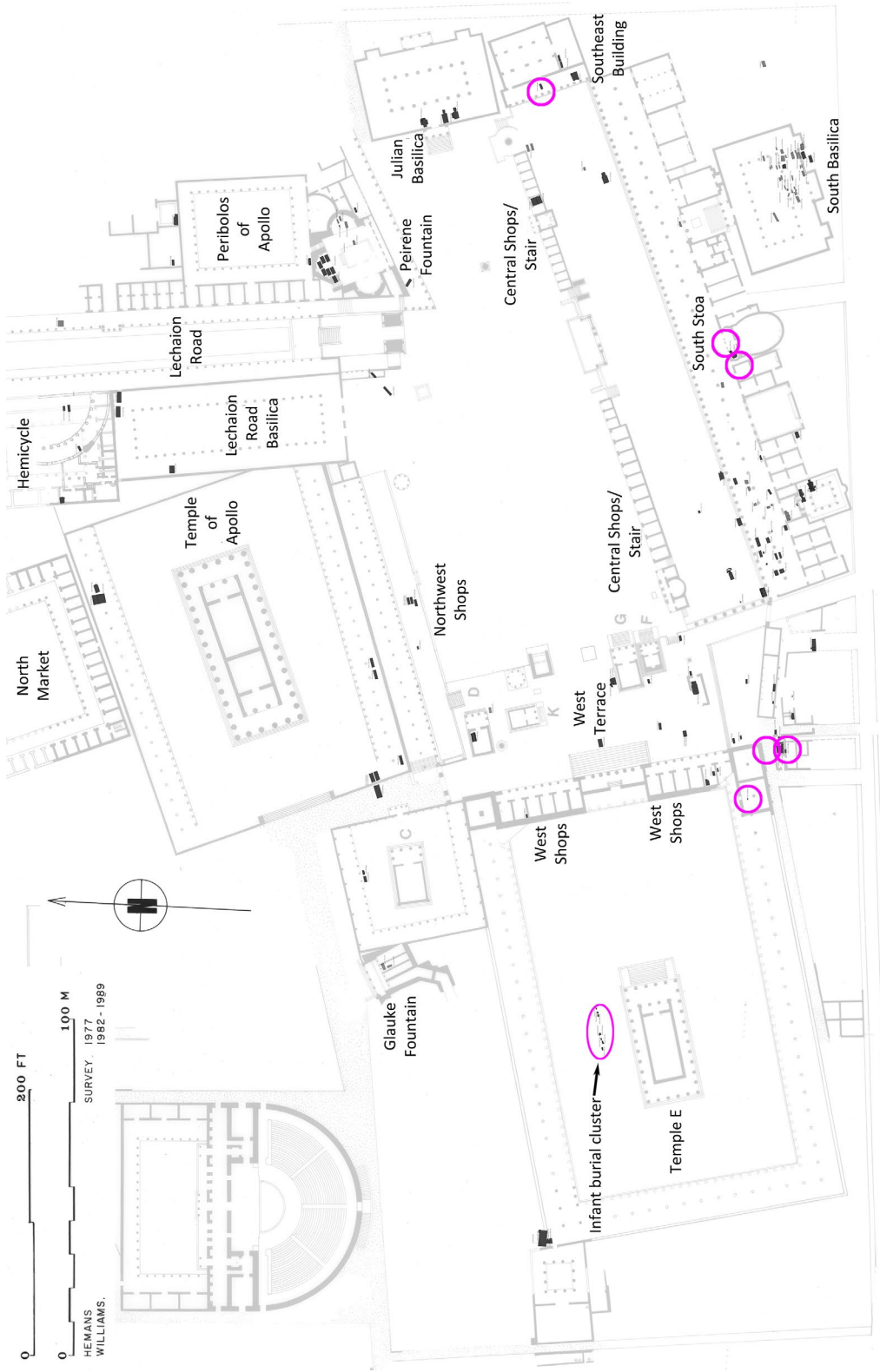


Fig. 9: Plan of the greater Forum area with Late Antique graves. ○ = identifiable late 6th to early 7th C. burial subset.

another amphora burial, two child graves (one a cist and the other an irregular tile grave) containing lekythoi, and an adult tile grave were made at about the same time.

Northwest of Panayia Field, the greater Forum area, which by the 8th c. AD was home to numerous grave clusters along its periphery, appears to have been used only sporadically for burial during the late 6th to early 7th c. AD (Fig. 9). The earliest burials, located immediately west of the Forum on the north side of Temple E, constitute an unusual cluster of infants deposited in five amphorae and three small tile graves; the one saved amphora is of the Gaza type and belongs to the 6th c. AD, probably its latter part.⁴² A similar Gaza amphora burial was excavated at the temple precinct's southeast corner.⁴³

Probably later than these infant burials are five multiple burial tombs scattered along the southern edges of the Forum.⁴⁴ Two tombs, cut into the rock at the center of the South Stoa, resemble the rock-cut chamber tombs with entry shafts in the Asklepieion/Gymnasium area but are far rougher in form and reveal no preserved trace of stuccoed superstructures.⁴⁵ At the Forum's southeast corner a drain was turned into a simple cist grave,⁴⁶ while at the southwest corner a pair of built vaulted tombs was installed; the vaulted tombs possessed platforms or rooms above which generally recall those in the Kraneion Basilica and may likewise have served for the deposition of objects or for commemorative meals.⁴⁷ Assemblages of lekythoi and other vessels (Fig. 10) recovered from most of these graves are similar to those from late 6th to early 7th c. AD burials in the area of the Asklepieion and

amphorae at Panayia Field possess late torpedo-shaped bodies and fall at the intersection of Forms 3 and 4 (MAJCHEREK 1995, 168f.); they likely date to the late 6th to early 7th c. AD. For the Panayia Field burials, see the summary in SANDERS 2005, 428. Although the position of the Late Antique city wall in relation to Panayia Field is not certain, it seems most likely that this site lay outside the wall due to the presence of multiple graves.

42 Amphora C-1938-713 appears to be a relatively advanced version of MAJCHEREK 1995, 168 Form 3. Unfortunately, it is not possible to date the numerous graves cut into Temple E's podium to the south of the infant burial cluster; they could be of Late Antique or much later date.

43 Grave 1990-018. A few additional infant burials were made along the western edges of the Forum, but can be placed only generally within the 7th c. AD.

44 An additional tomb group located in the northeast area of the temenos of the Temple of Apollo was published (ROBINSON 1976, 222) as belonging to the first half of the 7th C. AD based on its perceived contemporary construction with a church on the same site together with a trefoil pitcher and a fragment of an African Red Slip plate found in two of these tombs. However, the church is now believed to be a Frankish construction, the pitcher is unlike any known from Corinthian graves of the late 6th to early 7th c. AD and is likely somewhat later, and it is not certain that the plate fragment is to be associated with the original use of the tomb. It is at least clear that these tombs were installed by the end of the 7th c. AD due to clothing accessories and jewelry found within them.

45 Grave 1936-006, Grave 1948-001.

46 Grave 1915-003.

47 Grave 1974-005, Grave 1974-006. For the excavation reports, see: WILLIAMS/FISHER 1976, 118; WILLIAMS/FISHER 1975, 15.



Fig. 10: Lekythoi and pitcher from Forum area burials (Grave 1915-003, Grave 1974-005, Grave 1936-006).

Lerna Court but lack the imported fine wares present in these and other cemeteries at Corinth; this difference might be based on wealth, but seems more likely to be chronological, potentially placing the Forum vessels and their tombs toward the end of the import of better versions in the early 7th c. AD.

While nearly all known late 5th to early 7th c. AD burials belong to one of the above locations, isolated grave clusters were at least occasionally made within Corinth's suburbs, and larger zones of undated graves which might be assigned to Late Antiquity exist. Standing out in its apparent isolation is a group of three rock-cut cists situated at the edge of a cliff more than 500 m southwest of the Forum at the site of *Anaploga*. A single roughly made pot accompanied the dead in one cist, while above the central grave an epitaph, probably of 6th c. AD date, appears to have marked the tomb group, which may have belonged to a family living in this suburb of Corinth.⁴⁸ Also in this general district, a large number of tile graves was exposed to the west of the Forum, although their chronology is not clear; likewise, undated tile graves were uncovered by floods south of the city center by the fountain of Hadji Mustafa.⁴⁹ Lastly, at Corinth's northern port of *Lechaion*, an enormous Christian basilica seems to have been used by a small number of clergy as evidenced by three well-built cist graves bearing Christian imagery and containing ceramics including a mug from circa AD 600 inscribed with the name of Thomas the *presbyter*.⁵⁰

48 ROBINSON 1962.

49 BOOKIDIS/STROUD 1997, 383, 390.

50 SANDERS 2005, 440. For the excavation reports of the basilica's graves, see PALLAS 1956.

The Topographic Development of Corinth's Late Antique Burial Grounds

The locations of Corinth's Late Antique burial grounds reveal a contraction from the expansive cemetery area located in the plain to the city's north, a process which was accelerated due to the construction of a new, reduced city wall probably in the reign of Justinian. To the extent that these burial areas and Late Antique topography are known, the most heavily used zones occur within the general vicinity of Christian basilicas and other holy sites, suggesting a widespread trend toward *ad sanctos* burial, and burial in connection to sacred locations more broadly, which develops over the course of the 6th c. AD, while largely keeping intact the tradition of burying on land to the north of the city until the abandonment of these northern areas after the early 7th c. AD.

The clearest evidence for 5th c. AD mortuary activity at Corinth's northern periphery is found in Early Roman chamber tombs located in the plain at the southern edge of the city's northern cemetery, a practice which reappears, after a break in use, during the 6th c. AD; Roman chamber tombs were similarly reemployed in the 5th to 6th c. AD at the nearby port of *Kenchreai* after a marked hiatus.⁵¹ The 6th c. AD construction of the Kodratos Basilica, likewise positioned in the plain below Corinth's northern terrace and on the site of a pre-existing burial area which may have been thought to hold the namesake martyr's tomb, brought increased mortuary prestige to this area, and, in addition to the graves located within the basilica's immediate vicinity, surely attracted the many rock-cut cists on the terrace overlooking the building, and perhaps also leading to 6th c. AD burials at the site of an Early Roman chamber tomb slightly farther east.⁵² The Late Antique cult site known as the Fountain of the Lamps may have played a similar role in drawing burials to the Asklepieion/Gymnasium area.⁵³ Other known burial grounds include the 6th C. AD Kraneion Basilica to the east of the city in a longstanding cemetery district, and to the south, scattered late 4th to 6th c. AD graves on the north slope of Acrocorinth. While these last two areas, although not far from the urban center, presumably lay beyond Corinth's *pomerium*, the relationship between that boundary and the 6th to early 7th c. AD graves in the Asklepieion/Gymnasium area and the similarly dated graves above the Kodratos Basilica remains a question; in any case, the apparent use of the 'Epistyle Wall' as a southern boundary for the

51 For the chamber tombs at *Kenchreai*, see RIFE et al. 2007, 174.

52 For late activity at the chamber tomb, see SLANE 2017, 15 "Chamber Tomb with Sarcophagi".

53 On the Fountain of the Lamps, see WISEMAN 1972, 9–42. JORDAN 1994 provides corrected readings of the lamp inscriptions, while a syncretic interpretation of the cult is offered by ROTHHAUS 2000 126–124 and followed, with additional points of comparison, by CLINE 2011 118–125.

Asklepieion/Gymnasium burials suggests that by the early 6th c. AD, this area was considered to lie outside the city.

The contracted Late Antique city wall's construction brought mortuary areas even closer to the community of the living as, on a very uneven basis, burials were made on the land beyond it, and in some cases directly against its external face. The graves excavated on the east side of the Late Antique city wall and to its west, including the Forum, consist of small scattered clusters, some of them belonging primarily or exclusively to infants, and a few isolated tombs. In marked contrast, the densely packed zone of built tombs to the northeast of the wall is probably to be attributed to the presence of a Christian holy site ('Pallas' Basilica') near the wall's opposite face. The location of this cemetery, which extends northward almost to the terrace edge, additionally recalls the siting of the other large 6th to early 7th c. AD burial zones near the Kodratos Basilica and in the Asklepieion/Gymnasium area on the terraces to its north, and might also be considered to continue the tradition of mortuary activity in the northern district of Corinth. The evolution of cemetery topography is therefore not a straightforward case of a transition to a new urban boundary in the form of the Late Antique city wall, but relies in part upon the availability of land in the Forum and nearby areas that had become abandoned over the course of the 6th c. AD, and is particularly influenced by long term trends in cemetery location in addition to the emerging landscape of Christian landmarks. Our relatively limited knowledge of the use of land beyond these areas must also be acknowledged: If the tile graves exposed at some distance west and south of the Late Antique city wall belong to this period, then we may imagine a broader exploitation of land outside the city and less of a focus on the immediate periphery of the wall.

A somewhat similar situation is apparent at other cities, including Athens, where the nearer areas of some of the old extramural cemeteries which lay beyond its greater city wall (renewed under Justinian) continued to function into the 7th c. AD in addition to three extramural basilicas with corresponding cemeteries.⁵⁴ On the other hand, 4th to 6th c. AD burial grounds, in most cases associated with churches, developed within Athens' contracted post-Herulian wall but not on nearby land outside it; these settings are nonetheless still peripheral and avoid encroaching on the Roman Agora, which also lay within the post-Herulian circuit.⁵⁵ Liminality, preceding traditions of cemetery siting, and proximity to holy sites thus

54 TZAVELLA 2008. *Argos* reveals variations on these trends: Its extramural north cemetery, the primary mortuary zone of the late 5th to early 7th c. AD, appears to have been a new development following the abandonment of Roman cemeteries located elsewhere; additional graves which may be of Late Antique date lie within the city wall near a baptistery and multiple churches (METAXAS 2015, 380).

55 Although a similar burial distribution within the largely unexcavated zone which lay within Corinth's Late Antique city wall cannot be completely ruled out, the mortuary use of land directly outside that wall suggests that until at least the beginning of the 7th c. AD it was respected as a mortuary boundary

all seem to be significant factors in the topographic development of Late Antique cemeteries at Athens, Corinth, and elsewhere.

Trends in burial location based on social class, age, and religion are apparent to some degree within Corinth's cemeteries, although with the exception of Christian basilicas some degree of mixing amongst groups is likely. Basilicas, and probably land close to them, were employed by the Christian elite and upper class and include the Kodratos Basilica, the Kraneion Basilica, and perhaps the cemetery zone northeast of the Late Antique city wall. In contrast, the large burial zone of the Asklepieion/Gymnasium area was clearly used by the middle class on the basis of professions stated within its epitaphs, and may have included poorer residents as well due to the large number of tile graves in Lerna Court. The age of the dead may also have been a factor for those burying in Lerna Court considering the relatively high percentage of infants and children that seem to be present, a phenomenon further visible in the more scattered burials, primarily tile graves and amphorae, located outside the remainder of the line of the city wall, and suggestive of differential treatment and even exclusion from larger cemeteries due to age, social status, and potentially other factors.⁵⁶ The especially late built and rock-cut tombs of the Forum are clearly not, however, the graves of children or of the poor, but may instead reflect the long term trend of putting abandoned zones to use as burial sites together with a growing recognition of space just beyond the wall as suitable for mortuary development, continuing a process which had already begun at the zone northeast of the Late Antique wall and which also included the more humble burials scattered elsewhere along the wall's circuit. Lastly, aside from burials associated with Christian basilicas, the identification of religious identity for specific graves and larger cemetery zones is problematic: While signs of a Christian identity, or at least an inclination toward Christianity, are apparent in some deposited lamps, on epitaphs, and in rare incised or painted symbols on tombs, most graves are ambiguous as to the religious identity of those buried within, and the lack of positive evidence for the last Polytheists, Jews, and others should not lead us to assume that such burial grounds were fully 'Christian' cemeteries.⁵⁷ For the Asklepieion/Gymnasium area in particular, the practice of a Late Antique cult bearing syncretic aspects until

56 The consequence of this kind of differential treatment, an underrepresentation of infants and children within main cemetery areas, was identified by WESOŁOWSKY 1973, 345–347 for the Gymnasium's graves; see also KENNEDY 2016, 162–163.

57 The area of the Asklepieion/Gymnasium in particular has long been referred to as a 'Christian' cemetery; see, for example, WISEMAN 1969, 84 fn. 36. The use of Christian symbols on or within tomb structures from this era is extremely rare at Corinth, consisting of, in addition to staurograms painted within an Early Roman tomb (PALLAS 1975, fig. 14.), crosses and vegetal imagery painted on the interior of a cist grave at the Lechaion Basilica (PALLAS 1956, Pin. 73b), and in the Gymnasium area a cross and additional designs or letters painted within a rock-cut tomb's entry shaft (WISEMAN 1972, 8), an unpublished cross incised in the rock of another, and, finally, crosses incised on the stuccoed rubble mounds topping two rock-cut tombs (WISEMAN 1967b, 419 Fig. 7; WISEMAN 1969, 85).

at least the late 6th c. AD directly below this cemetery area at the Fountain of the Lamps raises the possibility that at least some individuals buried here held beliefs far outside orthodoxy and may not have considered themselves Christian at all.

Tomb Types

A wide range of tomb types was used by Late Antique Corinthians, from pitched tile graves and infant amphora burials to cist graves and vaulted tombs occurring in both built and rock-cut versions. Tile graves and cist graves both follow local Roman precedents, while vaulted tombs are a development of the 6th to early 7th c. AD.

Tile graves, in addition to amphora burials, are the simplest burial structures and typically accommodated a single individual (Fig. 5).⁵⁸ The most common version of this type at Corinth consists of two pitched Laconian roof tiles over the body, topped by cover tiles at the ridge and closed at the ends by tiles laid upright; minor variations include an absence of cover tiles and, apparently more rarely, a lack of end tiles, leaving the grave open at one or both ends or using stones instead to block off the grave at foot and head.

A widely occurring tomb type, tile graves exist in the province of *Achaëa* at sites large and small, but at major urban centers, where they also tend to represent a minority of buried individuals, they rarely contain pottery and may possess lower quality jewelry and clothing accessories than are present in other tomb types.⁵⁹ Their relative ease of construction and poverty of finds suggest that at Corinth and some other sites they were used to a large degree by the lower class, although they would also have been convenient structures more generally for anyone who needed to bury and lacked access to a multiple burial tomb.

Infant amphora burials, enabled by the breakage and removal of one end of the amphora and the insertion of the infant within the vessel, tend to occur in isolation or within areas of tile graves at Corinth (Fig. 5). Gaza amphorae appear to be used most frequently. Although amphora burials are a common tomb type, the many small tile graves that exist in Lerna Court and elsewhere, and the documented pres-

⁵⁸ For tile graves in the eastern Peloponnese generally, see RIFE 2012, 175–6.

⁵⁹ At *Argos*, considering the potential for multiple burial within cist graves, those buried in tile graves may be just as likely to wear jewelry and clothing accessories as those buried in cists; however, the items within tile graves are of lower quality, and pottery is completely absent (METAXAS 2015, 406). A similar pattern exists at Corinth at least in regard to the general lack of ceramics in tile graves, although the current state of publication does not permit a close comparison of jewelry and clothing accessories. At the cemetery belonging to *Olympia's* small Late Antique settlement, taking into account multiple burial within that site's many stone-lined cist graves, not only is an individual probably just as likely to be buried with jewelry and clothing accessories in a tile grave as in a cist grave, but there is also not a marked distinction in the quality of objects at what was surely a far less stratified society than at *Argos* or Corinth (VÖLLING/RETTNER 2018, 55–56 Tab. 2, 64).

ence of infants in a minority of rock-cut cists and vaulted tombs, suggest that most infants were provided burial in formats other than amphorae. Beyond Corinth, amphorae seem to be employed as burial containers no more frequently, and in small communities in particular they may not have been used at all.⁶⁰

Of excavated graves of the late 5th to early 7th c. AD, cists are the most common type at Corinth, and especially in consideration of the typical use of cists for multiple burials, they most likely housed the remains of more Corinthians than any other. Cists offered a range of possibilities in accordance with desired cost and personal preference, including slab-covered rock-cut versions with multiple lining options, fully built rubble masonry tombs, and tombs with walls of brick masonry and marble revetment. The finest versions of this tomb type were clearly used by leading members of society: While potentially including some relocated graves, the cists incorporating epitaphs at floor level within the Kodratos Basilica would have been a particularly memorable sight.⁶¹ For built cist tombs, a difference in quality of construction is apparent between Corinth and larger cities, in which a wide spectrum exists, and most smaller communities, which rely more heavily on spolia and fieldstones and may lack the upper tier of brick-built graves.⁶²

Although vaults do occur in some of Corinth's Early Roman tombs, these sepulchers are different in form and size from the smaller Late Antique vaulted chamber tombs, which emerge at Corinth during the 6th c. AD and follow a line of development already evident in *Thessaloniki* and other cities in Northern Greece and the Balkans broadly since at least as early as the 4th c. AD.⁶³ Well-documented 6th to

60 Amphora burials are rarely well published. At *Argos'* expansive north cemetery, in addition to the 400 tile and cist graves there were at least a few scattered amphorae (METAXAS 2015, 381), and in the east cemetery three amphora burials of the 4th to 5th c. AD century were made in the antechamber of a funerary complex (OIKONOMOU-LANIADO 2003, 31). The graves at *Isthmia's* fortress did not include any amphorae at all (RIFE 2012, 180), while a few examples of alternate containers exist at other sites such as a pithos at *Olympia* (VÖLLING/RETTNER 2018, 81 no. 175) and two beehives at *Delion* (XAMELAKE 2009, 1175). Lower availability of amphorae outside large cities may contribute to their limited repurposing, or lack of use altogether, as burial vessels at smaller sites, although differing attitudes regarding the level of formality of infant burial should not be discounted as an additional factor.

61 As RIFE 2012, 111 notes, the bishop Eustathios' cist (unlike the others) incorporates a layer of fill between the inscribed cover at surface level and a secondary secondary cover which tops the actual built tomb chamber below the fill, and is actually a special compartmentalized form of tomb known in simpler versions elsewhere in the *Corinthia*.

62 See the observations by RIFE 2012, 175 on the difference in quality between *Isthmia's* cist graves and those at Corinth. The scarcity of well-built cist graves at smaller, relatively isolated sites is especially pronounced at *Olympia's* 5th to early 7th c. AD cemetery, where, in addition to 166 cists made in a simple manner from large spolia blocks, only one tomb was constructed using brick masonry (VÖLLING/RETTNER 2018, 54).

63 For *Thessaloniki's* Late Antique cemeteries, which possess numerous vaulted tombs, see MARKE 2006; for vaulted Late Antique tombs from the Balkan region, see the contribution VALEVA in this volume.

early 7th c. AD vaulted tombs in Athens and a few smaller sites demonstrate that this tomb type, incorporating a rectangular subterranean chamber accessed by an entry shaft, appears in significant numbers at a relatively late date in *Achaea*; it seems to have become, along with the most elegant cist graves, a preferred form of mortuary architecture at the limited number of sites where it appears.⁶⁴ The high status of built vaulted tombs at Corinth is made clear through their presence at both of Corinth's cemetery basilicas, although these examples cannot be closely dated, in addition to the dense burial ground northeast of the Late Antique city wall and relatively late examples dating to circa 600 AD and beyond at the Forum. Corinth's rock-cut versions of vaulted tombs (Fig. 4.1–2), topped by vault-like mounds of stuccoed rubble, first appear in the Asklepieion/Gymnasium area in the 6th c. AD and are used until the early 7th c. AD if not slightly later; based on the epigraphic evidence for the middle-class occupations of those burying in them, the earliest rock-cut tombs might be regarded as ambitious emulations of the finer, built type known from other sites if not already Corinth itself. These rock-cut versions are unusual within the mortuary landscape of *Achaea*, but do find general points of comparison in nearby *Kenchreai* and *Isthmia*, which were surely following Corinth's example.⁶⁵ In addition to the visible superstructures of vaults, which may have conveyed a sense of prestige within the mortuary landscape, their function as settings for epitaphs and even platforms for deposited objects would have made this tomb type especially desirable.⁶⁶

Although topography and geology did impact the conduciveness of a site for the use of a particular tomb type, most noticeably in the placement of rock-cut tombs within the expansive zones above the plain where rock lay close to the surface, the deciding factor in choosing a type of tomb for burial seems overall to have been an economic one. In terms of material cost (and labor cost, if any) tile graves and amphorae must have been relatively cheap in comparison to the typical price of one and a half *solidi* for both built and rock-cut cist and vaulted tombs. That this was not a simple difference in preference is implied by the provision of vault-like stuc-

64 For the best documented vaulted tomb in Athens, see THREPSIADES 1971. *Delion* offers an example of vaulted tombs built at a smaller site; see XAMELAKE 2009, 1172. Beyond Corinth, this tomb type seems to be extremely rare within the Peloponnese; *Argos* has yielded only a single vaulted tomb of potential Late Antique date (OIKONOMOU-LANIADO 2003, 33).

65 RIFE et al. 2007, 154 provides an example of a rock-cut tomb with entry shaft, but lacking any surviving superstructure, at *Kenchreai*. Although essentially cist graves, two rock-cut tombs at *Isthmia* were topped by stuccoed mounds; see RIFE 2012, fig. 2.26, 2.30.

66 WISEMAN 1972, 8 suggests such a platform function for the west end of a mound above a grave in the Gymnasium area; the notebook sketch (Corinth Notebook 0122, 80) of a grave (Grave 1931-031) cut into the Asklepieion terrace appears to reveal a similar feature. Parallels within built tombs might be seen in the ornate superstructures above the vaulted tombs of the Kraneion Basilica, and the room-like space built above the pair of vaulted tombs in the southwest corner of the Forum. For potential comparanda at *Isthmia*, see two stuccoed superstructures, one incised with a cross at its raised west end: RIFE 2012, 47–54.

coed rubble mounds at surface level above at least some tile graves in emulation of those above rock-cut vaulted tombs; presumably, at least some burying in tile graves would have preferred more substantial tombs with vaults. Probably even more important than the presence of a vault or any perceived structural superiority for vaulted tombs and cists, however, was the potential for multiple burial that these tomb types allowed, and which lead to such heavy use of cists during this period: Since at least the beginning of the 5th c. AD the deposition of multiple individuals within a single tomb was a common practice, and cists along with the more structurally complex vaulted tombs, through their provision of burial chambers accessible through the removal of cover slabs or, for the latter tomb type, reached by a vertical shaft, enabled members of family groups to bury together, and be commemorated together, in a way that graves containing single occupants could not reliably allow.⁶⁷

Objects from Late Antique Funerary Contexts

Objects associated with Corinth's Late Antique burials consist primarily of pottery deposited within the grave, lamps placed within the grave pit or at surface level, and, only occasionally, jewelry and clothing accessories. Pottery seems to have been deposited in slightly less than half of cists and vaulted tombs overall, but almost never in tile graves. Ceramic assemblages of the late 5th c. AD and beyond continue the 4th to 5th c. AD tradition of a single pitcher or mug in association with a burial, adding as an alternative vessel the Late Antique lekythos, which appears in the 6th c. AD and likely continues until at least the early 7th c. AD (Fig. 7, 8.1–6, 10).⁶⁸ Lekythoi, in cylindrical, piriform, and spherical varieties, become the most common mortuary ceramic vessel at Corinth, constituting well over half of all pottery recovered from the Lerna Court/Asklepieion area and slightly less than half of all pottery from burial zones at the Gymnasium area (1933 'Hill of Zeus' excavations) and outside the Late Antique city wall's northeast segment. Pitchers occur at a somewhat lower frequency, while mugs and other vessel types are only occasionally deposited.

Corinth's mortuary ceramics, although in most cases belonging to broadly distributed types, find their best points of comparison in pottery from the cemeteries of

67 On the phenomenon of multiple burial, see SLANE 2017, 224, 239–240. It remains a question as to whether multiple burial develops under Christian influence, or if it should be regarded more generally as an evolving form of Roman practice. Groups of burials, some of which may represent families, are also identifiable within areas of tile graves and amphora burials including Lerna Court. It seems unlikely, however, that family members would have been consistently buried in close proximity to one another if a long interval existed between their deaths, a problem overcome by multiple burial cists and vaulted tombs.

68 SLANE 2017, 233.

Athens, *Delion* (Boeotia), and especially *Argos* in addition to late 6th to early 7th c. AD vessels retrieved from Andritsa Cave (Argolid) and 6th to 7th c. AD pottery excavated at *Delphi*.⁶⁹ As at Corinth, both the 6th to 7th c. AD cemeteries of *Argos* and a small number of well-published late 6th c. AD graves from Athens reveal high percentages of lekythoi.⁷⁰ Starting circa 600 AD, however, the Athenian evidence suggests that the percentage of lekythoi drops precipitously in favor of pitchers, a widespread phenomenon which may occur slightly later at Corinth.⁷¹ At *Delion*, the low percentage of lekythoi in 6th to early 7th c. AD graves along with the absence of cylindrical lekythoi further suggests regional differences in the use of these vessels.⁷²

The graveside anointing of the body with wine and water, a practice occurring in Antiquity and also contemporary Greek tradition, may explain the presence of the pitchers, lekythoi, and mugs, which to some extent could have been used interchangeably. However, mugs appear in such low numbers at Corinth and other sites, and are nearly non-existent in Athenian graves of the late 6th to early 7th c. AD, that a different role may be suggested for these vessels. The holding of 'kalyva', consumed by mourners at the funeral,⁷³ is one possibility, and may have led to a less frequent deposition of mugs in graves than vessels which came into closer contact with the dead; the plates and bowls recovered only rarely from graves are likewise to be associated with funerary or commemorative meals.⁷⁴ For graves lack-

69 *Argos*: OIKONOMOU-LANIADO 2003, 27 (Panagopoulou property), 28 (Kouya property), 29 (Pilioukou property). Athens: TZAVELLA 2010. *Delion*: XAMELAKE 2010. Andritsa Cave: KORMAZOPOULOU/XATZELAZAROU 2010; *Delphi*: PETRIDIS 2007, fig. 1, 6. On Corinth's Late Antique ceramic trade networks, see HAMMOND 2018.

70 For the subset of Athenian late 6th c. AD graves, see TZAVELLA 2010, 653 (Kynosarges cemetery: Kallirrois Street 5, graves I, II; Vourvachi Street 21, grave XII), 654 (Kerameikos cemetery: Plataion Street 30–32, grave I).

71 Athenian graves from circa 600 AD and the early 7th c. AD: TZAVELLA 2010, 653 (Kynosarges cemetery, Kokkini Street 4–6, graves I, IV, V, VI), 653 (South Gate cemetery: Zacharitsa Street 38, graves II, III). In addition, Grave IV at Kerameikou Street 93 is dated to the late 6th c. AD or circa 600 AD and contains only three lekythoi out of 10 vessels. The transition to assemblages consisting of primarily pitchers and similar jugs cannot be closely dated at Corinth. The likely continuation of Corinth's lekythoi into the early 7th c. AD based on accompanying pottery which is produced into the 7th c. AD, and the absence of lekythoi in graves of the Forum area which possess ridged pitchers of clear 7th c. AD date, suggest that at Corinth this change in practice might occur around that century's midpoint.

72 XAMELAKE 2010. Recent excavations at Thebes' Ismenion Hill should provide an improved perspective on vessel deposition in Boeotian graves; for illustrated preliminary reports see: BOURAS 2013; BOURAS 2014.

73 SANDERS 2005, 436

74 Plates and bowls, and perhaps also mugs, might in some cases have been used to contain aromatics (for potential evidence of the early 5th c. AD and before, see SLANE 2017, 232). While the low numbers of these vessels suggest that this was not a common practice in the late 5th c. AD and beyond, less expensive woven baskets and other containers which would not normally survive in the archaeological record might also have been used. On

ing pottery of any kind, a similar funerary tradition of anointing the dead may still have been followed, but concluded with the breaking of vessels outside the grave rather than their deposition within the tomb.⁷⁵ The number of vessels retrieved from multiple burial tombs further complicates the picture of vessel use because it tends to be approximately equal to the number of dead, or to consist of only one or two vessels in comparison to the three or four individuals typically buried;⁷⁶ the practice of both internal and external ceramic deposition for the dead within a tomb, and the re-use of pottery already within the tomb, are both possible explanations for this discrepancy. Lastly, although cooking pots, plates, bowls, and other items which may have been employed within funerary or commemorative meals are rarely found within Corinth's Late Antique cemeteries, the discovery of three pits full of dining ceramics, lamps, and other material beside the graves in a 6th c. AD cemetery at *Argos* suggests that these kinds of objects may have been left behind at surface level, and eventually collected and buried, within a cemetery or at its fringes.⁷⁷ Lastly, fragile glass unguentaria, bearing scented oil, were also occasionally deposited within tombs, probably at least slightly more frequently than the few recovered examples suggest.⁷⁸

Terracotta lamps, lit at the funeral or within the context of later commemoration, are abundant in cemeteries, but are such easily displaced objects that they are only occasionally recovered *in situ*. The best examples include lamps beside the stuccoed mounds of rock-cut chamber tombs on the Asklepion terrace and in the Gymnasium area, at what was presumably surface level near tile graves in the protected space of Lerna Court's reservoirs, on the cover of a cist grave within an Early Roman chamber tomb, and within the cuttings dug for tile graves in Lerna Court in close proximity to the tile covers (Fig. 6).⁷⁹ Both main types of placement, at sur-

the practices of commemorative meals and their material evidence see also the contributions ARDELEANU, BIANCHI, MERTEN, PRIEN and VALEVA in this volume.

75 The Gymnasium excavations present valuable evidence for deposition outside the grave, including a jug found shattered at surface level (WISEMAN 1969, 84, n. 36), and the re-use of a lekythos and lamps as part of the fill within the stuccoed mounds that covered a rock-cut tomb (WISEMAN 1969, 83). At *Isthmia*, a cooking pot smashed outside a late 6th to early 7th c. AD grave must have played some role within funerary ritual or commemoration (RIFE 2012, 196).

76 WESOLOWSKY 1973, 348 found a median number of between three and four individuals per tomb in his study of the skeletal remains from the Gymnasium area.

77 OIKONOMOU-LANIADO 2003, 31f.

78 The few excavated examples of glass unguentaria include one from a child's grave at the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore (BOOKIDIS/STROUD 1997 385 no. 17), three vessels from a re-used Roman chamber tomb (SLANE 2017, 204), another three from the cemetery above the Kodratos Basilica (MELETI 2013, 164), and a vessel from the graves at the northeast segment of Corinth's Late Antique city wall (SKARMOUTSOU 2010, 714, 738 Eik. 2); additional glass fragments from the last site indicate the presence of at least a few more vessels.

79 The Gymnasium area: WISEMAN 1972, 8; WISEMAN 1969, 82. The cist grave of Maria within an Early Roman tomb: WALBANK/WALBANK 2006.

face or on a grave's tile or cover slab, follow practices of the 4th c. AD and earlier.⁸⁰ For the few cases in which a specific location is mentioned, the western end of the grave seems to be the preferred place of lamp deposition. This directional emphasis, above the head of the deceased, may be at least occasionally embodied within tomb architecture at Corinth and also *Isthmia* through the provision of flattened western ends of stuccoed mounds, which could have served as platforms for lamps and other objects. Following more general trends of lamp use, Athenian lamps, and Corinthian versions of them (Fig. 6. Objects 1–2), are the most common type deposited in connection with graves of the late 5th c. AD and extend well into the following century, while copies of North African lamps (Fig. 6. Objects 4–5), popular in the 6th c. AD, are deposited until at least the end of that century and likely into the early 7th c. AD.⁸¹ A circular lamp (Fig. 6. Object 6) provides an especially late date, potentially into the early or even middle 7th c. AD, for one of the last graves to receive this kind of object at Corinth.⁸²

Jewelry and clothing accessories, including bronze earrings, bronze and iron finger rings, glass and stone beads, bronze belt buckles, and bronze pins and ear spoons, appear only occasionally in late 5th to early 7th c. AD graves at Corinth, and when documented elsewhere similarly occur in low numbers (Fig. 8.7–8).⁸³ When worn by the dead, these objects would likely have been partly visible, catching the gaze of mourners, due to the exposure of the deceased's face during the funeral as occurs in modern Greek tradition.⁸⁴ While cist graves and vaulted tombs are more likely to possess jewelry and clothing accessories than are tile graves, in which they are extremely rare, the presence of multiple burials within built and rock-cut tombs renders the rate of occurrence of these objects per individual low within even these sometimes elaborate graves. The provision of jewelry and cloth-

80 SLANE 2017, 231f.

81 For a chronological overview of Late Antique lamps at Corinth, see SLANE/SANDERS 2005, 282–283. KARIVIERI 1996, 59 addresses the continuation of the Athenian lamp industry into the 7th c. AD at a diminished level.

82 On circular lamps: WOHL 2015. Circular lamps and late versions of North African lamps are now placed in the late 6th to early 7th c. AD at *Delphi* (PETRIDIS 2012, 21 Fig. 14–16).

83 Excavations in the Gymnasium area produced the majority of published jewelry and clothing accessories from Corinth's cemeteries; see WISEMAN 1967b, 418, 420, pl. 88, 91, WISEMAN 1969, 79f., 83, pl. 25, WISEMAN 1972, 8. Although these classes of objects are rarely well documented, they do seem to occur broadly at low levels; at *Argos'* North Cemetery, they were recovered from only 39 of 400 graves (10%), while additional small finds unattributed to specific tombs may raise the percentage at that site to circa 15% (METAXAS 2015, 382), at *Olympia* from 75 of 337 documented graves (22%) (VÖLLING/RETTNER 2018, 54), and at *Delion* from 10 of 48 graves (21%) (XAMELAKE 2009).

84 DANFORTH 1982 provides an excellent, vividly photographed case study of modern Greek traditions related to death and burial. In addition to the face, the hands of the deceased are sometimes exposed in modern practice. It seems likely that the face was also left uncovered in burials of the Roman period at Corinth (SLANE 2017, 229).

ing accessories to only a small minority of burials continues the low levels of deposition occurring in the 4th to 5th c. AD and earlier, although the types of items worn by the dead change over time: Belt buckles, pins, and ear spoons, known in graves of the late 5th to early 7th c. AD, are absent in earlier burials; their presence in later graves may relate both to changes in fashion and preparation of the body.⁸⁵ For burials in otherwise well-constructed tombs, the absence of jewelry thus bears no clear relation to the relative wealth of the deceased: In most cases these items, especially pieces of high material or sentimental value, would have been inherited by family members.⁸⁶

Epitaphs

Corinth boasts the largest number of Late Antique epitaphs of any site in Greece, although they are also the most fragmentary.⁸⁷ The uncovering of the vast majority during early excavations in the Asklepieion, Lerna Court, and Forum areas permitted their inclusion within the catalog of two mid-20th c. volumes dedicated to Corinth's inscriptions; subsequent studies, and especially Sironen's recent corpus of material from the 4th to 6th c. AD, provide corrected readings, incorporate a modest number of epitaphs unearthed after 1950, and shed new light on this body of evidence as a whole.⁸⁸

Inscribed on rectangular marble plaques, epitaphs are almost never found *in situ*.⁸⁹ Rare examples that may be securely associated with specific tombs include

85 SLANE 2017, 212–215, 229. Belt buckles of the 6th c. AD and beyond clearly indicate that clothing was at least sometimes worn under any burial wrapping, while in earlier centuries it seems that only a shroud enclosed the body.

86 Such an inheritance was received by Gregory of Nyssa upon the death of his sister Macrina: Greg. Nyss. vit. Macr. 30, 8–21.

87 SIRONEN 2018, 201.

88 For a helpful overview of the publication of Corinth's Late Antique inscriptions, see MILLIS 2017. The inscriptions excavated through 1950 were published in MERITT 1931 and KENT 1966. In their study of Byzantine inscriptions from across the Peloponnese, FEISSEL/PHILIPPIDIS-BRAAT 1985 offer a number of corrections and comments on Corinth's epitaphs, including those revealed in the 1960s and 1970s at the Kodratos Basilica, the Kraneion Basilica, and in the Gymnasium area. Sironen analyzed Corinth's epitaphs within an appendix of his dissertation (SIRONEN 1997b) on Late Antique Attic inscriptions, reworking this section as a conference paper (SIRONEN 1997a), before finally returning to this material in IG IV² 3, the main findings of which are summarized in SIRONEN 2018. WALBANK 2010 considers the names and professions inscribed on the epitaphs, and provides a helpful overview of the state of the epitaphs and their publication history. For dating criteria of Corinthian epitaphs, see SANDERS 2005, 434; WALBANK/WALBANK 2006, 285.

89 Aside from marble plaques, an exceptional rectangular tile (KENT 1966, no. 553) bearing a short inscription was retrieved from the area east of the Asklepieion.

the epitaph for Maria set into the west end of a cist grave's cover in an Early Roman chamber tomb, a pair of epitaphs, one of them apparently still attached to the remains of a stuccoed mound, belonging to two rock-cut tombs at the Asklepieion, and the epitaphs forming part of the covers of cist graves within the Kodratos Basilica, although at least some of these last tombs were subject to modification following their initial construction.⁹⁰ Many additional epitaphs, including the well-preserved marker of a tomb bought by Eusebios the Anatolian, a seller of shoes and buyer of secondhand clothes, from Leonidios the stucco renderer (Fig. 11), were uncovered on the Asklepieion terrace near rock-cut tombs, scattered throughout Lerna Court, and uncovered within post-antique contexts in the Forum; the presence of multiple tombs within their vicinities does not permit a secure association with any specific grave.⁹¹ An exceptional case is the inscription bearing the name of Tasios the *presbyter*, which was carved into the face of bedrock beside a cutting packed with chamber tombs in the Gymnasium and presumably associated with the grave nearest it.⁹² Based on this limited evidence, and additionally the nearly exact correspondence between the number of rock-cut graves in the Asklepieion and Lerna Court area and the number of epitaphs recovered there, it seems that while epitaphs were frequently provided to built and rock-cut tombs, tile graves did not usually receive them.

As Sironen's analysis of the epitaphic *formulae* demonstrates, the texts at Corinth are lengthier than those anywhere else in Greece.⁹³ The most frequently used word for the tomb, as at most Greek sites, is *κοιμητήριο*, while inclusion of the profession of the tomb's owner, and the date of death of the owner or another named individual, are particularly Corinthian epigraphic features. Although a spouse is sometimes named as an occupant of the tomb, the identification of chil-

90 Epitaph of Maria: WALBANK/WALBANK 2006; epitaphs associated with a pair of tombs at the Asklepieion: KENT 1966 no. 531, 552; Kodratos Basilica epitaphs: STIKAS 1964; STIKAS 1966. A small amount of ambiguity remains for the two epitaphs from the Asklepieion: One (no. 531) was discovered intact on the north side of the southern tomb, built into what the excavator described as a loose cement floor (Corinth Notebook 0122, 77) at a level of 0,6 m above the rock surface; this feature is likely a poorly preserved rubble mound above the northern tomb, which was otherwise not documented. The southern tomb possessed a mound but lacked an *in situ*-tombstone, which is probably to be found in the broken tombstone (no. 552) discovered near the intact one, and which may have slipped a short distance from its original position on one tomb's mound to the other.

91 For the epitaph of the tomb owned by Eusebios, which was the burial site of an individual named Noumenis, see WALBANK 2010, 285 n. 100, although WALBANK, following KENT 1966, no. 522, was incorrect to associate the epitaph with a specific tomb. It was recovered in a displaced state at or near the level of the rock surface to the east of the northernmost of a pair of rock-cut tombs and less than 3,0 m from a third tomb.

92 Although the given interpretation (WISEMAN 1969, 85) of this inscription as an epitaph is likely, one might wonder alternately if Tasios was in some way responsible for the administration of this discrete burial zone.

93 SIRONEN 1997a, 743.

dren or other individuals is rare. The frequency of named individuals, thus usually only one or two, stands in contrast to the skeletal remains of three to four persons typically uncovered within the rock-cut tombs with which many of the epitaphs are to be associated, and who would have remained partially anonymous within the epigraphic record.

Frequent use of the word *διαφέρων* to indicate possession by the tomb owner, the unusual inclusion of statements of tomb purchase for a significant minority of epitaphs, and the omission of the age of the deceased or any other biographical details⁹⁴ in most cases all point to Corinthian epitaphs as primarily serving to identify ownership of mortuary real estate.⁹⁵ Moreover, the inclusion of the owner's or deceased's profession, as well as the date of death and tomb purchase (and for those epitaphs mentioning tomb purchase, the profession of the seller and the price paid), are not merely features of a relatively elaborate Corinthian epigraphic culture, but may also be viewed as supporting rightful tomb ownership while countering unauthorized use through the creation of a unique and detailed record akin to a basic contract.⁹⁶ Particularly given the substantial cost of built and rock-cut tombs which, when indicated, was one and a half *solidi* (in a single exceptional case, two *solidi*), safeguarding this investment would have been crucial to the individuals, who seem to have largely belonged to the middle and upper classes, who made it.⁹⁷ From this perspective, the apparent lack of epitaphs for tile graves is at least partly explained: They were unlikely to be subject to re-use, and stuccoed mounds or other markers above them would have helped to prevent accidental disturbance.⁹⁸

94 On epigraphic evidence with similar characteristics, e.g. in *Cilicia*, see the contribution CUBAS DÍAZ in this volume.

95 SIRONEN 1997a, 743. On epitaphs as statements of ownership see WALBANK 2010, 295.

96 For epitaphs as “legal documents” and the corresponding use of indiction years for dating, see SANDERS 2005, 434–435. Tomb sellers' professions, as given on epitaphs, are varied, and these sales are at least in some cases for pre-existing tombs, perhaps made available by the financial need of the seller, rather than empty plots. For a tomb restored “good as new” following its sale, see KENT 1966, no. 551; it is unclear whether any pre-owned tombs had been already used for burial.

97 The epitaph (SEG XXIX 319) which states the payment of two *solidi* was found in the eastern suburb of Corinth somewhere to the northeast of the *martyrium* or basilica (‘Pallas Basilica’) located within the Late Antique wall, and to the south of the Amphitheater, it likely belongs to a grave within the extended cemetery zone northeast of the Late Antique city wall, and may be unusually expensive due to its proximity to the Christian holy site. SIRONEN 1997a notes the extreme scarcity of curses against tomb violation within Corinthian epitaphs; the inclusion of details of ownership and purchase might be considered a more effective alternative.

98 Non-surviving epitaphs on cheaper materials, such as wood or tile, can of course not be ruled out for tile graves. It is striking, however, that only a single epitaph on tile (KENT 1966, no. 553) was retrieved from the broader area of the Asklepieion, suggesting that alternative materials were rarely used.

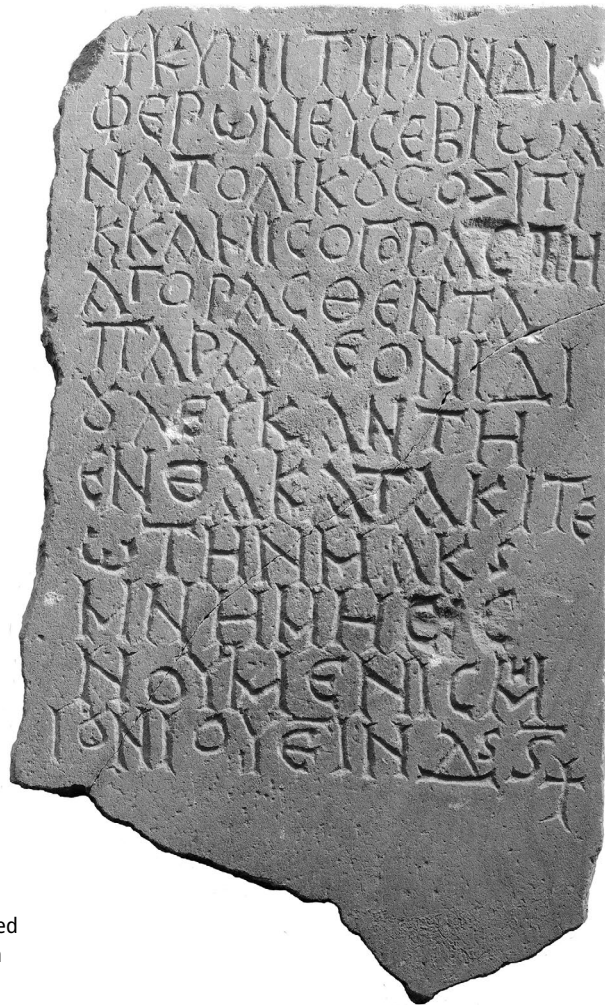


Fig. 11: Epitaph from tomb owned by Eusebios the Anatolian discovered near rock-cut tombs on Asklepieion terrace.

Alongside protection of ownership, epitaphs would have played a basic role of identification for tombs that were otherwise nearly identical to many others in their immediate vicinities, allowing family members to more easily locate the appropriate grave for commemorative activities or the interment of additional individuals. This function may have been particularly poignant at times of commemoration: Sited at the west end of cist graves (and potentially attached to the same area of mounds or vaults topping chamber tombs), epitaphs would in many cases likely have rested directly above the heads of the dead in the midst of an area that seems to have been a focus for ritual including the laying of lamps, perhaps the pouring of libations, and surely, prayer.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Although the position of epitaphs and objects deposited upon the tomb demonstrates some variability in modern practice in Greece, an emphasis on the west end is frequently still apparent.

Corinth's epitaphs, and the broader mortuary culture which they represent, appear to have exerted an influence beyond the periphery of the city. At *Argos*, many epitaphs incorporate the profession of the tomb's owner, a feature common at Corinth but occurring less frequently at Athens.¹⁰⁰ Two of the Argive epitaphs are also unusual within the broader corpus of Greek inscriptions in their statement of tomb purchase at one of the two prices known from Corinth; an additional epitaph discovered 16 km west of Corinth at Stimanga also notes tomb sale at a Corinthian price.¹⁰¹ At the very least, a mortuary real estate market like that at Corinth seems to have existed more widely in the northeast Peloponnese and was potentially driven by Corinthian pricing; it is not inconceivable that some form of price regulation occurred. The use of epitaphs was weak, however, beyond the sphere of the largest cities: Within the Peloponnese, aside from the regions of *Corinthia* and *Argolis*, only some 25 Late Antique epitaphs in total have been discovered and published across a small number of sites.¹⁰²

Conclusion

Mortuary practices of the late 5th to early 7th c. AD at Corinth generally follow an evolving local tradition and resemble those of the larger cities (and some smaller ones) within the province of *Achaëa*. Cist graves, tile graves, and infant amphora burials, all used since the Roman period and even earlier, are joined at Corinth in the 6th to early 7th c. AD by rock-cut and built versions of Late Antique vaulted chamber tombs. Corinthian graves vary from those at smaller sites primarily in the higher quality of construction and variety of types present, especially vaulted tombs that are also well represented at Athens but much rarer elsewhere, and in their forms and the varied burial grounds at which they occur seem to reflect the ambitions of a highly stratified society. In its epitaphs and, in a more limited manner, its rock-cut chamber tombs, Corinth's influence on other sites in the northeast Peloponnese is apparent. Within the grave, as at *Argos*, Athens, and other cities, ceramics are common, while jewelry and clothing accessories are rare. Pottery, con-

100 The high rate of curses on Argive epitaphs, however, does not resemble Corinth; SIRONEN 1997b, 399 sees the Argive corpus as displaying a mix of Corinthian and Athenian traits. On the mention of professions in other regions see the contributions ARDELEANU, CUBAS DÍAZ and ZIMMERMANN in this volume.

101 *Argos* (both two solidi): OIKONOMOU-LANIADO 2003, 55 no. 16, 20. Stimanga (one and a half solidi): IG IV 437.

102 SIRONEN 2018, 211–214. While this data is surely affected by the unequal degree of excavation (and publication) from one site to another, the relative scarcity of epitaphs beyond the environs of the largest ancient cities is clear. The total absence of these markers at *Olympia* (VÖLLING/RETTNER 2018, 53), despite that site's extensive excavation, suggests that the inhabitants of this and other small, remote communities did not employ epitaphs at all.

sisting primarily of pitchers and Late Antique lekythoi, the latter a new product of the 6th c. AD, was deposited inside both built and rock-cut tombs, or left behind in a broken state at surface level, and varies mainly in the proportions of these vessel types. The dead were only occasionally accompanied by jewelry and clothing accessories, which were usually of bronze or iron; most individuals seem to have worn nothing more than a simple garment. Lamps were commonly placed within the grave pit, or on the surface at the time of burial or subsequent commemoration.

The topographic distribution of Corinth's Late Antique burial grounds reveals a gradual contraction and the intensified exploitation of zones close to the lines of the city's evolving boundaries, the simultaneous use of multiple areas, and the influence of holy sites. In the 6th c. AD, following the appearance of scattered grave clusters on the north slope of Acrocorinth in the late 4th and 5th c. AD, burials at Corinth's expansive northern cemetery appears to have become limited to the southern edge of this zone at the 6th c. AD Kodratos Basilica and a few tombs beyond, while areas of the terrace edge above were for the first time put to mortuary use in the early 6th c. AD, continuing until at least the early 7th c. AD. East of the city, the construction of the 6th c. AD Kraneion Basilica, which included a monumental triconch tomb chamber, suggests a continuing role for this old cemetery district. At the city center, a landscape that had already evolved far from its Roman form was redefined further through the erection of a contracted Late Antique fortification circuit within the space of the *pomerium*, resulting in the mortuary use of the land just beyond this wall on an inconsistent basis by the end of the 6th c. AD. In addition to the graves within the Kodratos and Kraneion Basilicas, the presence of major excavated burial areas within the general vicinity of holy sites, including a possible *martyrium* within the Late Antique city wall and the religiously ambiguous Fountain of the Lamps near the Asklepieion/Gymnasium area, further demonstrates the impact of these sacred structures within the mortuary landscape, and perhaps not only for Christians.

Despite the multiple tomb types in use, the remains of the Asklepieion/Gymnasium area reveal some degree of uniformity at ground level in the 6th to early 7th c. AD which might be more broadly representative of Corinth's burial grounds of this era. The lack of disturbance of most tile graves here indicates that they were all marked in some way, probably by the mounds of stuccoed rubble that survived above a few of them and which were surely inspired by the stuccoed vaults, at least occasionally incorporating platforms, which rose above rock-cut chamber tombs. The picture that emerges on the surface of large cemeteries and perhaps also small burial clusters at Corinth is thus one of marked plots, likely including many mounds and platforms, whether stuccoed rubble or masonry-built. Within this setting, a variety of rituals during and after the funeral would have occurred as evidenced by the pottery within tombs or broken outside them, and the lamps left behind within the pits of tile graves, at surface, and perhaps even on top of graves' superstructures. Although corresponding ceramic remains are scarce, meals at the tomb site

probably also occurred widely, while the provision of libation holes within graves of the Kodratos Basilica suggest that more simple liquid offerings may have commonly been made at surface level. Larger burial grounds in particular must have been extremely cluttered places, and it is possible that periodic cleaning of the surface debris of mortuary rituals, as seems to be visible at *Argos*, also occurred at Corinth in addition to the incorporation of some ceramics within the rubble mounds.

The essential questions confronting families as they planned for the burial of their dead would have related to the location of the grave, the type and quality of tomb construction, the composition of the funerary procession, and the corresponding financial burden. Corinth possessed a variety of burial grounds, some more privileged than others: At the uppermost tier, elaborate graves within the Kodratos, Kraneion, and Lechaion Basilicas appear to belong primarily to the Christian social elite and some members of the clergy; rock-cut cists, some of them ornately lined, above the Kodratos Basilica should belong to the upper or middle classes, while the Asklepieion/Gymnasium area was used by a wide range of individuals from the middle class as revealed through its epitaphs, and perhaps the lower class as well. The extensive mortuary zone to the northeast of the Late Antique city wall seems to have been unusually desirable, and correspondingly expensive, due to its proximity to a Christian holy site. The other graves around the periphery of the Late Antique fortification circuit, located in isolation or in small clusters and including many infant and child burials, tend to be simple, and may in large part represent those effectively excluded from the larger cemetery zones based on age, class, or other reasons. While the cost of burying in a humble tile grave beside the Late Antique city wall, or in a space like Lerna Court, is unknown, it was presumably much less than the substantial price of a multiple burial tomb; the availability of funds, and also family traditions in burial location and tomb use, would have guided the choices of most Corinthians. Not surprisingly, those who did purchase built and rock-cut tombs, including the many middle-class Corinthians who invested substantial sums in structures which emulated the finest examples they knew, maintained an unusually strong practice of stating their ownership on epitaphs, safeguarding these investments from illicit use and providing secure sites where graveside ritual might contribute to the spiritual wellbeing of the dead.

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JULIA VALEVA

Architecture and Decoration of Late Antique Tombs in the Diocese of *Thracia* and Eastern *Illyricum*

Historical Introduction to the Area

The Romans definitively established their control over the Balkans in the 1st c. AD, after a series of military campaigns that had started long before, in the last decades of the 3rd c. BC.¹ The conquest started from the West with the Adriatic coast, followed by the southern part of the peninsula and the creation of the provinces of *Macedonia* in 148 BC and *Achaea* after 146 BC (corresponding to the modern territories of Greece and parts of North Macedonia and Albania). The lands of the Illyrian and Pannonian tribes were conquered and organized in provinces during Augustus' reign: *Dalmatia* and *Pannonia* (corresponding to modern Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, parts of Serbia and of North Macedonia). The vast regions between the Lower Danube and *Haemus Mons* (the Balkan Mountains), the future *Moesia* (Serbia and Bulgaria), succumbed by 29/28 BC. The *Limes Moesiae* included forts and stations along the Danube between *Singidunum*/Belgrade and the mouth of the river on the Black Sea. Many of the civilian settlements near the military camps developed into towns and provincial capitals. Their cultural heritage is the reason for their appearance in our survey. During the 1st c. AD *Moesia* was divided into two major areas, *Moesia Superior* and *Moesia Inferior*, the frontier between them running along the river *Oescus/Iskar* (in Bulgaria). The province of *Thracia* (today Bulgaria and European Turkey) was established in AD 46 after the death of the last ruler of the Odrysian client kingdom. An important territory was added to the empire after Trajan subjugated the Dacians in AD 107 and established the new province of *Dacia Traiana* (today Romania), but was abandoned by Aurelian in AD 271 under the pressure of barbarian incursions.

After the reforms of Diocletian the eastern part of the Balkan peninsula was organized into the Diocese of Thrace, part of the Eastern Prefecture (Fig. 1). The administrative history of the western part is rather complicated: it was reorganized several times, and only after the death of Theodosius I it was declared a praetorian prefecture by the name of Eastern *Illyricum*, attached to the *Pars Orientalis*.² The

- 1 It is a pleasure for me to thank my colleagues Jon C. Cubas Díaz and Stefan Ardeleanu for inviting me to participate in the conference.
- 2 It is not our goal to expound the history of the provincial subdivisions of the Balkan territory during the Roman and Late Roman periods, apart from the fact that the relevant literature is ample. The provinces were 'movable', as aptly noted by Carolin S. Snively in her study of the Macedonian provinces: SNIVELY 2010, 547–550. The classical



Fig. 1: Map of the Late Antique Balkan provinces with most important sites mentioned in this contribution.

Balkans gained new political and economic importance after the reforms of Diocletian and the establishment of a new capital in Constantinople. The provinces were interconnected through a network of important roads: the *Via Singidunum*, *Via Egnatia*, *Via Istrum*, *Via Pontica* and many others. Streams of people and ideas moving in this network created the history of the Balkans, this immense crossroad between

study of Theodor Mommsen remains fundamental, a selection of which, on the European provinces, is translated into English: MOMMSEN 1968. For the Middle Danube provinces: MÓCSY 1974; for the province of *Thracia*: IVANOV/VON BÜLOW 2008, 11–18, 64–66; a brief recent overview of the Balkan provinces: VALEVA/VIONIS 2014, 323–325.

East and West. Its mediatory role is best expressed by the fact that, parallel to an ongoing Romanization, Greek culture maintained its dominance in the southern half of the peninsula. The epigraphic and artistic evidence shows a massive Hellenization of the interior of the Balkans, especially South of the *Haemus*. The Roman influence, particularly regarding language, remained stronger in the provinces along the Danube, advanced by the permanent presence of military units and the towns that grew up around their camps.

This contribution discusses the masonry tombs built in Late Antiquity in the Balkan provinces, from *Scythia Minor* in the East to *Pannonia* in the West and Greece in the South. This is, however, only a brief overview, a sketch of a subject of enormous scope, of which the factual wealth, variety and cultural importance can hardly be overestimated. Moreover, we shall inquire not into all aspects of this field, but only into the form and decoration – mural and sculptural, of specific burial and commemorative structures. Our analysis will deal with monuments in the urban centres, as that is where the clusters of affluent people who ordered expensive burial monuments were to be found, but also with mausolea on private estates. Limits of space and the abundance of examples do not allow for a full discussion about many topics that this contribution will undoubtedly provoke. In general we rely on the conclusions suggested by the archaeologists to whom we owe the primary publications of the numerous monuments mentioned here. Only occasionally do we express a different opinion. The chronological framework of the survey spans from the second half of the 3rd c. AD, with its still pagan cultural context, to the 6th c. AD, when Christianisation of the population brought about the disappearance of luxurious private mausolea, as well as the standardization and diminution in size of less expensive funerary monuments.

Late Antique Funerary Landscapes between the Black Sea and the Adriatic Sea: Some General Patterns

As may be expected, the absolute majority of burials in Late Antiquity, as in previous periods, was modest, if not poor. The lower end of the spectrum begins with inhumations in pits with some grave marker. Then there were burials in wooden coffins, or coffins constructed in brick or/and *tegulae*. The *tegulae* were set gable-wise and were generally covered by *imbrices*. In other cases, the bricks were vertically positioned to form a ‘chest’, covered by large tiles or bricks. The deceased were deposited in wooden coffins or on wooden biers, additionally covered with a thin layer of earth.³ More expensive tombs had walls built of bricks and mortar, over

3 An example is the Jagodin Mala necropolis in Niš: POPOVIĆ et al. 2014, 23, 27, fig. 14e. Already in 1907 the Serbian archaeologist Miloje Vasić defined the basic types of burials discovered in *Viminacium*, which were widely used also in all other Balkan provinces

which a brick covering was placed, usually resembling a pitched roof of *tegulae* with *imbrices* on the joint. Both interior and exterior of the walls were plastered with hydrophobic mortar.

Our survey, however, is dedicated to tombs with more sophisticated features in terms of architecture, building material, dimension and decoration. They are believed to be commissioned by well-to-do people, and, indeed, stand out when compared to the humble graves described above. At the same time, the simple structure of a grave does not always imply scarcity of the burial itself: in the simple tombs, e.g., that were excavated in the so-called ‘Benetton factory area’ of the Jagodin Mala necropolis in *Naissus*/Niš, the grave-goods include a fair amount of golden jewellery.⁴ In such cases we cannot be sure whether the family of the dead incurred other substantial expenditures, such as commissions for professional mourners and copious dining, or not.⁵ Still, monumentality and masonry technique do count, and several types of tombs are considered monuments that only wealthy families could afford.⁶

Tombs with a rectangular plan and barrel vaults constitute the prevalent high-cost type in the Balkan provinces in Late Antiquity. There are also tombs covered by cross-vaults or calottes and provided with *arcosolia*. In some publications they are classified as mausolea,⁷ presumably because of their familial use. The use of this terminology is justified in cases where an external building meant for commemorative rites and combined with the burial chamber, also exists. Finally, we must mention that only well-off people could afford burials in sarcophagi, made of stone or lead.

In general, traditional Roman types of funerary monuments continued to be erected in Late Antiquity, but local characteristics also persisted. Throughout the Thracian provinces interment in burial mounds endured well into the early 4th c. AD. Re-use of existing *tumuli* prevailed, but newly raised mounds are also attested. The practice is also recorded in a written source. The Passion of the Maricanopolitan martyrs Maximus, Asclepiodota and Theodotus mentions Teres, the governor of *Thracia* from AD 305 to 311, a *vir perfectissimus* who died shortly after their execution. Over his grave a mound “as tall as a mountain” (εἰς ὄρους μέγεθος τὸ χῶμα ἀπεκορύφωσαν) was raised, which according to the author of the Passion served to remind future generations of God’s wrath against the ‘tyrant’.⁸

(VASIĆ 1907, 73–85); cf. for the types of Early Christian burials in *Sopianae*: MAGYAR 2006, 60; for *Moesia Secunda*: RUSEV 2012, 388; for *Scythia Minor*: SOFICARU 2017. Some general publications about types of burials in the Roman world are also of interest for the present study: TOYNBEE 1971; VON HESBERG 1992; MCDONNELL 2014.

4 POPOVIĆ et al. 2014, 33, Fig. 22, Cat. 40, 54.

5 MCDONNELL 2014 2014, 279.

6 POPOVIĆ et al. 2014, 30.

7 NIKOLAJEVIĆ 1980, 359–361.

8 SHARANKOV 2018, 107.

The necropoleis of the towns encompassed both pagan and Christian burials. It would be hard to state something in principle about the situation of the Christian 'clusters' within Late Antique necropoleis, although in some cases their spread to a position close to the fortification wall can be observed. When the churches found their place within the walls, privileged people, high-ranking members of the Christian clergy or benefactors were buried inside, infringing on the traditional prohibition of intramural interments.⁹

The Barrel-Vaulted Tomb: A Characteristic Late Antique Type in the Balkan Provinces

The cult of the dead had a prominent place in pagan Roman culture. It played an even more crucial role in the process of Christianization. Some new forms of funerary architecture and customs that appeared or dominated in Late Antique pagan contexts were eventually adopted by the Christians. The tomb covered with a barrel vault was among these features. The shape was not an innovation: scholars tend to relate it to the tombs with semi-circular keystones or corbel vaults that developed expansively in Macedonia, Thrace, Anatolia and other regions in the Late Classical and Early Hellenistic periods.¹⁰ These were stone constructions. Two tombs from the 1st c. AD, the so-called Tomb of Demeter in Kerch and the tomb in *Bizye/Vize* (Kırklareli Province, Turkey, in the Marmara region), are good examples of the fact that both the architectural type and decoration persisted in funerary ideology and art over a long period of time.¹¹ The Tomb of Demeter has a *dro-mos* with stairs and a ramp. There are niches in three of the walls. Two massive stone slabs, now lost, imitated *klinai* on which sarcophagi were placed. The walls of this tomb are slightly inclined inward, concealing in this way the border of the vault. This smooth transition was characteristic of the typical Roman tombs built in brick masonry with rectangular boxes sealed by low barrel vaults, a more sophisticated construction than the tomb consisting of a barrel vault, placed directly on the ground. Such structures, described as typical for funerary architecture in Italy (e.g. *Ostia*, *Isola Sacra*), were built in the provinces as well, e.g. in the interior of the Balkans.¹² Oriental influences in funerary practice should also be taken into consideration, since the epigraphic evidence in the Balkan provinces shows that

9 Observations on the location of Early Christian necropoleis of towns in provinces within the territory of modern Bulgaria in: DOSSEVA 2015, 28–32, 34–39.

10 This is the opinion of Dimitrios Pallas and Euterpe Marke: MARKE 2006, 110.

11 For the tomb of Demeter: ROSTOVITZEFF 1914, 200f.; ZINKO et al. 2009; for the tomb in *Bizye*: MANSEL 1939; VALEVA 2001, fig. 6.

12 Type VIIIB according to GETOV 1970, as attributed by KALCHEV 1984, 79, fig. 4 to a tomb in the necropolis of *Augusta Traiana*, province of *Thracia*. In *Thracia* this type appeared during the Roman period: it did not derive from previous local types.



Fig. 2: Cist and barrel-vaulted tombs in the necropolis of *Thessaloniki*.

there was a constant flow of immigrants from the East, mainly from *Bithynia* and *Syria* (see below).

The Late Antique barrel-vault tomb has a rectangular chamber usually built of natural stone and a vault built of bricks. Although Late Antique barrel-vaulted tombs resemble Early Hellenistic examples, they have lost the tectonic distinction, marked by the cornice, between the supporting and the supported elements.¹³ From Late Antiquity onwards, painted decoration would be used to imitate architectural elements, such as cornices and vault coffers.

Tombs with barrel vaults have been well studied in the necropolis of *Thessaloniki* (Fig. 2). They became popular in this prosperous city from the end of the 3rd c. AD, a phenomenon related – according to E. Marke – to the new middle class that appeared as result of the Diocletian's reforms, and whose members commissioned the tombs. Marke also designed a typology, related mainly to the type of entrances into the tombs. The earliest barrel-vaulted tombs have no entrance.¹⁴ During the Tetrarchy, at the end of the 3rd c. AD, the tombs acquired an entrance, and some of them a gabled covering.¹⁵ The tombs with an entrance in one of the narrow walls, usually the eastern one, became very popular from the first quarter of the 4th c. AD.¹⁶ Slightly later, tombs could be entered from a shaft with stairs, or simply through the vault.¹⁷ Barrel-vaulted tombs were widely built in *Macedonia*¹⁸

13 BUISKIKH 2009, 46.

14 MARKE 2006, 110–112, 217, fig. 57, pl. 59a (e.g. tomb 26, dated to the middle of the 3rd c. AD).

15 MARKE 2006, 112f., 220f., figs. 52, 65, 66, pl. 1a–b, 2a–b, 57b (tomb 41, dated AD 280–290); 221, fig. 51 (tomb 42, dated to the end of the 3rd c. AD).

16 MARKE 2006, 110–112, pls. 46a–g, 47a–b, 55b, 56a–b, 63b, 70a–g, 71a (e.g., tombs 27–36): many of them are dated to the middle of the 4th c. AD; tomb 30 has a *kline* and a niche.

17 MARKE 2006, 113, 220, figs. 10, 135 (tombs 37–40, dated to the 4th – early 5th c. AD), 221–226 (tombs 44–72, with dates from the 4th to the 6th c. AD).

18 See the numerous parallels drawn by E. Marke. For the tombs within the territory of modern North Macedonia: LILČIĆ 1983; there are basic similarities in the plan, covering,



Fig. 3: Interior view of the Late Antique tomb near *Diocletianopolis*.

and *Achaea*. In *Thessaloniki* itself, their construction continued well into the middle Byzantine period.

Barrel-vaulted tombs were built all over the Late Empire, but not everywhere did the exploration of Late Antique necropoleis have a scope as wide as in *Thessaloniki*. In another provincial capital, e.g. *Philippopolis* in *Thracia*, the number of the discovered barrel-vaulted tombs is limited, and one reason for that is probably that there has been no consistent exploration of the cemeteries all around the town. On the other hand, several tombs built with flat roofing were discovered in the necropoleis of *Philippopolis*. These seem to have been the luxurious tomb type that was most popular locally, all the more since some of them have painted decoration as well.¹⁹

A notable barrel-vaulted tomb was discovered about 40 km North of *Philippopolis*, close to *Diocletianopolis*, a town famous for its mineral springs (Fig. 3). The entrance to the tomb is on one of the long sides, through a long inclined dromos with steps. Inside the funerary chamber, along the short sides, thin low walls constitute chest-like rooms, presumably for the coffins. Cushion-like shapes at the narrow sides of these structures make them look like beds and suggest that they had flat surfaces. A well-produced mosaic decorates the floor, while the walls and the 'beds' have painted floral motifs, and the latter also feature an imitation of curtains. The luxurious interior and the large dimensions of the tomb, along with its remoteness from the town, suggest that the tomb was built in a private estate.²⁰

The state of preservation of Roman antiquities in *Diocletianopolis* is impressive. The graveyards of the town were situated to the East, South and Southwest of the

building material, ways of entry, etc., with the evidence from *Thessaloniki*. Many of the vaulted tombs enumerated by Viktor Lilčić have been found in churches.

¹⁹ VALEVA 1999, 42–48.

²⁰ DJAMBOV 1963; VALEVA 1999, 48–50.

town. The majority of the graves is made of *tegulae*. There are tombs built of bricks, most of them with flat covering, and only a few have barrel vaults. In two of the vaulted tombs, both dated to the second half of the 4th – early 5th c. AD, there are funerary beds.²¹ In another big town of the province of *Thracia*, *Augusta Traiana*, a considerable part of the necropoleis has been studied,²² but the number of the barrel-vaulted tombs is small here, too.

In the province of *Haemimontus*, the necropoleis of *Apollonia Pontica*, whose name changed to *Sozopolis* in the early 4th c. AD, were studied systematically. Attention was focused, however, on the classical Greek colonial era, while evidence for the Early Christian and Early Byzantine periods is still insufficient.²³ Single burials have been discovered in churches within the town. The same fact holds true in respect to another town in the same province, *Mesembria*: five tombs have been found in the narthex of the church dedicated to Theotokos Eleousa, three of which with barrel vaults.²⁴

In the province of *Moesia Inferior*, tombs with barrel vaults were discovered in the capital *Marcianopolis/Devnya*, e.g. in its Eastern necropolis, along with several tombs with flat covering and a sarcophagus. Some of the tombs had painted decoration.²⁵ In the other important town of the province, *Odessos/Varna*, besides the tombs with barrel vaults shaft tombs were also made for rich burials. The latter type is specific for the regions along the coast of the Black Sea to the North, as far as and including the Tauric Peninsula, where it is especially prominent.²⁶ The tombs are dug into the ground or rock. The shape of the ceiling is that of a barrel, in some cases; in others it is a large stone slab. Barrel-vaulted tombs were also discovered in the territory of *Odessos*, one of which, in the village of Ossenovo, is of special interest for its painted decoration in a rather primitive style, but iconographically rich: servants and military men are depicted on both sides of their lord and his wife. Also pagan symbols related to funerary beliefs (snake, turtle) are depicted along with the Christian monogram: the decorative system evokes the complex spirituality of a period of transition, with its mingling of pagan and Christian eschatological ideas.²⁷

Barrel-vaulted tombs with large dimensions are relatively rare, but they do exist in many necropoleis in *Moesia Inferior*, which were subjected to systematic

21 TZONCHEV/SARKISYAN 1960, 36; MADJAROV 1993, 188–196; DOSSEVA 2014, 98.

22 KALCHEV 1984; KALCHEV 1993.

23 DOSSEVA 2014, 108–112; PANAYOTOVA/DRAZHEVA 2003.

24 CHANEVA-DECHEVSKA 1999, 233; DOSSEVA 2014.

25 General survey: MINCHEV 1987; DOSSEVA 2014, 119f. For the necropoleis: RUSEV 2012, 384 with literature, and the painted tombs: VALEVA 1999, 19–22 with literature.

26 MIRCHEV 1951; MIRCHEV 1958; ALEXANDRU 2012; DOSSEVA 2014, 122–124; RUSEV 2018, 138f.; for barrel-vaulted tombs: MINCHEV 1986, 36 (within a church), 38; for the finds in Romania: SOFICARU 2007. For the shaft tombs in the village of Kamen Briag (on the Black Sea coast, Northeastern Bulgaria): SALKIN/TOPTANOV 1988.

27 PILLINGER/MINCHEV/GEORGIEV 1989; VALEVA 1987, 281–284.



Fig. 4: Barrel-vaulted tomb in Durostorum with procession scene and detail.

excavation.²⁸ Such tombs, usually intended for multiple burials, were discovered in *Durostorum/Silistra*.²⁹ The most famous among them is the so-called Roman Tomb of Silistra, with entirely preserved interior painted decoration that features the lord of a provincial domain, his wife and a row of their servants (Fig. 4).³⁰ A barrel-vaulted tomb with notable dimensions is also known from *Tirizis/Kaliakra*, a site which first belonged to *Moesia Inferior* and, after Diocletian, became part of *Scythia Minor*.³¹

The tomb with a barrel vault was the preferred burial structure for well-to-do citizens in the province of *Scythia Minor* as well. Several tombs of the hypogeum type were discovered in the Western necropolis of *Callatis*,³² in which Christian burials sometimes overlap with burials from previous periods, some of them dating back even to Early Hellenism. The Christian hypogea were grouped around what is supposed to have been the cemeterial church. Of special interest is the tomb with painted crosses and Psalm texts,³³ relevant to the trust Christians placed

28 IVANOV et al. 2006; CHERA-MĂRGINEANU 1978.

29 For the large tomb with dimensions $3.34\text{--}4.20 \times 4.06\text{--}4.12 \times \text{H. } 4.00$ m: MILOŠEVIĆ/DONEVSKI 1999, 246f.

30 For the painted tomb: DIMITROV/CHICHKOVA 1986.

31 KUZMANOV 1971.

32 BARBU 1971; PEDA 1980; LUNGU/CHERA-MĂRGINEANU 1982; PETRE 1987; BUCOVALĂ/PAȘCA 1989; IONESCU/ALEXANDRU/CONSTANTIN 2003; SOFICARU 2007; ALEXANDRU 2012; The tombs for the poor also shared the types used in the other Balkan provinces: ALEXANDRU 1912, 124. In general for *Scythia Minor*: LUNGU 2000.

33 ALEXANDRU 2012, 122f. The inscription at the entrance reproduces the text of Ps. 18 (19), 15: “Κύριε βοηθέ μου κ(αι) λυτρωτά μου”, the one on the western wall of the funerary chamber Ps. 22 (23), 4: “οὐ φοβηθήσομ(αι) κακά, ὅτι σὺ μετ’ ἐμοῦ (εἶ)ῖ, Κύριε”.



Fig. 5: Barrel-vaulted tomb in Tomis with banquet scene on a *stibadium*.

in God at the threshold of their new life after death. As Ps. 18 (19), 15 says: “Oh Lord, my helper and my redeemer” and the explicit words of Ps. 22 (23), 4 are: “I will fear no evil, for You are with me, Lord”. This new way of emphasizing Christian eschatological expectations will be discussed below. In *Tomis/Constanța*, as everywhere else, the majority of burials is of a modest types,³⁴ but among the few vaulted tombs there are two with lavish, particularly well preserved painted decoration, each showing a banquet on a *stibadium*. They both are dated to the middle of the 4th c. AD (Fig. 5).³⁵

Intra-Basilical and Crypt Burials in *Scythia Minor* and *Moesia Inferior*

The necropoleis *sub divo* were not the only places where larger tombs, sometimes decorated, were erected. Very distinguished people were buried inside churches on rare occasions, usually in the aisles, the narthex, the annexes, and even in the central nave. Yet when such burials are located in the apse or the sanctuary, their interpretation poses a problem: are these privileged graves, crypts or martyrial graves?³⁶ As a rule they are relatively spacious (usually about 2.00 × 3.00 m, although the dimensions of the crypt of the basilica in the Mihai Eminescu High School in Constanța are 6.15 × 3.75 × 2.32 m). In *Scythia Minor* there is a series of such features which suggest a local tradition related, as scholars assume, to the veneration of the numerous local martyrs.³⁷

It is believed that the veneration of martyrs in *Scythia Minor* originated in its capital *Tomis* and subsequently spread to other towns. Three of the six churches in *Tomis* contain crypts integrated in the sanctuary: the so-called Great basilica, the so-called Small basilica, and the basilica discovered in the courtyard of the Mihai Eminescu High School (National College).³⁸ The crypts in these churches are spacious and have complex plans: they are supposed to have been used for multiple burials, presumably of martyrs and holy men. They all have staircases providing access from the West, hence the assumption that these were also pilgrimage churches. The crypt of the basilica in the courtyard of Mihai Eminescu High School has not only the most complex plan, but also a painted decoration, consisting of imitations of marble revetment on the walls and a grid of coffers including flowers and birds on the vault.³⁹

34 For their classification: BARBU 1971; SOFICARU 2007, 300.

35 CHERA/LUNGU 1988; CHERA 1993; BARBET 1994, 25–31; MUREȘAN 2016, 130 f.

36 ACHIM 2004, 278.

37 BARNEA 1981; ACHIM 2004.

38 ACHIM 2015, 321–325.

39 BARBET/MONIER 2001.

Of particular interest is the crypt in the episcopal basilica in *Halmyris*/Murrighiol (Tulcea district).⁴⁰ In its dimensions and shape it does not differ from the barrel-vaulted tombs built in necropoleis. Inside, there are two bed-like structures on which two entirely preserved skeletons were found:⁴¹ The analyses of the bodies showed traces of torture and decapitation, which is why the individuals were identified with the martyrs Epictetus and Astion from *Bithynia*, executed in *Halmyris* on 8 July AD 290. The entrance, as in the large crypts of *Tropaeum Traiani*/Adamklissi and *Tomis*, is from the West, and is reached through eight steps with a 2.15 m-long corridor. The crypt has a painted corona on the lunette. The basilica and the crypt, apparently contemporary, are dated to the end of 4th – early 5th c. AD. A similar crypt has been found in *Zaldapa*, a big and well-fortified town of the province *Scythia Minor* (located near the modern village of Abrit in Bulgaria). It is also of large dimensions, hence the assumption that it would have held the body of a martyr.⁴² In *Tropaeum Traiani* there is a crypt beneath the apse of basilica A, also large enough to house the body of a martyr (?).⁴³ Another large crypt was discovered in Niculițel near *Noviodunum*/Isaccea (Tulcea district),⁴⁴ which is believed to be the burial place of six martyrs (Fig. 6). Built in the 4th c. AD, the *martyrium* (in which the presumed bodies of two of the martyrs had been transferred from an earlier structure) would have been topped by the basilica of the necropolis in the 5th or 6th c. AD. The crypt is covered by a canopy vault.

We cannot, however, be sure that in all cases the structure in the eastern end of a church is related to the cult of martyrs, even if its dimensions are large. The interpretation of the basilica with crypt in *Histria*/Istros presents such difficulties.⁴⁵ Another perplexing example was found in the apse of the Episcopal basilica in *Novae*/Svishtov in *Moesia Inferior*: a structure with a rectangular plan and flat covering that could be a privileged tomb, a martyr's tomb or a feature related to liturgy.⁴⁶

Although the vaulted crypts are declared a phenomenon specific for *Scythia Minor*, there are analogous structures in the neighbouring province of *Moesia Inferior*. Worthy of notice is that the most remarkable were found in *Odessos* and its territory, situated on the Black Sea, with obvious possibilities for easy communication by sea with the towns of *Scythia Minor*. A crypt built of brick with a barrel vault has been discovered in front of the apse of the church situated on the intersection

40 ZAHARIADE/BOUNEGRU 2003, 117–126; ACHIM 2015, 325f.; ATANASOV et al. 2017, 129f.; the dimensions of the crypt: 2.00 × 1.80 × 1.88 m.

41 ACHIM 2015, 325f.

42 ACHIM 2015, 321–327; ATANASOV et al. 2017, 128.

43 Dimensions 2.70 x 2.30 x 2.50 m; the crypts in the *basilicae* C and D in the same town are smaller and could have contained only fragments of holy bodies or objects: ATANASOV et al. 2017, 128f., with further references.

44 BAUMAN 1972; BAUMAN 2006, 827–831. The dimensions of the crypt: 3.50 × 3.50 × 2.30 m: ATANASOV et al. 2017, 131; ACHIM 2015, 326f.

45 ACHIM 2005.

46 ČIČIKOVA 1997, 57; ACHIM 2015, 315f.



Fig. 6: Basilica with barrel-vaulted crypt in Niculițel near *Noviodunum*.

of A. Gachev Street and Kozlodui Street in *Odessos*.⁴⁷ The entrance to the crypt was blocked by a marble slab with a Latin inscription: the name of the deceased is not preserved, but it has been suggested that he was a high rank cleric,⁴⁸ which makes it reasonable to assume a privileged tomb. In a church on the Djanavar Tepe, situated in the ancient *chôra* of *Odessos*, a barrel-vaulted tomb has been found West of the sanctuary and beneath the ambo. This was probably a privileged tomb too, but it was connected to a *loculus* facing east in which relics were preserved.⁴⁹ In the village of Shkorpilovtsi on the Black Sea coast, which also belonged to the *chôra* of *Odessos* in Antiquity, a church was excavated in the centre of small Late Antique fortifications. In front of the sanctuary there is a big crypt with an entrance.⁵⁰ Its vault was protruding from the floor. The crypt chamber is decorated with crosses on the vault and the western lunette, a stucco cornice at the base of the vault and geometric paintings on the walls.⁵¹

47 DOSSEVA 2014, 125 f.; ACHIM 2015, 320f.

48 MINCHEV 1986, 35.

49 BOYADJIEV 1995, 70f., figs. 5, 7; MINCHEV 1986, 36f.; MINCHEV 2002a, 46; DOSSEVA 2011, 146–147 with literature; ACHIM 2015, 317. For the crypts in Djanavar Tepe and Shkorpilovtsi: DOSSEVA 2017, 58–60.

50 SHKORPIL/SHKORPIL 1921, 23f.; Dimensions of the crypt in Shkorpilovtsi: 3.20 × 2.68 × 2.40 m: MIRCHEV 1969; MINCHEV 2002b; DOSSEVA 2014, 146f. with quotations from the archives of Karel Shkorpil in the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

51 On the decoration of the crypt: VALEVA 1999, 18f.

Barrel-Vaulted Tombs and Sarcophagi from Urban and Estate Contexts in *Dacia Ripensis* and *Dacia Mediterranea*

Moving West to the province of *Dacia Ripensis* we must mention that the capital *Ratiaria* suffered from heavy invasions of treasure hunters during the last few decades. The graveyards were the main target of their activity. In Antiquity, the necropoleis were situated to the West and Northwest of the city along the Danube road and the road leading to *Naissus*.⁵² Several one-chamber tombs with barrel vaults were discovered here, as well as one comprising two chambers, sharing one long wall.⁵³ Lead sarcophagi, considered to be luxurious funeral receptacles,⁵⁴ were also discovered. Stone sarcophagi from previous periods were often reused during the 5th and 6th c. AD.

A large number of tombs with barrel vaults was discovered in *Serdica*/Sofia, the capital of *Dacia Mediterranea*. The Eastern necropolis of the city was the vastest. As drawn by the Austrian painter Joseph Oberbauer, the vaulted tombs of the Late Antique necropolis of *Serdica* were still visible at the end of the 19th c. An important cluster of pagan and Christian tombs has been revealed beneath and around the church of Saint Sophia, still standing today.⁵⁵ The earliest tombs, discovered at a depth of 2.90 m, date from the 2nd c. AD, as coins and ceramic finds indicate. The layer between 1.80 and 1.20 m under the ground level of the church contains tombs dating from the second half of the 3rd to the third quarter of the 4th c. AD, some of them pagan, others Christian.⁵⁶ Many of these tombs, some with flat roofing, others with barrel vaults, can still be seen today in the modern *in-situ*-museum built for the purpose beneath the church (Fig. 7). Scholars are inclined to interpret this situation as burials *ad sanctos*, which gradually appeared following the monumentalization of the church. The cemetery around the church of Saint Sophia was in use mainly during the 4th and the 5th c. AD. Later the necropolis expanded progressively to the East and Southeast: the tombs studied there date predominantly from the 5th to the early 7th c. AD.⁵⁷ Barrel-vaulted tombs prevail in this necropolis. Different forms or types appear rarely, e.g. a double tomb with barrel vaults, or the '*kline*' tomb which will be discussed below in greater detail.⁵⁸ There was a necropolis West of the city wall as well.⁵⁹ Vaulted tombs were built there too, some of them with a small vaulted antechamber. In general, the tombs with barrel vaults have a regular shape (rectangular plan, semi-cylindrical vault, using stones and bricks for the walls and

52 DINCHEV 2002, 24 f.; DOSSEVA 2014, 68 f.

53 ATANASOVA 1971, 98–100; ATANASOVA 1978.

54 As in *Singidunum* and *Viminacium*: JEREMIĆ/ILIĆ 2018, 230 with literature.

55 FILOV 1913; recently DINCHEV 2014, and VALEVA 2015, 67–69 with literature.

56 SHALGANOV 2005.

57 GOSPODINOV 1921; DINCHEV 2014, 13–27, 42–47 (and German summary).

58 For the two-chambers tomb: SHKORPIL/SHKORPIL 1890, 46 f., pl. I.

59 KIROVA 2007.



Fig. 7: Vaulted tombs beneath Saint Sophia church in Serdica.

bricks for the vaults), but there are minor differences regarding the entrances, the interior niches, and the decoration that depended on different circumstances, environment and personal preferences. A tomb in the village of Bistritsa near Sofia, e.g., has an entrance through a shaft provided with a few steps,⁶⁰ a feature which is not usual in *Serdica*, but exists in *Thessaloniki*, as we have already mentioned.

Tombs with barrel vaults are reported from other places within the borders of *Dacia Mediterranea*, e.g. in the towns of *Germania* and *Pautalia*.⁶¹ The bulk of comparative evidence, however, comes from *Naissus/Niš*, the town in which Constantine the Great was born. The Early Christian heritage of *Naissus* is very rich, including churches, mausolea, *martyria*. The biggest ancient graveyard, situated in modern Jagodin Mala and deployed along both sides of the road once leading to *Ratiaria*. was thoroughly studied.⁶² This necropolis was used from the 4th through the early 7th c. AD. Like the Eastern necropolis of *Serdica* it was expanding Eastwards. The graves appear either in regular rows or without order. Most of the tombs were designed for single or double burial, but there are larger tombs made for many persons.⁶³ In some of the graves, including Christian ones, grave goods and jewellery were found. East-West orientation prevails. Most often, the barrel-vaulted tombs consist of only one room, with an access in the form of a shallow shaft with steps. The entrance is on the narrow wall, closed by vertically placed simple stone or marble slabs; the shaft entrances are horizontally covered with stone slabs.⁶⁴ More often the plan is rectangular, but there are tombs with square plans as well. The dimensions vary from 2.00 × 1.00 × H. 1.40 m to, more commonly,

60 STANCHEV 1950, 283f.

61 DOSSEVA 2014, 61f. with literature.

62 RAKOCIJA 2013a, 180–189; RAKOCIJA 2013b with literature; JEREMIĆ 2013; POPOVIĆ et al. 2014.

63 POPOVIĆ et al. 2014, 28f., figs. 16–17.

64 POPOVIĆ et al. 2014, 31f., fig. 21.



Fig. 8: Basilica with *martyrium* in *Naissus*.

2.00/4.00 × 2.00 × H. 1.85 m.⁶⁵ Inside the tombs the walls are plastered and sometimes painted. The inhumation was performed in chests formed by thin barriers, parallel to the walls. There are niches in the walls for grave-candles or garlands. The barrel-vaulted type came to be used in *Naissus* at the end of the 3rd – early 4th c. AD. Most of the tombs in Jagodin Mala date from the second half of the 4th and the 5th c. AD.⁶⁶ The use of this type continued in the following centuries, not only in *Naissus* but in other sites as well: Klisoura, Svrlig, Morodvis.⁶⁷ Double tombs similar to those found in *Thessaloniki* are rare.⁶⁸

In the Jagodin Mala necropolis six Early Christian churches were also discovered. They are badly preserved and crypts in them were not reported, with one noteworthy exception: an imposing basilica with nave and two aisles, and a large adjacent crypt, interpreted as *martyrium*.⁶⁹ The barrel vault that covered the central part of the crypt had been destroyed when it was found. On each of the long sides of the crypt there are two large *arcosolia* (Fig. 8). On the west wall there is one big, central niche between two smaller lateral niches, and a window above (a *fenestella*). In the central space one sees a pedestal with impressive dimensions, the interpretation of which in my opinion is not definite. A staircase with ten steps of a total height of 3.30 m leads down to the crypt. The *martyrium* was built over an earlier building (probably a memorial surrounded by a wall) around the middle of the 4th c. AD or the last years of the reign of Constantius II. A necropolis for privileged burials developed in close proximity to it during the next decades. The basilica was eventually erected eastward in the second half of the 5th c. AD, shaping the final

65 POPOVIĆ et al. 2014, 31f.

66 POPOVIĆ et al. 2014, 30f.

67 RAKOCIJA 2004.

68 POPOVIĆ et al. 2014, 34, fig. 23.

69 MILOŠEVIĆ 2004; RAKOCIJA 2013c; POPOVIĆ et al. 2014, 19–22. Dimensions of the crypt: 7.44 × 3.13 (6 m with *arcosolia*) × 3.38 m.



Fig. 9: Mausoleum 4 in villa 2 near Montana.

aspect of this sacred place. As already noticed by Serbian scholars, close parallels for the basilica with *martyrium* complex in Niš are to be found in the necropoleis of Marusinac and Kapljuc in *Salona*, and in *Sopianae*.⁷⁰

As we have seen, there is a noteworthy similarity between the tomb types in the necropoleis of *Serdica* and *Naissus*, easily explained by the fact that they belong to the same province, their location on the same important road from Central Europe to Constantinople and the relatively short distance between them (about 160 km). Constantine used to reside in *Serdica* during his political and military movements, and he also embellished his native *Naissus*, which he visited on numerous occasions.⁷¹

The dynamism of ecclesiastical history in both cities was undoubtedly stimulated by their new political role as imperial residences from the Tetrarchic period onwards. There is another fact of interest: the bishops of both *Serdica* and *Naissus*, like all other bishops of the prefecture of Eastern *Illyricum*, were subordinate to the archbishop of *Thessaloniki*, who served as the vicar of the Pope. This is often an argument for stating that there was western influence in religious and funerary art, although the relations between the parties were not always harmonious. On numerous occasions the bishops of *Illyricum* were not loyal to the Pope, sometimes under pressure of the patriarch and the emperor in Constantinople, sometimes led by their own ambitions.⁷²

Leaving the cities and casting a glance at the luxurious funerary monuments on private estates in *Dacia Mediterranea* and *Dacia Ripensis*, we may notice that the evidence is similar to what we have in the Diocese of *Thracia*. A good example comes from the vicinity of the town of Montana in Bulgaria (*Municipium Montanensium*/

70 MILOŠEVIĆ 2004, 127f.; DYGGVE/EGGER 1939, 16, Abb. 23; 85, Abb. 113; 122, Abb. 138; FÜLEP 1975, 36–41.

71 RAKOCIJA 2013a, 794 n. 20; VASIĆ 2008.

72 GRANICH 1925; SNIVELY 2010, 553.

Montana), where four Roman *villae* have been studied in the 1970's (Fig. 9).⁷³ Most interesting is the necropolis of *villa 2*, covering 3 ha enclosed in a fence strengthened by buttresses. Four mausolea were built in this private necropolis. Each of them has two levels: an underground level for burials and a level above ground for commemorative rites. The ground surface of mausoleum No. 4 is 70 m². An entrance with stairs from the East leads about 2.00 m deep to the vaulted burial chamber (3.20 × 2.70 × H. 2.05 m), in which two sarcophagi were installed. The *cella memoriae* above ground had a temple-like facade with gable supported by columns and topped by acroteria; the interior walls were painted.

Trapezoidal and Barrel-Vaulted Tombs, Hypogea and Mausolea in Moesia Prima, Moesia Superior and Pannonia Valeria

Moving further to the West within our survey, important evidence about funerary architecture is provided from the exploration of the necropoleis of *Viminacium*/Stari Kostolac, the chief town in *Moesia Superior* during the Principate and capital of *Moesia Prima* during the Dominate (Fig. 10, 11). The exploration of the graveyards of *Viminacium* began at the end of the 19th c. The number of excavated burials from the Roman and Late Antique period amounts to more than 14 000. The Late Antique necropoleis developed South of the legionary camp and the fortified city at the sites of Pećine, Više Grobalja, Velika Kapija, Kod Bresta and Više Burdelja.⁷⁴ The Christians of *Viminacium* buried their dead within the pagan Late Roman necropoleis, following pre-existing tomb rows.⁷⁵ A very characteristic shape of rich tombs in *Viminacium* are the tombs with trapezoidal section, built of bricks.⁷⁶ The construction is of the corbelled type.⁷⁷ According to S. Đurić's classification the type is prevalent in *Moesia* and *Pannonia*, but isolated cases were also found in other regions, e.g. in *Macedonia* (in the modern town of Sandanski in Bulgaria).⁷⁸ Among the rich burials in *Viminacium* there are twenty-nine fresco-painted tombs (Fig. 11), seventeen of which have a trapezoidal cross section,⁷⁹ confirming that this type was used for rich burials.

The shapes of the funerary monuments in *Viminacium* are remarkably varied, a fact scholars explain by pointing to the immigration of people from the orien-

73 ALEXANDROV 1980, 44–52 (for the necropolis).

74 On the necropoleis, with literature: NIKOLIĆ 2018, 103–107; JEREMIĆ/ILIĆ 2018, 232.

75 ILIĆ 2017, 120, who notes the similar situation in *Naissus*/Jagodina Mala.

76 For typologies of the tombs of *Viminacium*: VASIĆ 1907, 83–91; ĐURIĆ 1985b, 139–147; ZOTOVIĆ 1986; cfr. ANĐELKOVIĆ GRAŠAR/NIKOLIĆ/ROGIĆ 2013, 76; ANĐELKOVIĆ GRAŠAR/NIKOLIĆ/ROGIĆ 2020.

77 ANĐELKOVIĆ GRAŠAR/NIKOLIĆ/ROGIĆ 2013, 76.

78 ANĐELKOVIĆ GRAŠAR/NIKOLIĆ/ROGIĆ 2013, 76; for the tomb in Sandanski: GERASIMOV 1966.

79 KORAĆ 2007, 247–261; ANĐELKOVIĆ GRAŠAR/NIKOLIĆ/ROGIĆ 2013, 76.



Fig. 10: Enclosure with mausoleum and tombs in *Viminacium*, Perivoj locality.



Fig. 11: Wall paintings of tomb G-2624 in *Viminacium*.

tal provinces, who brought along their customs to their new places of residence.⁸⁰ Many mausolea have been discovered at different sites in the vast areas of the *Viminacium* graveyards. Inside the mausolea, the dead were buried in stone or lead sarcophagi, in masonry graves, and in barrel-vaulted *arcosolia*. The tombs of wealthy people seem to have been meant for the subsequent burial of other family members too. Traces of commemorative rites were recorded in some of the mausolea.⁸¹

There are several classifications of the burial structures in *Viminacium* according to different criteria: their plan, shape, roofing, or their position with respect to the surface (partially buried, hypogea).⁸² One of the structures, found in the Eastern necropolis of *Viminacium* in a site called Perivoj, has an enclosure of 20 × 20 m, in the centre of which a tomb with a square plan (5 × 5 m) was built (Fig. 10).⁸³ Within the enclosure different types of burial structures were found. The central mausoleum, found heavily destroyed, was recently reconstructed in 3D as a tower mausoleum with a suggested 3rd c. AD-date.⁸⁴

Another site where barrel vault tombs are well studied is *Sopianae*/Pécs in *Pannonia Valeria* (Fig. 12). Most of them are Early Christian: they began to appear at the end of the 3rd c. AD alongside pagan tombs.⁸⁵ In the main cemetery, located North of the town, several constructions of a mausoleum-type were excavated. The underground part reserved for the dead was opened only for burials, while commemoration of the dead took place in a chapel above.⁸⁶ There are cases in which the chapel (*cella memoriae*, *oratorium*) was built for the community, whose members were buried in simple graves in the ground.⁸⁷ Other monuments were family-mausolea. Through a hole or *fenestella* the dead could share in some of the offerings presented either outside or on the *mensa* built or set up in the *cella*.⁸⁸ As noticed by Hungarian scholars, similar but not exactly identical arrangements exist in other Balkan provinces, the usual reference being to the cemeteries in *Salona* (Marusinac).⁸⁹ Other similarities were noted with the family tombs in *Naissus*. Although obeying to a common principle, the burial constructions in these regions have their own peculiarities, specifically considering the relationship between tomb and *cella memoriae*.

As has become clear from the presentation of the monuments discussed so far, the simple tombs with barrel vaults in Late Antique necropoleis of the Balkan prov-

80 MILOŠEVIĆ 2002, 218, 220–222.

81 MILOŠEVIĆ-JEVTIĆ 2014, 323–330.

82 MILOSEVIC-JEVTIĆ 2014.

83 NIKOLIC 2018, 106f. with literature.

84 GOLUBOVIĆ/MRĐIĆ 2018, 164, fig. 9.

85 FÜLEP 1975.

86 FÜLEP 1977. On the relation between the two levels: VISY 2007.

87 VISY 2007, 143f.

88 VISY 2007, 146.

89 DYGGVE/EGGER 1939; EGGER 1962, 181–188, VISY 2007, 144f. RENDIĆ-MIOČEVIĆ 1954–1956, fig. 2, tab. I.4. Cfr. also the contributions ARBEITER, ARDELEANU and PRIEN in this volume.



Fig. 12: Early Christian mausoleum in *Sopiana*.

inces should be considered as commissions of moderately wealthy citizens. The particularly rich families commissioned big mausolea comprising a crypt and a *cella memoriae*. Often these huge structures had architectural, painted and sculptural decoration. They appeared as funerary monuments in a pagan context, but their long use by families for generations kept them operative well into the Christian age. If such a family-mausoleum was built, e.g. in the 2nd c. AD, the burials at the end of the 4th c. AD could eventually be performed according to the Christian rites, and probably even by another family.

Other Characteristic Tomb Types: Tombs with *Arcosolia* and *Exedrae*

Tombs with *arcosolia* appeared after inhumation became the standard practice in the mid-2nd c. AD. Some family tombs were designed as rooms with a square plan and *arcosolia* on three sides, while the fourth side was left for the entrance. The interior arrangement resembles a *triclinium*: an appropriate example would be the Corinthian rock-cut tomb, made in the first half of the 2nd c. AD, but used for Christian burials in the 5th and 6th c. AD.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ The tomb has an almost square plan (3.60 × 3.15 m) and graves in *arcosolia*: HOSKINS/WALBANK 2015, 156, 180f., 197. Cfr. also the contribution by OTT in this volume.

In the Eastern necropolis of *Serdica* (close to the modern Parliament) a family tomb with a central plan was found. Inside there are three burial places in the form of chests, sheltered presumably by arches (*arcosolia*). The preserved height of the tomb is limited, but it is clear that its covering was a dome on pendentives or a groin vault. The building was partially sunken in the terrain; a second story is assumed by some scholars, but the relatively thin walls make this improbable. A tomb with a similar plan (and a far better state of preservation), dated to the second half of the 3rd c. AD, was excavated in the area of the Law School at the University of Thessaloniki.⁹¹ Another one was found in the village of Kochagovo in the *chōra* of *Philippopolis*. It was discovered in a rather damaged state after a treasure-hunters' raid, but its main features are clear. It was built with bricks in a previously dug pit of about 4 m in depth and had an entrance in the shape of a shaft with several stairs.⁹² Its height would have been considerable, since the ground plan measures 4 × 5 m. A cross vault is assumed. Although the plan seems similar to other tombs, the inner disposition and types of burials are different: in the middle stood a granite sarcophagus, while the surrounding burials were dug in the ground and covered with slabs.

Several entirely preserved tombs in *Thessaloniki* and *Naissus* illustrate what these tombs might have looked like, with their domes and *arcosolia* vaults partly visible above ground. The tombs in *Naissus*, labelled as 'calotte tombs', have walls built of stone and layers of brick, and domes only of brick. The entrances are barrel-vaulted, provided with stairs and stone slabs for closing the entrance to the chamber. Tomb 18 is an eloquent example with its cross-outlined plan, dome on pendentives above the central room and barrel-vaulted *arcosolia* on three sides. There are burials of the *formae* type in the central part. The tomb is compared to *cubiculum* 2 in the Eastern necropolis of *Thessaloniki*, which is dated in the first quarter of the 4th c. AD.⁹³ Another tomb with a cruciform plan was found in the village of Jelašnica, East of Niš, but there the vault above the central part is barrel-shaped.⁹⁴ There are also tombs in which this centralized plan is elongated with two more *arcosolia*. This required an additional dome (calotte) cover. One of the tombs was discovered in Niš, the other in nearby Niška Banja (Fig. 13).⁹⁵

A hypogeum tomb with more complicated plan, comprising a vestibule (2.30 × 1.75 × H. 1.60 m) and five adjacent burial rooms of roughly equal dimensions (c. 2.25 × 1.30 × H. 1.25 m), was accidentally found in the village of Krupnik in the district of Blagoevgrad in Bulgaria, in the ancient province of *Macedonia*. Built entirely of bricks except for the doorways framed by stone blocks, the tomb was dated to

91 For the tomb in *Serdica*: SHALGANOV 1989, 74–77; BOYADJIEV 2002, 166–168; BOYADJIEV 2003, 66; for the tomb in *Thessaloniki*: MARKE 2006, 100–101, 211, fig. 36, pl. 44, 45a.

92 VELKOV 1926–1927.

93 RAKOCIJA 2013b, 192; MARKE 2006, 100–103, 211f., figs. 37–39.

94 RAKOCIJA 2013b, 198, fig. 20.

95 NIKOLAJEVIĆ 1980, 312, fig. 11; JEREMIĆ 2013, 134, fig. 65; RAKOCIJA 2013a, 196–198.



Fig. 13: 'Calotte-type' tomb in Niška Banja.

the 4th–5th c. AD, but the unfortunate fact that it had been robbed did not allow any precise conclusions about its date and the way of burying. Presumably it was a family tomb.⁹⁶ It is a pity that no further archaeological investigations were conducted in the region, because the type of the tomb is rare: was it an individual structure on a private estate or was it related in some way to a still unknown settlement in the vicinity? In any case this tomb stands out by its dimensions and the disposition of the rooms, demonstrating once again the variety of the funerary structures in Late Antiquity.

A large mausoleum on two levels was discovered in the Roman *castrum Diana*, built on the cliffs of the Iron Gates above the Danube in the Karataš archaeological site, near Kladovo in eastern Serbia.⁹⁷ Only the subterranean burial room and the floor of the above-ground memorial structure are preserved. Inside the crypt two short walls protruding from the long walls divide the interior in two parts: in the Eastern part, next to the entrance, two *arcosolia* are built along the northern and southern walls; three more *arcosolia* can be found in the western part. Presumably both parts were covered by cross vaults. The above-ground level also had two rooms. A coin of Constans (AD 337–350) found at the site suggests that the mausoleum could have been built in the fourth decade of the 4th c. AD at the earliest, while another find, a cruciform fibula, points to the possibility that a high-ranking military officer could have been buried in the crypt.

In *Durostorum* in *Moesia Secunda* (former *Moesia Inferior*) a structure on two levels was also classified as mausoleum. Its underground room has a rectangular plan, while the above-ground part was octagonal.⁹⁸ There are three *arcosolia* inside

96 RASHENOV 1927.

97 MILOŠEVIĆ-JEVTIĆ 2014, 329.

98 MILOŠEVIĆ/DONEVSKI 2000, 253, fig. 11.

the crypt, but no sarcophagi were found. A vaulted passage with stairs, 3,70 m long, leads to the chamber. The interior is built with bricks while the exterior walls are built of stone bound with white mortar. Two reconstructions of the above-ground part of the mausoleum were suggested. According to the first one, the chamber was covered by a dome on pendentives and a four-sloped roof, while the other reconstruction advocates for a high octagonal above-ground structure.⁹⁹

About 5 km South of the walls of *Serdica* a mausoleum was excavated that supposedly was part of a Late Antiquity private estate, of which, however, no other buildings have been revealed so far. The mausoleum features a burial chamber occupied by three stone sarcophagi and an antechamber with two semi-circular *exedrae* (covered with conches?), where commemorative feasting around a sigma table presumably took place. The mausoleum has three more service rooms prior to the antechamber with *exedrae*. The archaeologists who explored the site have different opinions about the chronology of the mausoleum, but agree on the 4th c. AD as period of construction, based on numismatic evidence.¹⁰⁰ The scanty evidence from this impressive monument, unfortunately enough thoroughly robbed already in Antiquity, does not help us to determine the religious affiliation of the members of this family. Based on the typology of these mausolea, the absence of Christian signs, and on the coin finds with a solidus of Theodosius II (AD 423/424) as the most recent item, I would suggest that this structure was erected around the middle of the 4th c. AD within a pagan context, and continued to be used by the family, already Christianized, until its destruction in the first half of the 5th c. AD. A similar mausoleum of three parts was discovered on another private estate in the vicinity of the city walls of *Serdica*, in the modern district Stefan Karadja in Sofia. Its publication left much to be desired. Recently a dating in the early 4th c. AD was suggested.¹⁰¹

The plan with semi-circular *exedrae* covered by conches is especially well attested in the Brestovik tomb (today on the territory of Belgrade's Municipality, in Late Antiquity in the province of *Moesia Prima*) (Fig. 14). The tomb was excavated in one of the numerous Roman *villae* occupying the fertile lands along the Danube. The tomb, dated to the 3rd–4th c. AD,¹⁰² includes a burial chamber, a commemorative chamber (*cella memoriae*) with two *conchae*, and a long wide dromos with a portico in front of the entrance to the tomb. The burial chamber, dug into the slope of the hill to the West, is covered by a barrel vault and shelters three masonry graves of diverse dimensions. After some initial debates, it is agreed today that the commemorative chamber featured a cross vault.¹⁰³ The dominant opinion is that the tomb is pagan, based on its complex plan, similar to the tradition of the Roman mausolea,

99 BOYADJIEV 2003.

100 SHALGANOV/IVANOV 2006, 316f.; IVANOV 2008, 155–158; Summary in DOSSEVA 2014, 56–60.

101 IVANOV 2008, 156 with literature.

102 VALTROVIĆ 1906, 136; VASIĆ 1906, 140; TOMOVIĆ 1996, 419–426; MILOŠEVIĆ 2009b, 59–64; MILOŠEVIĆ-JEVTIĆ 2014, 327f.

103 VUJAČIĆ-VULOVIĆ 1967; MILOŠEVIĆ 1993; MILOŠEVIĆ 2009a, 747.

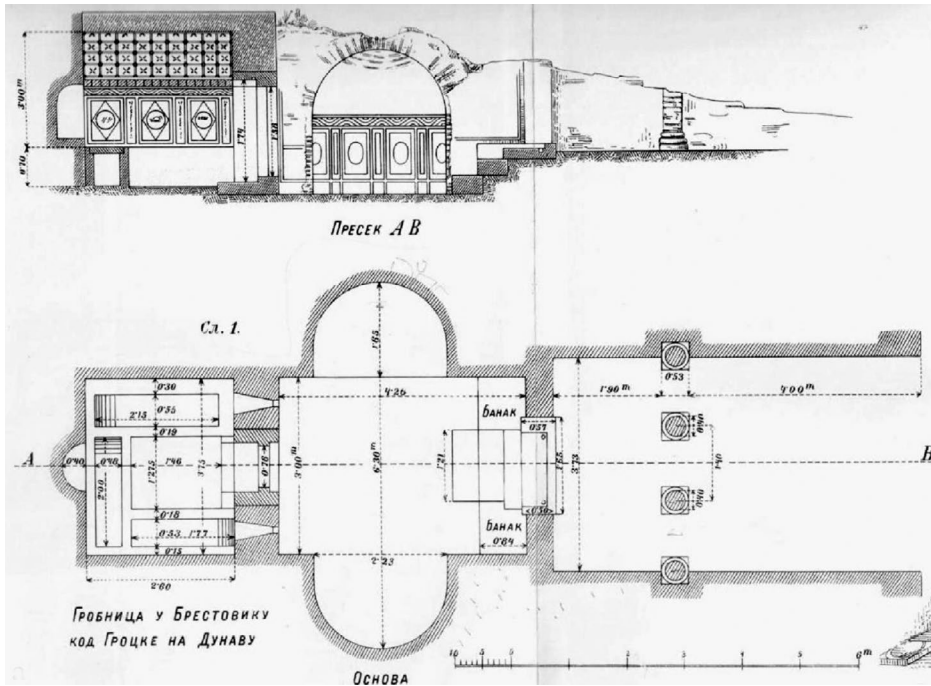


Fig. 14: Plan of a Late Antique tomb with semi-circular *exedrae* in Brestovik.

and on its sculptural decoration. Today the local people place icons and light candles there, venerating the saints Ermil and Stratonik.¹⁰⁴ The entire tomb was internally decorated with murals. In the burial chamber, the walls above the built graves featured faux-marble and painted incrustation; the vault was decorated with painted coffers.¹⁰⁵ There were also figural representations, now unfortunately lost. From the tomb comes a statue of a man, dated to the period of the Tetrarchy.¹⁰⁶

Another tomb with a similar plan with two conches was discovered in Stepojevac, in *Moesia Prima*.¹⁰⁷ The preserved height of the walls is low, and the archaeological documentation is meagre, so it is not clear what the function was of the *exedrae* that protrude East and West of the central rectangular room. The entrance to the central room is rather wide and flanked by two pilasters. This was a family tomb, built within the perimeter of a *villa rustica*. It is dated to the end of the 4th c. AD. One more tomb of this type is known from the necropolis of *Ulpiana–Justiniana Secunda* in the province of *Dardania*.¹⁰⁸ It is situated in the Western necropolis of the town. There are three rooms, arranged in enfilade: the entrance from the East, the central

104 NIKOLIĆ et al. 2018, 198, 206.

105 NIKOLIĆ et al. 2018, 206–253.

106 TOMOVIĆ 1996; MILOŠEVIĆ 2009a.

107 MILOŠEVIĆ 2009b, 64 with literature.

108 MILOŠEVIĆ 2009b, 64–67.

part with the semi-circular *exedrae* protruding North and South, and the third room. In the southern *exedra* a burial was found, and there is another feature (a wall) in front of the northern *exedra*. We can only assume that the central part with the *exedrae* could have had a commemorative character at the beginning, but was later transformed into a burial place. The monument is dated to the 4th c. AD.

Two funerary structures in the shape of a triconch were discovered in *Viminacium*, on the Kod Groblja site.¹⁰⁹ They have similar dimensions and layouts, comprising two rooms, of which the principal one has a central apse and two more *exedrae* on the lateral walls. Burials were found in these structures with traces of rich garments and objects belonging to the deceased. The initial burials in both tombs at the beginning of the 4th c. AD were followed during the next decades by their gradual monumentalization in the form of trefoil funerary structures, alongside periodical repairs till the end of the same century.

One last type of prominent tombs will be mentioned in this section: tombs with an octagonal plan. The application of this type in non-imperial contexts is not studied yet: some of the monuments have been initially interpreted as baptisteries, e.g. burial chamber 5 in the cemetery North of *Sopianae*.¹¹⁰ Another octagonal building was excavated in *Odessos*:¹¹¹ seven of the walls present niches in *arcosolia*, while the eighth side is occupied by the entrance. A family mausoleum with a peculiar design was found in the perimeter of a *villa rustica* complex near the village of Urovene, in the Bulgarian Vratza district, in the ancient province of *Dacia Ripensis*. It had two floors but as often only the subterranean part is preserved. The exterior shape is octagonal. The interior on both levels has the plan of a triconch. It can be reconstructed, for the underground level, as a central square room covered by a dome, and three identical recessions (2.50 × 2.40 × H. 1.80 m). The large depth suggests that the recessions were meant for sarcophagi, but they have not been found.¹¹²

The described two-storey funerary structures provided with *exedrae* and *arcosolia* represent mausoleum types which gained in popularity predominantly in the 4th c. AD. Their curvilinear forms reflect the vogue of the day, the architectural iconography shaped in the Late Antique imperial and aristocratic residences. When emulated by middle class people, however, even when they belonged to the upper middle class and had comfortable incomes, their size and splendour was more limited. The funerary context itself imposed further simplifications of plan and reductions in dimensions. The religious affiliation of the commissioners was presumably pagan, although Christianization was constant and implacable, and family members eventually adhered to the new faith. When Christianity became dominant, mausolea went out of use.

109 MILOŠEVIĆ 2005, 178–181.

110 GABOR 2014, 39–42.

111 MIRCHEV 1958, 576.

112 MASHOV 2014.

Decoration of Late Antique Tombs from the Balkans

A fascinating feature of the vaulted tombs, the mausolea and the *martyria* discussed above is their decoration. The main observation is that luxurious interior decoration prevailed over distinctive exteriors. In many of these Late Antique uniform tombs with humble exterior, e.g. those covered by barrel vaults, we find rich, sometimes opulent painted decoration. In a good number of tombs, the walls are embellished with painted flowers, garlands, festoons and birds. Several rectangular tombs with flat roofing from *Philippopolis* and *Marcianopolis* exhibit this type of decorative system, suggestive of owners subscribing to pagan religious beliefs. The tombs with painted flowers and garlands are usually dated to the 3rd and 4th c. AD: those studied in the necropolis of *Thessaloniki* seem to belong to the 3rd c. AD.¹¹³ In vaulted tombs flowers often occupy the vault while the walls are decorated with painted imitation of marble revetment (Fig. 15), as in a tomb found beneath the church of Saint Sophia in *Serdica*.¹¹⁴



Fig. 15: Late Antique tomb in the Eastern necropolis of *Serdica*.

In the ‘Funerary banquet tomb’ in *Philippopolis* the garland is a subordinate motive. The central scene of the funerary meal is combined with another motif gaining prominence during Late Antiquity: the procession, in this instance of servants bringing food.¹¹⁵ Remarkably, the servants are depicted as being taller than their

113 VALEVA 2001, 174–178; MARKE 2006, 123–127.

114 KITANOV 2009, 121–129, pl. LXXXVI–CVIII; KITANOV 2014.

115 VALEVA 1999, 42–46 with literature.

masters, but this unconventional disproportion has also been attested throughout the Empire on other monuments.

The funerary banquet, a quintessentially classical motif of ancient funerary iconography, continued to feature in Late Antique funerary decoration, be it mainly in pagan contexts. Probably pagan is the (still unpublished) tomb with flat roofing discovered in front of the western facade of the church Saint Sophia in *Serdica*, decorated with a painted scene of a banquet on a *kline*, while the floor is covered with an unpretentious *opus tessellatum* mosaic. Depictions of funerary meals of the sigma type are documented in the necropolis of *Thessaloniki*.¹¹⁶ As already mentioned, two tombs in *Tomis*, in *Scythia Minor*, have the banquet scene included in their decorative system. The paintings of the first one are remarkably well preserved (Fig. 5). Five persons are depicted reclining on a *stibadium* around a table on which six breads are placed:¹¹⁷ clearly the sixth bread is for the deceased, believed to participate invisibly in the funerary meal. Although some details in the tomb hint at a Christian affiliation of the commissioner, there are no explicit Christian symbols painted. The feasting men are served by attendants. As already noted with respect to the tomb in *Philippopolis*, a procession of servants became the token of wealth and high social status. Several well-dated tombs in which this idea is plainly expressed were found in different towns, demonstrating that this iconography of self-representation was very popular exactly during the 4th c. AD, when the revival of the Empire brought to life a class of *homines novi* eager to display their material possibilities. These tomb paintings are among the finest examples of Late Antique painting styles and cultural ideals. They were found in *Viminacium* (Fig. 11),¹¹⁸ *Durostorum* (Fig. 4),¹¹⁹ *Thessaloniki* (Eustorgios tomb)¹²⁰ and Beshka (Beška) (Fig. 16).¹²¹ The scenes depict masters surrounded by servants, suggesting micro-worlds of well-being, either real on the earth or promised for the afterlife.¹²² The ceremonial character of the compositions conformed quite well to the trend of a hierarchical structure in post-Diocletianic society.

In the second tomb with a banquet scene on a *stibadium* in *Tomis*, unfortunately largely destroyed, the presence of *orantes* among the surviving images suggests a Christian context.¹²³ These *orantes* bring us back to two already mentioned tombs, one in *Naissus*¹²⁴ and another in *Sopianae*,¹²⁵ on the walls of which the apostles

116 MARKE 2006, 140 f., figs. 74–75, pl. 5.

117 CHERA/LUNGU 1988; CHERA 1993; BARBET 1994. In one of the tombs in *Thessaloniki*, breads of the same shape, probably ritual, are also depicted: MARKE 2006, 166–169, fig. 116.

118 KORAC 2007, 69–101; ANĐELKOVIĆ GRAŠAR 2015, 270 f.; ANĐELKOVIĆ GRAŠAR/NIKOLIĆ/ROGIĆ 2020.

119 DIMITROV/CHICHIKOVA 1986; ATANASOV 2007; ATANASOV 2014.

120 MARKE 2006, 138 f.

121 ĐURIĆ 1985a; POPOVIĆ 2011, 237–240; ANĐELKOVIĆ GRAŠAR/NIKOLIĆ/ROGIĆ 2020.

122 SCHNEIDER 1983.

123 BARBET/BUČOVALÁ 1996.

124 RAKOCIJA 2014 with historiography.

125 GERKE 1954; MAGYAR 2006, 46 with literature.



Fig. 16: Late Antique tomb in Beška with painted scene with servants bringing food; today in the Museum of Vojvodina, Novi Sad.

St. Peter and St. Paul are depicted. It has been suggested that the martyrs who had actually been buried in the tomb in *Naissus* were painted on the opposite wall. In the tomb in *Sopianae*, four male busts are painted in medallions on the vault, images of martyrs or portraits of family members. For both tombs it has been argued that the iconography is based on Roman prototypes painted in the catacombs.

Wall paintings with Christian themes taken from the Old Testament were found in *Sopianae* (Fig. 12).¹²⁶ Early Christian iconography, however, is best represented in the tombs of *Thessaloniki*.¹²⁷ Recently a flat-roofed tomb of rectangular shape was accidentally found in *Philippopolis*. Besides Christ's monogram two scenes of his miracles are depicted: the healing of the paralytic and the resurrection of Lazarus.¹²⁸ The dynamic and expressive drawing style of the paintings follows Hellenistic traditions. This stylistic peculiarity, combined with the emphasis on the miracles of Christ, suggest a date in the 4th c. AD.

For the painted Christian tombs of the 5th–6th c. AD we use the word 'decoration' conventionally, because its aim is not aesthetic pleasure. It is a system of spiritual symbols, expressed through painted crosses and psalms or devotional texts.¹²⁹ Such crosses and words are painted on the walls of a 5th c. AD barrel-vaulted tomb situated 16 m West of the church of Saint Sophia in *Serdica* (Fig. 17): a certain

126 MAGYAR 2006, 46–52.

127 MARKE 2006, 130–137, 142–202.

128 MARTINOVA-KYUTOVA 2013.

129 VALEVA 2001 with literature.



Fig. 17: 'Honorius tomb' next to Saint Sophia church in *Serdica*.

Honorius declares himself “servant of God”.¹³⁰ The grave is the last abode for the faithful Christian, in which he will await God’s judgement. As verse 14 of Psalm 132 says: “This is my resting place forever; Here I will dwell, for I have desired it”. This quotation is written on the walls of tombs in *Augusta Traiana (Thracia)*, *Ürgüp (Cappadocia)*, and *Louloudies (Macedonia)*.¹³¹

In one of the most interesting tombs in *Serdica* we see the busts of four archangels, each in a corner at the springing of the barrel vault, and accompanied by their names: Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, and Raphael. The decoration of the vault imitates the heavenly sky, dominated by the cross, symbol of God. This scheme is a definite step towards Byzantine iconography and decorative principles.¹³²

Conclusions

Let us now summarize our observations regarding the architectural types of Late Antique burials of well-to-do members of society in the vast territory of the Balkan provinces. The funerary architecture in the Balkan provinces is standard on the

130 VALEVA 2001, 193, 197; SHALGANOV 2008; KITANOV 2002.

131 VALEVA 2001, 193.

132 VALEVA 1986.

whole, despite some local predilection for specific forms, e.g. trapezoidal tombs in *Viminacium* or ‘catacomb-type’ burials in the towns along the western shore of the Black Sea. The barrel-vaulted tomb can be identified as the most typical shape of a funerary monument for moderately well-to-do commissioners. Far fewer were the funerary structures with a central plan, covered by cross-vaults or calottes and provided with *arcosolia* for the burials inside. Two-storey mausolea, with an underground burial place and an above-ground *cella* for commemorative rites, were the most expensive buildings, commissioned by wealthy families both in urban necropoleis and on private estates. Some of these impressive mausolea had lavish painted and sculpted decoration.

The evidence under discussion shows a stable continuity of forms from the classical Roman to the Late Roman/Late Antique period. The transition of architectural types from pagan into Christian funerary contexts was an easy one and happened mainly during the 4th c. AD. Family tombs built in a pagan context continued to be used by the family members who adopted Christianity over time. At the same time, the accomplished and secluded form of the pagan mausoleum turned out to be a convenient burial place or memorial for venerated holy men and martyrs. So, while burials of ordinary Christians tended to become more simple, eventually ending up without any architectural setting, the graves of martyrs and holy men were placed or arranged in churches or purposefully built structures with a central plan and vaulted covering.

Many important questions remained barely touched in our contribution. One of them is the import of architectural types. The Balkans are on the crossroad between East and West, therefore both Roman/Italic and Oriental/Syrian-Anatolian traditions imposed themselves or intermingled here.¹³³ The exact dynamic, however, is very difficult to trace. It requires future investigation, which by all means will lead to a complex picture composed by objective as well as subjective factors.

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133 The type of the barrel-vaulted tomb was largely built in the provinces within present day Turkey and Syria: *Philadelphia*/Alaşehir, Constantinople, Ürgüp (in *Cappadocia*), *Sardis*, and, of course, the lavishly painted tomb in *Nikaia/Iznik*: VALEVA 2001, 202 (catalogue with literature).

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DONATELLA NUZZO

Le iscrizioni sepolcrali della provincia *Apulia et Calabria* in età tardoantica (IV–VII s. d. C.)

L'istituzione della provincia tardoantica e la cristianizzazione del territorio

In seguito alla riorganizzazione dell'Impero voluta da Diocleziano e alla decisione di sottoporre al regime provinciale anche la penisola italiana si istituì la provincia *Apulia et Calabria*, conseguente alla suddivisione dell'antica *regio secunda* augustea (Fig. 1).

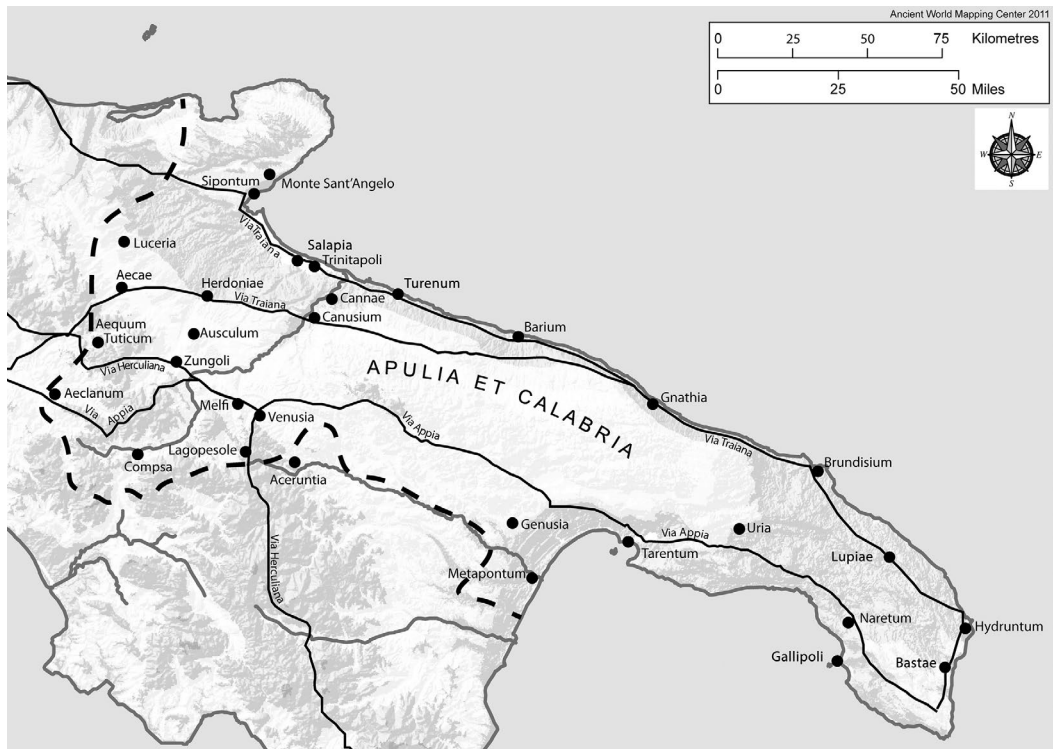


Fig. 1: La provincia *Apulia et Calabria* in età tardoantica.

Nell'ambito del nuovo assetto territoriale, a partire dal regno di Giuliano, per il ruolo di capoluogo provinciale fu scelta la città di Canosa, posta lungo il più importante asse stradale, la via Traiana. Tale decisione determinò, come in altre province, la composizione di una gerarchia dei centri urbani, con il capoluogo e sede

del governatore in posizione preminente e le altre città gradatamente subordinate allo stesso, prive di ogni autonomia amministrativa.¹ Come attestano anche le iscrizioni, conservarono un certo rilievo Venosa, Lucera e Taranto, talora oggetto di interesse da parte degli imperatori, mentre un ruolo certamente secondario si attribuì alle restanti *civitates* della regione.²

Anche le fonti scritte informano in maniera del tutto disomogenea a proposito dei centri urbani pugliesi. Cassiodoro menziona i *negotiatores* di Siponto³ e la città di *Hydruntum*/Otranto per la presenza nel fondo marino del mollusco da cui si ricavava la porpora;⁴ più tardi, Procopio cita ancora Otranto, e poi Taranto, Brindisi, Canosa e il *vicus* Canne per la loro importanza strategica nell'ambito del conflitto con i Goti.⁵ Le stesse città sono presenti nell'epistolario di papa Gregorio Magno, preoccupato della vacanza di alcune sedi diocesane.⁶

Per quanto riguarda gli insediamenti di ambito rurale, si è potuto osservare che in seguito al nuovo assetto organizzativo a partire dall'età tetrarchico-costantiniana si ebbe uno sviluppo dell'attività agricola, in particolare della cerealicoltura, funzionale all'approvvigionamento di Roma.⁷ Lo testimonia con evidenza la villa aristocratica di Faragola, nel territorio di *Ausculum*/Ascoli Satriano in Daunia, costruita alla fine del IV s. d.C.,⁸ e anche per la Puglia meridionale, specificamente per il territorio di Brindisi, è documentata una certa vitalità economica, almeno fino alla metà del V s. d.C.⁹

La conquista della regione da parte dei Longobardi, con l'eccezione di Otranto e dei territori limitrofi, conclusasi dopo la metà del VII s. d.C., segnò la fine dell'età tardoantica, con la definitiva disgregazione dell'organizzazione territoriale stabilita nel primo impero tetrarchico.

Il processo di diffusione e affermazione del cristianesimo coinvolse il territorio provinciale con modalità differenziate nelle diverse aree e, nello stesso modo, le comunità cristiane organizzate e guidate da vescovi si andarono distribuendo nel territorio in relazione sia al ruolo svolto da alcuni centri urbani, sia soprattutto agli intenti perseguiti dalla Chiesa di Roma, responsabile delle regioni dell'Italia suburbicaria.¹⁰ Le più antiche attestazioni diocesane della Puglia riguardano, in effetti,

1 GRELLE 1993, 161–174, GRELLE 1999, 117f. e, più di recente, VOLPE 2014.

2 CARLETTI/NUZZO 2007, 202–208.

3 Cassiod. Var. 2, 38.

4 Cassiod. Var. 1, 2.

5 Per quanto riguarda i riferimenti a Otranto vd. Prok. Bell. Goth. 1, 15; 2, 5; 3, 9–10, 18, 22, 26–27, 30; 4, 26, 34. Per Taranto vd. Prok. Bell. Goth. 3, 23, 27–28, 38; 4, 26, 34; per Brindisi vd. Prok. Bell. Goth. 3, 18; per Canosa vd. Prok. Bell. Goth. 3, 18; per Canne vd. Prok. Bell. Goth. 3, 18.

6 NUZZO 2017, 384–386.

7 Ampia discussione sul tema in VOLPE 2012 e VOLPE 2019.

8 Vd. VOLPE/TURCHIANO 2009 e, più di recente, DE VENUTO et al. 2018, 117–145 (con bibliografia).

9 APROSIO 2008, 151–169.

10 NUZZO 2010b, 474f.

il capoluogo provinciale, con il vescovo Stercorio di Canosa presente al concilio di *Serdica* del 343 d.C.,¹¹ la città di *Salapia* in Daunia, il cui vescovo Pardo partecipò nel 314 d.C. al concilio di Arles,¹² mentre dal Salento (forse da Brindisi) il vescovo Marco si recò nel 325 d.C. a Nicea.¹³ Tre diocesi, dunque, nel IV s. d.C., ben distribuite nel territorio provinciale, alle quali possiamo aggiungere, grazie ai risultati delle ricerche archeologiche, quella di Egnazia, per la Puglia centro-meridionale.¹⁴ Stando alle attestazioni delle fonti scritte, nel corso del V s. d.C. si andò infittendo la rete delle diocesi, tra le quali si possono ora comprendere quelle di Bari, Venosa, *Herdonia*, Siponto e, con certezza, di Brindisi.¹⁵ In ultimo, numerose sedi vescovili non risultano note prima del VI s. d.C., come *Turenium*/Trani, *Lupiae*/Lecce, Gallipoli, Taranto e Otranto.¹⁶

In sostanza nel corso di due secoli, secondo dinamiche e tempi di non sempre facile ricostruzione, la provincia risulta organizzata in base a una fitta rete diocesana, e, nello stesso tempo, la posizione di maggiore prestigio sembra costantemente occupata dal vescovo della città di Canosa. Dal punto di vista monumentale, l'unica chiesa episcopale documentata verso la fine del IV–inizi V s. d.C. sarebbe quella di Egnazia, mentre un maggiore sviluppo dell'edilizia ecclesiastica di ambito urbano si realizza nel pieno V s. d.C. a Siponto, Canosa, Bari e Venosa.¹⁷ A partire dallo stesso secolo si documentano anche i primi insediamenti religiosi nelle campagne, come per esempio il complesso ecclesiastico di San Giusto, in Daunia, e, nel

11 PCBE II p. 2132f.

12 PCBE II p. 1588.

13 PCBE II p. 1389f.

14 Per le indagini archeologiche nella chiesa episcopale, datata nella prima fase nella seconda metà del IV s. d.C., vd. CASSANO et al. 2007, 31–42 e CASSANO/MASTROCINQUE 2016, 55–42. Il primo vescovo noto della città, Rufenzio, sottoscrisse gli atti dei sinodi romani di Simmaco agli inizi del VI s. d.C. (PCBE II p. 1921f.).

15 Il vescovo di Bari Concordio partecipò al concilio romano di papa Ilario del 465 d.C., così come Felice di Siponto (PCBE II pp. 462. 777). La comunità cristiana di Brindisi è attestata per la prima volta da una lettera di papa Gelasio del 492–496 d.C. rivolta *clero, ordini et plebi Brundisii* (Geladius Epist. 16: THIEL 1868, 380f.). Anche a Venosa un vescovo Stefano è menzionato nelle lettere di Gelasio (Geladius Epist. 21: THIEL 1868, 338; Geladius Fragm. 14: THIEL 1868, 490f.) e compare tra i firmatari dei sinodi di papa Simmaco nei primi anni del VI s. d.C. (PCBE II p. 2115f.). Risale all'499 d.C. a partecipazione di Saturnino di *Herdonia* al sinodo romano (PCBE II p. 1992f.).

16 Per ciò che riguarda Trani la più antica attestazione vescovile riguarda il vescovo Eutichio presente ai concili romani degli inizi del VI s. d.C. (PCBE II p. 726). Alla metà dello stesso secolo sono attestati vescovi a Lecce e Gallipoli (nel 553 d.C. il vescovo Venanzio di *Lupiae*: PCBE II p. 2254f., mentre il primo vescovo conosciuto di Gallipoli è Dominicus, del 551 d.C.: PCBE II p. 582f.). Le diocesi di Otranto e di Taranto sono note solo a partire dall'episcopato di Gregorio Magno (per Otranto vd. Greg. M. epist. 9, 201, 206. La prima attestazione vescovile di Taranto riguarda Andrea, da collocare in un periodo precedente l'anno 592 d.C.: PCBE II p. 132f.).

17 Vd. rispettivamente per Siponto: FABBRI 1999, 179–187; Canosa: GIULIANI/LEONE/VOLPE 2013, 1217–1240; Bari: BERTELLI 2009; Venosa: SALVATORE 1997, 145–155.

Salento, quello di *Bastae/Vaste*, con una estesa area cimiteriale.¹⁸ Solo nel VI s. d.C. anche nelle campagne sembra concretizzarsi una rete ecclesiastica articolata, che documenta di riflesso una realtà insediativa forse ancora piuttosto complessa.¹⁹

D'altra parte, però, alla fine del VI s. d.C. da alcune lettere di Gregorio Magno si evince che due delle diocesi più importanti e forse più antiche della regione, Canosa e Brindisi, erano prive dei vescovi, così come quelle di Lecce e Gallipoli.²⁰ Pure per la maggior parte delle città pugliesi le liste episcopali si arrestano in questi anni per riprendere solo nel IX–X s. d.C., segno di una, almeno parziale, disgregazione dell'organizzazione ecclesiastica nel corso dell'alto medioevo.

Nella tarda antichità in alcune città dell'*Apulia et Calabria* è attestata la presenza di comunità ebraiche. In particolare a Venosa l'impianto di un gineceo imperiale dovette costituire un elemento di prosperità e favorì lo sviluppo di una fiorente comunità ebraica, che assunse un ruolo di primo piano nell'ambito della città.²¹ Nel suburbio nord-orientale, nella zona della Maddalena, si trova un'area sepolcrale composta da una serie di complessi ipogei ebraici e cristiani, scavati lungo la parete nord-orientale della collina. Le catacombe ebraiche hanno restituito una serie di epitaffi che ne attestano la frequentazione tra il IV e il VI s. d.C.²²

In questo contributo si esaminano le iscrizioni sepolcrali della provincia da diversi punti di vista, ponendo l'attenzione in particolare sulla distribuzione nel territorio provinciale, la cronologia delle attestazioni, i supporti epigrafici, i formulari e la lingua. Si vuole offrire, inoltre, un sintetico quadro complessivo che tenga conto degli epitaffi di committenza sia cristiana sia ebraica, nell'ottica di delineare il profilo storico-sociale dei contesti, esclusivamente urbani, della produzione epigrafica.²³

Le iscrizioni sepolcrali e la loro distribuzione nel territorio provinciale

Sono al momento note circa centottanta iscrizioni tardoantiche relative alla provincia dell'*Apulia et Calabria*, pertinenti per la maggior parte a contesti funerari.²⁴ Si documenta, dunque, nella regione una consistente diminuzione del numero delle

18 Per il complesso ecclesiastico di San Giusto vd. VOLPE 1998; a proposito delle indagini relative alla chiesa paleocristiana e al cimitero di Vaste vd. D'ANDRIA/MASTRONUZZI/MELISSANO 2006.

19 VOLPE 2014, 1060–1065 e NUZZO 2018, 74 (con bibliografia).

20 Cfr. Greg. M. epist. 1, 51 e 6, 21. Nella lettera 11, 57 (luglio 601 d.C.) lo stesso Pietro è ancora *visitor* della chiesa di Brindisi.

21 GRELLE 1994; LACERENZA 2010, 368–370; LACERENZA 2014, 190–192.

22 NOY 1993, nn. 42–116. Sono poche, invece, le iscrizioni ebraiche tardoantiche rinvenute in altre città della regione: NOY 1993, nn. 118–119 (Taranto), 134 (Otranto), 135 (Bari), 137 (Oria). Cfr. LACERENZA 2010, 369f.

23 Vd., in questa stessa prospettiva, anche NUZZO 2010a.

24 Per ciò che attiene il materiale epigrafico tardoantico della provincia, non solo di committenza cristiana, gli studi più recenti sono quelli di CARLETTI/NUZZO 2007 e

attestazioni epigrafiche rispetto a quelle della prima e media età imperiale.²⁵ Si è potuto verificare, inoltre, che le testimonianze si ritrovano solo in alcune città, tutte collocate nelle aree settentrionali e centrali della regione (Siponto, Lucera, Canosa, Venosa, Bari), con pochissimi rinvenimenti, per quanto riguarda il settore meridionale, solo a Brindisi e a Otranto. Il numero più consistente di iscrizioni, non solo epitaffi, si concentra ulteriormente in pochi centri urbani: in particolare Lucera, Venosa e Canosa, *civitates* che assunsero rilevanza amministrativa nel sistema provinciale.²⁶ Un altro dato che appare significativo è la quasi totale assenza di rinvenimenti epigrafici nelle aree rurali e ciò porta a riferire la produzione di iscrizioni essenzialmente all'ambito urbano.²⁷

Le iscrizioni sepolcrali cristiane provengono principalmente dai contesti cimiteriali di Canosa, oggetto peraltro in anni recenti di indagini sistematiche.²⁸ Gli altri centri urbani hanno restituito, invece, un numero molto ridotto di attestazioni, spesso in contrasto con quanto documentato nella piena età imperiale. Un dato importante da rilevare è che il maggior numero delle testimonianze epigrafiche tardoantiche di carattere funerario della regione è costituito dalle iscrizioni di committenza ebraica, relative per lo più ai cimiteri suburbani di Venosa.²⁹

I contesti funerari

Non è stato ancora condotto uno studio complessivo degli insediamenti cimiteriali tardoantichi della provincia, così come raccolte sistematiche dei dati e analisi d'insieme, che consentano di tracciare un quadro generale della prassi sepolcrale tardoantica e di affrontare temi quali il rapporto con gli insediamenti, la continuità/discontinuità rispetto alle necropoli di età classica, l'organizzazione degli spazi funerari, la rappresentazione (e autorappresentazione) delle strutture sociali, le condizioni di vita dei defunti.

SILVESTRINI 2010. Per quanto riguarda, invece, le iscrizioni cristiane vd. ICI XIII in part. p. LXV–LXVI, con bibliografia precedente. Rispetto all'edizione del CIL, che comprendeva solo nove iscrizioni cristiane (CIL IX 306, 410, 411, 412, 413, 933, 6150, 6192), si è registrato un notevole incremento numerico, anche grazie ai rinvenimenti di scavo. Per la produzione epigrafica in Puglia tra tarda antichità e altomedioevo vd., in particolare per il VI–VII s. d.C., FELLE 2012, 610–614.

25 Per le iscrizioni della regione in età imperiale vd. SILVESTRINI 2005.

26 CARLETTI/NUZZO 2007, 202–208.

27 L'unica eccezione è rappresentata dall'epitaffio di *Paulidirisi* trovato presso il casale di San Lorenzo in Carmignano (Foggia), pertinente verosimilmente a un cimitero rurale (ICI XIII 34). Per una diversa lettura del nome (*Pandirisi*) vd. FELLE 2012, 613 n. 33.

28 Per le indagini e i rinvenimenti epigrafici nel cimitero di Ponte della Lama vd. CARLETTI/NUZZO/DE SANTIS 2006–2007; per gli scavi del complesso episcopale di San Pietro vd. VOLPE et al. 2007. Cfr., inoltre, ICI XIII p. 3–15.

29 NOY 1993, nn. 42–116.

Tuttavia alcuni dati emergono con chiarezza. Se da una parte, infatti, non sono numerose nel territorio le attestazioni di basiliche cimiteriali, con le significative eccezioni di San Giusto,³⁰ di San Pietro a Canosa³¹ e della piccola chiesa in località Maldonato di Otranto,³² si segnala dall'altra la notevole diffusione tra la metà del IV e la metà del VI s. d.C. degli insediamenti ipogei. La prassi di scavare aree sepolcrali nel banco roccioso è ampiamente attestata in area garganica, a Siponto, a Canosa, a Venosa, a Bari e anche nel territorio salentino. Sembra proprio che, laddove consentito dalla conformazione geomorfologica del sito, si sia cercato di sfruttare sistematicamente i rilievi rocciosi, idonei alla creazione di ambienti ipogei,³³ recuperando così un'antica tradizione risalente al periodo preromano, documentata soprattutto in *Daunia* e, in particolare, a Canosa. È da rilevare, inoltre, che nei siti in cui sono state condotte indagini sistematiche si è evidenziata la presenza di sepolcreti contemporanei sia subdiali, sia sotterranei, trattandosi evidentemente di realtà strettamente connesse e non alternative. In alcuni casi, infine, esclusivamente in contesti urbani, si evidenzia la continuità di sfruttamento dei siti utilizzati a scopo cimiteriale già in età classica.³⁴

La cronologia degli epitaffi

Il più antico epitaffio cristiano datato è stato ritrovato a Canosa: si tratta dell'iscrizione sepolcrale del *procurator Brizinus*, responsabile forse della conduzione di tenute fondiarie, morto nell'anno 393 d.C. (Fig. 2).³⁵

La maggior parte delle iscrizioni sepolcrali di Canosa è stata ritrovata nel cimitero di Ponte della Lama, posto nel suburbio settentrionale della città, ed è databile tra la seconda metà del IV e la prima metà del VI s. d.C., periodo in cui tale contesto fu in uso. Alcune iscrizioni con data consolare permettono di confermare tale cronologia. Tra queste ricordo l'iscrizione graffita lacunosa incisa sul parapetto di una tomba ad arcosolio che ricorda il consolato di Flavio Rumorido dell'anno 403 d.C.,³⁶ quella, pure estremamente frammentaria, riconducibile al 481 d.C. per la menzione di *Flavius Rufus Placidus*,³⁷ ed infine gli epitaffi, oggi perduti, databili tra gli anni 519 e 549 d.C.,³⁸

30 Vd. VOLPE 1998. Le sepolture della basilica non hanno restituito nessun epitaffio.

31 Sul complesso ecclesiastico di San Pietro a Canosa vd. VOLPE et al. 2007.

32 Cfr. ICI XIII p. 113–115 (con bibliografia).

33 NUZZO 2008.

34 Tra gli altri, interessante in questa prospettiva è il caso della sepoltura del vescovo di Brindisi *Pretiosus*, il cui epitaffio fu ritrovato nel contesto di una necropoli romana, evidentemente ancora in uso nel VI–VII s. d.C. (ICI XIII 48).

35 ICI XIII 1.

36 ICI XIII 2.

37 ICI XIII 3.

38 ICI XIII 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

che sembrano da riferire al più tardo periodo di frequentazione delle catacombe canosine.

L'arco cronologico definito dalle iscrizioni con datazione consolare si colloca tra il 393 e il 549 d.C., ma la maggior parte delle epigrafi datate si concentra nella prima metà del VI s. d.C.³⁹ Tra i sistemi di datazione è attestato, esclusivamente a Canosa, anche l'uso dell'*indictio*.⁴⁰

Per definire la cronologia delle iscrizioni prive di datazione consolare ci si è potuti avvalere in alcuni casi del contesto di pertinenza. Le iscrizioni funerarie pertinenti agli ipogei cristiani della collina della Maddalena a Venosa sono state datate tra il V e la prima metà del VI s. d.C.;⁴¹ l'epitaffio di *Paulus*, rinvenuto in una basilica suburbana di Otranto, si può ritenere del VI s. d.C.;⁴² le iscrizioni ritrovate nel complesso ecclesiastico di San Pietro a Canosa si collocano tra gli ultimi anni del VI e il VII s. d.C., in concomitanza con la fase di occupazione funeraria degli edifici.⁴³

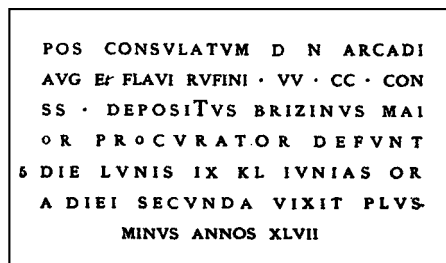
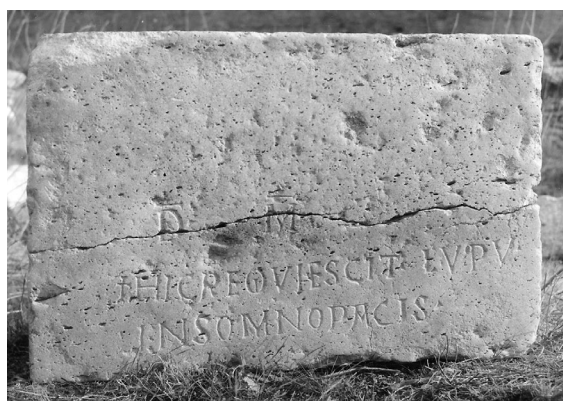


Fig. 2: Epitaffio di *Brizinus* dell'anno 393 d.C. da Canosa.

Fig. 3: Epitaffio di *Lupu* da Lucera.

Nel caso degli epitaffi di Lucera, si è rivelata utile per la definizione cronologica l'analisi degli elementi onomastici e paleografici (Fig. 3).

39 Vd. [ICI XIII 38](#) (anno 503 d.C.), [4](#) (anno 519 d.C.), [5](#) (anno 520 d.C.), [6](#) (anno 527 d.C.), [7](#) (anno 543 d.C.), [8](#) (anno 549 d.C.). Nel V s. d.C. si datano invece [ICI XIII 2](#) (anno 403 d.C.), [9](#) (anno 405 d.C.?), [3](#) (anno 481 d.C.). Il testo [ICI XIII 39](#) è riferibile, per la menzione del solo console Opilione, all'anno 453 oppure 524 d.C.

40 Vd. [ICI XIII 6](#), [7](#), [13](#). Nei primi due casi l'uso dell'indizione accompagna la datazione consolare.

41 Cfr. [ICI XIII 40](#), [41](#).

42 [ICI XIII 49](#).

43 [ICI XIII 11](#), [12](#), [16](#), [18](#), [20](#), [21](#), [22](#), [23](#).

I nomi dei defunti e dei dedicanti rimandano all'onomastica longobarda (*A[rech]isi*, *A[rich]isi* o *A[lec]isi*,⁴⁴ *Lupu*⁴⁵ e *Sigiffridus*)⁴⁶ e alcune forme grafiche (*Q* con tratto verticale iscritto, *A* con asta orizzontale spezzata, *E* onciale, *M* con le traverse alte sul rigo di base) trovano confronto con la scrittura epigrafica pavese dei secoli VI–VIII d.C. e con altre iscrizioni coeve di committenza longobarda.⁴⁷ Per tali motivi queste iscrizioni si possono datare tra la fine del VI e la prima metà del VII s. d.C.

L'epigrafia della regione si caratterizza per la continuità della prassi tardoantica fino a tutto il VII s. d.C. e per la presenza, in particolare negli epitaffi più tardi, di elementi di transizione verso forme più marcatamente altomedievali.⁴⁸

I supporti epigrafici

Il corpus epigrafico è composto ovviamente da numerose iscrizioni lapidarie, ma la maggior parte della documentazione è rappresentata dai *tituli picti*, iscrizioni dipinte in rosso su intonaco bianco. Per quanto riguarda i supporti lapidari, si osserva che l'uso del marmo è piuttosto limitato e circoscritto solo a Canosa e a Venosa,⁴⁹ mentre risultano maggiormente attestate le lastre di calcare di estrazione locale.⁵⁰

Le iscrizioni funerarie rinvenute nel complesso ecclesiastico di San Pietro furono incise sui lastroni in pietra calcarea oppure sulle lastre marmoree che dovevano costituire la copertura delle tombe pavimentali. Fa eccezione solo l'iscrizione musiva posta al di sopra di una sepoltura posta all'interno del mausoleo affiancato all'atrio di accesso della chiesa (Fig. 4).⁵¹

Nella regione le iscrizioni musive sono attestate soprattutto in testi di carattere votivo o dedicatorio e, dunque, l'esempio di Canosa rappresenta una attestazione di particolare importanza. In effetti, le iscrizioni funerarie in mosaico a copertura di sepolture pavimentali sono usate soprattutto in Africa, dove si contano numerosi casi, e pure, molto meno di frequente, nella penisola iberica, in Sardegna, in Sicilia, in Campania, ad Ancona e Grado, per restare in ambito occidentale.⁵² Nel

44 ICI XIII 30.

45 ICI XIII 31.

46 ICI XIII 32.

47 Cfr. ICI XIII 30. Un più aggiornato commento agli aspetti paleografici di queste iscrizioni in FELLE 2012, 611f.

48 FELLE 2012, 605f.

49 Lastre marmoree sono attestate da alcuni epitaffi lacunosi ritrovati a San Pietro a Canosa, tra cui quello del *defensor* (ICI XIII 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23) e dall'iscrizione sepolcrale di *Leontia* del 503 d.C., da Venosa (ICI XIII 38).

50 ICI XIII 9, 11, 12, 17 (Canosa), 30, 31, 33 (Lucera), 34 (*saltus Carminianensis*), 39 (Venosa), 48 (Brindisi), 49 (Otranto).

51 ICI XIII 16.

52 Un corpus recente dei mosaici funerari ritrovato in Italia è in QUATTROCCHI 2018, part. 53 (con una breve scheda sul mosaico di Canosa). Tra gli ultimi contributi sul tema, in

caso di Canosa la scelta di tale tecnica esecutiva sembra si possa collegare, più che alla influenza di prassi epigrafiche in uso in altri contesti geografici, alla volontà di reintegrare il pregevole rivestimento musivo del mausoleo, tagliato per la realizzazione di alcune sepolture pavimentali.

Un aspetto rilevante per quanto riguarda gli aspetti tecnico-esecutivi è rappresentato dall'ampio impiego a Canosa dei *tituli picti*, rinvenuti non solo negli ambienti ipogei, fenomeno che può essere legato anche alla scarsa reperibilità del marmo.⁵³ Tuttavia i caratteri testuali ed esecutivi di tali epitaffi e soprattutto il livello delle committenze consentono di attribuire, in linea generale, i *tituli picti* a personaggi di rilievo nell'ambito delle comunità cittadine. Da sottolineare anche l'impostazione formale dei testi, talvolta inseriti all'interno di *tabulae ansatae*. Dal punto di vista tecnico si segnala in particolare l'epitaffio metrico del *puer Ilarianus*, dipinto sull'intonaco bianco di rivestimento della fronte di una tomba a cassa inserita in un vano della necropoli subdiale (Fig. 5).⁵⁴



Fig. 4: Iscrizione sepolcrale in mosaico dal complesso ecclesiastico di San Pietro a Canosa.

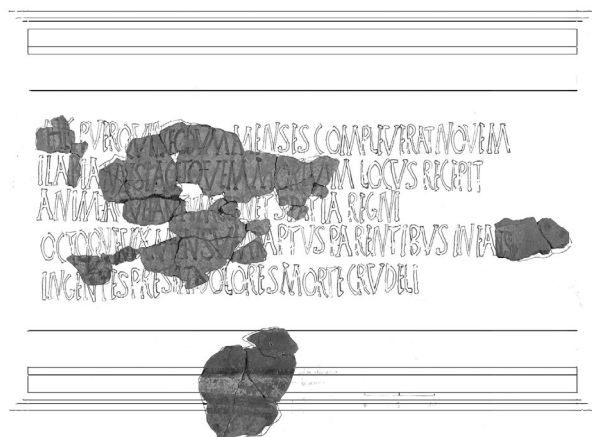


Fig. 5: Iscrizione in versi del *puer Ilarianus* da Canosa.

Il testo, disposto su linee guida tracciate a pennello in colore giallo ocre, fu dapprima inciso a sgraffio sull'intonaco e poi dipinto in rosso con un pennello a spatola. Anche nelle catacombe ebraiche di Venosa il maggior numero di epitaffi, spesso in-

particolare per mosaici funerari della Sardegna, vd. FERRI 2015, 557–563 e MAZZOLENI 2015, 498–500; per mosaici funerari dell'Africa e della penisola iberica, vd. i contributi ARDELEANU e ARBEITER in questo volume.

53 ICI XIII 3, 45, 10, 14, 15, 24.

54 ICI XIII 13.

seriti all'interno di tavole ansate, è dipinto a pennello in colore rosso su una base di intonaco bianco.⁵⁵

I formulari

Dal punto di vista della composizione del testo, nelle iscrizioni in esame è ampiamente attestata la formula locativa *hic requiescit* (spesso con l'aggiunta di *in pace*),⁵⁶ posta all'inizio del testo e preceduta da croce, ricorrente nell'epigrafia funeraria cristiana soprattutto a partire dal V s. d.C.⁵⁷ La stessa formula locativa è usata ripetutamente anche nelle iscrizioni tardoantiche di committenza ebraica, come documentato dalle attestazioni di Venosa.⁵⁸

In alcuni epitaffi canosini della prima metà del VI s. d.C. questa formula incipitaria è seguita da *sanctae memoriae*,⁵⁹ che ricorre anche nel titolo funerario di *Leontia* di Venosa, datato nell'anno 503 d.C., a conferma della sua diffusione nell'area in questo periodo (Fig. 6).⁶⁰

L'espressione è presente in diverse regioni dell'*orbis* con esempi dall'Italia settentrionale e meridionale, dalla Gallia, dall'Africa settentrionale e dalla Dalmazia.⁶¹ Dal punto di vista cronologico, l'uso è in genere compreso tra il V e il VI s. d.C., con l'eccezione dell'iscrizione del *presbyter [Can]didus*, dell'anno 368 oppure 378 d.C., proveniente da un cimitero del Lazio,⁶² e degli epitaffi di alcuni vescovi delle diocesi piemontesi (Ursicino di Torino, Grazioso di Novara e Celso di Vercelli)⁶³ e di Aureliano di

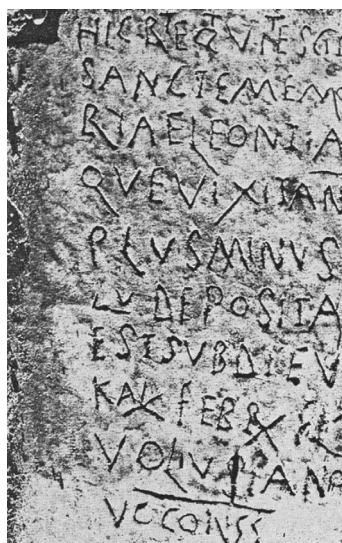


Fig. 6: Epitaffio di *Leontia* da Venosa.

55 Cfr. NOY 1993, nn. 42, 44, 48, 51–52, 56–57, 60–64, 67–69, 71–78, 80–82, 84–90, 96, 103–105, 107, 111. Come nel caso del carme di *Ilarianus*, anche le iscrizioni NOY 1993, nn. 86, 107 furono prima incise e poi dipinte a pennello. Per contesti funerari subdiali con epitaffi dipinti vd. i contributi FELLE, VALEVA e ARDELEANU in questo volume.

56 ICI XIII 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 16, 23, 30, 31, 33, 38, 39, 40, 41, 48.

57 CARLETTI 2008, 208.

58 NOY 1993, nn. 63, 67–68, 73, 80, 85–90, 103, 107 (con diverse varianti e anche l'uso del verbo *pauso*). Numerose attestazioni della stessa formula in lingua greca (ὧδε κεῖται, con qualche variante): NOY 1993, nn. 46–48, 50, 52, 66, 76–78, 104, 111, 114–116. Per iscrizioni ebraiche sia che cristiane con formulari simili, vd. anche i contributi CUBAS DÍAZ e GATIER in questo volume.

59 ICI XIII 4, 5, 6, 8.

60 ICI XIII 38.

61 Cfr. ILCV III p. 404.

62 ILCV 1145.

63 CIL V 7136, 6562, 6725. Per i primi due cfr. anche ICI XVII 13b, 43.



Fig. 7: Epitaffio del vescovo *Pretiosus* da Brindisi.

Nola⁶⁴ databili nel VII–VIII s. d.C. L'aggettivo *sanctus* sembra alludere alle buone qualità dei defunti e al ricordo positivo da essi lasciato, analogamente al più frequente *bonae memoriae*, piuttosto che alla loro condizione di «fedeli» o «cristiani», come invece accertato in altri contesti.⁶⁵ Tale forma di elogio si addice a defunti di ogni condizione e non esclusivamente a membri della gerarchia ecclesiastica, ai quali più frequentemente *sanctae memoriae* è riferito: soprattutto ai vescovi, ma anche ai presbiteri, ai diaconi e suddiaconi, mentre sono rare le iscrizioni in cui *sanctae memoriae* è rivolto a personaggi non legati all'attività ecclesiastica e di queste un gruppo cospicuo è rappresentato dalle attestazioni canosine.⁶⁶

Ancora a proposito dei formulari è necessario segnalare l'espressione *hic requiescit in somno pacis* preceduta dalla croce attestata da tre epigrafi rinvenute a Lucera, databili, come si è osservato, tra la fine del VI e la prima metà del VII s. d.C.⁶⁷ Essa è molto diffusa (per esempio a Roma e in Piemonte⁶⁸) e ricorre con particolare frequenza nelle iscrizioni cristiane della Campania, in particolare a Eclano dalla seconda metà del IV fino alla seconda metà del VI s. d.C.⁶⁹ e a Capua nel corso del VI s. d.C.⁷⁰ Nell'*Apulia et Calabria* è documentata anche a Brindisi, dall'epitaffio del vescovo *Pretiosus*, dove è posta alla fine del testo (Fig. 7).⁷¹

64 CIL X 1366.

65 Per il caso di Bolsena cfr. CARLETTI 1984, 125. Sull'espressione vd. anche MAZZOLENI 2007, 54f.

66 CARLETTI 2008, 229. Vd. anche CORDA 1999, 48 e GAUTHIER/MARIN/PRÉVOT 2010, 534f.

67 ICI XIII 30, 31, 33.

68 Cfr. ICI XVII p. 255 (indice).

69 ICI VIII p. 82, in ventuno testi.

70 Cfr., per esempio, tra le iscrizioni datate CIL X 4495 (del 517 d.C.), 4516 (del 570 d.C.).

71 ICI XIII 48.

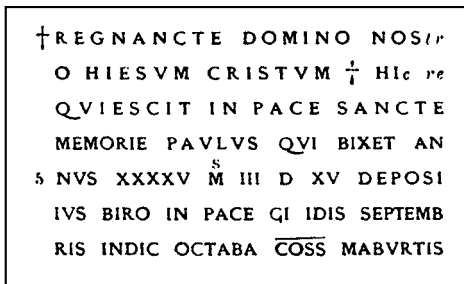


Fig. 8: Epitaffio di *Paulus* dell'anno 529 d.C. da Canosa.

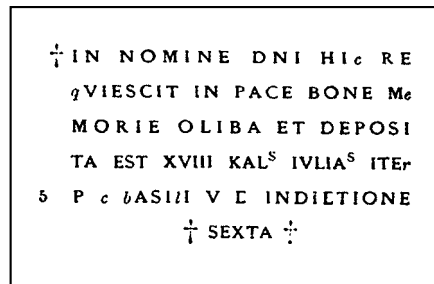


Fig. 9: Epitaffio di *Oliba* dell'anno 543 d.C. da Canosa.

Tra le iscrizioni caratterizzate da formulari inconsueti si segnala quella di *Paulus*, morto a Canosa nell'anno 529 d.C., che reca nelle prime due righe del testo la singolare intestazione: *Regnancte Domino nostro Hiesum Christum* preceduta e seguita da croce (Fig. 8).⁷²

Essa non risulta attestata in altre epigrafi sepolcrali e trova confronto solo con le contemporanee titolature dei re goti Teodorico (474–526 d.C.) e Atalarico (526–534 d.C.), nei bolli laterizi⁷³ e verosimilmente in una iscrizione urbana.⁷⁴ Anche nell'epigrafe canosina di *Oliba* dell'anno 543 d.C., il testo è preceduto da una espressione incipitaria (*in nomine Domini*) slegata dal testo che segue (Fig. 9).⁷⁵

Infine, in un epitaffio frammentario si riscontra la presenza dell'acclamazione *vivas* (nella forma *biba* con lo scambio labiovelare B–V) che esprime l'augurio rivolto al defunto per la vita ultraterrena.⁷⁶ L'uso dei *carmina* è attestato nella regione dalla sola epigrafe del *puer Ilarianus*, sepolto nel cimitero subdiale di Ponte della Lama a Canosa, il cui testo è composto in esametri.⁷⁷

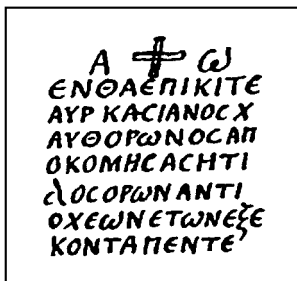


Fig. 10: Epitaffio di Αὐρήλιος Κασσιανός da Siponto.

Per quanto riguarda le iscrizioni di committenza cristiana si può osservare l'assoluta prevalenza di testi in lingua latina, con poche eccezioni: l'epitaffio in greco di Αὐρήλιος Κασσιανός, forse un commerciante, proveniente da un villaggio del territorio di *Antiochia* in Siria e morto verosimilmente a Siponto (Fig. 10)⁷⁸ e l'epigrafe funeraria

72 ICI XIII 6.

73 Cfr. CIL XV 1664–1670, 1672–1675.

74 Cfr. ORLANDI 1997, 168f., relativa verosimilmente a un intervento di tipo edilizio.

75 ICI XIII 7.

76 ICI XIII 34.

77 ICI XIII 13.

78 ICI XIII 27 e NUZZO 2012.

bilingue, in greco e in latino, di *Alexander*, sepolto in uno degli ipogei di Ponte della Lama a Canosa, definito genericamente *grecus*, cioè orientale.⁷⁹

Nelle iscrizioni ebraiche tardoantiche di Venosa si usavano il latino, il greco e l'ebraico. La lingua prevalente è quella greca, mentre quella ebraica, pure presente in un alto numero di documenti, compare essenzialmente in formule stereotipate, «espressioni integrative» al testo principale in greco o in latino.⁸⁰

Le iscrizioni funerarie e le comunità urbane tardoantiche

Attraverso i rinvenimenti epigrafici si può provare a tracciare un quadro delle comunità urbane nella tarda antichità e, in particolare, di quanti fecero ricorso alla memoria scritta per conservare il ricordo della propria sepoltura. In realtà la documentazione di committenza cristiana dell'*Apulia et Calabria* non offre molti spunti in tal senso. Raramente il nome del defunto è accompagnato da indicazioni relative al ruolo svolto in vita: più cospicua, anche sotto questo aspetto, la documentazione canosina che attesta un *defensor*, un *vir honestus*, un *maior*, *procurator* e un *primicerius*.⁸¹ Una sola iscrizione è relativa a un vescovo, *Pretiosus* di Brindisi,⁸² mentre da Venosa proviene l'epitaffio di un personaggio della Chiesa locale, un *lector*, *qui timore Chr(ist)i reliquit vit[am] saecularem*.⁸³ Si è già accennato ai due defunti originari delle regioni orientali dell'impero, *Alexander* sepolto a Canosa⁸⁴ e Αύρίλιος Κασσιανός a Siponto.⁸⁵

Per ciò che riguarda le iscrizioni ebraiche, si può ritenere che l'uso dell'epitaffio fosse riservato ai membri più eminenti della comunità giudaica. Le epigrafi rinvenute nella catacomba di Venosa si riferiscono infatti ad esponenti di rilievo nell'ambito della comunità cittadina: *archisynagogoi*, gerusiarchi, un *didaskalos*, un *presbyter* e alcune *presbyterae*.⁸⁶ Inoltre, il cd. ipogeo Lauridia, di carattere privato e familiare, ha restituito gli epitaffi marmorei in greco di Marcello, «padre dei padri» e *patronus*» della città; di Auxanio, anch'egli patrono della città, della moglie Faustina e di Marco definito *theuseues* (catecumeno): il nucleo cimiteriale è riferibile dunque a un gruppo di personaggi di rilievo, la cui importanza venne decretata dal conferimento del patronato, come risulta appunto dalle loro epigrafi funerarie.⁸⁷

79 ICI XIII 10.

80 LACERENZA 2014, 191 f.

81 Cfr. rispettivamente ICI XIII 1, 8, 11, 20. Sul ruolo del *defensor civitatis* vd., più di recente, FRAKES 2018, 127–147.

82 ICI XIII 48.

83 ICI XIII 39.

84 ICI XIII 10.

85 ICI XIII 27.

86 Cfr. per esempio NOY 1993, nn. 48, 53, 59, 76, 62.

87 GRELLI 1994 e NOY 1993, nn. 113–116.

Conclusioni

Il primo dato che emerge dall'analisi delle testimonianze epigrafiche funerarie dell'*Apulia et Calabria* tardoantica è la drastica diminuzione della quantità delle attestazioni rispetto a quelle databili nel I–II s. d.C., aspetto riscontrato anche a proposito delle epigrafi di apparato. Si è osservato, inoltre, che le iscrizioni si concentrano quasi esclusivamente in alcune città della provincia (in particolare a Lucera, Canosa, Venosa), mentre al momento esse risultano assenti nei contesti rurali. Questo impone, al momento, di riferire la produzione epigrafica solamente ai contesti urbani. La maggior parte delle epigrafi funerarie tardoantiche è di committenza ebraica e proviene dalle catacombe di Venosa, ma un numero considerevole di attestazioni è riferibile anche ai cimiteri ipogei e al complesso ecclesiastico di San Pietro a Canosa. Tra i vari aspetti presi in esame (cronologia, formulari, lingua) particolarmente interessante è il tema dei supporti e degli aspetti tecnico-esecutivi: numerose iscrizioni di committenza cristiana ed ebraica, infatti, rinvenute soprattutto nei contesti ipogei sono dipinte in rosso su una base di intonaco bianco, mentre i supporti lapidari, in marmo o in pietra locale, sono meno attestati. L'uso dei *tituli picti* trova riscontro in altri cimiteri dell'Italia centro-meridionale, a Roma e nel Lazio, in Campania e in Sicilia. Tale fenomeno, spesso collegato alla scarsa reperibilità del marmo, non implica però necessariamente una committenza di basso livello, come attestano per esempio l'epitaffio in versi di *Ilarianus* di Canosa e le iscrizioni di personaggi eminenti della comunità ebraica di Venosa, e si inserisce nell'ambito della diffusa diversificazione delle tecniche esecutive epigrafiche in età tardoantica.

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Die römischen Katakomben

Überlegungen zu Besitzverhältnissen, zur räumlichen Nutzung und zur Grabtypologie anhand der Katakomben Domitilla, SS. Marcellino e Pietro und Randanini

Einführung

Als archäologische Monumente sind die Katakomben Roms zugleich beeindruckend wie auch schwierig handzuhaben:¹ Bis heute sind im Umkreis von Rom etwa 60 solcher unterirdischen Friedhöfe bekannt geworden, die als Katakomben klassifiziert werden, also in Bauweise und Charakter deutlich als gemeinschaftliche Grabanlage mit rationaler Raumnutzung in einem systematischen Galerienetz für vorwiegend *loculus*-Bestattung und der Möglichkeit auf weitere Vergrößerung gekennzeichnet sind.² Ihre Gangsysteme erreichen eine Länge von insgesamt ca. 150km, mit hunderttausenden von Gräbern darin.³ Diese unterirdischen Labyrinth wurden ab dem späten 16. Jahrhundert wiederentdeckt.⁴ Ihre Gräber wurden bis ins frühe 19. Jh. hinein oft systematisch geöffnet, um die vermeintlichen Reliquien der so genannten ‚Katakomben-Märtyrer‘ zu entnehmen, denn die römische Kirche war damals der Ansicht, dass alle Gräber in Katakomben die Gebeine frühchristlicher Märtyrer der Verfolgungszeit enthielten. Daher ist der archäologische Befund heute in weiten Teilen gestört. Sehr oft liegen die beraubten Gräber offen und viele Grabinschriften, die als Grabverschluss angebracht waren, fehlen oder wurden nicht mehr *in situ* gefunden. Allerdings wurde bislang nie systematisch für jede Katakombe statistisch erhoben, wie viele Gräber es überhaupt gab,

- 1 Die hier vorgestellten Ergebnisse stammen aus Forschungsprojekten, die in den letzten Jahren vom Deutschen Archäologischen Institut Abt. Rom in Zusammenarbeit mit dem Parco Archeologico dell'Appia Antica und der Pontificia Commissione di Archeologia Sacra durchgeführt werden konnten. Den Verantwortlichen der Pontificia Commissione di Archeologia Sacra und des Parco Archeologico dell'Appia Antica sei ausdrücklich gedankt. Zum Domitilla-Projekt vgl. ZIMMERMANN 2016; die jüdische Katakombe der Vigna Randanini wird im Rahmen des DAI-Projekts ‚Kollektive Bestattungen‘ erforscht, vgl. ZIMMERMANN et al. 2019; ZIMMERMANN et al. 2022.
- 2 Zur Definition des Begriffs Katakombe in der aktuellen Forschung vgl. FIOCCHI NICOLAI 2004, 377; FIOCCHI NICOLAI 2014, 273. Als Einführung allg. FIOCCHI NICOLAI – BISCONTI – MAZZOLENI 1998.
- 3 Eine genaue Vermessung mit Erhebung der Längen und Volumina fehlt bis heute.
- 4 Zur Wiederentdeckung der Katakomben und dem Umfeld Antonio Bosios vgl. etwa GHI-LARDI 2006.

wie viele noch geschlossen sind bzw. wie viele insgesamt beraubt wurden, oder wie vielen davon noch eine Inschrift zugeordnet werden kann.⁵ Zudem ist auch allzu oft aus dem Blick geraten, dass die Katakomben ‚nur‘ die unterirdischen – und damit ganz sicherlich ärmeren – Bereiche der Zömeterien bilden, deren vermutlich repräsentativere Grabplätze in Mausoleen darüber anzunehmen sind, die sich aber nur sehr selten erhalten haben und nur in wenigen Ausnahmefällen ergraben werden konnten.⁶

Besitzverhältnisse in den römischen Katakomben – einige übergreifende Aspekte

Eine der wichtigsten Quellen für die positive Wahrnehmung und Beurteilung der christlichen Sorge um die Bestattungen ihrer Toten stammt – ausgerechnet möchte man hinzufügen – von Julian Apostata. In seinem berühmten Brief an Arsakios, Priester von Galatien,⁷ nennt er unter den Gründen für das Erstarken des Christentums, neben weiteren Beispielen ihrer Menschenfreundlichkeit, die Armenfürsorge allgemein und speziell die Sorge für die Bestattungen: Tatsächlich ist sie Teil der *caritas* und eines der Merkmale christlichen Verhaltens. Als voraussetzungslose ‚Leistung‘ ist eine kostenlose Bestattung ein Novum in der römischen Welt, und ihrer wird im Rahmen der Armenfürsorge teilhaftig, wer sich einen Grabplatz sonst nicht leisten könnte.⁸ Der Bischof hatte nach der *Traditio Apostolica* die Kosten für die Bestattung der Armen zu übernehmen.⁹

Für die Stadt Rom ging man stets davon aus, dass dieser Pflicht zur Bereitstellung eines Grabplatzes in den Katakomben nachgekommen wurde, die für den Zeitraum von etwa 200 Jahren, vom frühen 3. bis ins frühe 5. Jh. n. Chr., als Zömeterien genutzt wurden.¹⁰ Dabei ist es nicht einfach, ihren rechtlichen Status zu be-

5 Vgl. zum epigraphischen Material und dem Stand seiner Erschließung den Beitrag FELLE in diesem Band. Die christlichen Inschriften Roms sind in den Bänden des ICVR vorgelegt.

6 FIOCCHI NICOLAI 2014, 277; ZIMMERMANN/STRAPAZZON/GIULIANI 2022.

7 Iul. epist. 84 (an Arsakios).

8 Vgl. mit weiteren Belegen FIOCCHI NICOLAI 2014, 275f.; HARTL 2018, 19. Im Gegensatz dazu vgl. zum Fehlen einer solchen Initiative in der paganen römischen Welt: SCHRUMPF 2006, 138–148.

9 GEERLINGS 1991, 299. In *Ephesos* ist noch im 6. Jh. n. Chr. inschriftlich belegt, dass ein Bischof sogar mit Exkommunikation bedroht war, wenn er der Verpflichtung zur Bestattung der Armen nicht nachkam; vgl. dazu die sog. *Hypatios*-Inschrift aus dem Nartex der Marienkirche (I.Ephesos 4135), zuletzt DESTEPHEN 2008, 457–469, bes. 466 mit Anm. 98. Für den Fall der Fürsorge christlicher Gemeinden um die Bestattung ihrer Bischöfe vgl. den Beitrag ARDELEANU in diesem Band.

10 Vgl. zu den Katakomben als Orte vorwiegend für Armenbestattungen FIOCCHI NICOLAI 2001, 16–8; ZIMMERMANN 2013, 171–173, mit weiterer Lit; vgl. zur Bedeutung des Begriffs Zömeterium BRANDENBURG 1994.

stimmen: einerseits nennen die christlichen Quellen des 4. Jhs. n. Chr. 16 Gemeindefriedhöfe, die mit konkreten Katakomben identifiziert sind.¹¹ Andererseits gibt es in keiner einzigen Katakombe so etwas wie einen archäologischen Beweis für den kirchlichen Besitz etwa in Form eines *titulus* am Eingang, sondern höchstens sekundäre Hinweise in relativ späten Inschriften, die die Verehrung von Märtyrern und damit in Textquellen wie den frühmittelalterlichen Pilgeritineraren genannte Zömeterien identifizieren lassen.

Große Übereinstimmung zwischen archäologischen und schriftlichen Quellen bietet zum Glück die als älteste, direkt von der römischen Kirche als gemeinschaftliche Grabanlage organisierte Katakombe S. Callisto: Hippolytus berichtet, dass Bischof Zephyrinus (198–217 n. Chr.) den Diakon (und später Bischof) Callixtus als Verwalter des Zömeteriums einsetzte, und dieses wird allgemein mit der berühmten *area I* von S. Callisto identifiziert.¹² Bisweilen belegen auch Grabinschriften den antiken Namen des Zömeteriums, in dem sie gefunden wurden. Oftmals ließen sich Katakomben ferner mit Hilfe der Grabgedichte, die Bischof Damasus (366–384 n. Chr.) als Epitaphe an den Gräbern verehrter Märtyrer anbringen ließ, identifizieren. Eine offene Frage bleibt, wie Christen legal Zömeterien besitzen und betreiben konnten, solange sie offiziell als illegal (in juristischem Sinne) und sogar als Staatsfeinde angesehen wurden, speziell zu Zeiten der Christenverfolgungen. Eusebius berichtet im 4. Jh. n. Chr., dass Gallienus, nach den Verfolgungen unter Decius und Valerianus, im Jahre 260 n. Chr. die Friedhöfe der christlichen Gemeinden wieder öffnete.¹³ Dies bezeugt, dass die Kirche das rechtliche Problem irgendwie lösen konnte – vermutlich war der offizielle Eigentümer der Bischof oder ein Verwalter als Privatperson.¹⁴

Die ersten regulären Gemeindekatakomben zeichnen sich, in einer gewissen Bandbreite, durch einige typische Charakteristika ihrer Anlage aus.¹⁵ Zwar nutzen einige Zömeterien wie Priscilla oder S. Sebastiano unregelmäßige unterirdische Systeme ehemaliger Steinbrüche, sog. Arenare, in denen zuvor Tufferde abgebaut worden war, oder stillgelegte Wasserspeicher, wie etwa die sog. *Spelunca magna* in Pretestato. Andere zeigen hingegen eine untereinander einheitliche, regelmäßige Struktur. Die berühmte *area I* von S. Callisto (Abb. 1) entwickelt sich etwa aus

11 FIOCCHI NICOLAI 2014, 285.

12 Ps. Hippolytus, Philosoph. 9, 12, 14 (WENDLAND 1916, 248); vgl. zuletzt FIOCCHI NICOLAI 2001, 15–32, bes. 21; FIOCCHI NICOLAI/GUYON 2006, FIOCCHI NICOLAI 2014, 274.

13 Eus. HE 7, 11, 13; vgl. FIOCCHI NICOLAI 2014, 275.

14 FIOCCHI NICOLAI 2004, 383–384; FIOCCHI NICOLAI 2014, 283–285. Vgl. zum Wandel der frühchristlichen Gemeindestruktur in Rom im Verlauf des 2. Jhs. n. Chr. von presbyterial zu episkopal Simonetti 2006. Da mit S. Callisto für die älteste christliche Katakombe der Bischof als direkter Auftraggeber belegt ist und die etwas späteren Katakomben eine sehr ähnliche Struktur aufweisen, ist zwar nicht beweisbar, aber doch sehr naheliegend, dass diese Ähnlichkeit im selben Auftraggeber und auch zentralen Besitzer, letztlich damit im Bischof, begründet ist.

15 FIOCCHI NICOLAI 2014, 280–285.

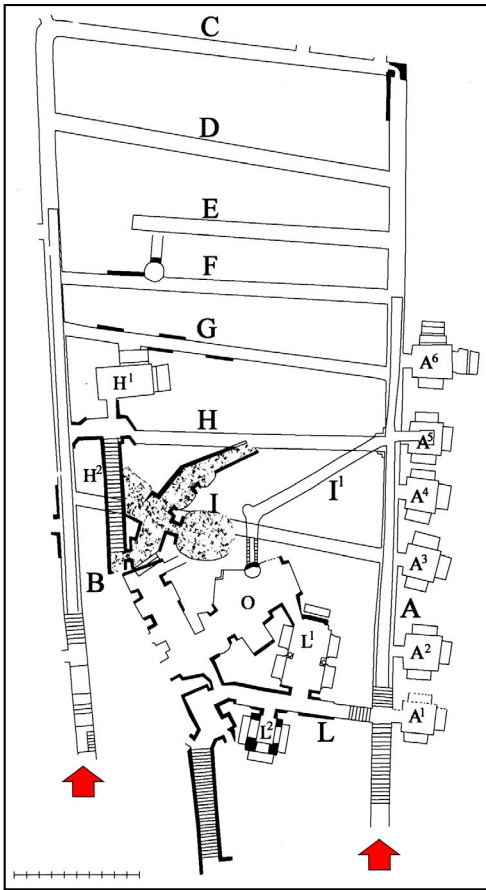


Abb. 1: Katakombe S. Callisto, sog. Area I.

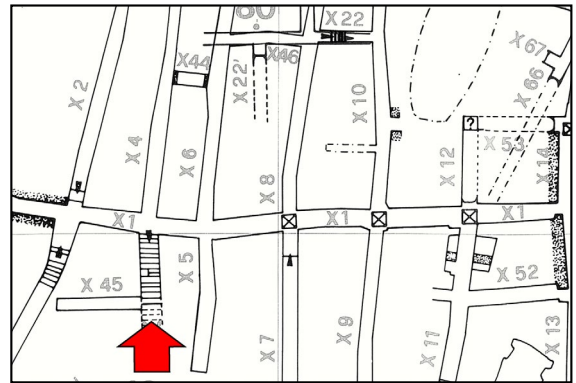


Abb. 2: Katakombe SS. Marcellino e Pietro, Kernregion X.

zwei parallelen Treppenabgängen und zwei langen Galerien, die durch rechtwinklige Verbindungsgänge miteinander verbunden wurden, und ein Gangnetz im sog. Rostsystem bilden.

Diese Struktur nutzt offensichtlich genau den Grundbesitz *sub divo*, der ebenfalls ein rechteckiges Grundstück war, und erschließt einheitlich etwa 1200 einfache *loculi* entlang dieser Galerien. Die *area I* ist hierin kein Einzelfall: Die Pläne der Kernregion X der Katakombe SS. Marcellino e Pietro (Abb. 2) oder der *regio I* der Pretestato-Katakombe lassen analoge rechteckige Parzellen *sub divo* erkennen, wenn man ihre Grenzen der unterirdischen Galerien entsprechenden an die Oberfläche projiziert. Für diese Interpretation des Befundes einer ursprünglich rechteckigen Grundstücksparzelle, die unterirdisch erschlossen wird, liefern Kernregionen weiterer Katakomben gute Argumente.¹⁶ Und die Regelmäßigkeit des Befundes lässt an eine Art Masterplan denken, für den man annehmen darf, dass die Kirche

16 Vgl. die einzelnen Beiträge im Band FIOCCHI NICOLAI/GUYON 2006.

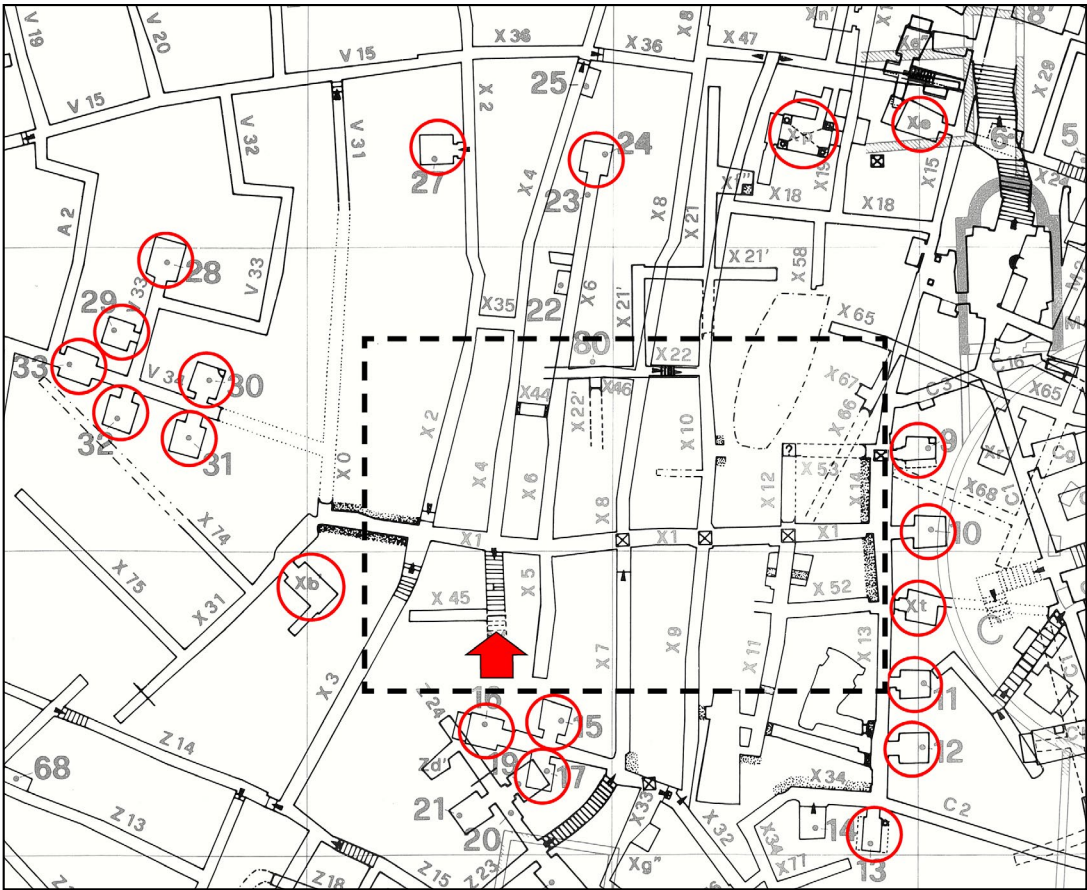


Abb. 3: Katakombe SS. Marcellino e Pietro, Kernregion X mit Erweiterung und *cubicula* bis zum frühen 4. Jh. n. Chr.

als Organisator bzw. der Bischof als Auftraggeber und vermutlich auch Eigentümer dieser charakteristischen Anlagen zu beanspruchen sind. Leider gibt es wie gesagt bislang nur in begrenztem Umfang Kenntnis von der allfälligen Bebauung der Areale *sub divo*, daher können hier nur die Bereiche unter der Erde diskutiert werden.

In aller Regel wurden diese ersten Parzellen im Verlauf des 3. Jhs. n. Chr. nur recht moderat vergrößert. Man kann vermuten, dass der Grundbesitz sicherlich aus Kostengründen eher zögerlich in der Fläche ausgedehnt wurde, hingegen wurden die Galerien regelmäßig weiter in die Erde abgetieft, wobei neuer Bestattungsplatz ohne neue Grundstücks-Investition entstand. Oft zählen daher in den Katakomben die ältesten Galerien auch zu den tiefsten, zugleich liegen die ältesten Gräber heute nur schwer erreichbar weit oben an den Galeriewänden, während sich die jüngeren Gräber nahe am Boden der tiefer gegrabenen Gänge befinden. Nach dem Ende der Verfolgungszeit (305 n. Chr.) bzw. ab dem Kirchenfrieden (313 n. Chr.) existierte das vormalige Problem einer horizontalen Ausdehnung der

zur Verfügung stehenden Parzelle offensichtlich nicht mehr: Im Verlauf des 4. Jhs. n. Chr. entwickeln sich die Katakomben oft stark in der Fläche, wie am besten das Beispiel der Domitilla-Katakombe (Abb. 4–6) zeigen kann: Die räumlich stark begrenzten, alten Regionen des 3. Jhs. n. Chr. reichen in bis zu 8 m Tiefe, während ein normaler Gang des riesigen Galerierasters des 4. Jhs. n. Chr. meist nur die Normalhöhe von etwa 2 m erreicht. Die späten Regionen wurden nie vertieft, offensichtlich weil es für die Ausdehnung keine (ökonomische) Begrenzung der Fläche mehr gab. Solche Aspekte, die man nicht nur unter topographisch-chronologischen Gesichtspunkten, sondern insbesondere unter wirtschaftlichen vergleichen müsste, sind bislang noch zu wenig erschlossen.¹⁷

Ein weiterer Aspekt ist hier zu erwähnen: Zu Beginn boten diese ersten Systeme wie in S. Callisto oder SS. Marcellino e Pietro keine bzw. kaum *cubicula*. In S. Callisto konzentrierten sie sich in der zweiten bzw. dritten Ausbauphase fast ausschließlich in einer Galerie (in den sog. Sakramentskapellen A1–A3 und dann A4–A6, Abb. 1),¹⁸ in SS. Marcellino e Pietro entstanden *cubicula* erst in der zweiten Nutzungs-Generation, und dann rund um das erste Gangnetz der Kernregion X herum verteilt (Abb. 3).¹⁹ Der Bedarf an prestigeträchtigeren Kammern war anfangs offenbar nicht ausgeprägt, sondern entstand erst nach der Anlage des ersten Galerierasters mit einheitlich einfachsten *loculi* an den Wänden der Galerien. Es ist zudem interessant, dass in beiden Fällen, in S. Callisto wie in SS. Marcellino e Pietro, die *fossore*s (die Totengräber) unter den Besitzern dieser *cubicula* zu vermuten sind.²⁰ Sie erledigen die unterirdische Arbeit, also das Ausschachten der Gänge und Gräber, und sie nehmen auch die Bestattung selbst mit dem Einbringen des Leichnams und dem Verschluss des Grabes vor.²¹ Es wundert daher nicht, dass sie im Verlauf des 4. Jhs. n. Chr. zu Mitgliedern des Klerus erhoben wurden, vielleicht um die Verstorbenen im Moment der Schließung des Grabes einsegnen zu können. Jedenfalls bezeugen Epitaphe aus dem 4. Jh. Chr., dass sie auch für den Verkauf der Gräber zuständig waren.²² Die *fossore*s waren also die Ausgräber und die technischen Verwalter der Katakomben.

17 Vgl. zu den ökonomischen Aspekten der Katakomben jetzt RUTGERS 2019. Allerdings fehlt in den interessantesten und erstmals detailliert vorgetragenen Berechnungen zu den anfallenden Unkosten für die Anlage der Katakomben bzw. eines *cubiculum* oder eines *loculus* der Hinweis, dass diese Unkosten den Quellen nach im Zweifel ja eben nicht auf die Bestatteten umgelegt, sondern vom Bischof getragen wurden.

18 FIOCCHI NICOLAI 2014, 281.

19 GUYON 1987, 64f.

20 In S. Callisto wie in SS. Marcellino e Pietro gibt es in diesen *cubicula* Malereien mit Berufsbildern von Fossoren, was für ihre Deutung als Familiengrüfte von Totengräbern spricht; vgl. ZIMMERMANN 2002, 208f. mit Anm. 699–702; BISCONTI 2009, 22–24.

21 Die berühmte Ritzzeichnung eines Fossors auf einer Grabinschrift aus der Comodilla-Katakombe zeigt diesen mit seiner Lampe, der Hacke und dem als Wickelmumie auf dem Boden liegenden Leichnam, ICVR II 6446. Allg. MAIMONE ANSALDO PATTI 2002–2003.

22 GUYON 1974; CONDE GUERRI 1979; CARLETTI 1986, 115–126; BENOCI 2021.

Ein letzter genereller Punkt sei erwähnt. Es gab wohl zwei Möglichkeiten, an einen Bestattungsplatz in den Katakomben zu gelangen: entweder man erwarb durch Kauf einen Grabplatz, d. h. man bereitete zu Lebzeiten einen Ort für die Bestattung vor (bzw. die Familie erwarb ein Grabplatz in dem Moment, in dem ein Familienmitglied starb). Solche private Grabfürsorge ist durch Inschriften, die den Kauf direkt nennen, in den Katakomben häufig bezeugt. Oder, wenn der Verstorbene bzw. seine Familie dafür nicht die notwendigen Mittel hatten, kümmerte sich, wie die *Traditio Apostolica* belegt, der Bischof unentgeltlich um die Bestattung, womit klar ist, dass wir es mit regelrechten Armenbestattungen und wohl mit unauffälligen, armen Gräbern zu tun haben. Überraschenderweise gibt es aber keine einzige Inschrift in den Katakomben, die eine solche Stiftung eines Grabes durch den Bischof erwähnt – vermutlich war es nicht prestigeträchtig, die eigene Bedürftigkeit und die daraus resultierende Notwendigkeit eines solchen geschenkten Grabplatzes zu benennen. Im Gegenteil erwähnen etliche Inschriften den Umstand, dass ein Grabplatz bereits zu Lebzeiten, *in vitam*, oder *expressis verbis* durch einen Angehörigen, etwa den Ehepartner, Eltern oder Kinder, bereitet wurde, was zugleich die private Investition bestätigt.²³ Aus dieser Perspektive wird die Erwähnung der Bereitung *in vitam* im Kontext der Katakombenbestattungen zu einer Art Statussymbol. Im Umkehrschluss sollte man vermuten, dass es sich, wenn die Inschrift eines *loculus*-Grabes insbesondere in einer einfachen *loculus*-Galerie seine Bereitung *in vitam* nicht ausdrücklich hervorhebt, um ein solches vom Bischof bereitgestelltes Armengrab handelt. War jemand von der Familie bei der Bestattung anwesend, dann wird man auf verschiedenste Weise das Grab markiert haben, um es für regelmäßigen Grabkult leichter wieder zu finden, also etwa durch einen Namen und/ oder einen Segenswunsch als Epitaph oder Graffito, oder auch durch irgendwelche Zeichen und Gegenstände wie im Verschlussmörtel angebrachte Lampen, Mosaiksteinchen oder ähnliche Gegenstände, die ein Grab individuell markieren.²⁴ Neben solchen Gräbern, die zwar keinen Hinweis auf die Art des Erwerbes preisgeben, aber zu erkennen geben, dass zukünftige Besucher das Grab wiederfinden wollten, gibt es aber auch vollkommen anonym verbliebene Grablegen. Offensichtlich war hier beim Verschluss des Grabes niemand anwesend, der zu einem Besuch oder für Totenkult wiederkehren wollte. Hypothetisch sollten zumindest für alle solche vollständig anonymen *loculi*, die keine markierenden Inschriften, Graffiti oder Zeichen aufweisen, angenommen werden, dass ihre Nutzung der *caritas* des Bischofs verdankt wird.

23 Z. B. ICVR III 6524 aus Domitilla: *locus Adeodati / porcinari et Acutu / lae sibi (v)ibi fecerunt*; oder das berühmte Beispiel über dem Zugang des *cubiculum Leonis* in der Commodilla-Katakombe, ICVR III 8669: *Leo officialis ann(onae) si(bi) / vivo fecit cubiculum in cem(eterio) / (A)dauti et Feli(c)is*.

24 Vgl. zu Objekten, die im Putz bei den Gräbern angebracht sind, FIOCCHI NICOLAI 2014, 298; auch DE SANTIS 1994.

Nicht alle Armengräber müssen folglich anonym sein, aber zumindest die anonymen Gräber dürften Armengräber sein.²⁵

Die Besitzer der Gräber in den Katakomben. Zur Aussagekraft von Grabtypen und den Möglichkeiten zur Markierung von Grabbesitz

Wie bereits gesehen, konnten sich Katakomben als kollektive Grabanlagen für hauptsächlich einfachste Bestattung entweder in ausgebeuteten Stollen von Tufferde (Arenaren) und aufgelassenen Wasserspeichern einnisten, oder sie nahmen ihren Ursprung von kleineren, privaten Hypogäen aus,²⁶ oder sie entstanden direkt als rasterförmige Gangnetze, was sie als originäre Gemeindegrotten charakterisiert. Oftmals scheinen gemeinschaftliche Zömeterien aus privaten Stiftungen hervorgegangen zu sein, und der Name des Stifters dürfte bisweilen im Katakombennamen erhalten geblieben sein,²⁷ wie etwa bei den Katakomben Priscilla oder Domitilla zu vermuten ist. Insbesondere bei so planvollen Anlagen wie S. Callisto oder SS. Marcellino e Pietro (Abb. 1–2), bei denen rechteckige Parzellen für regelmäßige Armengalerien als Kernregion erkennbar sind, ist die Kirche bzw. der Bischof als treibende Kraft hinter der Anlage zu vermuten. Auch wenn es letztlich in den wenigsten Fällen darüber Sicherheit geben kann, dass die Gemeinschaft, die diese Grabanlagen ab dem 3. Jh. n. Chr. anlegte und dann betrieb, die christliche Gemeinde war, ist dies doch in der Regel zu vermuten, weil zumindest im Verlauf ihrer Entwicklung durch das 3. und 4. Jh. n. Chr. hindurch das Inschriftenmaterial, die Malereien und der sich oft einnistende Märtyrerkult sie als Gemeindegrotten bestätigen.²⁸ Die Zugänge vom oberirdischen Bereich sind leider nie mit originalen Verschlüssen erhalten, aber klar ist, dass unter der Erde, abgesehen von einzelnen verschließbaren Kammern, keine weitere Absperrung zur Trennung von Besitzern existierten – was ebenfalls für den gemeinschaftlichen Besitz in einer Hand – der Kirche – spricht.

Die Terminologie für die verschiedenen Grabeinheiten, die man in den Katakomben besitzen konnte, ist durch einige Grabinschriften bezeugt, so etwa in der berühmten des Diakons Severus aus S. Callisto: die Grabräume sind hier als *cubacula* bezeichnet, die Bogengräber als *arcosolia*, die Lichtschächte als *luminare*. Der

25 Es wäre zu überlegen, ob die sog. *cameroni* in der Tecla-Katakombe, die systematisch für hunderte vollkommen anonymer Gräber angelegt waren, nicht eine Sonderform dieser kostenlos zur Verfügung gestellten Gräber darstellen, eben da die ‚gestapelte‘ Bestattungsform in den tiefen Grabschächten überhaupt keine Möglichkeit einer individuellen Inschrift oder eines Erinnerungszeichens bot; vgl. NUZZO 2000, 13–21.

26 BRANDENBURG 1984.

27 FIOCCHI NICOLAI 2014, 284f.

28 Vgl. dazu die Diskussion der Thesen von Eric Rebillard, etwa in REBILLARD 1997 und REBILLARD 2003, bei FIOCCHI NICOLAI 2014, 274.

Terminus für die einfachsten Wandnischengräber ist *loci*, heute allgemein *loculi*.²⁹ Der charakteristische Grabtyp der Katakomben schlechthin ist der *loculus*, ein flaches Wandnischengrab, das in jedem Fall weit über 90 % aller Bestattungen ausmacht.³⁰ Für jede dieser räumlichen Kategorien gab es nun mehrere Möglichkeiten, um zwischen dem gemeinschaftlichen Bereich und der privaten Sphäre bzw. dem Privatbesitz zu unterscheiden.

Der private Besitz eines *cubiculum* ist in der Regel durch eine Tür und damit die Möglichkeit des festen Verschließens, klar ersichtlich. Nicht selten sind Türschwelle, Türrahmen und Türstürze aus Marmor oder Travertin erhalten, die noch das Schließsystem mit Löchern für Angeln und Riegel erkennen lassen, auch wenn keine einzige Tür erhalten ist. Der Türsturz trug bisweilen den Familiennamen als besitzanzeigenden *titulus* im Genitiv, wie etwa in Domitilla in der sogenannten Region *Aureli A*,³¹ aus dem 3. Jh. n. Chr., über dem Eingang des *cubiculum* *Mc „Epleciorum“*³² oder aus dem 4. Jh. n. Chr. im Falle des *cubiculum* *La*, des sog. *cubiculum* des Priesters Eulalios.³³ *Cubicula* sind die Einheiten, die üblicherweise als Grabraum für Familien angesprochen werden. Manchmal sind ihre Wandflächen roh aus Tuff und ohne Wandputz belassen, oft sind sie auch weiß verputzt, bisweilen wurden sie sogar mit Malerei verziert, die dann in der Regel figürliche Bilder des Alten und Neuen Testaments zeigen. Für die Domitilla-Katakombe liegen jetzt umfassende statistische Zahlen vor.³⁴ Die Katakombe erstreckt sich auf vorwiegend zwei Stockwerken, und zwar in einer Gesamtlänge von etwas mehr als 12 km Galerien. Insgesamt wurden in diesem Gangnetz 228 *cubicula* angelegt. Von diesen waren 42 überhaupt nicht und 16 nur teilweise verputzt (z. B. nur an einer Wand, in einem Arkosol oder an der Decke). Immerhin 136 *cubicula* sind hingegen vollständig weiß verputzt.³⁵ Zudem wurden weitere 16 teilweise und 21 vollständig mit Malerei geschmückt (Abb. 4).

Um ein Missverständnis dürfte es sich bei der bisherigen Annahme handeln, dass weiß verputzte aber nicht ausgemalte Kammern auf eine späte Entstehung im 4. Jh. n. Chr. hinweisen, denn dies lässt sich bei Betrachtung der Verteilung und dem Verhältnis von bemalten Kammern zu unbemalten, aber verputzten Kammern nicht zeigen.³⁶ Auch der Inhalt einer Malerei kann den Grabbesitz anzeigen, wobei hier nicht

29 ICVR IV 10183.

30 Allg. zur Definition der verschiedenen Grabtypen NUZZO 2000, 163–176; für eine Übersicht der Zahlenverhältnisse etwa NUZZO 2000, 84–88.

31 Vgl. PERGOLA 1983.

32 ICVR III 6662; vgl. FELLE/ZIMMERMANN 2014, 107.

33 ICVR III 7200: *Εὐλάλιος ἐὰν τῶ;*; vgl. PERGOLA 1989.

34 Allg. zur Domitilla-Katakombe zus. PERGOLA 2004; zum Domitilla-Projekt zusammenfassend ZIMMERMANN/TSAMAKDA 2007; zuletzt ZIMMERMANN 2016.

35 31 dieser *cubicula* sind heute noch vollständig erhalten und ganz verputzt. 105 sind vollständig verputzt, aber mehr oder weniger zerstört.

36 So etwa GUYON 1987, 340–343 und FIOCCHI NICOLAI 2014, 297 mit Anm. 137. Unter den frühen Kammern der sog. Region der *Flavi Aureli* in Domitilla ist nur eine einzige bemalt,

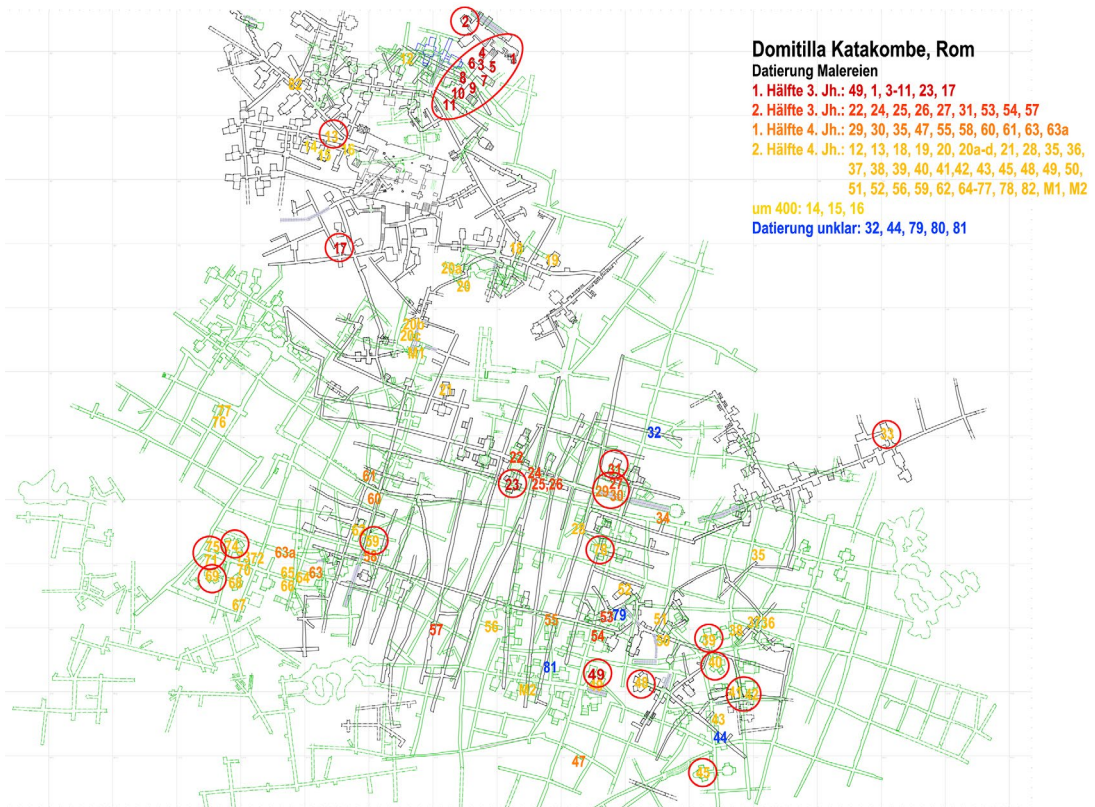


Abb. 4: Domitilla-Katakombe, Gesamtplan mit Angabe der bemalten *cubicula*.

die Nennung eines Namens in einem Dipinto gemeint ist, sondern ein Porträt des Grabherren.³⁷ Berühmte Beispiele sind etwa die prominent in der Achse der Eintretenden und zugleich im Einfall des Tageslichts durch einen Lichtschacht inszenierten Porträts im *cubiculum* 74 (der *mentores*)³⁸ oder im *cubiculum* 39 (der *sei santi*).³⁹

Arkosole können sowohl innerhalb eines *cubiculum* liegen als auch außerhalb in den Galerien, und sie scheinen die Einheit für kleine Familien oder insbesondere für die Bestattung von Paaren gewesen zu sein.⁴⁰ Auch sie sind häufig verputzt und

aber mehrere weiß verputzt, und auch in SS. Marcellino e Pietro gibt es beides: frühe und späte bemalte und unbemalte Kammern. Hingegen genügt es auf Katakomben wie S. Agnese hinzuweisen, wo überhaupt keine Malerei zu finden ist, trotz anspruchsvoller Architektur etlicher *cubicula* – offensichtlich boten nicht überall Fossoren an, den Grabraum auch mit Malerei zu verschönern.

37 ZIMMERMANN 2007; vgl. eine ähnliche ‚individualisierte‘ Repräsentation in spätantiken Grabmalereien des Balkan-Gebietes den Beitrag VALEVA in diesem Band.

38 PERGOLA 1990, ZIMMERMANN 2002, 129–135.

39 YAMADA 2008.

40 Als ein Beispiel sei das bemalte Arkosol 12 in einer Galerie im 3. Stock der Domitilla-Katakombe genannt, in dessen Lunette ein Ehepaar mit einem bzw. zwei Kindern erscheint,

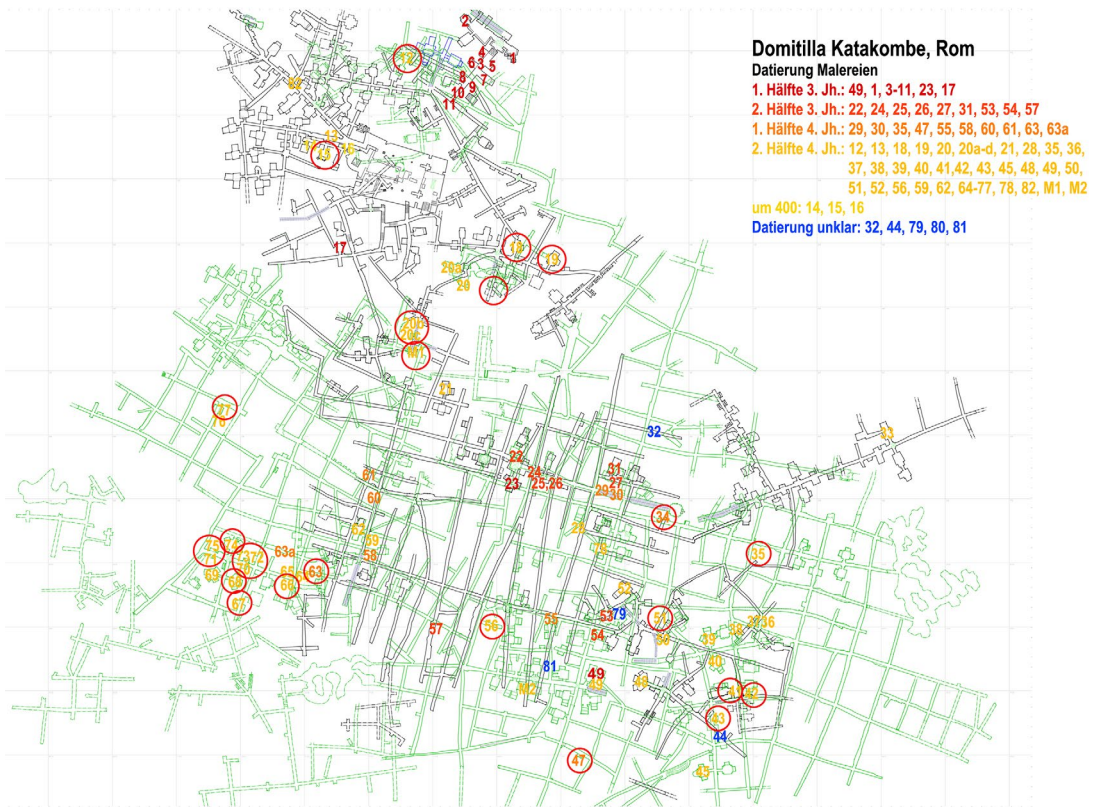


Abb. 5: Domitilla-Katakombe, Gesamtplan mit Angabe der bemalten Arkosole.

bisweilen bemalt. In Domitilla befinden sich von insgesamt 650 Arkosolen 306 innerhalb von *cubicula*, alle übrigen – und damit etwas mehr als die Hälfte – in Galerien. Aber nur sehr wenige von ihnen, gerade einmal 20, wurden bemalt (Abb. 5).

Sehr oft scheint in den Galerien bei Arkosolen ein weißer Verputz den Bereich des persönlichen Besitzes anzuzeigen, und dazu gehört beim Arkosol außer dem Inneren des Bogengrabes auch der äußere Wandabschnitt mit der Fläche des Sockels unterhalb und dem Wandabschnitt um den Bogen herum bis zur Decke, und oftmals auch noch ein verputzter oder bemalter Deckenstreifen direkt über dem Arkosol. Eine Inschrift, die sich heute im Museo Nazionale Romano befindet, bezeichnet diese spezifische Besitzsituation mit der Definition eines „*arcosolio cum pareticulo suo*“.⁴¹ Berühmte Beispiele für gemalte Arkosole in Domitilla sind das

vgl. Zimmermann/Tsamakda 2007, 22–23. Das Arkosol liegt so exakt vor dem Eingang eines (nur weiß verputzten) *cubiculum*, dass es wirkt, als wäre dies die Erweiterung des völlig ausgeschöpften Grabraumes im *cubiculum* um ein weiteres Arkosol. Eine ähnliche Lage von weiteren Arkosolen findet sich relativ häufig.

41 ICVR I 1965: *Domus eternalis / Aur(eli) Celsi et Aur(eliae) Ilar(itatis) conpari m/ees fecimus nobis / et nostris et amic/is arcosolio cum p/areticulo suo in pacem.*

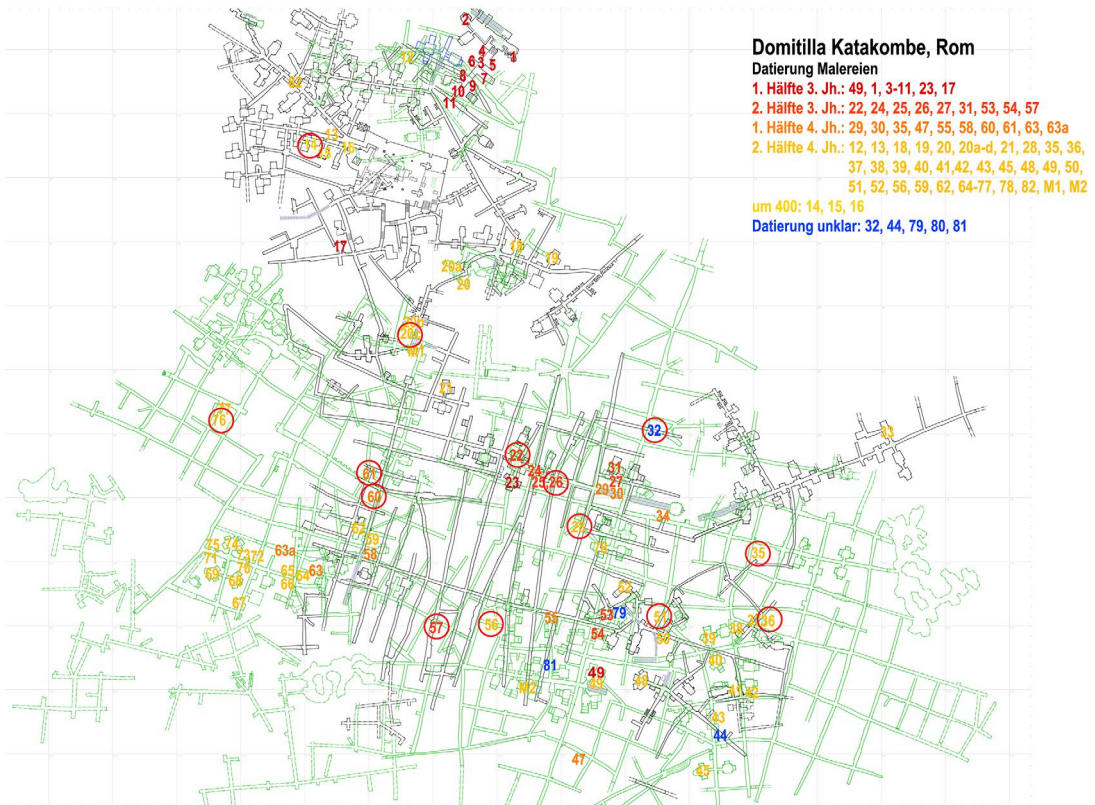


Abb. 6: Domitilla-Katakombe, Gesamtplan mit Angabe der bemalten *loculus*-Wände.

Arkosol 15 (der *Veneranda*, Abb. 7), bei dem die Inschrift in die Malerei der Lünette integriert ist,⁴² und das Arkosol 50 (sog. *arcosolio rosso*), bei dem interessanterweise der Besitzernamen als Graffito wie ein *titulus* über die Bogenöffnung eingegritzt wurde.⁴³

Schließlich konnte man einen einzelnen *loculus* in einer Galerie oder eine Reihe von übereinanderliegenden *loculi* besitzen, die wiederum manchmal verputzt und schließlich zusammen mit dem entsprechenden Wandabschnitt bemalt sein konnten. Eine Inschrift in der Domitilla-Katakombe bezeichnet einen *loculus* als „*locus*“.⁴⁴ In Domitilla kommt diese spezifische Form von bemalten *loculus*-Wänden 23 Mal und damit häufiger als in jeder anderen Katakombe vor (Abb. 6). Berühmte Beispiele für bemalte *loculus*-Wände sind die Malerei 51 (sog. Orans im Triptichon),⁴⁵

42 Vgl. GIULIANI 1994.

43 ICVR III 7652, vgl. FELLE/ZIMMERMANN 2014, 102.

44 ICVR III 8445: *Annibonius fecit sibi et suis / locum homi<ni>bus n(umero) VIII intro formas / ec ton emon panton tuto emon.*

45 WILPERT 1903, 459; ZIMMERMANN 2007, 165, Taf. 20d.



Abb. 7: Domitilla-Katakombe, Arkosol der Veneranda.



Abb. 8: Domitilla-Katakombe, *loculus* des Ianuarius.

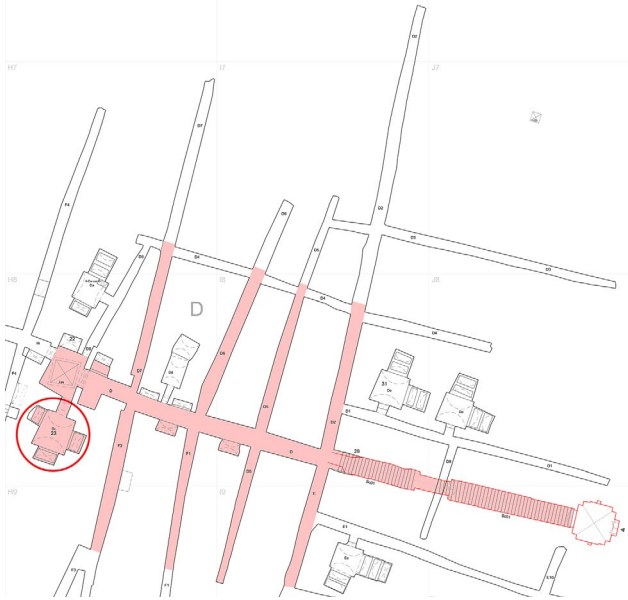


Abb. 9: Domitilla-Katakomben, Region des Guten Hirten, 3. Jh. n. Chr.

oder auch der *loculus* 26 mit Malerei von zwei Orantinnen, den ein gewisser *Ianuarus* seiner Frau anlegen ließ, wie die gemalte *tabula ansata* vermerkt (Abb. 8).⁴⁶

Erstmals für die Domitilla-Katakomben sind nun zumindest alle *in situ* befindlichen Inschriften und Graffiti nicht nur in einer Online-Datenbank erschlossen, sondern zugleich regionenweise auf dem Katakombenplan im PDF-Format vermerkt und direkt mit der Datenbank verlinkt.⁴⁷ Die Pläne mit den Links stehen online zum download bereit.⁴⁸ Auf diese Weise sind die Inschriften und Graffiti aus den Katakomben erstmals direkt in ihrem Kontext bewertbar gemacht.

In sehr wenigen Katakomben ließ die archäologische Situation vermuten, dass ganze Regionen im Besitz von privaten Besitzern oder, wie es scheint, von Berufsverbänden waren, wie nur zwei Beispiele zeigen können, wiederum aus Domitilla. Aus der ersten Hälfte des 3. Jh. n. Chr. stammt das sog. *cubiculum* des Guten Hirten mit dem umliegenden Galerienetz, die *regio D* (Abb. 9).⁴⁹ Offenbar bereitete hier ein privater Grabbesitzer nicht nur eine monumentale Grabkammer für sich und seine Familie, sondern er sah auch zugleich ein Netz von Gale-

46 ICVR III 7652: *Ianuarus coniugi fecit.*

47 FELLE/ZIMMERMANN 2014, vgl. den Beitrag FELLE in diesem Band.

48 Die PDF-Pläne der einzelnen Katakomben-Regionen mit den links in die Epigraphic Data Base Bari (EDB) stehen online unter <https://www.oeaw.ac.at/oeai/forschung/altertumswissenschaften/projekte-in-publicationsvorbereitung/die-domitilla-katakomben-in-rom/2013-14> (aufgerufen am 10.03.2021).; auf der Homepage der EDB ist von den einzelnen Inschriften ebenfalls direkt der entsprechende Katakombenplan verlinkt: <https://www.edb.uniba.it/> (Zugriff 25/01/2021).

49 PERGOLA 1975, FIOCCHI NICOLAI 2014, 281.

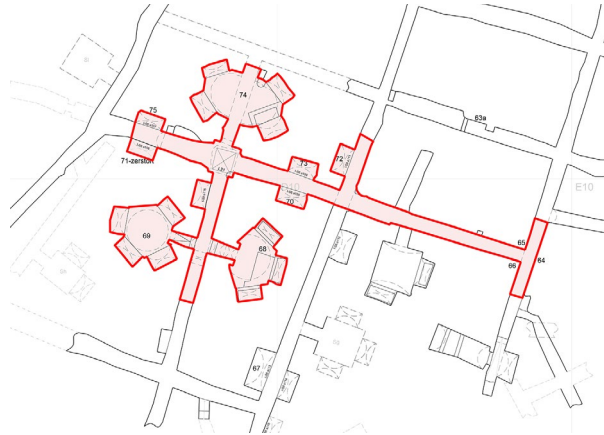


Abb. 10: Domitilla-Katakombe, Region S der *mensores*.

rien für etwa 400 einfache *loculus*-Bestattungen vor – also weit mehr, als selbst für einen großen Haushalt anzunehmen ist. Zwar zeigen die Malereien und Inschriften keinen Hinweis auf eine christliche Motivation, der Charakter der Anlage scheint aber dieselbe Armenfürsorge wie oben für die Kirche genannt, hier aber in der Hand eines privaten Stifters zu belegen. Da die Region dann im Verlauf des 3. Jhs. n. Chr. in der nun entstehenden Gemeindegatakomben aufging, ist aber naheliegend, dass der Besitzer Christ war und sie dann als Stiftung in den Besitz der Gemeinde überging.

Das zweite Beispiel ist die *regio S* in Domitilla, genannt der *mensores*, aus dem späten 4. Jh. n. Chr. (Abb. 10). Wahrscheinlich waren nicht nur die drei polygonalen *cubicula* und fünf Arkosole bemalt, sondern auch die gesamte Hauptgalerie.⁵⁰ Inschriften und Malereien lassen vermuten, dass die Region als Ganzes von christlichen Mitgliedern der *annona*-Administration genutzt wurde.⁵¹ Der einzigartige Arkosoltyp mit dreidimensional aufgespanntem Bogen sowie Maler, die nur hier in Domitilla und nur in dieser klar begrenzten Region vorkommen, bestätigen ihren privaten Charakter, da man die Malereien offensichtlich nicht mithilfe der sonst hier tätigen lokalen ‚Domitilla-Fossoren‘, sondern eigens herbeigerufener Handwerker ausführen ließ. Jedenfalls finden sich auch hier Grabtypen aller unterschiedlicher sozialen Gruppen vertreten, von *loculi* über Arkosolen bis zu *cubicula*.⁵²

50 PERGOLA 1990, 181; NUZZO 2000, 54f.; ZIMMERMANN 2002, 127–154.

51 PERGOLA 1990; BISCONTI 2000, 265.

52 Dabei ist in den polygonalen *cubicula* gut zu beobachten, dass hier die soziale Gruppe in ihrer Diversität im Moment der Anlage genau bekannt war, da man sehr individuell die Anzahl der Grabplätze, nach Grabtyp und Aufwand exakt berechnet, anlegte. Diese Sorgfalt bei der individuellen Anpassung kommt umso klarer hervor, wenn man sie etwa mit dem System der Fossoren in SS. Marcellino e Pietro vergleicht, die in rationaler Weise die Kammerwände für sehr viele zukünftige Bestattungen vorsehen, weit über

Insbesondere in den sehr großen Katakomben, die eine lange Nutzungsdauer für Bestattungen abdecken, lassen sich in den Grabtypen und der Architektur der Gräber, in den Malereien und auch bei den Inschriften lokale handwerkliche Merkmale erkennen, die eine Bindung der Fossoren an einzelne Zömeterien wahrscheinlich macht. In einem Einzelfall war derselbe Maler in zwei Arkosolen in den Katakomben Domitilla und S. Callisto tätig,⁵³ auch zwischen den Katakomben der Via Salaria wurden jüngst eine besondere Affinität der Malereien untereinander festgestellt.⁵⁴ Ebenso konnten auch Inschriften derselben Werkstatt oder besser von denselben Steinmetzen in S. Callisto, S. Sebastiano und Domitilla identifiziert werden.⁵⁵ Aber bislang sind solche Merkmale der Ausgrabungstechnik im Tuff, der Grabtypologie, der Eigenheiten von Malereien und Inschriften noch nicht so genau erhoben, um sie vergleichend auszuwerten.

Wie in allen verschiedenen, bislang zitierten Beispielen zu sehen war, konnten Inschriften etwa über dem Eingang von *cubicula* als *tituli*, oder als Grabinschriften auf dem Grabverschluss aus Marmor, Ziegel oder im Verschlussmörtel eingeritzt sein, oder auch als Teil der gemalten Dekoration angebracht werden. Immer sind sie direkt und eindeutig mit dem Grabraum bzw. konkret dem Grabplatz verbunden, zu dem sie gehören, die Grabinschriften sind in aller Regel unmittelbar Grabaufschriften. Sie identifizieren üblicherweise den Verstorbenen, weisen aber nicht unbedingt auf den privaten Besitz eines Grabes hin.

Gräber für die Armen – das wichtigste Merkmal der römischen Katakomben

Mit dieser Beobachtung wenden wir uns noch einmal den Fällen von Bestattungen zu, die wohl ohne Beitrag der Bestatteten am Erwerb des Grabplatzes eingebracht wurden – und die gemeinhin als die Gräber für die Armen gelten, zu deren Fürsorge die christliche *caritas* verpflichtete. Beim Blick auf die Pläne der großen Katakomben fällt es nicht schwer, die Regionen zu erkennen, die für solche Gräber, die vom Bischof bezahlt wurden, in Frage kommen. Hier seien wiederum nur SS. Marcellino e Pietro und Domitilla betrachtet. Auszuschließen sind Bereiche mit *cubicula* und Arkosolen oder anderen prestigeträchtigen Grabformen sowie Grabregionen, die sich in aller Regel unmittelbar an Treppen und Lichtschächten anlagern und ganz klar begrenzt sind. Man darf hingegen Armengräber wohl in den kilometerlangen einfachen Galerien mit ausschließlich *loculus*-Bestattungen identifizieren, in denen jegliche teure Dekoration oder Schmuckform fehlen. Diese Gräber sind wie gesagt

den konkreten Bedarf hinaus, so dass oft vorbereitete Grabplätze unbenutzt blieben; vgl. ZIMMERMANN 2001.

53 ZIMMERMANN 2002, 155–162.

54 BRACONI 2018, 310–312.

55 Vgl. dazu den Beitrag FELLE in diesem Band.

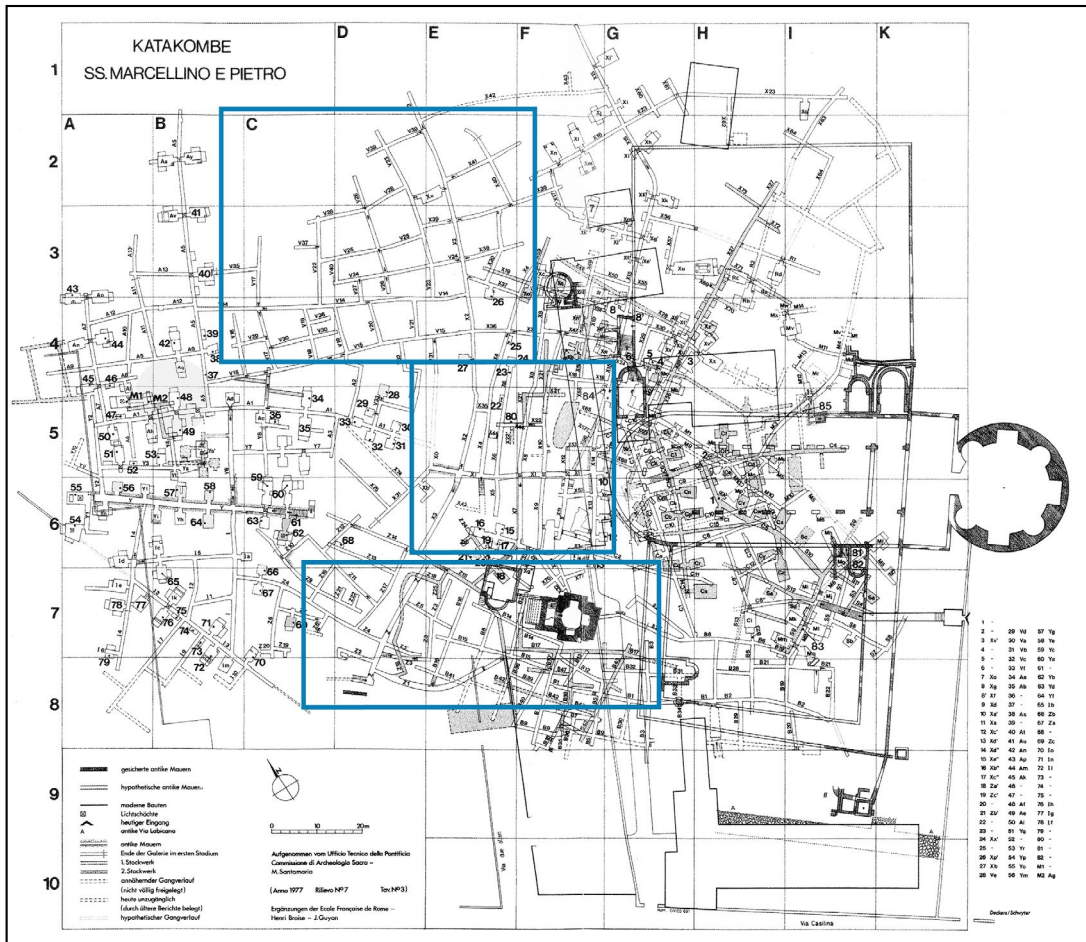


Abb. 11: Katakomben SS. Marcellino e Pietro, Gesamtplan.

nicht unbedingt ohne eine Inschrift; im Gegenteil können sie z. B. ein Graffito im Verschlussmörtel haben, also die sog. Inschriften *a nastro*.⁵⁶ Sie stellen zusammen mit zahlreichen vollständig anonymen Gräbern den bei weitem höchsten Prozentsatz aller Gräber und sind daher das eigentliche Charakteristikum der *funerary landscapes* der Katakomben. Selbst in vollständig erhaltenen Galerien (d. h. solchen ohne jegliche Zerstörung oder Beraubung) haben nie mehr als etwa 30 Prozent aller Gräber irgendeine Art von Dekoration, eine Inschrift oder ein Zeichen wie ein Chi-Rho oder ähnliches erhalten.⁵⁷ Alle übrigen Gräber sind Kandidaten für die Kategorie der Armengräber. In SS. Marcellino e Pietro sind das etwa die zentralen Regionen X, B und Z, (und die gesamten großen Bereiche fern einer Treppe (Abb. 11)).⁵⁸

56 Vgl. den Beitrag FELLE in diesem Band.

57 NUZZO 2000, 28, 84–89.

58 FIOCCHI NICOLAI 2014, 289; vgl. GUYON 1987, 64–65, 71–89, 94, 96.

In der Domitilla-Katakomben sind es vor allem die Regionen des ersten Stockwerks, aber auch große Bereiche der zentralen Regionen im zweiten Untergeschoss, die zumeist gänzlich frei von *cubicula* oder Arkosolen blieben (Abb. 4–6).⁵⁹ Die Beispiele ließen sich leicht vermehren. Man wird nicht fehl gehen, einen großen Anteil aller Gräber in den Katakomben dieser Gruppe zuzuzählen.

Grabbesitz in den jüdischen Katakomben Roms – das Beispiel der Randanini-Katakomben

Bislang wurden ausschließlich christliche Katakomben betrachtet, obwohl mindestens fünf jüdische Katakomben und einige heidnische oder nicht nur von Christen genutzte Katakomben in demselben Bereich vor den Toren Roms liegen. Daher sei abschließend, um das Bild zu vervollständigen, zumindest eine der jüdischen Katakomben betrachtet, da sie die *funerary landscapes* Roms mit besonderen Merkmalen bereichern.⁶⁰ Die jüdischen Katakomben sind durch ihre Inschriften und z. T. Malereien oder wenige Sarkophagreliefs als solche erkennbar, haben darüber hinaus aber untereinander keine weiteren strukturellen Gemeinsamkeiten, die sie von den christlichen Anlagen abhebt. Sie entspringen offensichtlich demselben Wunsch nach günstigem Grabraum für eine ähnliche Grabgemeinschaft, in diesem Fall der jüdischen Gemeinde. Exemplarisch sei die Randanini-Katakomben analysiert.

Die kleine Randanini-Katakomben (Abb. 12) liegt ungefähr gegenüber von S. Sebastiano an der Via Appia, wobei sie sozusagen ‚ebenerdig‘ unter dem Hügel zwischen Via Appia und einer nördlichen Abzweigung, heute Via Appia Pignatelli, im Tuff angelegt wurde. Seit ihrer Entdeckung war sie bereits häufig Ziel eingehender Studien.⁶¹ Auch sie konnte jüngst vollständig digital dokumentiert und statistisch erfasst werden.⁶² Offensichtlich entstand sie aus einem privaten Hypogäum des frühen 3. Jhs. n. Chr. mit einigen *cubicula*, darunter einem Doppel-*cubiculum* mit heidnischer Malerei, und nutzte dann im 3. und 4. Jh. n. Chr. zumindest teilweise ein aufgelassenes hydraulisches Gangnetz für Bestattungen. Jedenfalls ist ein Großteil der Gänge mit über 2 m Breite viel weiter als normale Katakombengänge. Die Anlage folgt nur in Ansätzen einem systematischen Raster und es gibt auch keine

59 FIOCCHI NICOLAI 2001, 40–44.

60 Vgl. allgemein zur jüdischen Präsenz in Rom RUTGERS 1995, und zu den jüdischen Katakomben VISMARA 1986 und VISMARA 2013; zum Verhältnis der jüdischen und christlichen Katakomben bes. FIOCCHI NICOLAI 2014, 279 mit Anm. 30; zu spätantiken jüdischen Katakomben Unteritaliens vgl. den Beitrag NUZZO in diesem Band.

61 Zur Randanini-Katakomben, ihrer Entdeckungsgeschichte und einer bibliographischen Übersicht vgl. zusammenfassend DELLO RUSSO 2011; zur Katakomben zusammenfassend LAURENZI 2013; vgl. NUZZO 2000, 135–138 und VISMARA 1986 sowie VISMARA 2013. Bislang gibt es keine Untersuchung zum Zusammenhang von ober- und unterirdischem Areal.

62 Vgl. ZIMMERMANN et al. 2019; und jetzt ausführlich ZIMMERMANN et al. 2022.

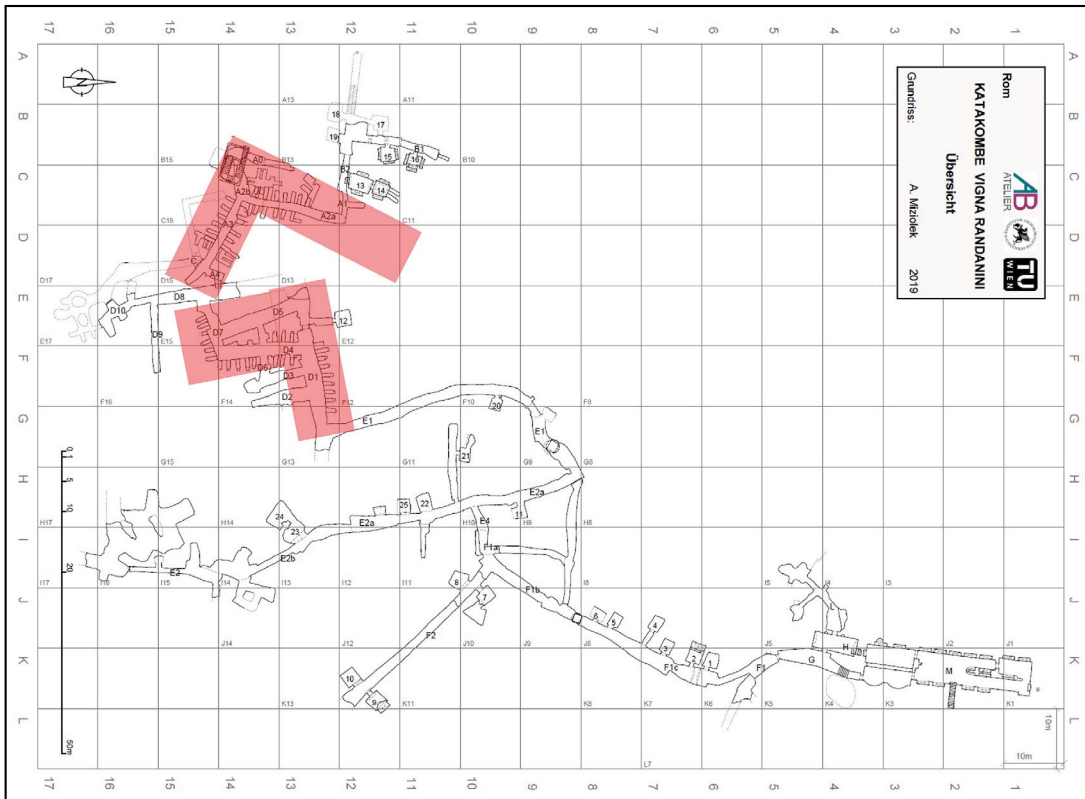


Abb. 12: Jüdische Katakombe der Vigna Randanini, Gesamtplan.

originären Lichtschächte.⁶³ Ihr Galerienetz kommt auf eine moderate Ausdehnung von rund 700 m Länge. Von den 25 *cubicula* sind vier bemalt. Neben der erwähnten Doppelkammer zeigt ein *cubiculum* jüdische Kultgegenstände als Dekor, ein zweites scheint mit seinem Palmendekor ebenfalls das jüdische Bilderverbot umzusetzen.⁶⁴ Neben den bereits behandelten Grabtypen (*loculi*, Arkosole, *cubicula*) finden sich hier zusätzlich eine besondere Art von Schachtgrab, die sog. *kokhim*, die in Italien ansonsten völlig unüblich, aber im östlichen Mittelmeerraum – und auch in Palästina – verbreitet sind.⁶⁵ Bei diesem Grabtyp handelt es sich um einen rechtwinklig zur Galerie in die Wand getieften Grabschacht, der zum Teil unter das Bodenniveau des Ganges gegraben sein kann. Die Höhe der Decke eines *kokh* nimmt von der Galerie her stetig ab, auf einer im Schacht waagrecht umlaufenden Kante konnten Verschlussplatten aufliegen. Die meisten dieser *kokhim* – nämlich 65 – sind

63 Die zwei als Lichtschächte bezeichneten Öffnungen zur Oberfläche weisen deutliche die Charakteristika einer Brunnen- bzw. Zisternenöffnung auf.

64 Vgl. LAURENZI 2013, 49–66.

65 RUTGERS 1990, 155–157; NUZZO 2000, 189; FIOCCHI NICOLAI 2014, 279 mit Anm. 30; LAURENZI 2013, 38–40.

auf zwei große, hallenartig geweitete Grabräume in den Regionen A und D (A2a–A3 und D1–D4–D7) verteilt, und diese besonderen, weiten Grabräume erscheinen vom Charakter her sehr geeignet für die kollektive Bestattung einer kleinen Gemeinde. Allerdings sind die *kokhim* kein Kennzeichen aller jüdischen Katakomben Roms, sondern treten in dieser Form singularär hier in Randanini auf. Zugleich findet in der übrigen Katakombe die übliche soziale Ausdifferenzierung durch Grabtypen und den unterschiedlichen Aufwand, der für einzelne Grabgruppen etwa durch *cubicula* und Malerei betrieben wurde, statt. Die Inschriften vermitteln ein ähnliches Bild. Einerseits finden sich alle Arten von Inschriftentypen, die bereits in den christlichen Katakomben vorkamen, von solchen auf Verschlussplatten der *loculi* und Arkosole bis zu den Graffiti des Typs ‚a *nastro*‘ im Verschlussmörtel.⁶⁶ Dabei scheinen aber bisweilen die Sprache, das Alphabet und die Namen, die oft mit griechischen Buchstaben für lateinische Wörter geschrieben sind, den typischen Status der Gemeinschaft zwischen zwei verschiedenen Kulturen, der jüdischen und der römischen, zu reflektieren. Andererseits gibt es an den Galeriewänden einen kleinen rechteckigen Inschriftentyp mit einem ganz anderen Verhältnis von Inschriften und Grab: anders als in allen christlichen Katakomben sind die Inschriftenplatten hier oft wie *tituli* in der Mitte einer Wandfläche angebracht und weisen so die umliegenden *loculi* als die zusammengehörenden Gräber wohl eines (Familien-) Verbandes aus.⁶⁷ Zudem fällt auf, dass es unter den Inschriften aus den jüdischen Katakomben bislang keine gibt, die auf den Graberwerb bzw. den Besitzerwerb innerhalb der Katakombe hinweist.⁶⁸ Offensichtlich fanden die hier tätigen Fossoren ebenfalls spezielle Lösungen für ihre in diesem Fall jüdischen Auftraggeber.

Zusammenfassung

Die *funerary landscapes* der römischen Katakomben erscheinen, trotz gut greifbarer allgemeiner Charakteristika, die sie unter der Bezeichnung Katakombe als große Gruppe einen, in der Nabsicht in viele kleinere Mikro-Landschaften untergliedert, mit vielen lokalen Eigenheiten an einzelnen Konsular-Straßen, in einzelnen Katakomben, gemäß einzelner Traditionen von Malern, Marmorateliers oder auch Fossoren. Ihre Entstehungs- und Nutzungsgeschichte lässt sich, gemeinsam mit der Verbreitung und Anerkennung des Christentums, in wichtigen Phasen nachzeichnen, und der spezielle Charakter als unterirdischer Zömeterien, die zum allergrößten Teil der Bestattung der ärmeren Gemeindemitglieder diente, wird insbesondere bei Einbeziehung statistischer Betrachtung evident. Es liegt nahe, neben den

66 Zu den Inschriften der Randanini-Katakombe vgl. zuletzt LAURENZI 2013, 84–90, und insbesondere Antonello Vilella zu den Inschriften und neu gefundenen Graffiti *in situ* in ZIMMERMANN et al. 2022, 372–385.

67 Vgl. ZIMMERMANN et al. 2019, 143f. mit Abb. 28.

68 Vgl. bislang zum Problem VISMARA 2013, 1876–1880.

vorgestellten Grabkontexten mit deutlichen Spuren des Besitzererbs, in diesem Angebot an einfachstem Grabplatz für Mittellose genau jenen Aspekt zu erkennen, den Julian Apostata im Rückblick als so wichtig für den Erfolg des Christentums beurteilte. Und trotz der langen Forschungsgeschichte bleibt angesichts der großen Ausdehnung, der Anzahl der Monumente und der riesigen Materialfülle nicht zuletzt der Inschriften nach wie vor ein großes Forschungspotential.

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ANTONIO ENRICO FELLE

Paesaggi epigrafici nelle necropoli della Roma tardoantica

Alcuni casi esemplari per una 'epigrafia archeologica'

Affidabilità archeologica di un dossier epigrafico: le iscrizioni cristiane di Roma

Nell'*Epigraphic Database Bari* (d'ora in avanti: EDB)¹ che nell'ambito del progetto europeo dell'*Europeana network of Ancient Greek and Latin Epigraphy* (EAGLE)² ha come propria sfera di azione le antiche epigrafi cristiane di Roma, la schedatura dei materiali – come noto, editi in massima parte nei dieci volumi finora apparsi del corpus delle *Inscriptiones Christianae Urbis Romae, nova series* (ICVR) – conta al momento più di 41.000 iscrizioni:³ un numero vicino a quello delle epigrafi urbane non cristiane edite nelle varie parti del sesto volume del CIL, anche con la considerazione dei reperti epigrafici pubblicati nei relativi più recenti *Supplementa*.

La documentazione epigrafica lasciata dai cristiani della Roma tardoantica è dunque quantitativamente imponente. Al di là della quantità, credo però che essa sia rilevante in primo luogo perché essa si trova in massima parte nei propri contesti archeologici originari. Da una rapida ricerca risulta che solo una iscrizione, su dieci schedate nell'EDB, risulta oggi conservata in collezioni museali.⁴ Le epigrafi dei cristiani della Roma tardoantica sono dunque in maggioranza conservate an-

1 *Epigraphic Database Bari. Inscriptions by Christians in Rome (3rd–8th cent. CE)* (<http://www.edb.uniba.it>; ultimo accesso: 08/01/2020).

2 Cfr. <https://www.eagle-network.eu/> (ultimo accesso: 08/01/2020).

3 Al momento della consegna di questo contributo per la stampa (gennaio 2020), l'EDB conta precisamente 41.593 schede (41.449 online, 144 in corso di revisione) e 7883 immagini (ultimo accesso: 08/01/2020). Le iscrizioni edite nei dieci volumi finora pubblicati del corpus delle *Inscriptiones Christianae Urbis Romae* (d'ora in avanti: ICVR) sono state tutte inserite nell'EDB, con la sola eccezione delle epigrafi latine della basilica di San Paolo fuori le mura: per queste iscrizioni – circa un migliaio –, si è deciso per il momento di attenderne la nuova edizione da tempo annunciata ad opera di Rosanna Barbera, che di queste epigrafi già dieci anni fa ha pubblicato un indice automatizzato dei vocaboli: BARBERA 2009. Sull'EDB cfr. FELLE 2014; FELLE 2017a; CARLETTI/FELLE 2019; FELLE 2021; FELLE 2022.

4 Precisamente, le epigrafi che in EDB risultano conservate in collezioni pubbliche e private nonché musei sono 4045 (appunto il 10 % circa del totale); includendo nel calcolo le iscrizioni esposte a scopo devozionale in chiese e monasteri il totale dei reperti epigrafici cristiani di Roma non conservati in catacomba sale a 5144, il 12 % del totale (dati: EDB, ultimo accesso: 08/01/2020).

cora nei propri contesti di pertinenza originaria: in parte negli edifici di culto (entro e fuori le mura) e in misura molto maggiore nei vasti insediamenti funerari ipogei del suburbio, le cosiddette ‘catacombe’⁵ che forse proprio per questa loro caratteristica, l’essere sotterranee, ne hanno permesso un maggior livello di conservazione.⁶ Ad oggi, circa tre quarti delle epigrafi cristiane di Roma risultano ancora esistenti all’interno dei contesti per i quali furono realizzate,⁷ malgrado i rilevanti danni dovuti alla riscoperta delle catacombe cristiane nell’età della Controriforma cattolica e la loro conseguente ‘valorizzazione’ a scopo di propaganda religiosa e di sollecitazione della devozione popolare verso i martiri dei primi secoli del Cristianesimo.

Tra il XVII e il XIX s. i riscoperti cimiteri ipogei cristiani nel suburbio di Roma furono utilizzati come vere e proprie ‘miniere’ da cui estrarre sante reliquie da proporre alla venerazione dei fedeli – dal momento che i defunti deposti nelle antiche catacombe erano allora considerati tutti martiri;⁸ malgrado ciò, nella stragrande maggioranza dei casi le epigrafi sono state lasciate nelle gallerie sotterranee, probabilmente in quanto ritenute non particolarmente significative né tantomeno ‘belle’ secondo i canoni allora correnti dell’antiquaria e dell’archeologia.

Tale fortunata circostanza, con i reperti epigrafici ancora in buona parte nei propri originari monumenti di pertinenza, ha portato a considerare come ovvia, quasi scontata e senza nemmeno una particolare necessità di esplicita riflessione teorica la considerazione sistematica della *interrelazione* tra contesto archeologico ed iscrizioni. Lo si può evincere sin dai primi studi scientifici di epigrafia cristiana ad opera di Giovanni Battista de Rossi, nella seconda metà dell’800, proseguiti in questo senso dai suoi successori: partendo dai suoi allievi diretti Enrico Stevenson, Mariano Armellini, Orazio Marucchi, i primi esponenti della cosiddetta ‘scuola romana’ di archeologia cristiana e di epigrafia cristiana che da Giuseppe Gatti e Angelo Silvagni, attraverso Antonio Ferrua, è giunta ininterrotta sino ai nostri giorni.

Delle iscrizioni dei cristiani, sin dai primi saggi, risultano considerati non solo i testi – spesso ‘contaminati’ con elementi non alfabetici: segni, immagini, simboli⁹ –

5 Il termine deriva dal toponimo antico *κατὰ κύμβας*, indicante la località sulla via Appia dell’antico e pluristratificato complesso sottostante la odierna basilica romana di San Sebastiano fuori le mura. Si tratta di uno dei pochissimi insediamenti funerari ad essere stato frequentato senza soluzione di continuità, dai columbaria di età flavia sino alla frequentazione devozionale cristiana di età moderna.

6 Nelle gallerie dei cimiteri sotterranei romani tardoantichi si trova ancora gran parte della originaria documentazione archeologica: reperti ceramici, metallici, vitrei e mobili in genere, oltre alle inamovibili (in una certa misura) decorazioni degli ambienti.

7 Le epigrafi note solo da tradizione manoscritta e dunque da considerarsi perdute sono poco di più, precisamente 5868, corrispondente al 14 % circa del totale (dati: EDB; ultimo accesso: 08/01/2020).

8 Cfr. GHILARDI 2008; più recentemente si veda GHILARDI 2014. In particolare sul versante epigrafico del fenomeno, si veda ora l’intervento di Valeria Ambriola in FELLE/AMBRIOLA 2020a, 173–184.

9 Da ultimo su questo aspetto cfr. FELLE 2013b; FELLE 2017b; FELLE 2018a; FELLE 2020.

ma anche i materiali, le forme dei supporti, le tecniche esecutive, le caratteristiche grafiche. Anche la usuale separazione tra epigrafia di lingua greca ed epigrafia di lingua latina – naturale derivazione del tradizionale approccio alle iscrizioni su base filologico-testuale, di radice umanistica – non è di fatto mai stata applicata nell'ambito degli studi di epigrafia cristiana.¹⁰

La considerazione onnicomprensiva delle iscrizioni come 'monumenti scritti'¹¹ è bene evidenziata nel corpus delle ICVR in cui dal secondo volume in poi è stata prevista la sistematica pubblicazione delle piante dei complessi ipogei di afferenza delle epigrafi edite nei singoli volumi, anch'essi organizzati appunto su base topografica. In queste mappe, precise anche se alquanto schematiche, i vari ambienti ipogei (gallerie, cubicoli, scale, etc.) sono definiti da sigle convenzionali di tipo alfanumerico. Nelle singole schede del corpus, l'ambiente di originaria pertinenza delle epigrafi e quello in cui esse sono conservate – spesso tra loro coincidenti per tradizionale prassi dei *fossore*s moderni – è quando possibile annotato utilizzando queste stesse sigle, che sono state adottate *in toto* nell'EDB, con l'aggiunta quando necessario di opportune nuove sigle ad integrazione di quelle esistenti, sulla base di studi più recenti sui vari complessi sepolcrali.¹²

Dunque, non solo è possibile ma è anche necessario approcciare la documentazione epigrafica dei cristiani di Roma sia come dossier di testi sia anche come imprescindibile 'dato' archeologico.

Un caso di studio: la documentazione epigrafica della catacomba di Domitilla

Nell'ultimo decennio mi sono occupato in questa ottica delle iscrizioni del complesso della catacomba di Domitilla lungo la via Ardeatina, nel settore sudorientale del suburbio di Roma: un caso che propongo in questa sede come efficace esemplificazione.

- 10 Sulla compresenza di greco e latino nella documentazione epigrafica urbana di committenza cristiana segnalo alcuni miei specifici contributi: FELLE 1999; FELLE 2007a. Sulla particolare valenza del greco nelle iscrizioni cristiane più antiche rimando al più recente FELLE 2018b.
- 11 Ci si richiama con questa definizione alla riflessione sulla epigrafia come «archeologia dei monumenti scritti» esposta in MANACORDA 2000.
- 12 Ad esempio, le sigle identificative degli ambienti del complesso catacombale di Domitilla riprendono quelle delle piante topografiche del III volume delle ICVR (edito nel 1956 da A. Silvagni ed A. Ferrua), integrate con altre, aggiunte a quelle già esistenti, in seguito al recente accuratissimo rilievo – attraverso laser-scanning – dell'intera rete cimiteriale oggi praticabile, nell'ambito del Domitilla-Projekt diretto da Norbert Zimmermann (ÖAW, Austria – DAI-Rom, Deutschland: <https://www.oeaw.ac.at/en/ancient/research/monumenta-antiqua/early-christianity/the-domitilla-catacomb-in-rome/>, ultimo accesso: 07/12/2021). Il nuovo insieme di sigle per gli ambienti della catacomba di Domitilla è ripreso integralmente nell'EDB.

Non credo sia necessario riprendere i dettagli già presentati in altri miei contributi, a cui rimando per i dati specifici – anche numerici;¹³ penso sia meglio privilegiare in questa occasione la considerazione di fenomeni e dinamiche di insieme che mi auguro possano aggiungere qualche ulteriore elemento utile per una riflessione generale e per stabilire utili confronti con quanto avviene nelle altre aree del mondo tardoantico.

Un primo dato, immediatamente evidente, è offerto dalla distribuzione disomogenea dei reperti epigrafici, sia dal punto di vista quantitativo sia anche da quello qualitativo (Figs. 1a–1b).¹⁴

Nel livello superiore della catacomba (Fig. 1a), la regione *A* da sola raccoglie oltre un quinto della documentazione, seguita dalle contigue regioni *B*, *D* e *G*, ognuna delle quali restituisce un decimo circa delle epigrafi pertinenti questo piano. A questo insieme di regioni – impennate sull'asse della lunghissima galleria *A–A'–A''*, perpendicolare allo scalone cd. 'del 1854', segue come quantità di documenti epigrafici un secondo insieme di regioni contigue fra loro (*E*, *F*, *P*, *U*) e anch'esse in qualche modo connesse al medesimo scalone, sviluppandosi su un versante opposto a quello della regione *A*. Anche la regione *S* appare relativamente ricca di iscrizioni,¹⁵ concentrate essenzialmente nella zona del cd. 'cubicolo dei *mensores*' (*Sd*),¹⁶ che da sola raggiunge la quantità totale delle epigrafi pertinenti alle contigue regioni *N* e *Q* ed alla più vasta regione *T* (allo stato attuale non più raggiungibile), con cui si giunge alla periferia del primo piano di gallerie – insieme alle regioni *C*, *H*, *R*. Anche queste ultime regioni, sebbene siano non poco estese, hanno restituito pochissime epigrafi. In sintesi, nel livello superiore della catacomba di Domitilla appare evidente una diretta corrispondenza tra quantità di documenti epigrafici e vicinanza ad elementi primari di sviluppo topografico del complesso ipogeo, quali la galleria *A* e – su scala più ridotta – il cd. 'cubicolo dei *mensores*' (*Sd*). Analogamente, nel secondo piano (Fig. 1b), sono i nuclei più antichi della catacomba (*D*, *H–I*, *M*, *P*) e le regioni con funzione di *retrosanctos* (*N*, *O*, *Q* – ad un livello inferiore: dunque non visibile nella pianta –, *R*, *S*, parzialmente *T*) a restituire due terzi del totale delle iscrizioni, sebbene corrispondano a meno della metà dell'estensione lineare delle gallerie del livello.

13 FELLE 2007b; FELLE 2013a; FELLE/ZIMMERMANN 2014.

14 Ad oggi risultano nell'EDB poco meno di 5000 iscrizioni pertinenti al complesso monumentale di Domitilla – precisamente 4754 (uno degli insiemi più rilevanti, raggiungendo il 12 % circa del totale del database), distribuiti quasi paritariamente tra i due livelli principali di gallerie (1539 nel I piano, superiore, esteso per sette chilometri; 1643 in quello inferiore, che raggiunge i cinque chilometri); alla basilica martiriale semipogea afferiscono 637 reperti, mentre di 935 epigrafi non è noto il preciso contesto originario di pertinenza all'interno del cimitero. Tra queste ultime rientrano le inscriptiones quae in coem. Callisti repertae traduntur (cfr. ICVR III 8716–9338), a proposito delle quali A. Silvagni e A. Ferrua affermano esplicitamente che «probabilius nobis Domitillae vindicari posse videntur» (ICVR III pp. 328 f.).

15 A questa regione sono pertinenti 132 iscrizioni.

16 Cfr. PERGOLA 1990; ZIMMERMANN 2002, part. 126–154.

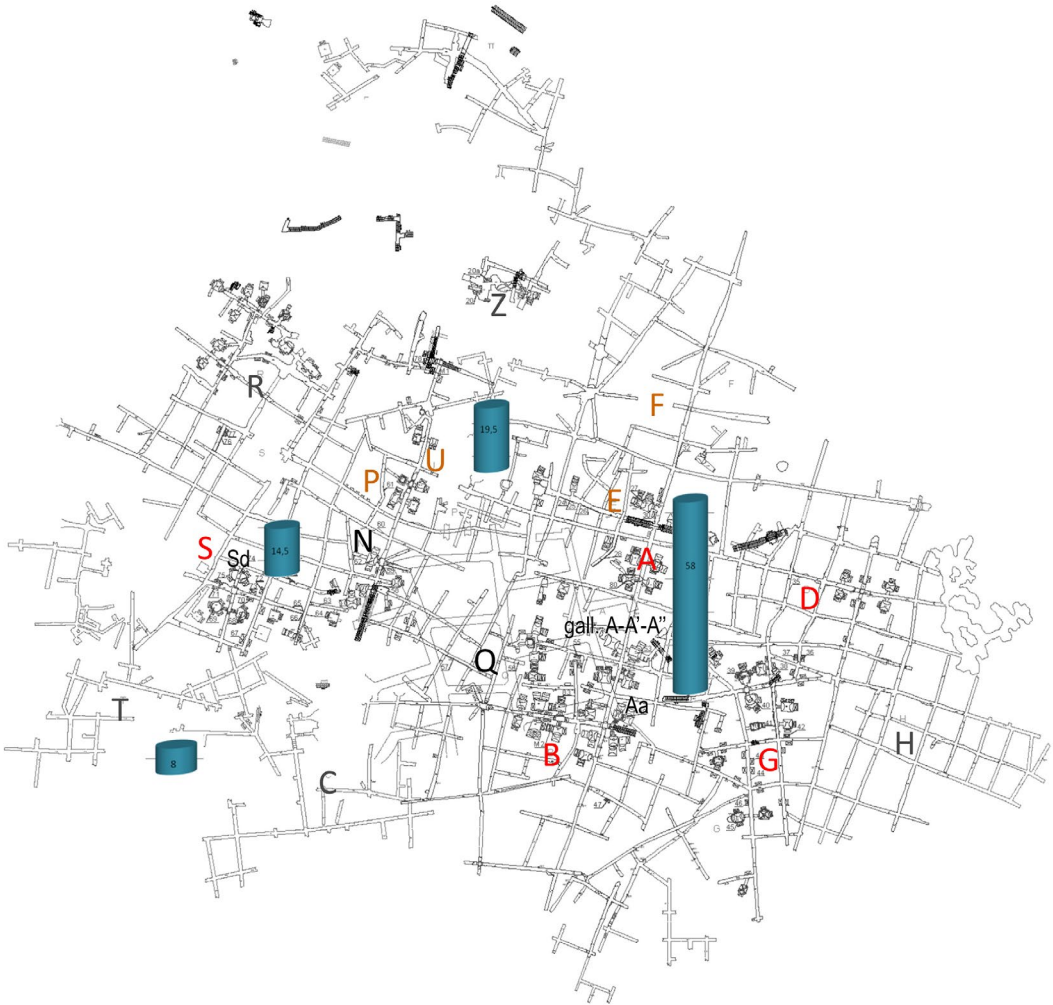


Fig. 1a: Roma, via Ardeatina, catacomba di Domitilla. Densità della documentazione epigrafica nei due livelli principali del cimitero sotterraneo. Primo livello.

La distribuzione spaziale delle iscrizioni nella catacomba di Domitilla dunque evidenzia – qui come nelle altre catacombe romane – la regola generale delle regioni periferiche molto ‘meno scritte’. Inoltre, alcune aree risultano ‘peggio scritte’ delle altre. Se nelle regioni più antiche (livello inferiore: *D, H-I, M, P*) o comunque generatrici di ulteriori sviluppi (livello superiore: *A, B, D, S*) si rileva il frequente ricorso a modalità esecutive ‘ortodosse’, nelle aree più tarde (livello inferiore: *E, F, L, N*; livello superiore: *E, F, N, Q*) si fa uso di una più ampia gamma di tecniche e materiali, il che può essere un segnale di committenze e maestranze più diversificate e di diverso livello professionale. Nei settori gravitanti attorno al centro martiriale nel piano inferiore (regioni *N, O, Q, R, S, T*) epitaffi ‘canonicamente’ scolpiti su marmo compaiono accanto ad altri realizzati con modalità



Fig. 1b: Roma, via Ardeatina, catacomba di Domitilla. Densità della documentazione epigrafica nei due livelli principali del cimitero sotterraneo. Secondo livello.

più approssimative. Nelle aree più periferiche del livello superiore (*T* – oggi irraggiungibile –, *C*, *G* nelle sue più lontane gallerie meridionali *G11–G22*) si riscontra una particolare concentrazione di epigrafi tracciate sommariamente con uno strumento di fortuna (come anche le sole dita) sulla malta di fissaggio dei materiali di chiusura dei *loculi* prima del suo indurimento, che convenzionalmente sono definite ‘iscrizioni a nastro’.¹⁷

Il fenomeno della maggiore concentrazione delle epigrafi delle catacombe nei loro nuclei più antichi (come ad esempio l’arenario della catacomba di Priscilla sulla via Salaria, l’Area I nel *coemeterium Calixti*, la regione cd. ‘della scala minore e maggiore’ in Pretestato¹⁸), trova dunque conferma anche nel complesso di Domitilla. Con la eccezione isolata della regione detta ‘di Ampliato’ al primo livello (Fig. 1a, cubicolo *Aa*), i nuclei più antichi sono tutti nel secondo livello di gallerie (Fig. 1b). Realizzati e utilizzati a partire dal III s. d.C., se non dagli ultimi due o tre decenni del secolo precedente, sono stati tutti identificati e definiti con sicurezza: si tratta delle regioni *M* (cd. ‘dei Flavi Aureli’), *P* (il cd. ‘ipogeo dei Flavi’), *D* (cd. ‘del Buon Pastore’), *H* e *I* (cd. ‘dello scalone del 1897’).¹⁹ Come già rilevato, pur non essendo nel loro insieme di non rilevante estensione, questi settori restituiscono buona parte della documentazione epigrafica dell’intero complesso cimiteriale. È vero che ciò può essere dovuto al fatto che, essendo queste le zone più antiche, esse sono state ovviamente maggiormente utilizzate e per più tempo: ma la maggiore presenza di epigrafi in alcune regioni di una catacomba rispetto ad altre può derivare anche da altri motivi.

Infatti, altre regioni del medesimo secondo livello di gallerie (le già menzionate regioni *N*, *O*, *R*, *S*, *T*), pur non essendo particolarmente estese, hanno restituito una relativamente alta quantità di iscrizioni. Queste regioni hanno in comune un ele-

17 La definizione di epigrafi ‘a nastro’ è in CARLETTI 1998, 54f.; cfr. anche CARLETTI 2001a, 336–343; ROCCO 2005, 263f. Un caso-limite è costituito dalla regione *T* del livello superiore, dove le iscrizioni ‘a nastro’ superano le epigrafi su marmo (rispettivamente, 22 e 20). Questa tecnica esecutiva riveste particolare importanza dal punto di vista paleografico, poiché è diretta espressione della consuetudine scrittoria e delle capacità grafiche dell’estensore, come e più dei più noti ‘graffiti’ (ai quali le epigrafi ‘a nastro’ non possono propriamente essere assimilate). Analogamente a quanto accade in una pagina di un manoscritto, nelle ‘iscrizioni a nastro’ restano fissati, oltre alle lettere propriamente dette, tutti quegli elementi, quali le legature tra le lettere e quegli elementi ausiliari che definiscono il ‘tratteggio’ (cioè il numero e la direzione degli elementi grafici costitutivi delle singole lettere), che restituiscono un quadro di una scrittura personale, connessa ad un determinato individuo estensore: in molti casi proprio per questo non sono di immediata e semplice decifrazione.

18 Per brevità richiamo rispettivamente soltanto FIOCCHI NICOLAI/GUYON 2006b; GIULIANI 2006; SPERA 2006.

19 Richiamo i principali interventi: sull’ipogeo ‘dei Flavi’ (*P*) cfr. PANI ERMINI 1969 e PANI ERMINI 1972; sulla regione ‘del Buon Pastore’ (*D*) si veda PERGOLA 1975; sullo ‘scalone del 1897’ (*H–I*) cfr. PERGOLA 1985–1986; sulla regione ‘dei Flavi Aureli’ (*M*) rimando a STYGER 1926–27 e PERGOLA 1983. Infine, sulla cd. ‘cripta di Ampliato’ (cub. *Aa* del primo livello), il richiamo obbligato è a TESTINI 1952 e TESTINI 1978.

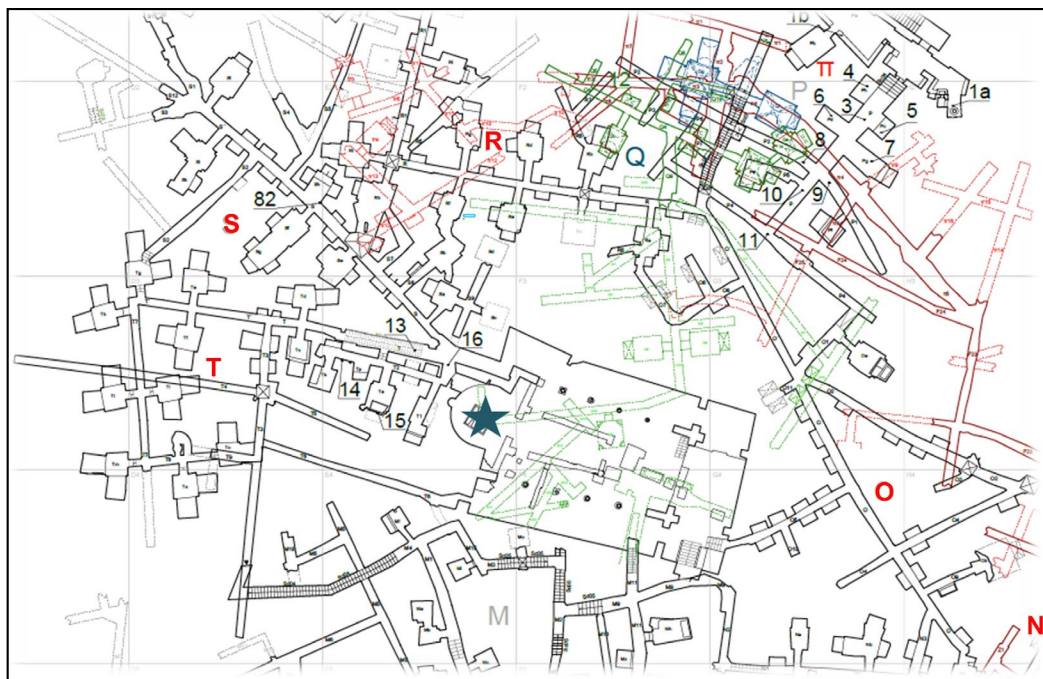


Fig. 2: Roma, via Ardeatina, catacomba di Domitilla, secondo livello. Le regioni N, O, R, S, T, gravitanti attorno al luogo della sepoltura dei martiri – evidenziato con una stella.

mento (Fig. 2): sono tutte nelle immediate vicinanze del centro devozionale della catacomba, cioè il luogo di sepoltura dei due martiri Nereo ed Achilleo.

Credo sia evidente, già da queste prime considerazioni di base, che la considerazione del solo dato quantitativo non è sufficiente a spiegare il complesso ‘paesaggio epigrafico’ delle catacombe romane: esso può essere correttamente interpretato solo avendo cura di esaminare congiuntamente i diversi elementi in gioco.

Il peso specifico dei luoghi della devozione

Il ricorso alla ‘morte scritta’ è dunque più marcato in determinate zone ‘centrali’ di una catacomba piuttosto che in altre, laddove il concetto di ‘centralità’ deve interpretarsi non soltanto nel mero senso topografico. Infatti, una regione di una catacomba cristiana è tanto più ‘centrale’ anche e soprattutto quanto più essa è vicina ai luoghi della devozione verso i martiri, che sempre più ne diventano il perno centrale.²⁰ Gli spazi funerari nei pressi delle tombe martiriali nel corso del tempo di-

²⁰ Questo è forse uno degli elementi di maggiore divergenza rispetto a quanto si può vedere nelle contemporanee catacombe ebraiche del suburbio romano, dove il fenomeno del culto martiriale – di assoluto rilievo per le catacombe cristiane – è invece del tutto

vengono i punti focali delle reti dei cimiteri dei cristiani di Roma: sono i luoghi più ricercati per le sepolture in forza del cosiddetto «*saint voisinage*»²¹ che garantiva ai *fratres* defunti della comunità la protezione ed assistenza da parte del santo martire che, pur nella realtà ultraterrena, assume – tra gli altri – un ruolo che a tutti gli effetti sembra riecheggiare quello del *patronus* di tradizione romana.

D'altra parte è indubbio che proprio per tale motivo questi spazi oggettivamente offrivano una potenziale maggiore visibilità dei sepolcri e quindi dei rispettivi epitaffi. Le epigrafi funerarie esposte in questi luoghi avevano – proprio grazie alla loro posizione in questo senso privilegiata – maggiori *chances* di essere viste e notate; i loro testi avevano più probabilità di essere letti o ascoltati dai visitatori che *devotionis causa* si recavano presso le tombe venerate. Queste iscrizioni, di fatto, garantivano una senz'altro maggiore possibilità di reale e ripetuta memoria per i defunti lì deposti.

I sepolcri *ad sanctos* e i relativi epitaffi, pur essendo autentica espressione di un elemento nuovo e specifico del fenomeno cristiano (il culto dei martiri), contemporaneamente rispondevano ancora anche alla prima *raison d'être* di fondo del *monumentum* funerario – antico e non solo: l'evocazione, cioè, del ricordo del defunto da parte dei superstiti, la prima basilare garanzia di una forma di 'sopravvivenza' al di là della morte fisica.

In questa ottica, non è un caso che la quasi totalità delle attestazioni epigrafiche di ecclesiastici deposti nel complesso di Domitilla si concentri nella area della attuale basilica, coincidente con quella dell'originario luogo di sepoltura e dunque di venerazione dei martiri Nereo e Achilleo.²² La nuova motivazione devozionale cristiana e la 'romana' esigenza sociale di visibilità dei sepolcri trovano dunque una felice combinazione. In questo il complesso di Domitilla conferma quanto rilevato per i maggiori centri di devozione martiriale di Roma: dalla *basilica Apostolorum* alla basilica Vaticana, da San Paolo fuori le mura a San Lorenzo, la incidenza degli epitaffi rispetto al numero dei sepolcri risulta non a caso molto più alta di quella, molto inferiore, riscontrabile negli ambulacri ipogei delle comuni catacombe.²³

assente. Nelle necropoli cristiane *sub divo* la alta densità di iscrizioni funerarie presso i complessi martiriali è ben confrontabile con il fenomeno in catacomba; si vedano in questo volume i contributi di ARBEITER, ARDELEANU, MERTEN, MAINARDIS e VALEVA.

21 Uso la particolarmente efficace definizione proposta da Yvette Duval: cfr. DUVAL 1988, 133–169; DUVAL 1991, part. 336–339.

22 Vedi ICVR III 6611 [EDB 22523], 6649 [EDB 22572], 7068a [EDB 23321], 7068b [EDB 22322], 7279.3 [EDB 22799] (e dunque 7200 [EDB 23771]: caso di Eulalios), 7261 [EDB 22751], 7621 [EDB 18543], 7677d [EDB 23975], 7760 [EDB 24413], 7930 [EDB 23865], 7931a [EDB 23866], 7931b [EDB 23867], 8143 [EDB 24666], 8148 [EDB 24671], 8161 [EDB 24683], 8165 [EDB 24687], 8207 [EDB 23563], 8274a' [EDB 25439], 8333a [EDB 25313], 8333b [EDB 25314], 8334a [EDB 25315], 8334b [EDB 25316], 8336a [EDB 25319], 8336b [EDB 25320], 8441 [EDB 25521], 8481 [EDB 25788], 9143 [EDB 20170].

23 Cfr. CARLETTI 1998, 46; CARLETTI 2001a, 333–336; CARLETTI 2012, 673–675.

Il paesaggio epigrafico come elemento di riflessione archeologica: alcuni esempi

Nella catacomba di Domitilla il dato epigrafico ha contribuito a costruire nuove ipotesi di interpretazione storico-topografica del suo sviluppo. Un primo esempio è offerto dalla già menzionata regione *T* del secondo livello, immediatamente ad Ovest della basilica martiriale (Figs. 3a–3b). Sin dai primi studi l'area nel suo insieme è stata, sempre e sistematicamente, considerata come un palmare esempio di *retrosanctos*:²⁴ cioè, un gruppo unitario di ambienti sepolcrali sviluppatosi nelle immediate vicinanze del centro di venerazione martiriale in funzione appunto dell'esigenza di ottenimento del cosiddetto 'saint voisinage'.

Escludendo l'area della basilica, nel secondo livello di gallerie la regione *T*, pur di ridotta estensione, presenta la più alta densità di iscrizioni, confezionate inoltre con diverse tecniche esecutive di livello qualitativo anche molto diverso. Come già ricordato, vi si trovano esempi della canonica incisione su marmo come anche epigrafi realizzate nella già menzionata tecnica 'a nastro'.

Il ricorso a questa tecnica esecutiva 'povera' pare essere proprio delle ultime fasi di utilizzazione delle catacombe come cimiteri – prima della loro successiva trasformazione definitiva in veri e propri santuari; essa risulta molto più ricorrente in percentuale nelle regioni periferiche delle reti cimiteriali, là dove il corredo 'epigrafico' delle tombe – quando (inoltre raramente) presente – è costituito non tanto da testi quanto da semplici 'segni' (palme, monogrammi cristologici, semplici croci), sopravvissuti al pericoloso stato di devastazione e alla costante minaccia di crolli. Tale rischio è certo maggiore in queste zone periferiche a causa sia della escavazione degli ambulacri in banchi tufacei di scarsa qualità, sia della oggettivamente minore attenzione loro riservata, data l'assenza di elementi usualmente ritenuti più meritevoli di particolare cura (quali decorazioni, affreschi, sarcofagi).²⁵

L'anomala compresenza, nella documentazione epigrafica della regione *T*, di livelli esecutivi di diversa qualità nonché di diverse prassi formulari, corrispondeva ad altri elementi di problematicità nella interpretazione dello sviluppo in antico di questo settore della catacomba. Si è quindi iniziata una analisi *complementare* – sui due diversi piani della analisi della documentazione epigrafica e della considerazione della topografia cimiteriale condotta rispettivamente da chi scrive

24 Da ultimo si veda ora ZIMMERMANN 2018, 422–424.

25 I crolli in ambiente catacombale sono fisiologicamente frequenti in assenza di una pianificata attività di ricognizione e di verifica della statica degli ambienti da parte di personale specializzato. Nel corso della lunga attività di ricognizione fotografica nelle gallerie della catacomba di Domitilla, condotta sempre – come da regolamento – con l'accompagnamento di personale della Pontificia Commissione di Archeologia Sacra, si sono riscontrati più volte casi di crolli avvenuti da un giorno all'altro, anche nelle regioni più centrali del cimitero: tutti sono stati ovviamente segnalati per le conseguenti operazioni di messa in sicurezza e ripristino.

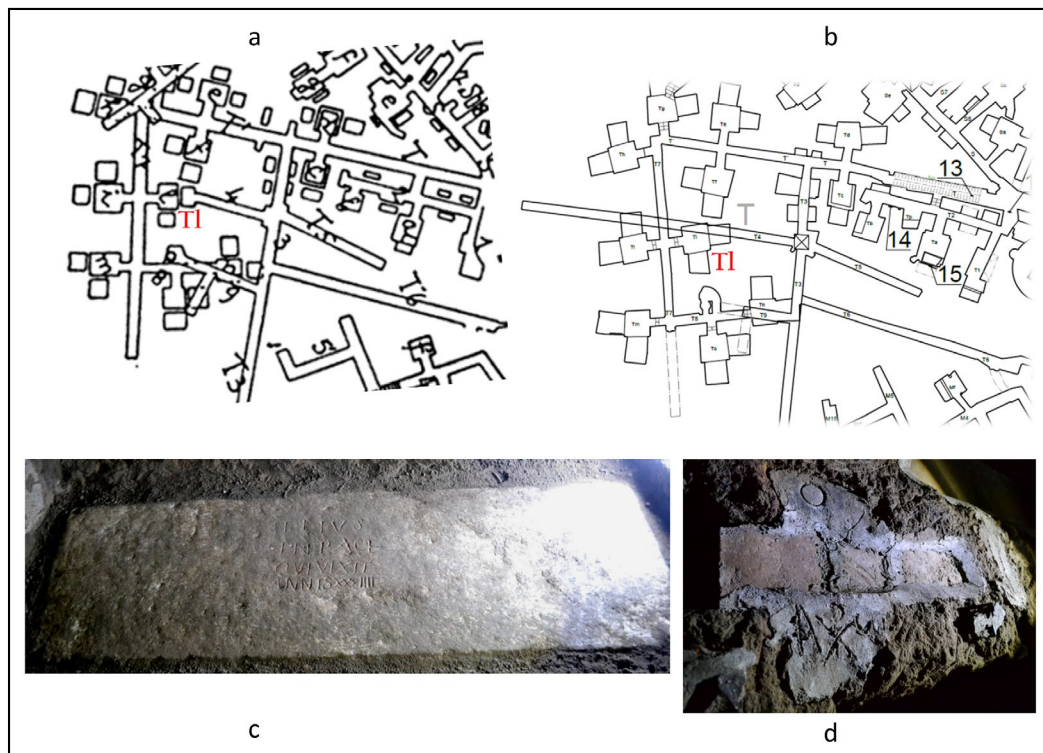


Fig. 3: Roma, via Ardeatina, catacomba di Domitilla, secondo livello. (a): La regione *T* nella pianta ICVR; (b): La regione *T* nella pianta del *Domitilla-Projekt*; (c): regione *T* (prima fase): l'iscrizione *in situ* ICVR III 6733 [EDB 20514], nel cubicolo *T*1 evidenziato in (a) e (b); (d): regione *T* (seconda fase): l'iscrizione 'a nastro' ICVR III 7295g [EDB 22637], nella galleria *T*4).

e da Norbert Zimmermann.²⁶ Le due attività di indagine hanno entrambe dimostrato, indipendentemente l'una dall'altra, che la regione *T* – fino ad oggi considerata come unitaria, così come appare nella pianta edita nel terzo volume delle ICVR (Fig. 3a) – deve invece essere distinta in parti diverse, di diversa datazione (Fig. 3b):²⁷ la più antica è con ogni probabilità anteriore o al massimo contemporanea alla fase in cui furono deposti nelle vicinanze i martiri Nereo ed Achilleo, evento che diede avvio alle radicali trasformazioni di questo settore del cimitero ipogeo.

26 Cfr. il contributo di ZIMMERMANN in questo volume.

27 Nella pianta pubblicata nel III volume delle ICVR sono inclusi come appartenenti ad una sola regione ambienti riferibili sicuramente a fasi diverse – come è evidente sia dalla loro diversa quota (alcune sovrapposizioni non sono rese nella pianta delle ICVR) sia dalla loro documentazione epigrafica: le gallerie *T*3, *T*4, *T*5, *T*9 sono senz'altro posteriori a *T*, *T'* e ai cubicoli, che, molto simili fra loro, possiamo senz'altro definire 'seriali': *Te*, *Tf*, *Tg*, *Th*, *Ti*, *Tl*, *Tm*, *Tn*.

In uno dei cubicoli della regione (*Tl*) è ancora *in situ*, a copertura di una tomba pavimentale, una lastra marmorea iscritta (Fig. 3c), che A. Ferrua pubblica nelle ICVR dichiarando di non averla vista.²⁸ L'iscrizione per le caratteristiche grafiche e per il formulario può essere agevolmente assegnata ai medesimi decenni in cui ebbe luogo la deposizione dei martiri, appunto tra gli ultimi anni del III s. d.C. e i primi del IV s. d.C., in età massenziana: in perfetta coerenza con la tipologia architettonica del cubicolo ed il quadro topografico della regione nella sua prima fase.²⁹

Lo sviluppo successivo della regione *T*, con un ulteriore livello di gallerie realizzato ad una quota inferiore, è invece da interpretarsi in funzione del ruolo di *retro-sanctos* assunta da quest'area a seguito della deposizione dei martiri: ed è proprio in questo più affollato e tardo settore (ultimo terzo del IV s. d.C.) che trovano spazio in massima parte le – dunque non più anomale – epigrafi ‘a nastro’ della regione (Fig. 3d).

Analogamente a quanto rilevato per la regione *T*, l'analisi topografica e quella epigrafica concordano nel farci distinguere due zone di diversa genesi e datazione anche nella regione *L*, considerata unitaria da A. Ferrua nella pianta di corredo al terzo volume delle ICVR (Fig. 4a): l'area più settentrionale³⁰ è probabilmente più tarda rispetto a quelle del resto della regione, che sembra essere più antico – come si evince anche dal molto rilevante ricorso al greco, presente in oltre un quarto delle epigrafi.³¹ Anche nel formulario delle epigrafi in questa area della regione *L* prevale un registro decisamente essenziale, distinto da quello riscontrabile nei reperti pertinenti alle restanti gallerie della regione. Si vedano ad esempio alcune epigrafi dalla galleria *L2*: alcune sono ancora a chiudere le relative tombe, come quella di *Irineus*, laddove si apprezza anche la minuta a sgraffio sottostante l'incisione (sfuggita agli editori delle ICVR);³² ancora più significative, le iscrizioni del cubicolo *Lc* –

28 ICVR III 6733 [EDB 20514]: *Elius / in pace / qui vixit / annis XXXIII*. Ferrua (ICVR, III, comm. ad loc. cit.) annota: «non vidimus et latet fortasse sub terra congesta in cubiculum».

29 Cfr. ora ZIMMERMANN 2018, part. 431–436 e, più sinteticamente, 441–443. Nella medesima regione *T* sono state rinvenute altre iscrizioni (ICVR III 6595 [EDB 22502] e ICVR III 6902 [EDB 22900]), che presentano caratteristiche grafiche identiche a quelle di un relativamente numeroso gruppo di epigrafi pertinenti a regioni di età massenziana (vedi *infra*). Entrambe le iscrizioni sono frammentarie e inoltre non assegnabili con precisione ad un singolo ambiente di pertinenza: infatti, due frammenti di una medesima iscrizione (ICVR III 6595) sono stati ritrovati separatamente, precisamente uno nella galleria *T* e l'altro nella galleria *T3*; il frammento ICVR III 6902 è stato recuperato insieme ad altri di varia datazione nei riempimenti del più tardo cubicolo *Ta*.

30 Gallerie *L4*, *L6*, *L7*, *L8*, *L9*, *L15*, *L16*, *L17*, *L18*, *L19*, oltre all'arcosolio *Ld*.

31 Si contano, su un totale di 75 epigrafi, ben 19 iscrizioni in greco. Per un utile confronto sempre nella catacomba di Domitilla, nella antichissima regione *M* (cd. ‘dei Flavi Aureli’), il greco compare in 19 documenti su 132 epigrafi totali, con dunque una incidenza del 14 %, molto più in linea con quella generalmente rilevabile per l'età anteriore alla cosiddetta ‘svolta costantiniana’: cfr. FELLE 2018b, 308f.

32 ICVR III 6762 [EDB 22618].

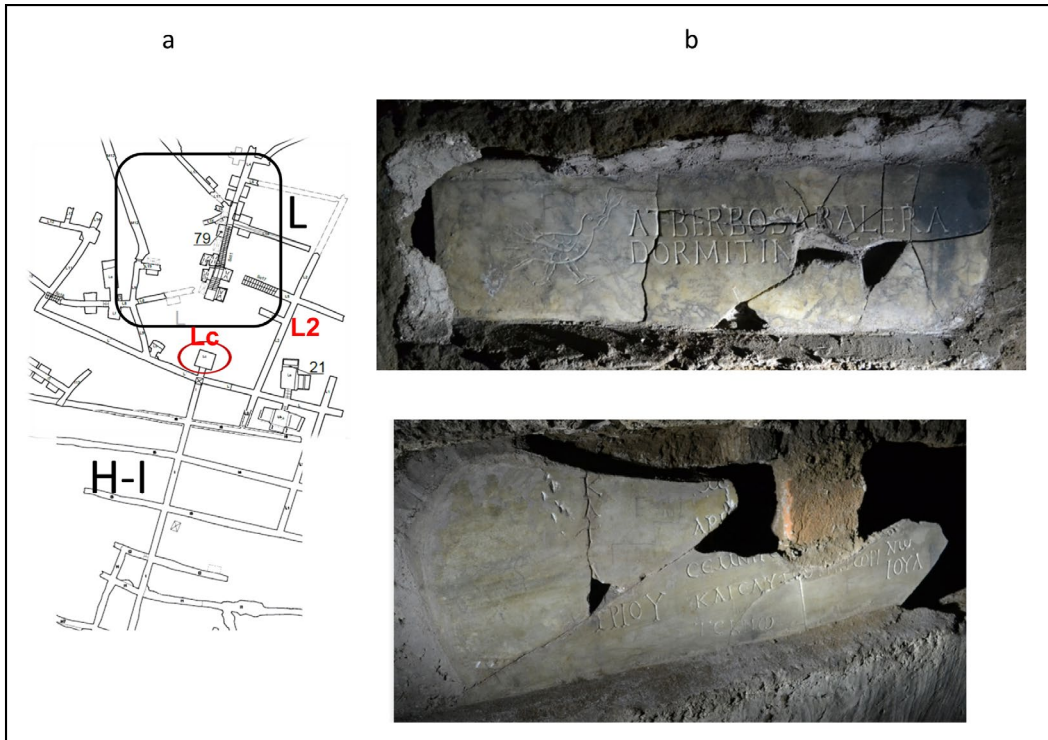


Fig. 4: Roma, via Ardeatina, catacomba di Domitilla, secondo livello. (a): La regione *L* e parte nord della regione *H-I*. Evidenziata dal profilo in nero l'area probabilmente più tarda della regione; in rosso il cubicolo *Lc*, evidenziata la galleria *L2*; (b): Cubicolo *Lc*, epigrafi *in situ*: in alto ICVR III 6527 [EDB 22314]; in basso ICVR III 7166.1-3 [EDB 23000, 23001, 23002].

anche qui, alcune ancora *in situ* (Fig. 4b).³³ Il cubicolo *Lc*, posto al fondo della lunga galleria principale della regione *I*, è al termine dell'asse principale della antica regione *H-I*, con cui sarebbe preferibile associare questo settore della regione *L*.

Prima della deposizione dei martiri Nereo e Achilleo, infatti, il luogo di maggiore sviluppo della rete sotterranea del cimitero è da situare più ad Est, precisamente nelle antiche regioni *D* ('Buon Pastore') ed *H-I* ('dello scalone del 1897') della quale – come per le già considerate regioni *T* ed *L* – l'epigrafia induce a ripensare l'articolazione e la storia.

In particolare la rilevante presenza di iscrizioni 'a nastro' – ridotte inoltre a isolati monogrammi cristologici – nella porzione sud-occidentale della regione *H-I* (altrimenti detta 'dello scalone del 1897')³⁴ (Fig. 5a) è un forte indizio di una sua datazione certo più avanzata rispetto al resto della zona.³⁵

33 ICVR III 6527 [EDB 22314]; 7166.1-3 [EDB 23000, 23001, 23002]; 7223 [EDB 23797]; 7251 [EDB 22100].

34 PERGOLA 1985-1986.

35 Oltre alla parte più meridionale delle gallerie *H1* e *H2*, rientra in questo settore più tardo l'approfondimento cui afferiscono le gallerie *H8*, *H9*, *H10*, *H11*, *H12*, *H13*, *H14*.

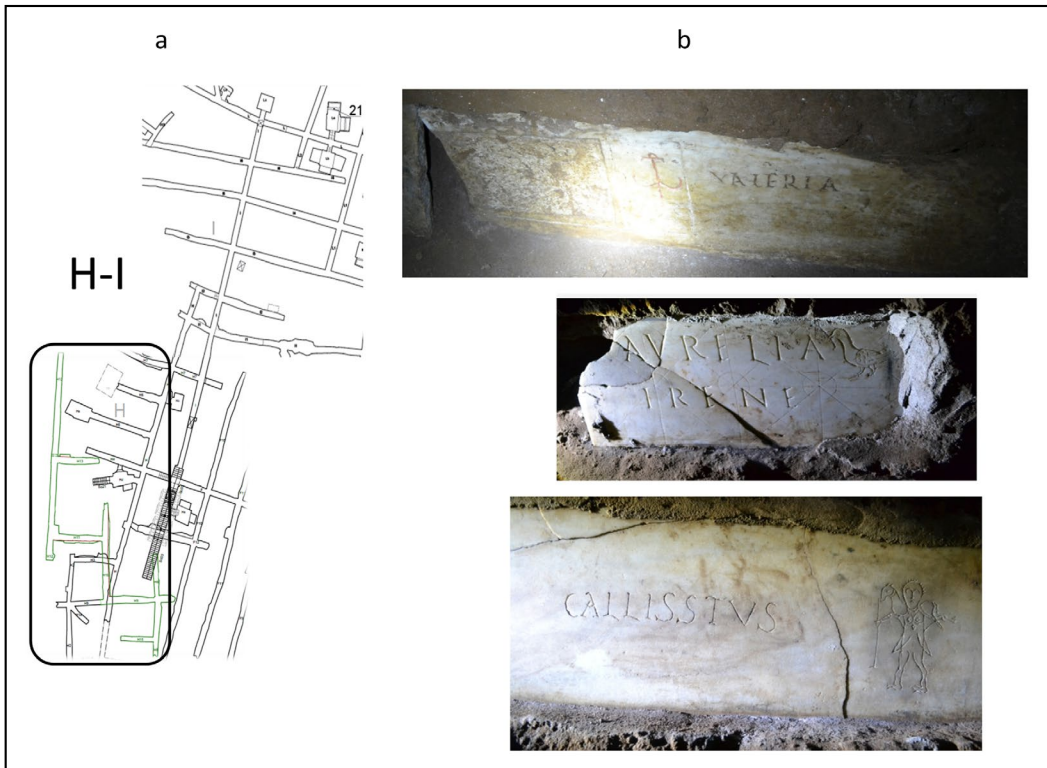


Fig. 5: Roma, via Ardeatina, catacomba di Domitilla, secondo livello. (a): regione *H-I*: evidenziata dal profilo in nero l'area di sviluppo più tardi, nel quale ricade il successivo approfondimento delle gallerie (segnalato in colore verde); (b): regione *H-I*: epigrafi *in situ* esempi di 'prassi antisistema': in alto, ICVR III 6956 [EDB 23154] (galleria *H4*); al centro, ICVR III 6579 [EDB 18571] (galleria *I5*); in basso, ICVR III 6608 [EDB 22520] (galleria *I2*).

La regione *H-I* fu progettata per un uso comunitario sin dal suo inizio in età precostantiniana, come risulta evidente dalle sue caratteristiche strutturali – lo sviluppo topografico regolare, aperto a potenziali espansioni future; l'uniformità tipologica delle sepolture, tutte sistematicamente semplici 'tombe parietali a loculo'.³⁶ Molte delle epigrafi della regione (Fig. 5b), coerentemente, seguono il modello minimale del cosiddetto 'laconismo arcaico' – come lo chiamò Giovanni Battista de Rossi che ne vide i primi esempi nell'arcaico arenario centrale della catacomba di Priscilla sulla Salaria –, indicata attualmente con la pregnante etichetta di 'prassi antisistema' coniata poco più di venti anni fa da C. Carletti, che così ha voluto denominare questa prassi formulare 'sottrattiva' – nel senso di una voluta riduzione degli epitaffi all'essenziale: cioè, il solo elemento nominale, accompagnato talvolta da formule di saluto o augurali basate sul termine $\epsilon\iota\rho\eta\nu\eta/pax$.³⁷

36 Cfr. NUZZO 2000, 171–173.

37 CARLETTI 2008, 30–36.

Questo modello risulta proposto – e non imposto, dal momento che accanto ad esso permangono nelle catacombe non pochi epitaffi in linea con la prassi tradizionale³⁸ – alla comunità cristiana di Roma durante il III s. d.C. dalla più alta dirigenza ecclesiastica, che lo adotta per prima nei propri epitaffi, quali quelli rinvenuti nella cd. ‘cripta dei Papi’³⁹ nel κοιμητήριον comunitario per antonomasia, la cataomba oggi detta di Callisto sulla via Appia.⁴⁰

Esempi di questa prassi si riscontrano sistematicamente in tutti i nuclei più antichi delle altre catacombe cristiane di Roma: e questo non solo dal punto di vista del formulario ridotto ai soli elementi onomastici dei defunti, ma anche se non soprattutto dal punto di vista delle soluzioni grafiche: sia per quanto riguarda la scrittura sia per quanto riguarda gli elementi non alfabetici, cioè i segni, le immagini, i simboli, il cui definito repertorio – analogamente a quanto si registra sul versante della decorazione degli ambienti sepolcrali – sembra essere il risultato di un ‘vocabolario’ controllato da una gestione centralizzata delle aree funerarie comunitarie dei cristiani.⁴¹

Gestione e committenze dei cimiteri comunitari/collettivi dei cristiani alla luce del dato epigrafico

Dalla documentazione epigrafica del complesso di Domitilla emerge un altro possibile indizio di ‘gestione controllata’. In alcune zone della cataomba – tutte databili allo stesso periodo compreso tra gli ultimi anni del III s. d.C. e i primi decenni del IV s. d.C. (regione *A, B e D* del primo livello; regioni *M, D, H* ed *I* del secondo) – sono visibili iscrizioni che con ogni probabilità sono state realizzate da una singola officina lapidaria (Fig. 6).⁴²

38 Cfr. FELLE 2016.

39 ICVR IV 10558 [EDB 4259]; 10616 [EDB 4681]; 10645 [EDB 4254]; 10670 [EDB 1697]; 10694 [EDB 1781].

40 Cfr. CARLETTI 2001b.

41 FELLE 2018a, 41–45.

42 Altri casi, più isolati, sono stati riscontrati anche in altre aree, come le regioni *E* e *P* del secondo livello e nel limitato terzo piano (*Q*). Sull’argomento, con una più ampia documentazione, cfr. FELLE 2021, 219–221; FELLE 2022. Ulteriori esempi in FELLE/ZIMMERMANN 2014, 109–112. Già nel 1935 Enrico Josi aveva notato che la figurazione di una *avis* in una delle iscrizioni del già ricordato cubicolo *Lc* (ICVR III 7273 [EDB 22764]) era del tutto identica a quella visibile su un’iscrizione frammentaria rinvenuta nella cataomba di Pretestato (ICVR V 14845 [EDB 1066]): vedi Josi 1935, 17f. Aggiungo a questo caso segnalato dallo Josi le quasi identiche figurazioni di *avis* nelle tre epigrafi ICVR III 7196 [EDB 23767] (II livello, galleria *M12*); 8114c [EDB 25364] (I livello, cubicolo *Ae*); ICVR V 14984 [EDB 805], conservata ora ai Musei Vaticani, di generica provenienza dal *coemeterium Praetextati*, sulla via Appia.



Fig. 6: Roma, via Ardeatina, catacomba di Domitilla. Alcuni esempi dell'attività di una officina lapidaria per il cimitero comunitario. Dall'alto, procedendo da sinistra a destra: ICVR III 7798 [EDB 24461] (I livello, galleria A2); ICVR III 7590 [EDB 22654] (I livello, galleria D); ICVR III 6909d [EDB 18164] (II livello, galleria M5); ICVR III 7481 [EDB 23609] (I livello, galleria B); ICVR III 6563 [EDB 22362] (II livello, galleria J); ICVR III 6981 [EDB 23184] (II livello, cubicolo Dc).

Accanto alla prassi – che resta prevalente – di iscrizioni realizzate da singoli lapicidi individuati attraverso scelte private, personali o familiari, queste epigrafi possono essere una traccia per ipotizzare l'esistenza di una bottega lapidaria di riferimento dei responsabili del cimitero per la comunità cristiana.

Il dato riveniente dalla catacomba di Domitilla non è una eccezione isolata: alcune note epigrafi, indicate tradizionalmente come 'ostriane',⁴³ rinvenute sia nella catacomba di Sant'Agnese sia nel vicino *coemeterium Maius* (entrambi i complessi funerari sono lungo la via Nomentana, nel suburbio nord orientale), sono quasi certamente state prodotte da una singola officina.⁴⁴ E inoltre non mancano altri

43 L'aggettivo deriva dal toponimo *Ostrianum* che, ad indicare quest'area del suburbio romano, è tramandato dagli Atti apocrifi di papa Liberio (*Gesta Liberii papae*, in *Patrologia Latina*, VIII, cc. 1388–1393; fine V – inizi VI s. d.C.), dove il termine designa la località dove Pietro amministrava il battesimo: *erat enim ibi non longe a cymiterio Noellae cymiterius (sic) Ostrianus, ubi Petrus apostolus baptizavit* (*Gesta Liberii papae*, in *Patrologia Latina*, VIII, c. 1391).

44 *Exempli gratia* cfr. ICVR VIII 21224a-b [EDB 11657; EDB 42069]; 21769 [EDB 36065]; 21963 [EDB 36360]. Da ultimo si veda CARLETTI 2018.

dossier epigrafici su cui dover riflettere in questa direzione di ricerca, come forse inducono a pensare alcune iscrizioni pertinenti ai cimiteri della via Salaria, come le catacombe di via Anapo e dei Giordani e, soprattutto, di Priscilla (con particolare riferimento a quelle relative alla regione centrale dell'arenario, in uso nel III s. d.C.).⁴⁵

Le iscrizioni dalla catacomba di Domitilla riconducibili all'attività dell'ipotizzata officina lapidaria in questione sono databili tra la fine del III s. d.C. e i primi decenni del IV s. d.C. Proprio in questo periodo – nel *coemeterium Domitillae* come altrove – insediamenti funerari tra loro autonomi e indipendenti sono trasformati in catacombe comunitarie, sotto la gestione diretta di responsabili – probabilmente ecclesiastici, o comunque persone direttamente connesse ai dirigenti della comunità.⁴⁶

La comunità cristiana sembra assumere nell'ambito della sfera funeraria il ruolo prima tradizionalmente proprio delle famiglie, e offre per la *cura gerenda pro mortuis* dei 'servizi standard' a costi contenuti – se non forse anche pari a zero: in primo luogo ovviamente la sepoltura, ma forse anche l'epitaffio, ridotto al solo nome, con una semplice acclamazione e/o un segno di repertorio. La apposizione di una epigrafe comunque non era considerata come necessaria, dal momento che – come evidente – solo una minima parte dei sepolcri nelle catacombe era dotata di epitaffio.⁴⁷

Nel caso di Domitilla, rapportando il totale delle iscrizioni con il numero delle tombe esistenti nella rete degli ambulacri ipogei⁴⁸ l'incidenza complessiva delle 'tombe scritte' risulta poco superiore ad una su dieci (il 13 % circa); tale percentuale, inoltre, appare progressivamente diminuire nel tempo.⁴⁹

Accanto alla quantità delle epigrafi, a partire dalla metà del IV s. d.C. sembra diminuire anche la loro qualità generale: le iscrizioni sono sempre più realizzate da esecutori improvvisati, non professionisti, tra i quali sicuramente vanno annoverati i *fossores* che, nella seconda metà del IV s. d.C. – diventati anche un *ordo ecclesiasticus* – sono i reali *manager* delle catacombe, delle quali l'epigrafia testimonia un ulteriore mutamento. Da originari nuclei indipendenti, uniti poi per essere

45 *Exempli gratia* cfr. ICVR IX 24708 [EDB 11975]; 24741 [EDB 14357]; 24776 [EDB 15676], dalla catacomba anonima di via Anapo; da Priscilla, vedi – sempre a titolo esemplificativo: ICVR IX 25005 [EDB 7567]; 25301 [EDB 10381]; 25334 [EDB 16809].

46 Data la vastità della bibliografia sull'argomento, per brevità rimando al recente preciso quadro tracciato in FIOCCHI NICOLAI 2018.

47 Cfr. CARLETTI 1998, 45f.; CARLETTI 2001a, 332f.; CARLETTI 2012, 673–675.

48 Il calcolo si deve a Verena Fugger (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Vienna), nel quadro delle attività del Domitilla-Projekt diretto da Norbert Zimmermann: i miei ringraziamenti ad entrambi per avermi gentilmente fornito i dati.

49 Il secondo livello, che include regioni risalenti all'età precostantiniana, restituisce una percentuale di 'morte scritta' attorno al 14 % (precisamente: 14,3 %), mentre il primo livello – in massima parte realizzato tra la metà e la seconda metà del IV s. d.C. – la percentuale si abbassa attorno al 10 % (precisamente: 10,4 %).

i cimiteri della comunità cristiana, le catacombe della *urbs christiana* sono ora grandi sepolcreti collettivi, che – esattamente come le antiche necropoli – ne sono un fedele riflesso.

Conclusioni

In conclusione: è evidente la rilevanza archeologica del dato epigrafico quando ancora ne è sufficientemente preservata la sua connessione con i contesti originari. È questo il caso appunto delle catacombe cristiane nel suburbio di Roma, che offrono un ‘paesaggio epigrafico’ corposo dal punto di vista quantitativo e molto articolato dal punto di vista della qualità, delle tecniche, delle scritture. Il caso di studio scelto nel contributo, il complesso cimiteriale di Domitilla sulla via Ardeatina, si rivela come un esempio efficace per la ricchezza del suo dossier di iscrizioni, che accompagnano la nascita e i primi sviluppi del cimitero in quanto spazio sepolcrale comunitario: le sue tracce emergono nel ‘paesaggio epigrafico’ non solo dalla più usuale analisi testuale e formulare, ma anche da alcune forme grafiche ricorrenti in diversi settori della rete di gallerie che fanno ipotizzare la possibile esistenza di almeno una officina lapidaria di riferimento, in funzione tra fine III s. e inizi del IV s. d.C., nei decenni dello sviluppo del cimitero; una officina in collegamento con una gestione comunitaria dell’area sepolcrale, che progressivamente dalla metà del IV s. d.C. in poi sembra svanire; in piena coerenza con quanto si può osservare da basi documentarie diverse da quella epigrafica, quali quelle delle tipologie sepolcrali e delle decorazioni degli ambienti.

La considerazione delle forme grafiche delle iscrizioni in catacomba, un approccio di analisi finora poco per non dire mai tentato, è stata resa possibile grazie ad una sistematica campagna di rilevamento fotografico: si auspica che il *case study* dell’indagine sulle iscrizioni del complesso di Domitilla possa essere un utile primo esempio per analoghe indagini nei ‘paesaggi epigrafici’ delle altre catacombe del suburbio romano.

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Crediti immagini

- Fig. 1** Piante del *Domitilla-Projekt*, cortesia N. Zimmermann, modificate dall'Autore.
- Fig. 2** Particolare della pianta *Domitilla-Projekt*, cortesia N. Zimmermann, modificata dall'Autore.
- Fig. 3** (a): da ICVR III; (b): Cortesia N. Zimmermann; (c): ICVR III 6733 [EDB 20514]; (d): ICVR III 7295g [EDB 22637]. Foto dell'Autore per EDB, in base all'accordo in essere con la Pontificia Commissione di Archeologia Sacra.
- Fig. 4** (a): Cortesia N. Zimmermann; (b): ICVR III 6527 [EDB 22314] e ICVR III 7166.1-3 [EDB 23000, 23001, 23002]. Foto dell'Autore per EDB, in base all'accordo in essere con la Pontificia Commissione di Archeologia Sacra.
- Fig. 5** (a): Cortesia N. Zimmermann; (b): ICVR III 6956 [EDB 23154], ICVR III 6579 [EDB 18571] e ICVR III 6608 [EDB 22520]. Foto dell'Autore per EDB, in base all'accordo in essere con la Pontificia Commissione di Archeologia Sacra.
- Fig. 6** Dall'alto, procedendo da sinistra a destra: ICVR III 7798 [EDB 24461], ICVR III 7590 [EDB 22654], ICVR III 6909d [EDB 18164], ICVR III 7481 [EDB 23609], ICVR III 6563 [EDB 22362] e ICVR III 6981 [EDB 23184]. Foto dell'Autore per EDB, in base all'accordo in essere con la Pontificia Commissione di Archeologia Sacra.

FULVIA MAINARDIS

Luoghi, monumenti, *epigraphic habit*

Note sulle necropoli tardoantiche della parte orientale della *Venetia et Histria*

Introduzione

Per i centri romani della *Venetia* orientale, essenzialmente *Aquileia*, *Concordia*, *Tergeste*, *Iulium Carnicum* e *Forum Iulii* si è registrato ultimamente un notevole incremento delle conoscenze relative ai contesti funerari tardoantichi e alla documentazione epigrafica ad essi collegata, grazie a nuove indagini archeologiche ma anche a ricerche nella documentazione d'archivio (Fig. 1).¹

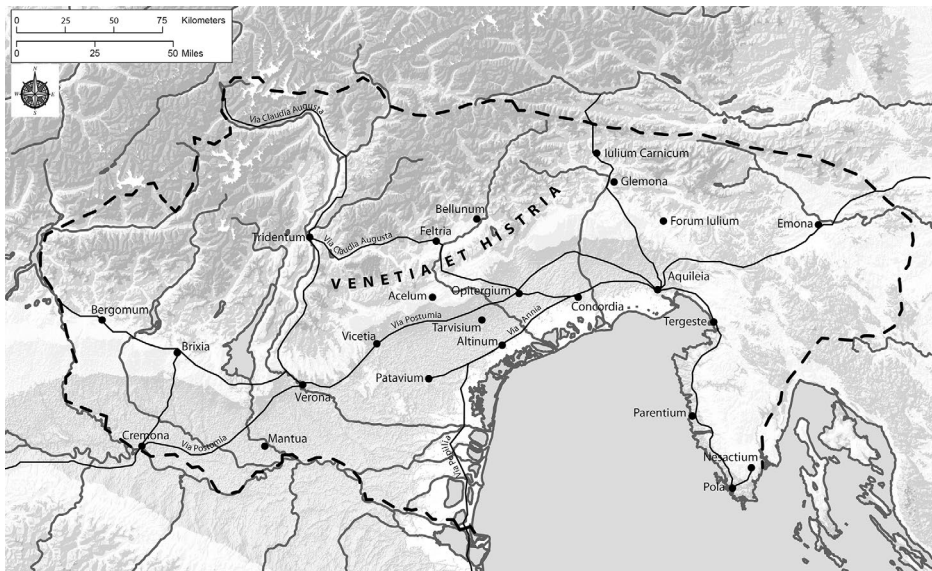


Fig. 1: *Venetia et Histria* nell'età tardoantica con siti menzionati nel testo.

Nel delineare un quadro di sintesi delle conoscenze relative alle realtà sepolcrali urbane e suburbane tra IV e V s. d.C. e al loro corredo epigrafico, oggetto di questo contributo, si evidenzieranno anche quei contesti nei quali – a fronte di un mondo cristiano piuttosto indagato nelle sue risultanze epigrafiche, iconografiche e archi-

1 Esempio in questo senso la raccolta di saggi in RINALDI/VIGONI 2015.

tettoniche – sia nota una documentazione non immediatamente attribuibile alla nuova fede. Questo aspetto rientra nel tema dei cd. ‘non Cristiani’ e delle loro sepolture e appartiene a quel filone di ricerche che hanno per oggetto, in senso lato, la sopravvivenza del mondo pagano² rispetto al ‘mondo nuovo’ dei cristiani, toccando diversi aspetti dell’orizzonte tardoantico, non ultimo quello relativo ai culti del *pantheon* romano.³

Le evidenze prese in esame appartengono esclusivamente alla categoria delle necropoli urbane e suburbane, con l’esclusione invece dei numerosi sepolcreti rurali pertinenti ai tanti agglomerati minori, più o meno strutturati, che caratterizzano l’ampio territorio di *Aquileia* e in generale tutta la *Venetia* orientale.⁴

Epigrafia funeraria tardoantica ad Aquileia: un case study sui limiti dell’utilizzo della documentazione

L’affermarsi del cristianesimo in questa area è stato ed è oggetto di numerosi studi che si sono soprattutto concentrati sulla realtà di *Aquileia* e sul suo ruolo nella diffusione del nuovo credo.⁵ Comincerei pertanto l’analisi proprio dalla città adriatica, che offre un ampio panorama delle diverse dinamiche operanti nel tessuto urbano a partire dall’età tetrarchica, quando la colonia assunse una nuova centralità in quanto capitale della nuova provincia, precludendo alla straordinaria fioritura, anche edilizia, di età costantiniana (Fig. 2).⁶

Si verificò allora quel fenomeno, noto anche altrove, di recupero della memoria civica in un progetto di ripristino, seppur in un orizzonte culturale ormai modificato, dell’*ornatus* della città, riallestendo in contesti mutati anche le statue del *pantheon* pagano.⁷ *Aquileia* divenne anche sede imperiale e luogo in cui furono emanate *constitutiones* dal notevole impatto sulla pervasività e sul ruolo del nuovo credo, soprattutto dopo l’editto di Tessalonica; tra questi editti basti ricordare la *constitutio* aquileiese di Teodosio del 16 giugno del 391 d.C. a proposito del divieto di frequentare i templi pagani.⁸

2 Per un inquadramento generale del tema CAMERON 2010; per gli aspetti più specifici riguardo al mondo funerario tardoantico cfr. SPERA 2009; VELLA 2016. Per la discussa presenza giudaica ad *Aquileia* vd. ultimamente con bibliografia precedente NOCE 2013.

3 Cfr. STEUERNAGEL 2011; CECCONI 2012, 123–162; CECCONI 2014.

4 Cfr. BUORA 1993; DEGRASSI 2000; CIVIDINI 2015; LAVARONE et al. 2016.

5 Per *Aquileia* vd. CUSCITO 2009; CUSCITO 2013c; CUSCITO 2014.

6 Per l’epigrafia costantiniana vd. CUSCITO 2016. Per la topografia tardoantica vd. GROH 2011; MARANO 2012; CUSCITO 2012.

7 Vd. ZACCARIA 2008, 148 con bibliografia precedente; WITSCHERL 2012–2013, 31–35; BOLLE 2019, 511–536; sul significato dell’esposizione di queste statue (statue di culto?) nell’ambito della sopravvivenza dei culti pagani nel IV s. d.C. vd. STEUERNAGEL 2011.

8 CTh 16, 10, 11 (p. 900) e CTh 11, 38, 1 (p. 656). Per l’elenco delle *constitutiones* emanate ad *Aquileia* vd. BRATOŽ 2003, 477 n. 2; per quelle di età costantiniana CUNEO 2004.

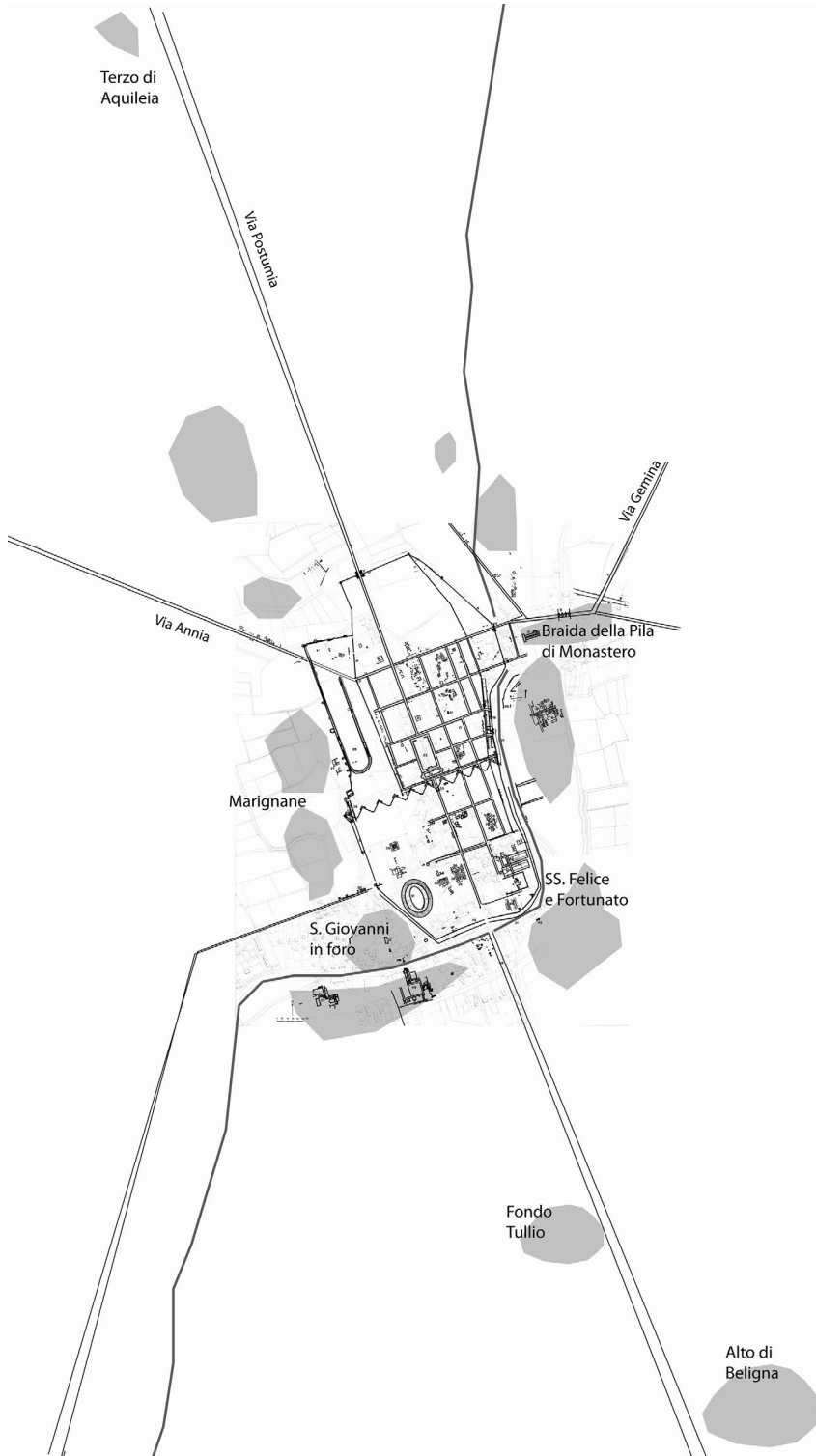


Fig. 2: *Aquileia*, pianta della città con aree di necropoli menzionate nel testo.

L'analisi della realtà funeraria aquileiese di età tardoantica mette in luce importanti problematiche⁹ di carattere generale che sono riscontrabili, seppur non tutte e con variazioni, anche negli altri contesti urbani presi in esame e che pertanto devono essere tenute sempre ben presenti nell'utilizzo della documentazione disponibile e nelle conclusioni che se ne possono trarre.

Gli aspetti critici riguardano:

1) l'attribuzione delle iscrizioni a una committenza cristiana: dalla seconda metà del Novecento molte iscrizioni, non solo urbane ma anche di molti altri centri dell'impero, considerate prima cristiane in base a un precostituito repertorio di criteri oggettivamente autoreferenziali, sono state correttamente riattribuite a un orizzonte non cristiano applicando l'indicazione di padre Ferrua secondo il quale «è canone fondamentale che un'epigrafe si consideri come pagana, o meglio la si lasci a giacere con esse, sino a che non si abbia un argomento positivo per ritenerla cristiana».¹⁰

2) La cronologia: mancano quasi sempre nell'epigrafia funeraria elementi datanti sicuri e si pone il problema delle seriazioni possibili stando alle iscrizioni sicuramente datate.¹¹ Se il criterio paleografico ha evidenti limiti,¹² tuttavia la peculiarità delle officine locali può fornire indizi per intuire se documenti pertinenti a orizzonti culturali o a contesti differenti possono essere coevi.¹³

3) La spoliazione e l'abbandono: non è completamente valutabile nei suoi effetti il fenomeno della spoliazione massiccia (con o senza reimpiego individuabile) subita dai complessi sepolcrali,¹⁴ (che per *Aquileia* ha tratti di marcata precocità, iniziando infatti a partire dal III s. d.C.),¹⁵ a cui si aggiungono anche fenomeni idrogeologici che hanno cancellato o obliterato tutte le evidenze monumentali. Oltre alla cd. 'necropoli della via Annia', nella cui attuale sistemazione è già evidente la stratigrafia complessa e la sovrapposizione delle sepolture, l'esempio più emblematico

9 Cfr. CANTINO WATAGHIN/LAMBERT 1998, 101–103.

10 Riportato in CARLETTI 2014, 84.

11 Al IV s. d.C. sono datate InscrAq 2935 = [EDR162431](#) (330 d.C.); InscrAq 2936 = [EDR071976](#) (336 d.C.); potrebbe essere del 335 o del 345 d.C. anche IACUMIN 1999, 65 nr. 5; InscrAq 2913 = [EDR078684](#) (352 d.C.); InscrAq 2937 = [EDR162436](#) (366 d.C.); InscrAq 2938 = [EDR139675](#) (382 d.C.); InscrAq 2939 = [EDR078687](#) (391 d.C.); InscrAq 2940 = [EDR162437](#) (392 d.C.); al V s. d.C. InscrAq 2941 = [EDR074896](#) (404 d.C.); InscrAq 2942 = [EDR162438](#) (402 o 409 d.C.); VERGONE 2007, 147 = [EDR007132](#); MAGNANI 2018, 108f., nr. 3 (417 d.C.); InscrAq 2904 = [EDR139207](#) (398 e 423 d.C.).

12 Non si osserva, come si potrebbe semplicisticamente ritenere, una qualche forma di evoluzione nella scrittura: per esempio in InscrAq 2937 del 366 d.C. la A ha il trattino spezzato (come anche in IACUMIN 1999, 65, nr. 5 se la datazione al 335 o 345 d.C. è corretta), che però è (ancora) obliquo in InscrAq 2940 = [EDR162437](#) del 392 d.C., in InscrAq 2941 = [EDR074896](#) del 404 d.C. e in InscrAq 2942 = [EDR162438](#) del 402 o 409 d.C.

13 Vd. l'identità compositiva oltre che formulare e iconografica degli epitaffi dei Cristiani con o senza il *Dis Manibus* in MAINARDIS 2020.

14 BUORA 2004, 385–387; GIOVANNINI 2012–2013, 217–219.

15 Sul fenomeno ad *Aquileia* con ampia bibliografia precedente vd. ZACCARIA 2012.

tico viene da *Italia Concordia*, dove le esondazioni hanno consentito di rinvenire il cd. 'sepolcreto dei militi',¹⁶ abbandonato e sommerso da 2 m di limi in seguito alle violente inondazioni del VI s. d.C.¹⁷ di cui sembra esserci un'eco anche in Paolo Diacono.¹⁸

4) La continuità d'uso delle necropoli dall'età imperiale all'epoca tardoantica: le nostre conoscenze risentono di secoli di ricerche parziali ed occasionali, volte soprattutto allo sterro dei singoli contesti sepolcrali che spesso presentavano situazioni perturbate e sconvolte *ab antiquo*. La possibilità di ricostruire quadri coerenti e unitari oggi si basa soprattutto sul recupero e la valorizzazione della documentazione di archivio, oggetto anche di alcuni specifici progetti che hanno come *focus* il suburbio.¹⁹

5) La mancanza di notizie precise per il rinvenimento: è frequente trovare la dicitura *Aquileiae reperta* con conseguente perdita di un prezioso dato topografico per la ricostruzione del paesaggio antico.

6) La relazione fra epigrafe e contesto necropolare e fra epigrafe e singola tomba:²⁰ soprattutto ad *Aquileia* gli scavi e i recuperi setto, otto e novecenteschi rendono difficile collegare il *titulus* al complesso monumentale o alla realtà sepolcrale a cui apparteneva, tanto più che l'epigrafia tardoantica nasce come un'epigrafia prevalentemente di reimpiego, fenomeno che va letto anche nell'ottica della lunga durata d'uso delle aree sepolcrali.²¹ Nel caso dell'epigrafia funeraria tardoantica di *Aquileia*²² le iscrizioni sono spesso incise su lastre di spoglio la cui collocazione originaria è difficile se non impossibile da stabilire.

16 Vd. *infra*.

17 FONTANA 2004; FONTANA 2006, 164–166; FONTANA 2015, 24f.; in relazione anche ai cambiamenti climatici vd. NEWFIELD 2018.

18 Paul. Hist. Lang. 3, 23: *Et tempore fuit aquae diluvium in finibus Venetiarum et Liguriae seu ceteris regionibus Italiae, quale post Noe tempora creditur non fuisse. Factae sunt lavinae possessionum seu villarum, hominumque pariter et animantium magnus interitus. Destructa sunt itinera, dissipatae viae, tantum tuncque Atesis fluvius excrevit, ut circa basilicam beati Zenonis martyris, quae extra Veronensis urbis muros sita est, usque ad superiores fenestras aqua pertingeret, licet, sicut et beatus Gregorius post papa scripsit, in eadem basilicam aqua minime introierit. Urbis quoque eiusdem Veronensis muri ex parte aliqua eadem sunt inundatione subruti. Facta est autem haec inundatio sexto decimo Kalendas Novembris. Sed tantae coruscationes et tonitrua fuerunt, quantae fieri vix aestivo tempore solent. Post duos quoque menses eadem urbs Veronensium magna ex parte incendio concremata est.*

19 Si vedano per esempio i diversi contributi di Paola Maggi e Flaviana Oriolo riguardanti lo studio del suburbio di *Aquileia* sulla base dei dati d'archivio (essenzialmente del MAN di *Aquileia*), a partire da MAGGI/ORIOLO 1999 fino a MAGGI/ORIOLO 2012–2013 con bibliografia precedente.

20 GIOVANNINI 2012–2013.

21 Sulla genesi e le caratteristiche delle necropoli di età costantiniana a Roma ma non solo vd. il quadro di FIOCCHI NICOLAI 2016.

22 Per l'epigrafia aquileiese vd. CUSCITO 1984; CUSCITO 2003; CUSCITO 2013a; MAZZOLENI 2013; ZACCARIA 2013.

Aree funerarie tardoantiche e corredo epigrafico ad *Aquileia*

Il patrimonio epigrafico aquileiese a fronte di oltre 4600 *tituli*, ne conta all'incirca 700–800²³ che tradizionalmente si attribuiscono all'orizzonte tardoantico/cristiano e che in larga parte, per lo meno per i testi meglio conservati e significativi,²⁴ sono stati oggetto di diverse analisi. Lo spoglio del materiale con la selezione di quante delle epigrafi funerarie sono prive di un apparato iconografico connotante (figure di oranti, cristogrammi e altri simboli specifici²⁵) e di espressioni riconducibili al credo cristiano produce per *Aquileia* poco più di un centinaio di esemplari, comprendendo tra questi anche diversi frammenti, ovviamente di dubbia attribuzione. La suggestione proposta da Christian Witschel²⁶ relativa al valore delle raffigurazioni di *fideles*²⁷ abbigliati in modo ricco e ricercato, come modalità di autorappresentazione all'interno della comunità di culto, potrebbe offrire una chiave interpretativa anche utilizzando, per così dire, il suo negativo. Vale a dire che in presenza di *tituli*, tradizionalmente classificati come cristiani stando principalmente alla paleografia, andrebbe forse valutato il valore dell'assenza di simbologia e lessico, che sono manifestazioni proprie di quella «autocoscienza identitaria»²⁸ propria dei partecipanti al nuovo credo.

Il quadro dei complessi cimiteriali aquileiesi tra IV e V s. d.C. è ben noto (Fig. 2),²⁹ sebbene i contesti siano spesso a tal punto sconvolti che le tipologie monumentali risultano a stento individuabili. Senza riprendere analisi puntuali già condotte,³⁰ può essere di un certo interesse soffermarsi su alcuni casi esemplari che offrono un panorama delle possibili soluzioni funerarie adottate e del relativo corredo epigrafico, valorizzando anche le testimonianze che non appaiono connotate con sicurezza in chiave cristiana.

La prima area sepolcrale di rilievo è quella della Beligna,³¹ nel settore meridionale della città. Qui è situata la località 'Alto di Beligna',³² che deve il suo nome a un dosso di circa 2 m, che ne ha evitato l'impaludamento. La continuità d'uso è evidente dalla presenza di tombe cristiane ai due lati della strada per Grado, oltre i recinti funerari pagani. Le ricerche e gli scavi ne hanno comprovato la lunga fre-

23 In WITSCHER 2006, 382 a fronte di 677 iscrizioni tardoantiche vengono contate 119 funerarie e 376 funerarie cristiane.

24 Vd. VERGONE 2007 con le iscrizioni cristiane del Museo Paleocristiano di Aquileia.

25 BISCONTI 1987; BISCONTI 1997; BISCONTI 2000a; BISCONTI 2000b; CUSCITO 2013b; per la medesima simbologia sulle gemme vd. SENA CHIESA 2012–2013.

26 WITSCHER 2006, 377f.

27 Sul valore di questo termine connesso al sacramento vd. CARLETTI 1997, 153.

28 SPERA 2009, 778f.

29 Sintesi in GRANDE 2001 con bibliografia precedente. Cfr. anche ORIOLO 2013.

30 Vd. l'analisi dettagliata, anche relativa ai corredi, in GIOVANNINI 2012–2013.

31 Per il dio *Belenus* e la relazione con il toponimo vd. ZACCARIA 2008; per un quadro generale vd. CUSCITO 2005, 543–549.

32 Particolarmente la p.c. 685/6.

quentazione, come è emerso sia dagli sbancamenti degli anni '70 del Novecento con centinaia di frustoli soprattutto di epigrafi tardoantiche parzialmente recuperati e privi di contesto,³³ sia dalle indagini archeologiche degli anni '90 con l'identificazione di una necropoli che conta circa una ventina di incinerazioni e una cinquantina di tombe a inumazione con una cronologia dall'inoltrato I al V s. d.C.³⁴ In questo scavo si sono documentate sepolture a inumazione in semplice fossa, talora foderata di laterizi con eventuale copertura alla cappuccina, in sarcofago lapideo o con deposizione in anfore africane II B, C, D. Da strati perturbati sono venute alla luce sia iscrizioni di età imperiale sia di età tardoantica,³⁵ tutte purtroppo in giacitura secondaria e che poco ci dicono su questa realtà funeraria di lunga durata. La matrice 'non cristiana' di alcune di queste sepolture è stata supposta sulla base di corredi connotati da oggetti legati a sentimenti magico-superstiziosi,³⁶ in cui non era ravvisabile nessun elemento che riconducesse invece all'orizzonte della nuova fede. Rientra perfettamente in questo quadro anche un caso di incinerazione tarda (sul quale vd. *infra*).

Ugualmente di grande interesse è anche un altro settore della Beligna, il fondo Tullio, situato a circa due chilometri dal lato meridionale della cinta urbana tarda e a poco più di 1,5 km a nord dell'Alto di Beligna, sul ciglio occidentale della direttrice per Grado. Qui è nota una basilica paleocristiana – variamente datata tra la fine del IV e gli inizi del V oppure ai decenni centrali del V s. d.C.³⁷ – a cui era collegata un'area cimiteriale *ad sanctos*. Da questo contesto sepolcrale vengono anche diverse iscrizioni prive di qualunque simbologia o espressione riferibile al mondo cristiano.³⁸ Così la lastra che *Aurelius Lupus* (Fig. 3) appronta per i figli, *Caianus* di 6 anni e *Lupicinus* di 5,³⁹ paleograficamente rimanda a esemplari datati alla fine del IV s. d.C.,⁴⁰ ai quali si può aggiungere, certo frutto di scarsa perizia tecnica, la lastra di *Modesta, civis Gallisana*.⁴¹

33 In IACUMIN 1994 sono registrate 24 iscrizioni, molte frammentarie e in maggioranza tardoantiche, di cui solo cinque sono attribuibili a un orizzonte cristiano. Vd. anche GIOVANNINI 2012–2013, 221f.

34 GIOVANNINI et al. 1998.

35 Di sei iscrizioni venute alla luce nel 1993 (MAGGI 1996, 196–198, nr. 16–18), tre sono ascrivibili almeno al IV s. d.C.: si tratta di [EDR007140](#); [EDR007141](#); [EDR007152](#).

36 GIOVANNINI 2005, 168.

37 Per le diverse cronologie vd. BUORA 1979; CANTINO WATAGHIN 2008, 309–316; CANTINO WATAGHIN 2008, 347–349; IACUMIN/COSSAR 2011, 57–62.

38 InscrAq 2984 = [EDR074895](#); InscrAq 3017, 3071 = [EDR139164](#); InscrAq 3211, 3214 = [EDR139094](#); sono invece frammentari InscrAq 2965 = [EDR173159](#); InscrAq 2966 = [EDR173160](#), InscrAq 3043, 3052, 3108, 3153, 3241.

39 InscrAq 3070 = [EDR134981](#): *Caianus qui vixit an/nos sex, menses duo di/ebus quique et / Lupicinus qui vixit / annis quique, dieb/us XX duo. Aurelius Lu/pus pater filis suis caris/simis meis vivus aeis posuit.*

40 Al 392 d.C. come InscrAq 2940 = [EDR162437](#).

41 InscrAq 3071 = [EDR139164](#): *Modeste femine / civi Gallisana / b(ene) m(erenti).*

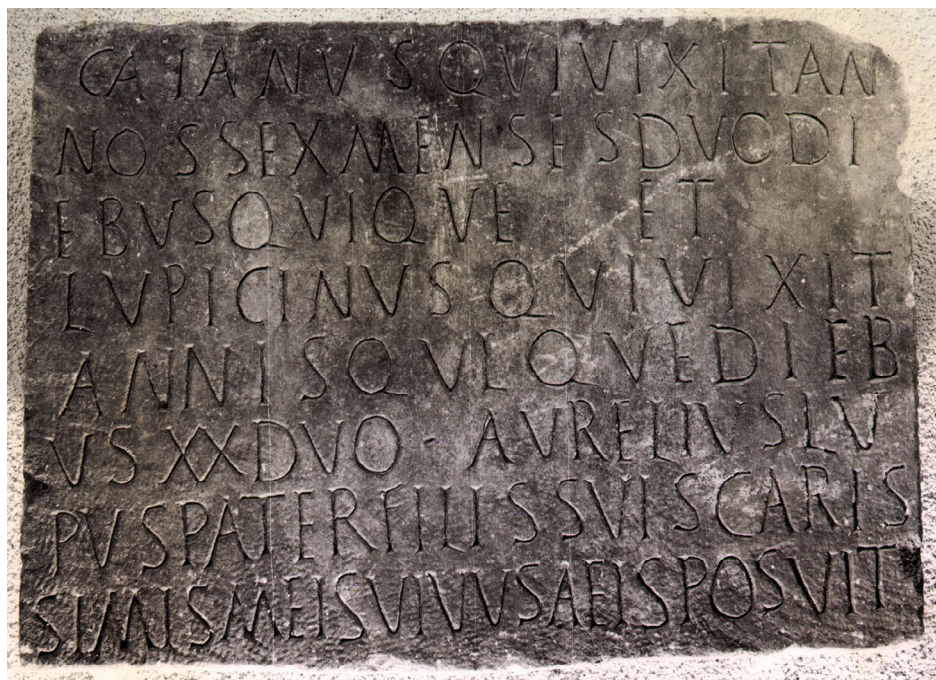


Fig. 3: *Aquileia*, lastra di epitafio per *Caianus* e *Lupicinus*.

A un orizzonte non cristiano parrebbe attribuibile anche la *mater Tici, Tyche*, che in una piccola lastra – con la non usuale formula *bene viventi*,⁴² attestata anche in area urbana per un’epigrafe non manifestatamente cristiana⁴³ – tradisce nella paleografia (vedi la E, la E a due tratti) ancora stretti legami con la corsiva in uso in età imperiale. Purtroppo poco è noto di quest’area sepolcrale dal punto di vista archeologico; è pertanto difficile contestualizzare non solo queste lastre ma anche gli altri materiali rinvenuti nell’area nel tentativo di immaginare la loro collocazione antica. Stando alle dimensioni non proprio modeste di alcune di esse⁴⁴ si può immaginare anche una infissione al suolo (signacoli fuori terra?) nell’ambito di un complesso cimiteriale cristiano che parrebbe comunque legato principalmente alla creazione della basilica, poi abbandonata in età longobarda e infine trasformata in monastero.⁴⁵

Va notato che a questi due settori della *Beligna* sono attribuibili ipoteticamente buona parte dei ritrovamenti che nei *corpora* sette e ottocenteschi sono segnalati come provenienti dalla *Beligna tout court*. Si tratta di materiali tardoantichi cristiani (quelli datati vanno dall’età costantiniana al primo quarto del V s. d.C.) e

42 InscrAq 3214 = EDR139094: *Mater Tici fecit / flie sue ben/e viventi Io/vine. Vixsit / annos VI, m(enses) VI, / dies XVI, oras VIII.*

43 CIL VI 29404.

44 *Aurelius Lupus*: 45 × 61 × 8 cm; *Modesta*: 27 × 72 × 3 cm; *Tyche* 30 × 28 × 5 cm.

45 Cfr. CANTINO WATAGHIN 2008, 347; IACUMIN/COSSAR 2011, 63–67.

non⁴⁶ che offrono qualche spunto anche sulle tipologie sepolcrali. Per la lastra del *fidelis Maximus*, recuperata alla Beligna nel 1796, Angelo Maria Cortenovis osservò che «in altre due pietre che servono di laterali al sepolcro vi erano i due monogrammi seguenti» vale a dire, come da apografo da lui disegnato, un cristogramma e un cristogramma con lettere apocalittiche.⁴⁷ Queste due altre pietre potrebbero riferirsi ad un apprestamento tombale articolato o forse ad una inumazione in una cassa costituita da elementi assemblati insieme, comunque sopra terra (per i due cristogrammi) di cui l'epigrafe – databile all'età dei Costantinidi per l'acconciatura del defunto – era probabilmente elemento esterno aggiunto.

Forse non molto diversa doveva apparire la sepoltura di *Proculina* recuperata alla fine dell'Ottocento.⁴⁸ L'iscrizione era posta all'esterno, infissa nel terreno in corrispondenza del capo della defunta, come parrebbe di intuire dalle condizioni di giacitura (la lastra sopra il cranio). Questo elemento, insieme alla cassa di mattoni, probabilmente in parte interrata, sembra richiamare una delle possibili posizioni dell'epigrafe nelle sepolture entro *cupa*, tipologia per ora assente nel panorama nordorientale.⁴⁹ Qualche analogia con questo quadro per la posizione distaccata dell'epitafio doveva presentare anche il sarcofago con due inumazioni successive,⁵⁰ la prima del vescovo *Amantius*, morto nel 398 d.C., poi affiancato dal diacono *Ambrosius*, sepolto invece nel 423 d.C. La cassa, trovata nel 1771 stando a Cortenovis, era «un'arca grande di pietra [...] dal cimitero cristiano della Beligna cavata. Nulla ha in sé di pregiato. Ma una pietra che era dentro alla medesima e stava sotto il capo del cadavere ivi sepolto, aveva la seguente iscrizione che fu rotta sul portarsi dal contadino a Gorizia per essere ve(n)duta a un scultore, ma fu copiata esattamente dal sig. Don Giacomo Uliani, ora Pievano di Cervignano, che si trovò presente».⁵¹ Si può immaginare, stando alla descrizione, che la sepoltura sia stata precedentemente manomessa facendo scivolare dentro il sarcofago il *titulus* collocato all'esterno.

46 Delle epigrafi tardoantiche, priva di simbologia cristiana, di cui è noto il recupero dalla Beligna si contano InscrAq. 2929 = [EDR078685](#); InscrAq 2982 = [lupa.at/16056](#); InscrAq 3053, 3058, 3081, 3119, 3121, 3154, 3170, 3183, 3192, 3201.

47 Così in InscrAq 3134 che riprende probabilmente una nota nei taccuini autografi del 1796 di Cortenovis presenti in BCUD Pirona, f. pr. ms 853b, f. 46 (su Jacopo Pirona, vd. REBAUDO 2004); GIOVANNINI 2012–2013, 220.

48 InscrAq 3171 = [EDR139678](#); GIOVANNINI 2013, 110 n. 60.

49 BARATTA 2006; BARATTA 2018; per *Aquileia* vd. MAINARDIS/SGOIFO 2021. Per *cupae* e 'tombe a caisson' tardoantiche vd. i contributi MERTEN, ARBEITER e ARDELEANU in questo volume.

50 Vd. sul fenomeno BOLLA 2015.

51 InscrAq 2904 = [EDR139207](#); il passo in BCUD Joppi, f. Joppi, ms. 324, f. 1 (ma segnato 274) (copia probabilmente di Antonio Joppi di una lettera – trattatello di Angelo Maria Cortenovis indirizzata al conte Niccolò di Toppo); il testo anche in BCUD Joppi, f. pr. 853b, f. 68 (ma in CIL e poi in InscrAq è stata accolta l'edizione di ASQUINI 1827, 21). Vd. invece GIOVANNINI 2012–2013, 220 per gli altri materiali (stelletta d'oro) presenti nella sepoltura e attribuibili ai paramenti sacri.

Anche per altri siti aquileiesi il recupero di vecchia documentazione amplia le nostre conoscenze per quanto concerne il paesaggio sepolcrale e le sue tipologie funerarie tarde. Nell'area della basilica dei SS. Felice e Fortunato,⁵² una basilica sorta forse nel IV s. d.C. su un contesto abitativo di età flavia nell'immediato suburbio sud-orientale, durante scavi degli anni '70 del Novecento si identificarono anche due *formae*, tombe a camera, che sembrerebbero una novità nel panorama aquileiese.⁵³ Tenuto conto sia dello smontaggio della città antica, sia della massiccia presenza di lastrine, spesso di spoglio e quasi sempre prive di contesto, non si può escludere che la tomba a camera potesse rappresentare una realtà più diffusa di quanto finora ritenuto. Sebbene il cimitero sembri strettamente connesso alla presenza della basilica paleocristiana, anche da San Felice provengono lapidi tardo-antiche prive di elementi della nuova fede che lascerebbero anche in questo caso pensare a una frequentazione mista.⁵⁴

Nell'area della chiesa medievale di San Giovanni in foro,⁵⁵ nel suburbio sud-occidentale, – un altro contesto poco indagato ma forse con una realtà paleocristiana precedente – tra le tombe cristiane scavate negli anni '70 del Novecento⁵⁶ ne è stata individuata una con sepoltura in anfora ma associata a una lastra con epigrafe. Potrebbe trattarsi del primo caso per *Aquileia* di relazione tra inumazione in anfora e iscrizione lapidea, quest'ultima con un testo fortemente mutilo.⁵⁷ Da questo stesso ambito vengono anche due iscrizioni datate al 417 d.C. – grazie al consolato di Onorio e Costanzo – una in latino⁵⁸ e una in greco⁵⁹ e anche materiali di età repubblicana e imperiale.⁶⁰ Difficile dire in questo caso se la presenza di queste epigrafi più antiche, comunque funerarie, sia un segno di reimpiego nel cimitero di età cristiana oppure se si tratti delle tracce di una realtà

52 CUSCITO 2005, 539–543; VIDULLI TORLO 2008; IACUMIN/COSSAR 2011, 53–55.

53 MAZZOLENI 1982, 304; GIOVANNINI 2012–2013, 218.

54 Si tratta di InscrAq 2907 = [EDR173111](#); InscrAq 2915 = [EDR145482](#); InscrAq 2963 = [EDR173151](#); InscrAq 2995, 3080 = [EDR135571](#); InscrAq 2963 = [EDR173151](#); InscrAq 3069.

55 CUSCITO 2005, 533–539; IACUMIN/COSSAR 2011, 79–83.

56 Si segnala anche la sepoltura, ben ripresa in bibliografia (a partire da BERTACCHI 1974, 87f., fig. 3; MAZZOLENI 1994, 198f., 212; CUSCITO 2009, 132f.; GIOVANNINI 2012–2013, 222f.), con copertura con lastra ed epigrafe musiva per una *Clarissima* (meno probabile *clarissima*): *Hic iace [t---] / Clariss[ima---] / quae vi[xit an(nos)] XXIII [---] / [id]us octo[bris---] / IIII[---] in[---]*. Nuova edizione in MAGNANI 2018, 104–107 nr. 2, fig. 3.

57 BERTACCHI 1974, 86: «Presso la tomba n. 7, sepoltura entro anfora, frammento di iscrizione figurata paleocristiana assai rozza: *[mi]nus LX et re/[qui]es(cit) VII kal(endas) O / [cto]bri(s) die lun(ae)*»; scettico sulla relazione sepoltura in anfora e iscrizione è BUORA 2017, 21f. e anche MAGNANI 2018, 101–104 nr. 1, fig. 2 che ne fa l'edizione.

58 AE 1992, 708; VERGONE 2007, 309f. nr. 147; [EDR139681](#).

59 MAGNANI 2018, 108f. nr. 3, fig. 4 (altra foto in [lupa.at/17116](#)).

60 InscrAq 3487 = [EDR119279](#) (repubblicana); InscrAq 962 = [EDR117853](#) (età augustea); un cippo inedito (inv. 63431); InscrAq 2742 = [EDR135560](#) (sarcofago di un *miles* della *II legio Italica* databile tra 238–270 d.C.).

sepolcrale precedente poi obliterata forse anche dalla costruzione del nuovo edificio di culto.⁶¹

Dalle Marignane, ampia zona a nord ovest della città⁶² con aree di necropoli di età imperiale, ma per ora senza indizi per individuare la presenza di una *memoria*,⁶³ provengono diverse iscrizioni funerarie tardoantiche e in particolare molte di Cristiani, come la lapide della bimba duenne Ortata,⁶⁴ che secondo la notizia ottocentesca sarebbe stata trovata nel fondo Cassis presso un sarcofago destinato forse a interrimento con il *titulus* invece a vista. Dallo stesso fondo Cassis è stata recuperata, priva però di contesto, anche la lapide di un *Aurelius Helianus* originario di *Nicomedia*, nella cui epigrafe, su materiale di reimpiego, paleograficamente situabile nel V s. d.C. manca però qualunque specifica di tipo cristiano.⁶⁵ Questo *titulus* non connotato si aggiunge ad altri simili riconducibili a quest'area, sebbene il toponimo Marignane, come già notato, riguardi un settore piuttosto ampio.⁶⁶ Qui troviamo anche la c.d. villa delle Marignane di età tetrarchica-costantiniana, una lussuosa residenza non lontana dal circo, spesso in passato identificata come villa imperiale.⁶⁷ Sopra questa struttura a un certo punto si inserì una necropoli – con fosse terragne e sepolture entro anfora (Fig. 4) – che rappresenta una sorta di modello paradigmatico sia dell'occupazione di spazi residenziali sia della lunga durata della tipologia sepolcrale a *enchytrismos*, databile, stando ai contenitori rilevabili nelle foto d'epoca, tra la seconda metà del V e il VII s. d.C.⁶⁸

Una situazione molto simile sembra ricostruibile nella Braidia della Pila di Monastero, dove, grazie soprattutto a ricerche d'archivio,⁶⁹ si è individuato un ulteriore complesso sepolcrale di IV s. d.C. che si imposta su strutture abitative di età precedente. Dei materiali iscritti che sappiamo lì rinvenuti tra il 1887 e il

61 Riprendendo anche quanto indicato nelle note precedenti, le iscrizioni tardoantiche e cristiane attribuibili a quest'area sono: MAGNANI 2018, nr. 1–2; CIL V 8595 = [EDR139183](#); InscrAq 3251 = [EDR139174](#); InscrAq 3239, 3090; CIL V 8691 = [EDR097851](#); VERGONE 2007, nr. 147. Si segnala che CIL V 8595 = [EDR139183](#) e InscrAq 3251,b = [EDR139174](#) presentano come segno d'interpunzione una piccola S che ricorre da un punto di vista paleografico in CIL V 1822 = [EDR007308](#), la pietra tombale di Santa Colomba, nel territorio di *Iulium Carnicum* (cfr. MAINARDIS 2008, 232f., nr. 143) datata al 524 d.C. (per le varie forme di interpunzione GROSSI GONDI 1920, 45).

62 BUORA 2001, 51 per la possibile estensione del toponimo Marignane.

63 Per il culto dei martiri e degli apostoli ad *Aquileia* vd. MAZZOLENI 1982.

64 InscrAq 3144 = [EDR139687](#); per le persone indicate nell'epitafio vd. CUSCITO 2013a, 121f., nr. 34.

65 InscrAq 2971 = [EDR173196](#): *Aurelius Helia/nus Nicome/deus ic posit/us* ((hedera)).

66 Così [InscrAq 3031](#), [3216](#), [3217](#).

67 Per le diverse identificazioni e anche per la bibliografia precedente vd. MIAN 2012–2013.

68 Vd. l'appendice di E. Braidotti 'Sepolture in anfora presso la villa delle Marignane' in REBAUDO/SAVIOLI/BRAIDOTTI 2012.

69 Vd. GIOVANNINI 2012–2013, 223–228 a cui si rimanda per una trattazione accurata anche dal punto di vista dei corredi associati e delle tipologie funerarie.



Fig. 4: *Aquileia*, tombe tardoantiche che si impostano sui pavimenti a mosaico della villa delle Marignane.

1888⁷⁰ il *titulus* del cristiano *Mascolianus*⁷¹ sembra rimandare a una tipologia sepolcrale già più volte ricordata, quando Enrico Maionica nel registro del museo annota che «die Platte stand an der einen Seite eines aus Ziegelsteinen gemachten Grabes». ⁷² Ancora una volta dobbiamo immaginarci l'infissione della lastra a fianco della sepoltura; E. Maionica da qui recupera un frammento di tegola, con un cristogramma e la scritta mutila *OC LOCO* graffita *post concturam* da intendere come parte di una formula del tipo *in hoc loco iacet vel requiescit*.⁷³ Dobbiamo pertanto immaginare anche la presenza di signacoli fatti in materiali ancora più modesti della lastra marmorea di spoglio, come l'argilla,⁷⁴ nei quali

70 Nel 1877: InscrAq 3022 = [EDR139097](#) e InscrAq 3207 = [EDR080527](#). Nel 1888: InscrAq 3126 = [EDR139118](#); InscrAq 3006 = [EDR139345](#); InscrAq 2930 = [EDR139209](#); InscrAq 2934 = [EDR139435](#); InscrAq 3163 = [EDR139422](#); InscrAq 2986 = [EDR139181](#); MAIONICA 1893, 116 nr. 27.

71 InscrAq 3126 = [EDR139118](#).

72 Così Enrico Maionica in *Jahresberichte des K.K. Staatsmuseum in Aquileia*, Archivio del MAN, su cui vd. la discussione in GIOVANNINI 2012–2013, 225 e fig. 3. Il frammento sembrava perduto ma è stato esposto nella mostra *Made in Roma and Aquileia* ed edito nel relativo catalogo (DE FRANZONI 2017, 194f.). Sono noti due nuovi esemplari di lastre, uno edito da MAINARDIS/SGOIFO 2021 e uno in corso di studio.

73 Queste le possibili varianti in ambito aquileiese, vd. [InscrAq 2992](#), 3251 = [EDR139174](#) e [InscrAq 3155](#) = [EDR139413](#).

74 Per questa tipologia si segnala anche da un'area sepolcrale di Santo Stefano (non presa in esame in questa sede perché prevalentemente area di necropoli repubblicana e imperiale) un ulteriore signacolo in terracotta con iscrizione funeraria cristiana ma graffita in caratteri lapidari attualmente in corso di studio.

però ricorre la simbologia usuale.⁷⁵ Non è escluso che si tratti di resti di tombe alla cappuccina.

In questo quadro sintetico degli ambiti sepolcrali tardoantichi di *Aquileia*, va menzionata una specifica tipologia funeraria, la cd. incinerazione tarda,⁷⁶ particolarmente interessante soprattutto se messa in relazione alla presenza di documentazione epigrafica non immediatamente attribuibile a un orizzonte cristiano. La possibilità di individuare questa modalità di sepoltura – riconoscibile con certezza almeno in due casi grazie a elementi di corredo databili – e di verificare come tali ossuari fossero collocati nello spazio sepolcrale tardoantico si dovrebbe basare sul recupero di contesti integri e stratigraficamente leggibili, condizioni queste invece assai poco frequenti nella realtà funeraria aquileiese. Il primo caso di incinerazione tarda – in un contesto però anepigrafe – è stato identificato nella località già ricordata di Alto di Beligna, dove la cremazione indiretta in anfora era associata a



Fig. 5: Terzo d'Aquileia, urna con incinerazione tarda e iscrizione *TEL*.

un collo di bottiglia Isings 104 che consente di fissare la cronologia della tomba tra la fine del III e gli inizi del IV s. d.C.⁷⁷ Più interessante è il secondo caso, una cremazione indiretta individuata casualmente nel 1921 a Terzo di Aquileia, nel suburbio nord-occidentale della città. Le ceneri erano collocate entro un'olla di vetro deposta poi in un'urna di calcare dotata di coperchio con iscrizione (Fig. 5).⁷⁸

75 GIOVANNINI 2012–2013, 226, fig. 4 il nr. 29 della pagina.

76 Cfr. AIROLDI 2001, 121.

77 GIOVANNINI et al. 1998, 270; GIOVANNINI 2012–2013, 234f.

78 BRUSIN 1929, 178f., nr. 2; diffusamente GIOVANNINI 2012–2013, 234f.; l'epigrafe in LETTICH 2003, 288 nr. 410 = [EDR007124](https://www.edr.acn.univie.it/EDR007124) = lupa.at/14114.

Il ricco corredo era composto da oggetti per la cura della persona, ornamenti (collane, anelli), dadi e pedine per giochi da tavolo, manufatti in ambra e otto monete in lega di bronzo. Tra queste una emessa da Valentiniano I (321–375 d.C.), fortemente usurata, che consente l'inquadramento di tutto il complesso almeno intorno alla fine del IV s. d.C. Il coperchio di quest'urna reca nella faccia superiore l'iscrizione *TEL*, senza punti, da intendersi come l'iniziale di un gentilizio o più probabilmente di un nome unico. La tipologia dell'urna e le caratteristiche anche paleografiche della scritta la rendono piuttosto somigliante ad altri contenitori per ceneri che si trovano nelle collezioni museali aquileiesi ma recuperati senza la conservazione di dati sul contesto e quindi solo ipoteticamente riconducibili a questo stesso fenomeno⁷⁹ che però, qualora l'attribuzione risultasse corretta, assumerebbe contorni più marcati. In particolare è piuttosto rilevante, tra i possibili esemplari, quello che presenta la scritta *FL*, sicuramente l'abbreviazione del gentilizio *Flavius*.⁸⁰ Le due lettere paleograficamente rimandano ai caratteri della scrittura onciale⁸¹ e quindi a una cronologia per lo meno di IV s. d.C. se non addirittura più tarda (Fig. 6), come si vede dall'influsso dell'onciale sulla capitale di un epitafio aquileiese del 417 d.C., dove le lettere *F* e *L* presentano caratteristiche molto simili.⁸²



Fig. 6: Aquileia, urna con iscrizione *FL*.

In ogni caso l'urna iscritta di Terzo è di per sé significativa per la corrispondenza tra scelta tafonomica e assenza di qualunque simbologia ascrivibile alla sfera cristiana, per la ricchezza e la composizione del corredo e infine per il nome singolo sul coperchio come unico elemento individuante secondo quella che è la nota evo-

79 Si tratta di InscrAq 1112 = lupa.at/14425; *Fl(avius)*; LETTICH 2003, 285 nr. 405 = lupa.at/14110: *Res(---?)*; forse anche l'urna parallelepipedica di LETTICH 2003, 284 nr. 400 = lupa.at/14417: *Lib(---?)*.

80 Sulla perdita di valore del *nomen* in età tardoantica vd. KEENAN 1974.

81 Ad Aquileia sicuramente documentata in [CIL V 1700](http://CIL.V.1700).

82 La foto in VERGONE 2007, nr. 147.

luzione dell'onomastica romana di epoca tardoantica.⁸³ Inoltre, nel caso delle due urne con la scritta nella parte superiore del coperchio – rispettivamente *Tel(---)* e *Lib(---)* – si potrebbe immaginare, in funzione di una migliore leggibilità, che i due cinerari fossero collocati direttamente sul suolo.

Spazi funerari ed epitaffi di *Julia Concordia* tardoantica

L'altra realtà urbana che offre un panorama sepolcrale di rilievo, sebbene legato purtroppo a sterri ottocenteschi che ne hanno determinato la quasi totale distruzione, è la colonia di *Julia Concordia*, l'attuale Concordia Sagittaria.⁸⁴

Di questa città situata sulla direttrice della via Annia, che la attraversava da ovest a est, sono noti dalla seconda metà dell'Ottocento almeno due nuclei disposti l'uno a occidente, la cd. 'Necropoli di Ponente', oggetto anche di recenti nuove indagini, e un altro a oriente, alla sinistra del fiume Lemene, la cd. 'Necropoli di Levante' o 'sepolcreto dei militi' (Fig. 7).⁸⁵

La conservazione di questo imponente sepolcreto, apparentemente costituito da monumenti situabili tra IV e V s. d.C., è dovuta all'abbandono dell'area probabilmente in seguito all'esondazione del Tagliamento nel letto del Lemene, i cui limi sigillarono la necropoli sotto oltre due metri di materiali fino agli sterri di fine Ottocento. Anche allora le condizioni idrogeologiche non solo non permisero lo scavo completo ma a un certo punto ne comportarono l'abbandono e il nuovo interrimento ritagliando le casse iscritte dai sarcofagi e lasciando in situ quelli meno importanti.⁸⁶ Nei lavori di scavo, complicati dalla presenza di ingestibili acque di falda, furono identificati due settori, uno settentrionale e uno meridionale, entrambi costituiti prevalentemente da sarcofagi per un numero totale di monumenti che sembrerebbe superare le 250 unità con solo un terzo circa di iscritti.⁸⁷

In un quadro stratigrafico inesistente almeno una quindicina di epigrafi rimandano all'età imperiale,⁸⁸ sebbene dalle relazioni ottocentesche non sia possibile stabilire se si tratti di monumenti pertinenti a fasi più antiche oppure se sono in-

83 Cfr. l'ampia analisi in KAJANTO 1997.

84 Vd. CROCE DA VILLA/MASTROCINQUE 1995; CROCE DA VILLA 2007; CROCE DA VILLA/DI FILIPPO BALESTRAZZI 2001.

85 Per un quadro sintetico sulle necropoli vd. CROCE DA VILLA 2001; per quella occidentale PETTENÒ/VIGONI 2011; RINALDI/VIGONI 2013 e i diversi contributi su *Julia Concordia* in RINALDI/VIGONI 2015. Per quella orientale vd. PETTENÒ/PAULETTO 2015 con bibliografia precedente (relativa anche alle indagini archeologiche di fine Ottocento di Dario Bertolini).

86 Per le iscrizioni – confluite solo parzialmente negli *additamenta* di CIL e fino al 1883 in Pais, *Supplementa Italica* – vd. LETTICH 1983 (solo i materiali più antichi della necropoli sono in BROILO 1984).

87 LETTICH 1983, 17-25.

88 LETTICH 1983, 28.

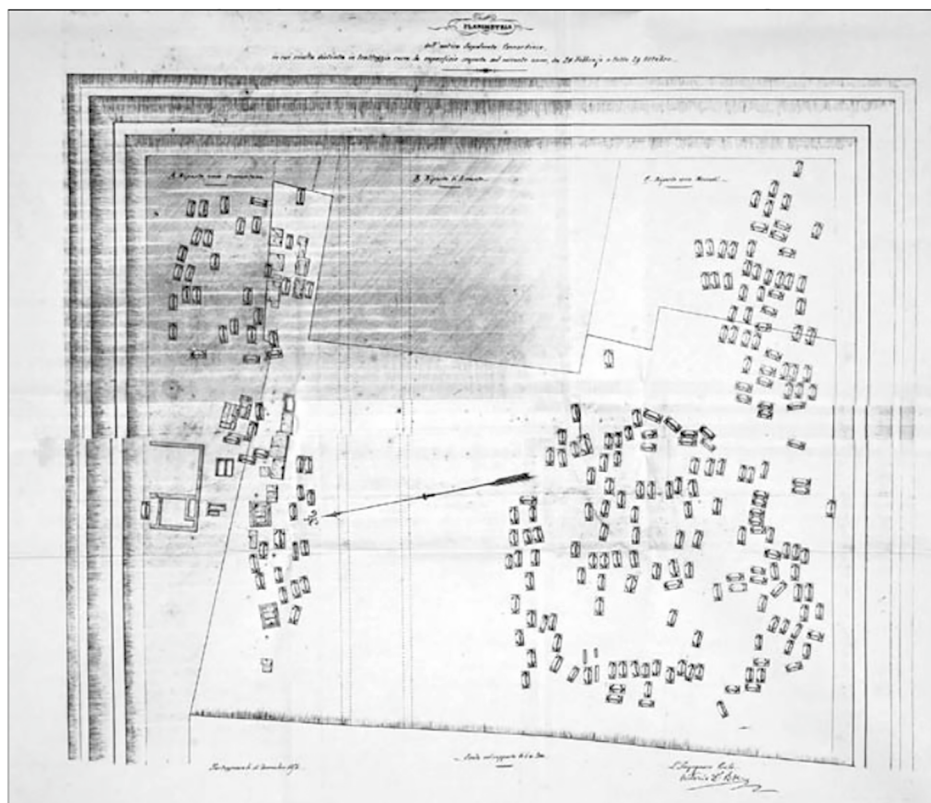


Fig. 7: Concordia, pianta d'epoca del 'Sepolcreto dei militi'.

vece reimpieghi. Questo è certo il caso dell'ara di una [---] *Galla* della fine del I s. d.C. usata come basamento di appoggio per una delle casse.⁸⁹

Di tutte queste sepolture tardoantiche entro sarcofago, piuttosto affastellate ma apparentemente sistemate secondo l'asse est-ovest in relazione alla strada che divideva i due settori, non sono facilmente definibili i livelli e le sovrapposizioni, poiché le relazioni degli scavatori registrano ugualmente la presenza di sarcofagi collocati a 2 m di profondità o a pochi piedi sotto il piano di campagna. Oltre ai monumenti lapidei, sono registrate anche sepolture entro cassa di mattoni e sepolture in anfora, relative a individui adulti e bambini.

Tra le persone menzionate dall'epigrafia del sepolcreto si distinguono oltre una quarantina di soldati di stanza a *Iulia Concordia*, poco meno di una decina addetti alla officina tardoimperiale di frecce e meno di una quindicina di orientali, originari soprattutto dall'area di *Apameia*.⁹⁰ Paradossalmente l'ossessiva presenza nelle iscrizioni di divieti di manomissione del sepolcro e delle conseguenti ammende,

89 CIL V 8706 = [EDR097866](#).

90 CRESCI MARRONE 2001.

materiale fondamentale per gli studiosi di *iura sepulchrorum*,⁹¹ non ha preservato il complesso dalla distruzione perpetrata dagli scavatori moderni, che hanno fatto scempio dei sarcofagi e hanno determinato la perdita di un contesto che dopo l'abbandono in età antica era rimasto pressoché intatto.

Questa circostanza ci ha precluso tra l'altro la possibilità di stabilire su base stratigrafica una cronologia relativa dei monumenti, soprattutto in relazione all'unica iscrizione sicuramente datata che il consolato di Arcadio e Onorio situa tra 394 e 402 d.C.⁹² In ogni caso il rapporto tra iscrizioni di Cristiani (connotate per la presenza della simbologia propria⁹³ o da riferimenti a *fideles*) e iscrizioni non attribuibili a Cristiani è di meno del 15 per cento sul totale dei *tituli* tardoantichi allora recuperati e oggi conservati nel museo di Portogruaro.⁹⁴ I formulari tra i due gruppi di monumenti sono del tutto omologhi, come è omologo il divieto di manomettere la tomba, cosa che doveva essere stata perpetrata più volte poiché in fase di scavo furono trovati diversi tronchi di legno usati per scalzare già in antico i coperchi.

Sono invece meglio ricostruibili le dinamiche di uso e poi di abbandono di un settore della cd. 'Necropoli di Ponente', il sepolcreto di via San Pietro, oggetto di recenti scavi adeguatamente pubblicati.⁹⁵ L'area indagata ha permesso di portare alla luce un sepolcro familiare con due sarcofagi di II s. d.C. in marmo proconnesio su alto podio, utile a stabilizzare il suolo e a monumentalizzare l'insieme. A partire dalla seconda metà del III s. d.C., l'area risulta completamente riorganizzata ed elevata per le acque di falda.⁹⁶ Sul podio ampliato furono poi posizionati altri tre sarcofagi, mentre numerose tombe in fossa terragna, con cassa di laterizi, alla cappuccina o in anfora trovarono posto con un orientamento prevalentemente est-ovest. Agli inizi del V s. d.C. anche questa necropoli fu abbandonata forse in relazione all'edificazione nel 397 d.C. nell'area extraurbana orientale della *basilica Apostolorum*, sotto l'attuale cattedrale, che rappresentò il nuovo polo cittadino. In concomitanza iniziò anche una progressiva spoliazione dei materiali pregiati⁹⁷ – dai marmi alle grappe metalliche – che terminò in seguito ad un evento alluvionale che obliterò il sepolcreto. Queste dinamiche sono probabilmente comuni anche a quelle di un ulteriore sito necropolare concordiese a sud della città, quello di via

91 REBILLARD 2009, 57–79 con ampia discussione e bibliografia precedente; cfr. anche GREGORI 2004 e BOLLA 2015, 358f.

92 Databile tra 394 e 402 d.C. è CIL V 8768 = EDR097916: *Arca Manioni, milete e nume/ro Brucherum et si quis eam/aperuerit, ut mani eius precidantur / aut in fesco det auri pondo doa. / Cons(ulibus) n(ostris) Arcadio / et Onorio (Au)g(u)st(i)s.*

93 Come per esempio i cristogrammi nell'iscrizione in greco di CIL V 8728 = EDR097887.

94 Sulla aprioristica e non giustificata inclusione di tutte le iscrizioni nelle ILCV vd. MAZZOLENI 1987, 77f.

95 Vedi la prima sezione, con più contributi specifici, intitolata 'Tulia Concordia. La necropoli monumentale di via San Pietro 309' nel volume RINALDI/VIGONI 2015, 21–197.

96 Su queste fasi e sull'evoluzione dell'impianto vd. VIGONI 2015, 42–50.

97 Sul fenomeno, anche se con focus specifico su Lazio e Campania, vd. MURER 2018.

Spareda, dove è stata individuata anche la medesima tipologia di monumento con sarcofago su alto podio.⁹⁸

Le necropoli tardoantiche nelle realtà urbane minori della *Venetia* orientale

Degli altri centri urbani della regione è di grande interesse quanto si osserva a *Tergeste*, l'attuale Trieste, sebbene si conservi un patrimonio epigrafico tardoantico modesto e con le stesse criticità – nel rapporto epigrafe, sepoltura e necropoli – già ricordate. Anche nella città portuale si registra l'inserzione di aree sepolcrali in settori prima residenziali, in un assetto urbanistico che dal IV s. d.C. conosce una certa contrazione, ben segnata dalla realizzazione di una nuova cinta urbana.⁹⁹ Mancano invece riscontri – per scarsità della documentazione o per il ridotto ruolo dell'abitato nel panorama regionale tardoantico – di quei fenomeni di conservazione della memoria civica negli spazi cittadini più rappresentativi, che invece si osservano ad *Aquileia*. Sono note diverse realtà sepolcrali tarde,¹⁰⁰ prive di ogni forma di monumentalizzazione – come il sepolcreto di via Donota¹⁰¹ – con casse in laterizio o sepoltura entro anfora. Costituiscono invece un'eccezione i sarcofagi lapidei del sepolcreto dei Santi Martiri, nella parte orientale suburbana della città antica, un sepolcreto noto soprattutto per i recuperi sette-ottocenteschi e ora completamente cancellato dall'impianto cittadino moderno.¹⁰²

Confinante con quest'area esterna alla cinta muraria è un settore recentemente sottoposto a molte indagini che ne hanno rivelato la spiccata vocazione insediativa con una strada litoranea che uscendo dall'abitato si dirigeva a est, verso l'Istria. Su tale strada si affacciavano ville lussuose, come la residenza della seconda metà di I s. d.C. individuata sotto il park Santa Lucia o *Domus Romanae*.¹⁰³ Alla fine del III s. d.C. questa ricca dimora, a seguito di un incendio, cessò di essere in uso e agli inizi del IV s. d.C. nella sua *pars rustica* fu edificato un grande fabbricato funerario tardoantico che reimpiegò anche materiali lapidei di una probabile vicina necropoli di età imperiale. Nel panorama della *Venetia* orientale ma anche di quello dell'Italia settentrionale questo edificio di forma rettangolare, con lesene e porticato affacciato sulla via che fiancheggia il mare (Fig. 8), rappresenta un'eccezione priva di

98 VIGONI 2011, 155–157 con bibliografia precedente.

99 MASELLI SCOTTI et al. 2006; DEGRASSI et al. 2006; TIUSSI/MANDRUZZATO 2006; invece MASELLI SCOTTI 2005 per l'evoluzione del tessuto urbano.

100 Quadro di sintesi in VENTURA 2015; cfr. anche VERZÁR-BASS 1997.

101 VENTURA 2015, 287f. con bibliografia precedente.

102 Per un quadro generale sul quartiere e sulla sua evoluzione vd. RIAVEZ 1997; per l'area sepolcrale VENTURA 2015, 298.

103 MASELLI SCOTTI 2009; VENTURA 2011.



Fig. 8: Tergeste, il monumento tardoantico del Park Santa Lucia.

confronti anche per la sua monumentalità, trattandosi di una costruzione probabilmente a due piani.¹⁰⁴

All'interno sono stati identificati frammenti di sarcofago e anche sepolture in cassa e in anfora che arrivano al V s. d.C. Il monumento era costituito da elementi di spoglio di tipo funerario, come il frammento di un imponente architrave, parte di un grande monumento a edicola che ha consentito di individuare un nuovo edile e un nuovo sevirò di Tergeste.¹⁰⁵ È suggestivo osservare come il gentilizio di questo magistrato della prima metà del I s. d.C., *P. Mercusenius Rufus*, figlio del sevirò *P. Mercusenius [---]* sia portato anche da un cavaliere di III s. d.C., *M. Nonius Mercusenius*, autore di un altare funerario per un *amicus*.¹⁰⁶ Questo monumento rinvenuto non lontano, sulla stessa direttrice viaria verso l'Istria, in condizione di reimpiego, era forse pertinente a uno stesso contesto sepolcrale di carattere familiare costruito da una *gens* che iniziò probabilmente con l'edile la sua ascesa sociale (dal *libertus*/sevirò, all'*ingenuus*/edile, fino all'*ingenuus*/cavaliere). In ogni caso lo smontaggio e il reimpiego in nuove sepolture di elementi di sepolcri più antichi, anche delle

104 MASELLI SCOTTI 2009.

105 Si tratta di [EDR155192](#): [---] *P(ubli) Mer]cuse[ni] P(ubli) f(ili) Rufi, aed(ilis), P(ublius) Mercusenius [---]/[---] pater, IIIIIvir Augustalis, fecit.*

106 *InscrIt* X 4, 44 = [EDR093868](#).

prime fasi della colonia cesariana, era prassi già individuata nella adiacente e già ricordata necropoli dei Santi Martiri.¹⁰⁷ Ci si può chiedere se tutto questo settore, che a ovest ha come punto limite la basilica paleocristiana di V s. d.C. di via Madonna del Mare¹⁰⁸ – intorno alla quale sono state individuate nell'Ottocento alcune sepolture¹⁰⁹ – non fosse in età tardoantica sistemato come un'unica grande necropoli, fondata sullo spoglio e il reimpiego di realtà precedenti e con una lunga durata, dato che il suo monumento più recente rimanda al VI s. d.C.¹¹⁰

Per gli ultimi due centri amministrativi della regione, *Iulium Carnicum* e *Forum Iulii*, poco è noto delle aree necropolari tardoantiche. Nel caso di *Iulium Carnicum*, l'odierna Zuglio, il vuoto documentario riguarda in effetti anche la topografia delle aree sepolcrali di età imperiale, di cui non resta traccia. Pochissimo è anche il materiale epigrafico tardoantico, nonostante, almeno dal V s. d.C. la colonia sia divenuta sede vescovile, come ci segnala l'epitaffio del vescovo *Ienuarius*.¹¹¹ Anche nel centro carnico dalla fine del IV s. d.C. si assiste alla dismissione degli spazi pubblici, il foro in particolare, con l'inserimento di sepolture che si affiancano all'installazione di piccole attività produttive, responsabili anche della spoliazione e del reimpiego di materiali recuperati dagli edifici di maggior pregio.¹¹² La costruzione di una basilica paleocristiana nell'immediato suburbio meridionale, in località Cjampon,¹¹³ oltre a quella probabile sulla cima del colle di San Pietro,¹¹⁴ determinò la nascita di un nuovo polo urbano e la conseguente creazione di uno spazio cimiteriale annesso, purtroppo mal noto, a causa degli sterri ottocenteschi che non hanno recuperato né iscrizioni, né altro genere di materiali. Tuttavia il pittore udinese Lepoldo Zuccolo (1760–1833), al seguito del commissario di guerra francese Étienne-Marie Siauve (1757–1812), nella sua ricca documentazione di carattere artistico e archeologico conservata nella Biblioteca Civica V. Joppi di Udine, segnala il ritrovamento nel 1810 in località Cjampon di un sarcofago di età imperiale a cassapanca con nicchie laterali (quella meglio conservata con cantharos) e *tabula ansata*, chiaramente riu-

107 Vd. la lastra sepolcrale (CIL V 549 = [EDR007313](#)) di uno dei primi duoviri della colonia, pertinente a un probabile basamento, riutilizzata come coperchio di sarcofago.

108 Per l'edificio con bibliografia precedente vd. DI MARCO 2004.

109 VENTURA 2015, 294 f.

110 Si tratta di CIL V 694 = [EDR007480](#): ((crux)) / *Hic requiescit in pace Mauren(t)ius, v(ir) i(llu)stris, qui vixit ann(is) pl(us) m(inus) XXXIII, / depositus est XV / kal(endas) Novemb(res), / ind(ictione) V, p(ost) c(onsulatum) d(omini) n(o)stri Ius(tini) Imperatoris* ((crux)).

111 CIL V 1858 = [EDR007309](#).

112 CORAZZA/DONAT/ORIOLO 2001; VILLA 2002, 342–365; per casi analoghi nell'Africa vd. il contributo ARDELEANU in questo volume.

113 MORO 1956, 89–104; MIRABELLA ROBERTI 1976, 94 f. Per le due iscrizioni dei donatori di tessellato identificate vd. MAINARDIS 2008, 228–230, nr. 140–141, rispettivamente [EDR007090](#) e [EDR007091](#).

114 Per questo edificio, mal noto, sottostante alla attuale Pieve di San Pietro (vd. MANDRUZZATO 2014), non è chiaro se la presenza dell'epitaffio del vescovo *Ienuarius* del 490 d.C., copiato sul colle da Ciriaco d'Ancona ma ora disperso, ne segnali anche una funzione cimiteriale, oppure se quella collocazione sia una forma di reimpiego.

tilizzato (e forse scalpellato nell'epitaffio) come segnala la lastra grezza che forniva la copertura.¹¹⁵ Pertanto almeno una qualche forma di monumentalizzazione delle aree sepolcrali, almeno quelle annesse alla basilica meridionale, anche se di spoglio e reimpiego, doveva interessare anche il centro carnico.

Non molto diverso è il caso di *Forum Iulii*, l'odierna Cividale del Friuli, dove si osserva un panorama funerario tardo privo di resti monumentali di rilievo e spesso anche di materiali di corredo, fagocitato e schiacciato – anche nelle prospettive della ricerca moderna – dai cambiamenti dovuti al ruolo assunto dalla città in seguito all'arrivo dei Longobardi. Cividale divenne infatti il primo ducato longobardo in suolo italico. Per l'ambiente urbano ci sono note molte inumazioni¹¹⁶ che dall'età tardoimperiale e poi altomedievale sono inserite in strutture romane in disuso, segnale anche qui della contrazione del nucleo insediativo. Gli edifici paleocristiani divennero poi i catalizzatori di nuove realtà cimiteriali che furono in uso prima da parte della popolazione autoctona, ma a partire dalla fine del VI e soprattutto nel VII s. d.C., anche da parte degli stessi Longobardi.¹¹⁷ Costoro al loro arrivo a Cividale iniziarono a seppellire nella zona extraurbana, sia in aree usate dalla popolazione locale, sia in aree nuove secondo uno sviluppo cronologico che vede le tombe più antiche nelle zone a settentrione della città, per poi, in seguito comparire anche nel centro urbano e infine nella parte meridionale dell'area urbana.¹¹⁸

Conclusioni

Nel quadro sintetico appena delineato, in cui si è tentato, a campione, di mettere in luce le possibili soluzioni funerarie adottate nell'allestimento delle sepolture tardo-romane e del relativo corredo epigrafico nei principali centri antichi della *Venetia* orientale, sono risultate anche piuttosto evidenti le difficoltà che si incontrano nel tentare di delineare i contesti e per così dire la materialità della scrittura epigrafica funeraria tardoantica.

Aquileia, pur nella sua ricchezza di documentazione archeologica ed epigrafica che ne potrebbe fare un caso esemplare almeno per l'Italia settentrionale, sconta il portato di secoli di spoliazioni e distruzioni finalizzate al reimpiego, che hanno profondamente sconvolto la realtà antica rendendo difficile comprendere come i singoli monumenti o le singole iscrizioni si relazionassero con la topografia sepolcrale nota a macchia di leopardo. Vi sono tuttavia spunti che fanno immaginare contesti subdiali, in continuità con le necropoli imperiali (con *tituli* marmorei o laterizi ben visibili), oppure altri in stretta relazione con la topografia del nuovo

115 Biblioteca Civica Udine, L. Zuccolo, ms. 853a, c. 210v.

116 Cfr. MASELLI SCOTTI/GIOVANNINI 2007.

117 Per i ritrovamenti relativi a necropoli di età romana vd. COLUSSA 2010, 129–136; per un quadro di sintesi sulle sepolture tardoantiche e longobarde cfr. AHUMADA 1998.

118 Un quadro aggiornato in BORZACCONI/GIOSTRA 2018.

culto, con strutture spesso legate a forme di culto martiriale, in cui forse trovavano spazio anche complessi architettonici più articolati come, forse, le tombe a camera. Si è anche notato come non sia sempre percepibile una distinzione netta, anche nella scelta dell'area sepolcrale, tra i defunti identificabili come *fideles* della nuova religione, oppure i cultori di antichi dei e rituali. Questa sopravvivenza, quando perdura nell'inoltrato IV o addirittura nel V s. d.C., viene ad assumere un significato pregnante, sebbene non siano definibili le ragioni di scelte tafonomiche che si discostano in modo così netto da pratiche e credenze ormai invalse, ma che in ogni caso possono essere considerate il segnale dell'appartenenza a gruppi 'altri', purtroppo non meglio definibili, seppur manifestamente diversi e certamente minoritari.

Iulia Concordia ci ha restituito straordinarie necropoli tardoantiche con una complessa stratificazione, anche sociale, che purtroppo, almeno nel caso del cd. sepolcreto dei militi, sono state indagate con modalità che oggi non permettono una interpretazione coerente delle relazioni tra le diverse sepolture anche in chiave diacronica. Tuttavia gli scavi di altre aree necropolari concordiesi ci segnalano come dall'età imperiale il sarcofago su alto podio, sia a fini monumentali sia per ovviare a una precaria situazione idrogeologica, rappresenti una delle soluzioni preferite e con una lunga durata nell'ambito cittadino.

Eccezionale è il ritrovamento a *Tergeste* di un edificio sepolcrale a due piani, che, proprio in virtù del ruolo secondario della città, ci porta a credere che una simile monumentalità doveva invece essere assai frequente in realtà civiche vitali e politicamente significative come *Aquileia*, metropoli di primo piano ma, come si è detto, profondamente sconvolta e rimaneggiata già *ab antiquo*.

La stessa difficoltà di lettura, ma in questo caso dovuta anche alla carenza di indagini mirate, si coglie a *Iulium Carnicum* – della quale ci sono ignote persino le necropoli di età imperiale – mentre *Forum Iulii* sconta il peso di uno sbilanciamento anche della ricerca moderna portata a privilegiare e ad indagare la presenza longobarda, a scapito della componente romana che vive nella città tardoantica.

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- Fig. 4** Da REBAUDO/SAVIOLI/BRAIDOTTI 2012, tav. 13.
- Fig. 5** Foto dell'autrice (per gentile concessione del Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Aquileia).
- Fig. 6** Foto dell'autrice (per gentile concessione del Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Aquileia).
- Fig. 7** Da PETTENÒ/PAULETTO 2015, fig. 7.
- Fig. 8** Da VENTURA 2015, fig. 12.

ROLAND PRIEN

Shifting Burial Rites – Shifting Identities?

Late Antique Burial Practices on the Rhine Frontier

Introduction

Within the framework of this volume, a paper dealing with the regions along the northwestern frontier of the Roman Empire appears to be slightly exotic (Fig. 1).

At first glance, the provinces along the left bank of the Rhine were not a cultural hotspot of the Late Antique world. They neither included important Christian centres, nor were they home to numerous distinguished writers and yielded only few workshops producing outstanding works of art. Only *Treveris*/Trier as Imperial residence may provide an exception here.¹ The northwestern frontier of the Empire (in further ‘the Rhine frontier’) roughly ran along the left bank of the Rhine River from Lake Constance in the south to the Rhine estuary in the north. While the Lower Rhine functioned as frontier already from the 1st c. AD onwards, the Middle and Upper Rhine became a border (again) in the later 3rd c. AD. In Late Antiquity the Rhine frontier was garrisoned by *limitanei* units based in numerous *castra* and cities along the river and to some extent also in its hinterlands. While earlier scholarship believed that, the end of the Rhine frontier came already at the beginning of the 5th c. AD (in 401 or 406/7), current research could document that most fortifications were in use until the second half of the 5th c. AD, when Roman provincial administration collapsed in the wake of military revolts against the western Roman emperors in Italy.

Compared to the other (mostly Mediterranean) regions studied in the volume, the Rhine frontier appears as distinct place, separated not only by geography but also by different research traditions. While most excavators and researchers dealing with Late Antique remains in the Mediterranean come from a ‘classical’ background, the author of this paper is a pre- and protohistorian archaeologist. The study of Late Antique burials in the northwestern provinces of the Roman Empire stand in the focus of both Provincial Roman and Early Medieval archaeology. Both are separate disciplines in Germany and both have different views about Late Antiquity concerning chronology: Provincial Roman archaeologists will usually argue that this period started in the later 3rd c. AD and ended with the collapse of Roman Imperial administration in Gaul around the middle of the 5th c. AD.² The following centuries are generally considered to belong to the Early Medieval era that ex-

1 See the contribution MERTEN in this volume.

2 BECHERT 2007, 132.

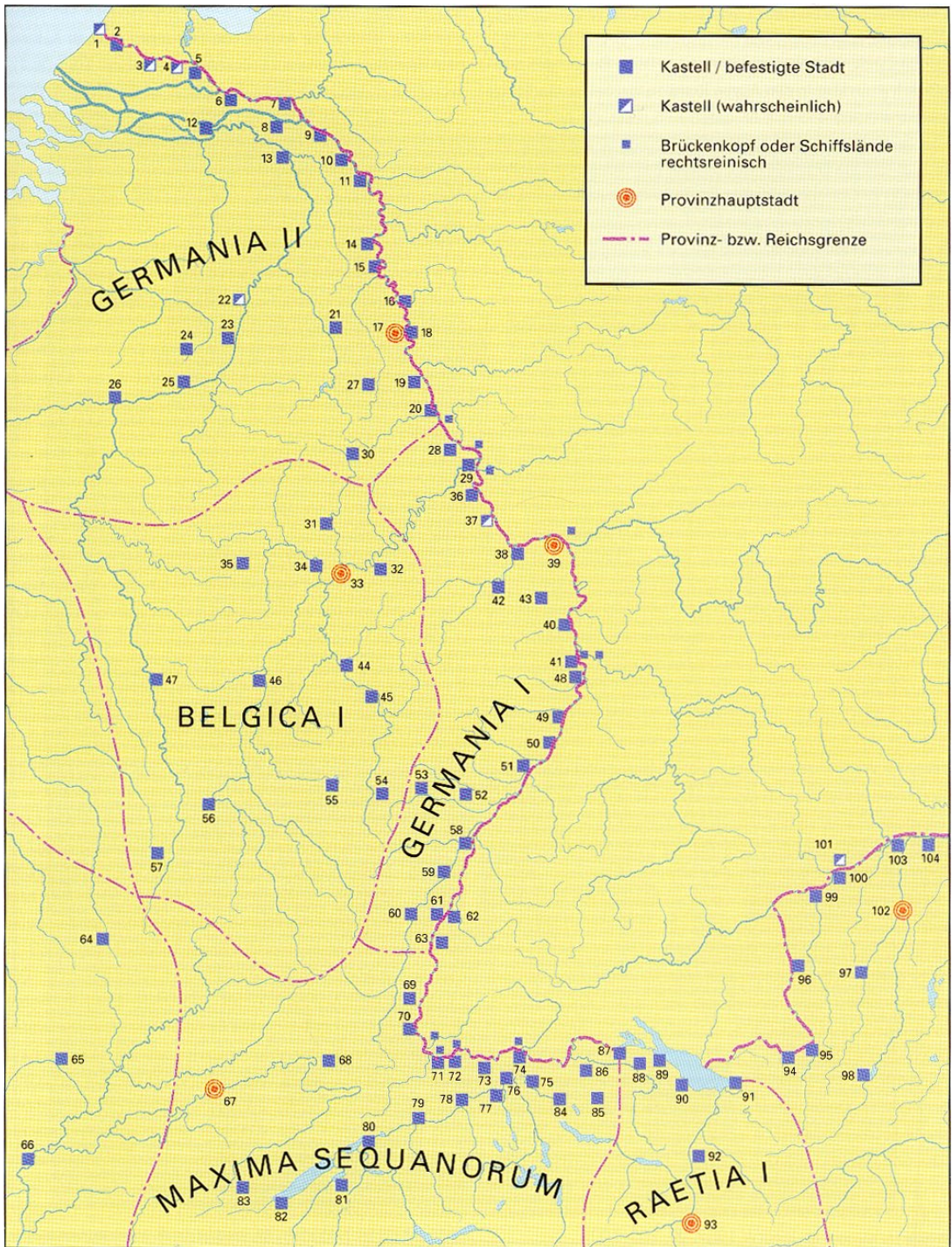


Fig. 1: The Late Antique Rhine frontier with sites discussed in this contribution.

tended to the Carolingian era or even beyond, although a precise differentiation between Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages has increasingly become a difficult task for both archaeologists and historians.³ The same applies to the historical disciplines, in which the field is divided between Ancient and Medieval History. Especially in archaeology, the approaches towards the study of burials in Provincial Roman and Early Medieval archaeology are quite different. This complicates any attempt at an overview of burial rites along the Rhine frontier between the 4th and 7th c. AD. An additional problem is the fact that most research on burials never dealt with burial rites, but instead focused on two main questions of ethnic and/or religious identity of the dead. Thus, this paper will firstly examine the different research traditions and secondly try to outline a possible approach for future studies of burial rites in this frontier region. Despite the fact that the author believes in a ‘Long Late Antiquity’ spanning from the 4th to the 7th c. AD in the northwestern provinces, this paper focuses on the period that is traditionally labelled ‘Late Roman’ (the 4th and 5th c. AD).

The Study of Burials through the Lens of Provincial Roman Archaeology

As the name already implies Provincial Roman archaeology focuses on the five centuries of Roman rule in *Gallia* and *Germania* from the conquest under Julius Caesar to the breakdown of the provincial administration around the middle of the 5th c. AD.⁴ As a separate discipline in Germany, it evolved to a lesser degree from Classical archaeology and more from Pre- and Protohistoric archaeology, dealing mostly with material remains of the Roman epoch and not so much with its art history. It applies many technical methods that were developed for prehistoric archaeology but also still heavily relies on written historical and epigraphic sources when it comes to analysis and interpretation of archaeological evidence. Provincial Roman archaeology is a relatively young discipline; the few existing professorships in the field were mostly installed within the last fifty years. Nevertheless, large-scale excavations of Roman sites have a tradition in Germany that goes back for more than two centuries. In this field of research, the Roman military has always been in the focus of attention. Along the Rhine, numerous military sites were excavated, among them five legionary fortresses and hundreds of auxiliary and smaller forts. The military aspect was also dominant in the study of Roman burials: In the 1st c. AD, Roman soldiers, mainly from Italy, brought their burial customs to the frontiers, where the local population partially adapted them.⁵

3 GOETZ 2003, 280–284; MARCONE 2008; MEIER 2017.

4 FISCHER 2001, 10–13.

5 NIERHAUS 1969; BÖHME-SCHÖNBERGER 2001; BECHERT 2007, 90–95.

For the 1st c. AD, burial practices are mainly discussed within the broader field of Romanization, but already at this stage, ethnic identities play a role in the interpretation of grave furniture – especially fibulae from burials. According to studies on burials of the 1st c. AD, society on the Rhine frontier was ethnically heterogenic, comprising ‘local’ populations of ‘Celtic’ and ‘Germanic’ origins and immigrants from Italy as well as from various other northwestern provinces.⁶ The presumed high mobility of at least some parts of society is mainly explained through the frequent exchange of the troops garrisoning the frontier. Identifying burials of Italian immigrants entering the frontier zone after the initial conquest is in many ways problematic: tombstones and inscriptions from funerary monuments clearly document their presence especially in towns and legionary fortresses, but this evidence is usually unrelated to any archaeologically examined burials since most of the stone material comes from secondary contexts. There is no grave furnishing that can be directly compared to contemporary burials from Italy and sources that highlight ‘Roman’ burial practices are usually restricted to only a few Roman authors writing about obsequies for individual members of the highest social classes in the times of the Late Republic and the Early Principate. Obviously, most aspects of Roman burial customs were not subject to religious regulations or state law. Thus, the individual handling of the dead was left to families and other social groups that took care of the funerals.⁷ This means that all expenditures for type and size of funeral monuments and grave goods were limited predominantly by economic means and less related to social status or ethnic and/or religious identities. This important conclusion should be kept in mind also when discussing Late Antique burials.

Concerning the period between the late 1st and the end of the 3rd c. AD, thousands of burials from the Rhine frontier and its hinterland have been subject to archaeological studies. Among them are different types of burial grounds related to towns, smaller settlements and rural *villae*. Only a few of these sites are entirely excavated: in *Mogontiacum*/Mainz, a necropolis stretching along the main road leading from the legionary fortress and its neighbouring *canabae* (serving as provincial capital but gaining municipal rights only in the late 3rd c. AD) to the north was exposed.⁸ It resembled typical urban burial grounds from the Mediterranean with assemblages of large grave monuments as well as numerous simple, unmarked burials. Similar lavish necropoleis are also known from smaller *vici* such as Heidelberg.⁹ Other examples such as the modest grave field of the rural *vicus* of *Belginum*/Wederath with its smaller tumuli show a continuous development of burials from the late Iron Age to the 4th c. AD.¹⁰ Many rural *villae* had separate burial

6 KAKOSCHKE 2002.

7 VOLP 2002, 69–94.

8 WITTEYER/FASOLD 1995; BOPPERS/ERTEL 2020.

9 HENSEN 2009.

10 HAFFNER 1989.

grounds, often with large grave monuments such as tumuli or pillar tombs; the majority of these lavish monuments from the second and first half of the 3rd c. AD were already demolished towards the end of the 3rd c. AD, their building material being reused in the foundations of newly erected fortifications.¹¹ The destruction of older grave monuments at this time marks a profound change in the ways the provincial Roman society was dealing with its ancestors: theoretically, disturbing the rest in death was a capital crime, yet levelling commemorative monuments that were partially erected on private land and financed by private money was a widespread phenomenon since the beginning of Late Antiquity. Quarrying these older monuments was not a random act of destruction but part of commercial operations carried out by craftsmen. The stone material was mainly reused for buildings commissioned by the state or local communities. This may point towards the possibility that these activities were not only legally sanctioned but also socially accepted: either the families that erected the funerary monuments no longer cared for them or they deemed them no longer a necessity for their funerary practices.

The 3rd c. AD saw another profound change in burial practices when the number of cremation burials declined and inhumation became the dominant form of burial at the beginning of the 4th c. AD. In the northwestern provinces, most graves from the 1st and 2nd c. AD were cremation burials with very few exceptions mostly found in urban contexts. Throughout the 3rd c. AD, the Roman elites changed their favoured practice to inhumation and within a few generations, the whole society seems to have followed their example.¹² This sudden change was attributed to the spread of Christianity within the Roman Empire based on the assumption that cremation was a burial form incompatible with both Christian beliefs and religious practices of the ascending oriental cults in the 3rd c. AD.¹³ A direct relation between both phenomena has, however, not been proven until today.¹⁴ For the Rhine frontier, this hypothesis can easily be dismissed since the transition from cremation to inhumation burials predates the spread of Christianity in these areas by several generations.¹⁵

We should add, finally, a brief discussion on the so-called ‘grave goods’. In burials from the 1st to 3rd c. AD, certain objects usually accompany the remains of the dead. Burials without any objects are known from Roman necropoleis (usually they are not dated), but the overall majority contained grave goods ranging from a few items to large assemblages of objects. Provincial Roman archaeology has studied this material mainly in terms of chronology and wealth of the deceased. The question why certain objects (or combinations of objects) were deposited in the graves has hardly been touched. Also, the definition of ‘grave goods’ remains imprecise: all

11 HENRICH 2010; HENRICH 2016.

12 MORRIS 1992, 31–33.

13 AUDIN 1960, 529.

14 VOLP 2002, 187.

15 PRIEN 2012, 65.

objects in a grave are counted in despite the conventional approach to include only things that were neither part of clothing or personal jewellery nor small items from the personal belongings of the deceased. Apart from that, most grave goods were vessels of different use and type.¹⁶ Very common were pots, sometimes containing meat or fruit. Food could also be placed on plates and dishes. Drinking vessels appear quite often, sometimes in combination with jars or jugs that presumably contained wine or other beverages. Richly furnished graves included glass vessels instead of or additionally to ceramics. Small lamps and little flasks with perfumy oil are usually interpreted as helpful items that would serve the dead in the afterworld. Rarely, larger objects like tools were included in burials. Some items may represent the profession of the deceased, but contrary to this observation, weapons are seldom found in any burials. This is usually explained by the assumption that Roman soldiers were equipped with arms from state-run *fabricae* and that these had to be returned on retirement. But as the weapon graves from Late Antiquity demonstrate, privately owned arms must have been circulating.

In Late Antiquity, the northwestern frontiers of the Empire saw some major changes. In contrast to the roughly two hundred years in which especially the Upper Rhine Valley was protected by the outer-lying Upper Germanic-Rhaetian Limes, the entire course of the Rhine between Lake Constance and the North Sea became a frontier again, albeit a frontier that was initially hardly visible in the second half of the 3rd c. AD. In contrast to the situation commonly shown by historic maps, the Upper Rhine did not become a military fortified border after the fall of the *limes* in the middle of the 3rd c. AD. Fortifications were not built before the beginning of the 4th c. AD and most of them were not *castra*, but fortified cities and smaller settlements. Sources such as the *Notitia Dignitatum* clearly tell us about the presence of military troops within settlements, but archaeologically we cannot detect them. The once so clear line between civilian and military space became blurred and even invisible. The same problem applies to burials where identifying graves of soldiers from the 1st to 3rd c. AD is fairly simple because of the numerous tombstones naming or depicting members of the armed forces, but in later times, such examples nearly vanish. Therefore, another major issue in archaeological research on Late Antique burials on the frontier zone is the differentiation between civilians and soldiers.

In summary, grave goods and burial practices in the northwestern provinces point toward strong local traditions in funerary practices that go back to the Iron Age. This is the cultural package all studies of Late Roman burials have to build on. Up until now, there are no comprehensive studies on Late Antique burials on the Rhine frontier. Only single grave fields and smaller areas have been studied so far – in contrast to neighbouring regions where anterior studies tried at least to examine

16 BECHERT 2007, 91.

chronological aspects.¹⁷ Given the numbers of excavated Late Roman burials on the Rhine frontier – until present thousands of graves – this paper can only focus on some small but hopefully representative examples.

The Archaeological Evidence: A Case Study from the Upper Rhine

From the Upper Rhine region, a wide range of grave constructions from Late Antiquity is known: the simplest ones are inhumations without any wooden or stone covers. The bodies of the deceased were probably wrapped in shrouds, but these – like most forms of textiles – seldom survived.¹⁸ The body was deposited in a grave



Fig. 2: Speyer, south-eastern grave field, tomb 1127.

pit together with grave goods that were placed either beside the head or behind the feet of the dead. Especially on the Lower Rhine, often a separate niche was added to the grave pit that received the grave goods.¹⁹ In some cases, traces of wooden coffins were recorded, but their use is archaeologically often hard to trace. The next more elaborate examples of graves are those with installations. The grave pit contained a construction made out of slabs or large tiles; usually reused building material (Fig. 2).

¹⁷ A good example for the province of *Raetia Secunda* provides KELLER 1971.

¹⁸ The only well-documented examples come from the necropolis of St. Maximin in Trier (REIFAHRT 2013); cfr. also the contribution MERTEN in this volume.

¹⁹ LINSCHIED 2018, 109. The first niches occur already during the 2nd and 3rd c. AD (Fischer 2001, 197).

Very common were brick plate graves where the tiles formed a triangular roof over the body of the deceased. These grave constructions can be found in large numbers in every part of the Late Roman Empire and even beyond and have a long tradition. The most expensive container for the dead were stone sarcophagi, especially in areas without stone deposits like the Lower Rhine region. Here, some of the sarcophagi were made from imported limestone that could be shipped via the rivers Moselle and Rhine from quarries in Lorraine, but the majority came from the tuff layers of the Volcanic Eifel. On the Upper Rhine, local bunter was predominately used. Most sarcophagi were only roughly worked; examples with relief sculpture are rare and were usually found around Trier and Köln and only few in rural areas. Stone sarcophagi seem to have been reused often in both Late Roman and Early Medieval times. Their appearance is not limited to urban necropoleis; they can also be found especially in burial grounds of large *villae*. Despite the huge quantity of archaeological data that comes from the underground grave structures, little is known about grave markers above ground.²⁰ Tombstones with inscriptions continued to be erected in the 4th to 7th c. AD, but in much lower quantities compared to the previous centuries. Apart from Trier where over 1300 – mostly Christian – grave inscriptions are known, most towns contribute no more than a dozen.²¹ Again, with the exception of Trier, no tombstone or grave slab was found *in situ*. In some cases traces of wear point towards a horizontal positioning over a burial or an upright position at a front end position.²² Other grave markers like wooden posts or enclosures have hitherto not been observed. Still, an above ground marker must have existed in many cases, since graves in the larger necropoleis seldomly overlap. Late Antique mausolea are only known from *Colonia*/Cologne and Trier. Most notable is the huge domed building with conchs, an attached peristyle court and golden mosaics that was built on the northwestern grave field outside Cologne on the site of the later church of St. Gereon. Originally thought to have been a Late Antique sanctuary housing the relics of the martyrs of the Theban Legion, later studies have shown that the building from the last quarter of the 4th c. AD was a monumental mausoleum that can be compared to Imperial sepulchres in Rome.²³ Unfortunately, neither archaeological nor historical sources provide evidence about who commissioned this extraordinary monument. In Trier, a few chamber tombs are known, some of them with painted walls and vaults.²⁴

With one exception discussed below, all information about burial practices comes from the graves themselves, especially from the grave goods. Thus, the following few examples of burials from the 4th to the 6th c. AD will be presented,

20 Cfr. the contribution OSNABRÜGGE in this volume.

21 RISTOW 2007, 270–274; cfr. the contributions MERTEN and OSNABRÜGGE in this volume.

22 Cfr. the contribution OSNABRÜGGE in this volume.

23 VERSTEGEN 2006.

24 FAUST 1998; SIEDOW 2020. On Late Antique barrel-vaulted tombs cfr. the contributions ARDELEANU, OTT and VALEVA in this volume.

beginning with the Upper Rhine region: numerous Late Antique burial sites are known from the urban centres of *Nemetae*/Speyer and *Borbetomagus*/Worms as well as from the various rural regions of the Palatinate. In the countryside, *villae* still in use in the 4th and 5th c. AD had at least one burial place which could be of varying size. The larger and smaller *vici* also contained necropoleis that were used – similar to those in the cities – often from the beginning of the 1st c. AD and continued until the end of Antiquity, sometimes even beyond. From the surroundings of Late Roman hilltop settlements also grave fields are known, where the occupation usually began at the same time as in the settlement. The extensive material findings from the several thousand known graves of Late Antiquity from the Palatinate provides comprehensive insights into burial practices of that time. It is striking that in the Palatinate, as in almost all border regions on the Rhine and Danube, there are many particularly richly furnished graves.

As an example for the rural area, three Late Antique burial sites are briefly presented here: The first example comes from Wachenheim (northwest of Speyer), where a large *villa* and its associated burial grounds were partially excavated. The *villa* itself was founded at the beginning of the 1st c. AD and remained in use without any destructions but with several rebuilding phases until Late Roman times.²⁵ Only in the 5th c. AD, the main building was destroyed by a fire but the *villa* was further used until the end of the 5th c. AD, which is quite exceptional on the Rhine frontier, where most *villae* seem to have been abandoned in the middle of the century at the latest. Only a few decades later, an Early Medieval settlement together with a row grave cemetery was founded nearby. The burial ground lay about 300 m south of the *villa* and was only partially excavated. It was in use from the 1st c. AD onwards and up to the end of the 3rd c. AD, only cremation burials existed. Inhumation graves appeared from around AD 300 onwards. The Late Antique burials are comparatively wealthy, with many stone sarcophagi. Grave goods deposited on or beside the sarcophagi and wooden coffins usually contain sets of pots and bowls or plates and jugs. Precious glass vessels also appear (usually individually) in a number of graves. The personal belongings of the dead sometimes include an iron knife, rarely hairpins and bronze necklaces or bracelets and in one case a three-layer bone comb. Exceptional are the ‘military belt fittings’ and a richly decorated glass goblet in tomb 63, which belongs to the first half of the 5th c. AD (Fig. 3).

Additionally, the grave yielded a set of ceramics (three bowls and a jug) and a small knife. These grave goods were found outside a bunter sarcophagus with a presumably male deceased (the bone material was nearly decomposed). The current interpretation of the grave goods emphasizes only on its ethnical character: due to the ‘military belt fittings’ and the glass goblet with its ‘Frankish’ form, the deceased is supposed to have been an individual of ‘Germanic’ origin.²⁶ While the

25 BERNHARD 2012.

26 BERNHARD 2005, 143.



Fig. 3: Wachenheim, tomb 63.

ethnic nature of these two objects is debatable, the approach doesn't take into account the fact that the set of ceramics appears to be very 'Roman'. These sets can be found in most of the graves in the Wachenheim burial ground, as the example of tomb 21 shows (Fig. 4).

Here, the other objects from the grave (a necklace with glass beads, a spindle whorl and two bone needles) point toward a female burial but nothing indicates her ethnical origins. The Late Antique 'military belt fittings' in tomb 63 are interpreted as indicating a 'Germanic' warrior, since the man appears to have been former soldier and only soldiers of 'Germanic' origin would have been accompanied by such military insignia in their graves. Yet the belt-buckle and belt-fittings that are usually thought to have been manufactured in Roman state *fabricae* as equipment for the Late Roman army do not identify the individual in tomb 63 as a soldier, since the precise use and dispersion of these objects is entirely unknown (they were also worn by other individuals than military officials). In this special case, they are treated as substitute for a weapon that would usually belong to a 5th c. AD-'warrior grave'. The glass goblet certainly shows a form which belongs to the later 5th c. AD, albeit not a 'Frankish' one. Indeed, the combination of a ceramic jar and a drinking vessel made from glass is very typical for Late Antiquity and does not express an ethnical identity – none of the grave goods presented here does. A similar interpretation of tomb 18 is even less convincing: here the assumed 'Germanic' character of the deceased rests entirely on the presence of a glass bowl type Helle, dating to the last third of the 5th. c. AD.²⁷ This vessel type was first recorded in Helle (Lower Sax-

27 On the use of glass within Late Antique burial practices cfr. the contributions ARDELEANU, BIANCHI and OTT in this volume.



Fig. 4: Wachenheim, tomb 21.

ony), which is outside the former Roman Empire, hence coming from a ‘Germanic’ origin. But most of the later found examples come from the Rhine frontier. All other grave goods (a plate and two bowls) were manufactured within the Empire. They were deposited all together in a niche beside the sarcophagus – again a very common practice along the Rhine. All Late Roman burials at Wachenheim show great similarities in terms of grave construction and grave goods and present a striking example for long-lived traditions that go far into the second half of the 5th c. AD. Yet they are commonly seen as evidence for a population shift that is thought to have taken place in many parts of the hinterland of the Rhine frontier during the 4th and 5th c. AD.²⁸ The reason for this lies both in the excessive focus on ethnic interpretation and in the over-interpretation of scanty historical sources. According to them, the Palatinate was hit by at least four Barbaric invasions (AD 275/276, 351–355, 406/407 and 451) that devastated the entire frontier zone and killed most of its inhabitants.²⁹ A continued settlement in *villae* and *vici* therefore required a new population that came from lands beyond the frontier. Beside the fact that the historical sources provide little evidence for this narrative, archaeological traces for widespread destructions are lacking in most cases.³⁰ In the case of Wachenheim, the *villa* shows traces of a fire that damaged most buildings in the first half of the 5th c. AD, but the site was not abandoned before the turn of the century. In the last occupation phase, the main building was no longer in use as a living space. In its vicinity, two pit houses (Grubenhäuser) were erected that contained sherds of

28 BERNHARD 2020, 74.

29 WITSCHERL 2020.

30 PRIEN 2013.

handmade pottery and pieces of a torque (Ösenhalsring). These objects were also classified as 'Germanic', despite the fact that both the ceramics and the torque are well-known finds in the Rhine frontier region.³¹ The old burial ground in the south was also no longer in use. Instead, a small grave field with 13 inhumation burials developed close to a farm building. All but one were without any grave goods or small objects, only tomb 11 contained a steep glass beaker, a knife and two pots, which date to the late 5th c. AD. While the objects from the pit houses may signal a changing material culture of the inhabitants of the *villa*, the burials contradict this evidence: unfurnished burials are abundant in the late 5th c. AD and the grave goods from tomb 11 still show the presence of older traditions. To put it in a nutshell, the study of burials from the Wachenheim *villa* shows a remarkable continuity of burial customs over more than 400 years despite alleged population shifts and religious changes.

In Gönnheim, only a few kilometres away from Wachenheim, a cemetery with 132 inhumation and cremation graves was excavated that belongs to a hitherto unlocated *villa*. The oldest burials date back to the first half of the 3rd c. AD and were all located in the east of the excavated area, to which the inhumation graves from the time after AD 300 adjoined to the west. Even further to the west were burials of the 4th and 5th c. AD suggesting that the neighbouring *villa* was in use well into the second third of the 5th c. AD.³² The Gönnheim necropolis provides a high number of excellent examples for Late Antique burial customs on the Upper Rhine Area. Approximately a tenth of the deceased were buried in stone sarcophagi. A high percentage of the tombs contained glass and fine ceramics such as terra sigillata from the Argonne and terra nigra. Among the glass vessels were also very expensive products such as drinking horns and jugs and in two cases, the dead were buried with 'military belt fittings'. Surprisingly, there is a small number of cremations among the burials from the late 4th and 5th c. AD. Tomb 8 (Fig. 5) was furnished with a sarcophagus which contained two bowls, a small jar, a glass beaker, a lamp and a bronze bracelet and it belongs to the early 5th c. AD.

Tomb 30 (Fig. 6) dates roughly from the same time. Here, both beaker and jar are glass vessels, accompanied by a terra sigillata bowl and a plate together with a torques (Ösenhalsring), which again led to the conclusion by the excavator that the deceased must have been of 'Germanic' origin.³³

But these torques made from bronze wire are quite abundant in burials from the Palatinate. The grave goods from tomb 41 (Fig. 7) belong to a cremation burial from the late 4th c. AD and illustrate that they do not differ much from what is found together with inhumation burials: once again, a drinking vessel, a jug and a small knife that was deposited together with the cremated bones in an amphora.

31 BERNHARD 2005, 141.

32 BERNHARD 2003.

33 BERNHARD 2003, 150.



Fig. 5: Gönheim, tomb 8.



Fig. 6: Gönheim, tomb 30.

Although not the entire necropolis in Gönheim was excavated, traces of a double ditch were found on two sides that presumably enclosed the burial ground. Unfortunately, no structures above ground could be recorded.

The third example for rural cemeteries comes from a different kind of sites: hill-top settlements are very common and distinctive Late Antique features within the settlement landscape not only in the frontier regions but also in most areas of the Roman Empire and beyond. In the Palatine, the site ‘Großer Berg’ near Kindsbach (district of Kaiserslautern) provides an example where both the settlement and the associated necropolis were nearly completely excavated.³⁴ The almost 100 graves at the foot of the mountain are particularly striking because they are all crema-

34 BERNHARD 1987; BERNHARD 2001.

tions, a rare phenomenon in the 4th c. AD. However, the unburnt grave goods from these burials hardly differ from those of the two previous examples. Also at this site, ceramic vessels are dominant (rather a larger pot than an urn, supplemented by small jugs or bowls) and occasionally, a glass vessel or tools in the form of knives can be found. While the ‘military belt fittings’ are missing, at least two of the graves yielded torques (Ösenhalsringe). These objects are associated with the presence of a ‘Germanic’ population in the settlement, since the oldest known objects of this type come from areas beyond the Rhine frontier.

In the present case, the cremation burial rite was also interpreted as ‘Germanic’ and thus the ‘immigrants’ buried here are said to have come from areas outside the Empire. Again, this ethnic interpretation of individual grave goods or of a whole burial is difficult in several respects: it presupposes that the relatives were concerned at the time of burial about consciously emphasizing the ‘otherness’ of the deceased. However, if this was indeed the case, it must have been a hard task to achieve, since apart from a few objects and the cremation rite the entire grave furnishing is identical to other contemporary burials from rural and urban contexts. The often-cited torques may have been a kind of status symbol, but not for a ‘Germanic immigrant’ – their widespread distribution in the border provinces of the Roman Empire rather suggests that they played a role within the ‘border society’ in Late Antiquity.



Fig. 7: Gönnheim, tomb 41.



Fig. 8: Speyer, south-eastern grave field, tomb 9/2010.

In addition to the rural necropoleis, urban burial places of Late Antiquity in the Palatinate have also been studied in recent times: hundreds of graves have been recorded in both Worms and Speyer.³⁵ Overall, it can be said that the graves in urban environments are often even more elaborately furnished than their counterparts in the countryside. Thus, precious glass vessels appear in much higher numbers and stone sarcophagi are also found much more frequently. Speyer also offers a good overview of the spatial development of the burial grounds around the city: at the beginning of Late Antiquity, a large cemetery existed in the west of the city.³⁶ It was partially used up to the 5th c. AD. In the 4th c. AD, various new burial sites developed in the north and at different locations in the west and south, including small groups of graves along the main road that led to the west. Finally, in the second half of the 4th c. AD, a large new cemetery evolved southeast of the now fortified town, which is the subject of recent excavations.³⁷ So far, this burial place is exceptional since nearly all of its hundreds of inhumations received no grave goods at all. Yet this place was certainly not the final resting place of a population in poverty as can be demonstrated by the numerous *bunter Sarcophagi* that come from this site.

35 For Worms see GRÜNEWALD 2006. The burials from Speyer remain largely unpublished until present.

36 PRIEN 2018, 90.

37 NASHAN 2018.

The only furnished grave is tomb 9/2010 (Fig. 8), where a man in his thirties was buried in the middle of the 5th c. AD.

He was buried in a simple pit, but received some grave goods, among them three dices and a handmade pot. On his body, he wore a 'military belt' with its fitting, sandals, a bronze fibula and a small knife. In this case, both the type of pot and the fibula are objects that probably came from outside of the Roman sphere and the absence of any further ceramic or glass vessels stands in stark contrast to other furnished graves in the Palatinate. These dissimilarities may not suffice to declare the deceased a military officer of 'Germanic' origins, but it highlights the fact that this man was buried according to different burial customs. While this grave stands out among others in the southeastern grave field, a late 4th c. AD burial from the western cemetery shows some similarities: tomb 17 yielded another adult man in a wooden coffin with two belt buckles (one probably showing a bust of an emperor), a crossbow brooch, five bronze coins, a finger ring, a knife and a glass vessel (Fig. 9).

Again, the personal items of the deceased may hint at a high status as state official, which was displayed through these objects. Tomb 110 is from the same cemetery, the burial of an adult woman in a stone sarcophagus. She was buried in the second half of the 4th c. AD together with a terra nigra beaker, two glass flasks, a small *balsamarium* and a necklace of glass beads. This combination of grave goods is quite abundant in urban necropoleis, where numerous glass vessels were uncovered. A striking example for this is provided by the burials that were already excavated in the 19th c. in the western cemetery of Speyer: in 1867, two undated stone



Fig. 9: Speyer, western grave field, tomb 17.



Fig. 10: Speyer, two richly furnished sarcophagi from the western grave field.

sarcophagi were discovered that together yielded sixteen glass vessels, among them six jugs with a volume of three litres each (Fig. 10).

Each tomb was equipped with at least two drinking bowls, two jars and two or more of the afore-mentioned jugs. The archaeological significance of these burials is even higher since one of the glass jars is still filled with conserved wine – it is indeed the oldest wine that survived from Antiquity in Europe. It allows speculating that the contents of most glass vessels in Roman burials were similar and thus quite expensive. Drinking vessels remained an important part of grave furnishings in Merovingian times, where the presence of glass is also usually interpreted as a sign of wealth and high status of the deceased.³⁸ The Late Roman burial grounds of Speyer ceased to be used – unlike many other urban necropoleis along the Rhine – throughout the 5th c. AD. Only from the southeastern cemetery, Merovingian burials are known.

Grave Goods and Burial Rites

As mentioned above, Late Antique burials from the Rhine frontier have until now only been studied in terms of chronology, social hierarchies, ethnic and to some degree religious identities. Unfortunately, there is no recent discussion about actual

38 KOCH 1998.

burial rites, which usually encompasses much more than just the way in which the deceased was buried. Some of the steps in the process of a burial that are conveyed by written sources are hard or even impossible to detect in the archaeological material. Lamentation of the dead, public mourning and laying-out usually took place in the houses of the living and required no special architecturally designed place. The deposition of the deceased in a tomb is usually the only archaeological evidence present, but from this, we can only sparsely tell which rites were conducted at the funeral or in the course of the remembrance of the dead. There is only one exception: funerary meals that were held at certain times in the year at or near to the grave. These meals held a long tradition in Roman funerary customs and were no distinctive ‘pagan’ feature, but also celebrated by Christians in Late Antiquity.³⁹ One reason for the continuity of this important ritual might have been its exclusive connection to funerary rites, while there was no direct link to church religions. The Bible itself offers no regulation to Christians regarding the handling of funerals, so feasting and libation at the grave was probably more a cultural trait than a religious one. From the catacombs in Rome, architectural features like benches and tables for meals or even cooking facilities are known.⁴⁰ From Late Antiquity, similar installations on closed burial spaces are known from various parts of the Roman Empire, sometimes – as in North Africa or Spain – even holding inscriptions that explain their functions.⁴¹ Unfortunately, such features are unknown at the Rhine frontier at large. The only three exceptions here are marked by so-called *cellae memoriae* from *Tricensimae*/Xanten on the Lower Rhine, *Bonna*/Bonn and *Gelduba*/Krefeld-Gellep. Beneath the present collegiate church of St. Victor in Xanten, pre-war excavations uncovered a Late Roman and Early Medieval burial place. Two graves were overbuilt by with *cellae* (small rectangular stone buildings) in the second half of the 4th c. AD. One of them (*cella* A) was furnished with a stone slab that served as *mensa* (table).⁴² The most prominent example was discovered beneath the collegiate church of St. Cassius et Florentius in Bonn, where a rectangular *cella* with circular benches and a masoned *mensa* that had terra sigillata bowls inserted in its surface was found. The structure was erected in the second half of the 4th c. AD and dismantled only a generation later. The excavator interpreted the *cella memoriae* as distinct early Christian feature, but this view is no longer valid.⁴³ According to older interpretations, the *cella* was the nucleus of an evolving pilgrim site where the relics of two martyrs from the Theban Legion were worshipped and where already in the early 5th c. AD a church was erected. However, recent evaluations of the old ex-

39 VOLP 2002, 216; cfr. the contributions ARBEITER, ARDELEANU, MERTEN, OTT and VALEVA in this volume.

40 SCHNEIDER 1927; FÉVRIER 1978.

41 Cfr. several discussed examples in the contributions ARBEITER and ARDELEANU in this volume.

42 For the excavations, see OTTEN 2003.

43 RISTOW 2007, 156.

cavations indicated that this building that housed a number of Early Medieval burials belongs to the 6th c. AD.⁴⁴ Another possible *cella memoriae* comes from *Gelduba/Krefeld-Gellep*.⁴⁵ Apart from these few examples of architecture designed for commemorative funerary meals, no other archaeological aboveground structures that can be related to funerary rites are known. Still, the finds from the graves presented above strongly suggest that these traditions were widespread along the Late Roman Rhine frontier. In almost every case, the grave goods encompass a drinking vessel and another container for liquids. Very common were also plates and cups that were used in the course of a meal. The presence of liquids such as wine is usually not attested and most of the food that was deposited in the graves left little recordable archaeological traces, but the ceramics usually point toward a desire to equip the deceased with drink and meal. Unlike in Old Egypt, written sources that tell about Roman funerary customs and in general about the afterlife imply that this aliment was not a necessity for the dead in the afterworld.⁴⁶ Instead, the grave goods were deposited in order to enable the dead to take part in the funerary meals. The abundance of distinctive sets of vessels in burials show that funerary meals were a very common custom in the northwestern provinces of the Late Roman Empire.

Christian and Pagan Burials

For a long time, it was assumed that the absence of grave goods in Late Roman graves especially from the 5th c. AD was a sign for Christian burials. This view was already called into question when burials with grave goods such as glass and ceramics vessels or even jewellery that display Christian symbols and motives were encountered. Today there is a consensus that grave goods can tell us little about the religious identity of the deceased. As demonstrated above, it helps us to understand whether rites such as funerary meals were practiced in some communities or not, but this again gives no evidence for religious affiliations. The situation is further complicated by the fact that Pagans and Christians usually used no separate places for burials. Well into the 6th c. AD, both groups buried their dead together. Along the Rhine frontier and in its hinterland, no exclusively Christian burial places such as spots near to *memoriae* for early martyrs existed neither. Only in Trier, two prestigious burial places near the resting places of the first bishops may have existed. Another reason for the absence of a Christian *coemeterium* in other towns is a lack of Early Christian martyrs along the Rhine. No martyr from the 2nd to the 4th c. AD is attested by contemporary sources in the region. The cult of the martyrs from the so-called Theban Legion that originally was connected to *Octodurum/Martigny* in

44 KELLER/MÜSSEMEIER 2001, 290–292.

45 REICHMANN 2009.

46 VOLP 2002, 198.

modern Switzerland is an ‘innovation’ from Merovingian times, when the serious shortage of martyrs in the east of the Frankish Empire had to be compensated with the creation of new members of the Legion that met their faith further north in places like Bonn, Cologne and Xanten.⁴⁷

Conclusion

In summary, many aspects of Late Antique burial rites on the Rhine frontier are still open for study. Further research in this area requires a wider scope of methods and approaches. Until present archaeological material from graves has predominantly been studied in terms of chronology and ethnic, religious and social identities. While distinctions between ‘native Romans’ and ‘barbarian immigrants’ have been called into question, little effort has been made to focus on archaeological traces of actual burial rites and their development through the times. This brief overview can only highlight few phenomena like the numerous presence of drinking vessels in Late Antique burials and a very small number of *cellae memoriae* along the Lower Rhine that probably served as places for commemorative meals for the deceased. A research focused on burial rites will require overstepping current boundaries and the abandonment of some much-loved theories.

The first step in this direction is to abandon ‘traditional’ questions about ethnic and religious affiliations since it turned out that this approach in research is a dead end. Instead, comparative studies that also include regions far away from the Rhine may provide new and surprising insights on the uniformity of Late Antique funerary landscapes. For the northwestern provinces, it also requires overstepping the boundaries between Provincial Roman and Merovingian archaeology, since burial rites obviously did not change together with the collapse of the Roman political order but rather evolved homogeneously into Early Medieval times. This step was not taken in this paper since it requires much further studies, but the present volume may be a valuable tool for such an undertaking.

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JONAS OSNABRÜGGE

Transformation und Verschwinden

Inschriften in der Funerärkultur an Oberrhein und südlichem
Mittelrhein in Spätantike und Frühmittelalter

Einführung

In diesem Beitrag¹ soll aus vornehmlich epigraphischer² Perspektive ein Überblick über die materiellen Hinterlassenschaften und Entwicklungen gegeben werden, welche die Begräbnislandschaft in der spätantiken Provinz *Germania Prima* und den germanischen Nachfolgeregna auf diesem Gebiet kennzeichneten. Der betrachtete Zeitraum erstreckt sich dabei vom Beginn des 4. Jhs. n. Chr. bis zum Beginn des karolingischen Zeitalters, das geographische Gebiet von der Schweizer Grenze bis zum nördlichen Ende des Oberrheintales. Die in diokletianischer Zeit entstandene Provinz *Germania Prima* mit dem Statthaltersitz *Mogontiacum*/Mainz erstreckte sich entlang des linken Rheinufer nördlich von Colmar bis in das Mittelrheintal. Seit den 260er Jahren n. Chr. beschränkte sich das Gebiet der direkten römischen Kontrolle nur noch auf das linke Rheinufer und einige Außenposten. Ab der Mitte des 5. Jhs. n. Chr. stand auch das linksrheinische Gebiet nicht mehr unter der Hoheit Roms und wurde im 6. Jh. n. Chr. Teil des Fränkischen Reiches.³ In dem betrachteten Gebiet entlang des Oberrheins entwickelte sich ab dem frühen 1. Jh. n. Chr. eine lebhaftes ‚epitaphische‘ Kultur, von der etwa 370 in das 1. bis 3. Jh. n. Chr. zu datierende Grabinschriften auf uns gekommen sind.⁴ Die Begräbnislandschaft der Spätantike hingegen ist vor allem durch das nahezu vollständige Verschwinden

- 1 An dieser Stelle möchte ich den Organisatoren der Konferenz, Stefan Ardeleanu und Jon C. Cubas Díaz, für die Einladung und die Möglichkeit, meine Ideen vorzutragen und zu diskutieren, sowie für eine gut organisierte Konferenz danken. Weiter gilt mein Dank Prof. Christian Witschel, für viele hilfreiche Kommentare und Hinweise sowie Roland Prien für anregende Diskussionen, Ellen Riemer und Markus Leicht vom Landesmuseum Mainz für ihre freundliche Hilfe, sowie Francisca Feraudi-Gruénais und Nicolai Futás in Heidelberg.
- 2 Für einen eher funerararchäologisch ausgerichteten Fokus auf dieses Gebiet vgl. den Beitrag PRIEN in diesem Band.
- 3 Zur Geschichte des Oberrheingebietes im dritten 3. Jh. n. Chr. und der Spätantike: BADISCHES LANDESMUSEUM KARLSRUHE 2005; WITSCHEL 2011; BERNHARD 2015; zur alemanischen Zeit: GEUENICH 2017; RISTOW 2017; WITSCHEL 2017a.
- 4 Die epigraphische Kultur entlang von Oberrhein und Neckar ist Gegenstand meines laufenden Dissertationsvorhabens, auf dem einige der hier vorgelegten Überlegungen zur spätantiken Entwicklung beruhen.

der Grabinschriften ab dem Ende des 3. Jhs. n. Chr. gekennzeichnet. Für die Zeit ab dem 4. bis in das 8. Jh. n. Chr. sind nur noch 20 Grabinschriften bekannt, von denen allein zwölf aus *Borbetomagus*/Worms, dem Hauptort der *civitas Vangionum* im Gebiet südwestlich von Mainz, stammen (Abb. 1).⁵

Die ländlichen Gebiete dagegen blieben bis auf wenige Ausnahmen nahezu inschriftenlos. Die epigraphische Kultur der Spätantike ist seit einiger Zeit als Untersuchungsgegenstand *sui generis* der epigraphischen und althistorischen Forschung etabliert, bei der statt der früheren Trennung in ‚antike‘ und ‚christliche Epigraphik‘ der Fokus auf die Transformation der antiken Inschriftkultur(en) in Spät-

- 5 Eine erste ‚christliche‘ Inschrift (HDo78078) wird bereits von Joseph Fuchs in dessen Geschichte von Mainz erwähnt (FUCHS 1772, 163–167, Nr. 19). Eine Sammlung ‚christlicher‘ Inschriften aus den gallisch-germanischen Provinzen legte Edmond Le Blant vor (ICG, pp. 453–466; NICG, pp. 86–102, 428–436); eine Inschriftensammlung mit ähnlich breitem geographischen Fokus wurde bereits 1890 durch Kraus vorgelegt. Ebenfalls aus der Frühzeit der Beschäftigung mit den spätantik-frühmittelalterlichen Inschriften des Gebiets stammt Joseph Beckers Darstellung der Entwicklung des Christentums entlang des Rheins anhand der Inschriften (BECKER 1864). Eine große Zahl der heute bekannten spätantiken und frühmittelalterlichen Inschriften stammt aus den Ausgrabungen des beginnenden 20. Jhs. in Mainz, insbesondere bei St. Alban, welche von Klaus Körber publiziert wurden (KÖRBER 1908; KÖRBER 1909; KÖRBER 1911; KÖRBER 1912; KÖRBER 1913). Zusammenhängende Studien über die Epitaphe entlang des Mittelrheins stammen von RADEMACHER 1939, mit Stücken des Bonner Museums (vgl. ENGEMANN/RÜGER 1991) sowie von BOPPERT (FIM), mit paläographischen Untersuchungen (erste Bemühungen dazu bereits bei BAUER 1926). Im Rahmen des Projektes *Die Deutschen Inschriften des Mittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit* wurden die spätantiken Inschriften von Worms, Wiesbaden und anderer Gebiete am Rhein aufgenommen (FUCHS 1991; NIKITSCH 2004; MONSEES 2010). Dieses Projekt operiert allerdings aus mediävistischer Perspektive, wobei die spätantiken/frühmittelalterlichen Inschriften an den Beginn der Chronologie gestellt und mit anderen Methoden als denen der antiken Epigraphik erschlossen werden. Neuere Überblicke unter Berücksichtigung von Neufunden stammen von NIKITSCH 2015 und SCHMITZ 2015 (mit nützlichen Verbreitungskarten). Inschriftliche Hinterlassenschaften spielen auch eine große Rolle in neueren Überblicksdarstellungen zur Entwicklung des Christentums entlang des Rheins von TERRIEN 2007 und RISTOW 2007; für das Rhein-Mosel-Gebiet SCHMITZ 2004. Eine onomastische, linguistische und sozialhistorische Analyse der Grabinschriften findet sich bei SCHMITZ 2001; vgl. SCHMITZ 2015. Die Paläographie der Epitaphe und der Vergleich mit der Schriftkultur des vorkarolingischen und karolingischen Mainz steht im Fokus der Betrachtung ausgewählter Stücke durch LICHT/FERRO/WALLENWEIN 2017; bes. LICHT 2017a; LICHT 2017b; LICHT 2017c. Eine Sammlung aller spätantik-frühmittelalterlichen Grabinschriften zwischen Worms, Mainz und Bingen wurde jüngst von KESSEL 2018 vorgelegt, diese ist jedoch immer noch stark der doktrinären Fokussierung auf ‚christliche‘ Epigraphik verhaftet. So beschreibt die Autorin fragmentarische Epitaphe ohne Anzeichen für eine christliche Konnotation als „Grabsteinfragment eines unbekanntes Christen“ (z. B. KESSEL 2018, 56, Nr. 31; 58, Nr. 33). Die Problematik dieser künstlichen Trennung der epigraphischen Disziplinen zeigt sich auch daran, dass etwa die Inschriften von Worms bis in das frühe 4. Jh. n. Chr. bei CSIR II,¹⁰ aufgenommen wurden, während sich die späteren Inschriften in FUCHS 1991 finden. Eine gemeinsame Betrachtung dieser Steindenkmäler fand bislang nicht statt.

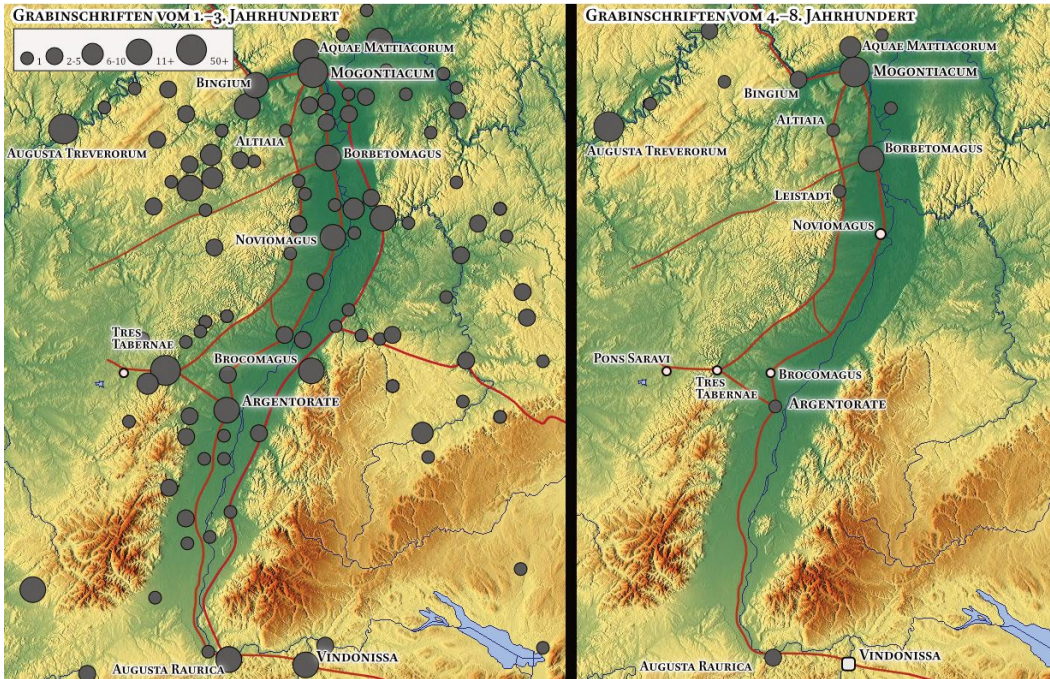


Abb. 1: Grabinschriften entlang von Oberrhein und Neckar.

antike und Frühmittelalter gelegt wird.⁶ Obwohl sich in der reichsweiten Perspektive gewisse Trends der spätantiken Epigraphik abzeichnen, ist zugleich eine Zersplitterung und Regionalisierung in lokale ‚epitaphic habits‘ zu konstatieren. Ziel dieses Beitrages wird daher auch sein, die regionalen Eigenheiten und Entwicklungen vor dem im Rahmen des Gesamtbandes gezeichneten Bild der Funerärlandschaften der spätantiken Oikumene zu beschreiben. Der erste Teil des Beitrages wird sich mit dem Verschwinden der Funerärinschriften und mit den damit einhergehenden Veränderungen in der ‚funerary landscape‘ des Oberrheingebietes beschäftigen. Im zweiten Teil werden einige Momente der Kontinuität, unter Heranziehung des epigraphisch ergiebigeren Gebietes um Mainz, betrachtet, um zu zeigen, in welchen Kontexten und in welchen Formen die Praxis des Aufstellens von Grabinschriftmonumenten fortlebte. In diesem Teil sollen ferner Aspekte der Materialität dieser Monumente im Fokus stehen.

6 Grundlegend dazu der Kongress der AIEGL zur *terza età dell'epigrafia* in Bologna 1986; Kontinuität betonen auch z. B. SALWAY 2015; SCHMITZ 2015; BOLLE/MACHADO/WITSCHEL 2017a; darin bes. ROUECHÉ/SOTINEL 2017 kritisch zur doktrinären Trennung in ‚pagane‘ und ‚christliche‘ Epigraphik; (vgl. TANTILLO 2017, 56–63) sowie WITSCHEL 2017b zu Phänomenen der spätantiken Epigraphik; Einzelstudien zum ‚epitaphic habit‘ der Spätantike: GALVÃO-SOBRINHO 1995.

Das Verschwinden der antiken Grabinschriftenkultur im Oberrheingebiet

Im 1. bis 3. Jh. n. Chr. waren die Grabinschriften in den germanischen Provinzen auf verschiedenen Typen von Inschriftenträgern angebracht. Die populärste Form dabei war die der Stele, mit einer großen Bandbreite von Formen und Dekorationen; zu einem geringeren Grad waren Mausoleen, Grabpfeiler, Grabaltäre und Sarkophage verbreitet.⁷ Ab dem späten 3. Jh. n. Chr. stellt sich das Bild jedoch gänzlich anders dar. Ein Problem bei unserer Betrachtung ist die Chronologie der Monumente, insbesondere der Sarkophage, einer im Rheingebiet erst ab dem späten 2. Jh. n. Chr. verbreiteten Monumentgattung, bei denen sich die mit Inschriften versehenen Exemplare zum großen Teil nur grob in die Zeit bis in das 3. Jh. n. Chr. und vielleicht noch das 4. oder frühe 5. Jh. n. Chr. einordnen lassen. Leider wurden die meisten im Oberrheingebiet gefundenen Sarkophage bereits kurz nach der Auffindung zerstört, was die Datierung verkompliziert.⁸ Damit lassen sich von den bekannten Sarkophagen im Untersuchungsgebiet keine eindeutig als spätantik einordnen.⁹ Abgesehen davon stellen Grabstelen am Übergang zur Spätantike die häufigsten Grabdenkmäler dar, die wir noch feststellen können. Im Gegensatz zu Ersteren können die Stelen zumeist anhand stilistischer Kriterien oder der Truppengeschichte relativ gut datiert werden. Insgesamt handelt es sich bei diesen um die letzten Grabdenkmäler, welche sich in den verwendeten Formen der Monumente, dem Inhalt und der Gestaltung der Inschriften noch auf die funeräre Inschriftenkultur der ersten drei Jahrhunderte zurückführen lassen. Die wenigen figuralen Darstellungen, die aus der Spätantike erhalten sind, zeigen mehrheitlich die Verstorbenen in frontaler Pose, meist mit Bewaffnung, und stammen in der Mehrheit aus dem militärischen Milieu. Auch wenn diese Ikonographie einer alten Tradition verpflichtet ist, könnte die Beliebtheit dieser figuralen Darstellungen im

7 Zu den Grabmonumenten im Rheingebiet: ANDRIKOPOULOU-STRACK 1986 (mit Fokus auf dem 1. Jh. n. Chr.); besonders wichtig für das 2. und 3. Jh. n. Chr. sind die Überblicke Faust (Grabstelen), Willer (Grabbauten) und Gabelmann (Grabbauten, Gräberstraßen); vgl. auch einschlägig Ditsch (nur Pfalz) und Scholz (Nordprovinzen, beide mit einigen Referenzen zu Grabdenkmälern des 3.–4. Jhs. n. Chr.).

8 Die Datierung des einzigen vermeintlich fest datierbaren – ebenfalls kurz nach der Auffindung zerstörten – Sarkophags aus Worms (CIL XIII 6248 = HDo78418) in das Jahr 440 n. Chr. über die erwähnten Konsuln ist aufgrund der zweifelhaften Überlieferung der stark ergänzten Inschrift, welche bereits Theodor Mommsen für größtenteils fiktiv hielt, kaum aufrecht zu erhalten (vgl. den Kommentar zu CIL XIII 6248). Zu den Sarkophagen der *Germania Superior* SPIESS 1988.

9 Demgegenüber existiert eine große Zahl von inschriftenlosen spätantiken Sarkophagen, die wir etwa zahlreich aus Speyer oder Worms kennen, vgl. dazu den Beitrag PRIEN in diesem Band; aber auch aus *Argentorate* (vgl. WATON/SCHNITZLER 2002, 203–205). Gänzlich anders war die Situation jedoch rechts des Rheins gelagert, wo Sarkophagbestattungen sich auf wenige Mitglieder der Elite beschränkten, dazu LATER 2012.



Abb. 2: Kopie eines Grab(?)reliefs des Lepontius aus Straßburg (CIL XIII 5980 = HD079033), Musée Archéologique de Strasbourg, frühes 4. Jh. n. Chr.

Militär ein erstes Vorzeichen für die zunehmende Militarisierung der Gesellschaft abbilden, die in den Grabinventaren des 4. und 5. Jhs. n. Chr. sichtbar wird.¹⁰ Ein Beispiel hierfür stellt die Grabstele des Lepontius aus *Argentorate*/Straßburg dar, welche während der deutschen Belagerung Straßburgs zerstört wurde (Abb. 2).¹¹

Das Bildfeld, welches bis auf zwei schmale, rahmende Leisten oben und unten die gesamte Front bedeckt, zeigt einen spätromischen Infanteristen in voller Rüs-

10 Die früheren Legionärsgrabstelen der Lager entlang des Rheins sind zumeist nur mit floralen oder geometrischen Ornamenten verziert, im Kontrast zu denen der Auxiliarsoldaten. Dies zeigt sich gut an den bekannten Beispielen aus Mainz, CSIR II,5, wo nur einige wenige Legionäre, insbesondere unter den *signiferi*, eine Grabstele mit ganzfiguriger Darstellung erhielten (z. B. CIL XIII 6901 = HD056117). In diesem – gleichwohl gering ausgeprägten – spätantiken Wiederaufleben militärischer Darstellungen könnten sich frühe Tendenzen einer ‚Militarisierung‘ der Grenzbevölkerung, die sich später auch in reichen Waffenbeigaben niederschlägt, zeigen; vgl. PRIEN 2017, 217f.; SARTI 2016.

11 Eine Kopie befindet sich heute im Musée Archéologique in Straßburg. Zum Fundort BAUDOUX et al. 2002, 249.

tung, stehend und en face. Anhand der gezeigten Waffen lässt sich die Entstehungszeit frühestens in die ersten Jahrzehnte des 4. Jhs. n. Chr. datieren.¹² Die Darstellung zeigt zwar oberflächliche Gemeinsamkeiten mit Grabstelen aus dem 1. Jh. n. Chr., deutlichere Parallelen lassen sich jedoch zu Soldatengrabstelen tetrarchischer Zeit aus *Aquileia* erkennen. Diese zeigen ebenfalls Frontaldarstellungen von Soldaten in einem schmalen Rahmen, auch wenn bei den Aquileienser Stelen das Inschriftenfeld unterhalb der bildlichen Darstellung erscheint.¹³ Aus unserem Gebiet sind drei weitere Soldatengrabstelen mit ähnlicher Darstellungsweise bekannt, die wohl ebenfalls in das frühe 4. Jh. n. Chr. gehören. Zwei davon stammen aus Worms und zeigen Kavalleristen, Katafraktarier oder gepanzerte *contarii*, in sehr einfacher Darstellung.¹⁴ Aus Mainz stammt ein Epitaph für einen *optio* der *legio II Pannonica* (i. e. *Adiutrix*). Hier fehlt zwar der obere Teil der bildlichen Darstellung, am unteren Rand des Bildfeldes ist jedoch noch der untere Rahmen des für die spätantike Ausrüstung der römischen Infanterie typischen Rundschildes zu sehen.¹⁵ Aus der jüngeren Kastellnekropole des im Zuge der Befestigung des Donau-Iller-Rhein-

- 12 Zu dem Relief jetzt KUHNLE 2018a, 61–64, die auch eine Entstehung im späten 4. oder sogar frühen 5. Jh. n. Chr. und eine non-funeräre Herkunft des Reliefs für möglich hält. Zur Datierung der dargestellten Waffen WOODS 1998. Beim dargestellten Helm dürfte es sich um eine stilisierte Wiedergabe eines Kamm- oder Spangenhelms vom Typ Intercisa/Dunapentele (dazu MIKS 2014) mit den charakteristischen augenförmigen Dekorationen handeln. Zu Form von Schwert und Ortband vgl. MIKS 2007, 369–373, 408–411, 455, 457, der das auf dem Lepontius-Relief dargestellte Ortband mit dem Typus Grundremmingen-Jakuszowice vergleicht (MIKS 2007, 410). Die Fundortlokalisierung in BAUDOUX et al. 2002, 248f. („dans l’enceinte romaine“) wurde jüngst von KUHNLE 2018a, revidiert: Das Relief wurde nicht in Sekundärverwendung in der Stadtmauer, sondern in einem Keller innerhalb des ummauerten Areals des Legionslagers gefunden, wodurch auch eine Datierung des Reliefs über den *terminus ante quem* des Baus der Stadtmauer 275–333 n. Chr. (KUHNLE 2018b, 840) hinfällig wird.
- 13 CIL V 900 = lupa 14013 = EDR117756; lupa 14014; CIL V 914 = lupa 14846 = EDR117761; CIL V 944 = lupa 14017 = EDR117771; lupa 14157; ohne vertikale Leisten: CIL V 895 = lupa 14019 = EDR117754; CIL V 940 = lupa 14011 = EDR117770. Zu den spätantiken Soldatengrabsteinen von *Aquileia*: CASARI 2012; CIGAINA 2012; vgl. auch den Beitrag MAINARDIS in diesem Band.
- 14 CIL XIII 6238 = HD075804 (vgl. CSIR II,10, 55) und CIL XIII 6239 = HD075793 (vgl. CSIR II,10, 54).
- 15 CIL XIII 6849 = HD055789 (CSIR II,5, 18). Ein weiterer Grabstein aus Mainz (CIL XIII 7097 = HD056476) wird aufgrund der sehr irregulären Buchstaben und der Verwendung tief eingeschnittener Hilfslinien in die erste Hälfte des 4. Jhs. n. Chr. datiert. Die Ergänzung der Inschrift zu *ce(n)t(urio) legio[nis] de/cim(a)e*, wie von Karl ZANGEMEISTER im CIL vorgeschlagen, scheint jedoch sehr spekulativ – eine solche Abkürzung von *centurio* wäre nur hier belegt –, und in Ermangelung von Resten einer bildlichen Darstellung ist die militärische Natur dieses Grabsteines ohnehin sehr fraglich, zumal die Lesung *LEGIO* in Z. 4 anhand der Fotografien nicht nachvollziehbar ist (in allen erhaltenen Mainzer Grabinschriften wird *legio* stets abgekürzt, ausgeschriebene Legionsnummern sind ohnehin sehr selten). Eine belastbare Datierung in das 4. Jh. n. Chr. ist allein durch die Paläographie und die Hilfslinien nicht möglich.

Limes unter Konstantin errichteten *castrum Rauracense*/Kaiseraugst stammt der Grabstein eines *signifer* der vom gleichen Kaiser ausgehobenen *legio prima Martia*.¹⁶ Für den zivilen Bereich kennen wir, ebenfalls aus Worms, eine Stele mit weiblicher Büste, welche über die stark stilisiert dargestellte Frisur in das späte 3. oder frühe 4. Jh. n. Chr. datiert werden kann.¹⁷ Einige wenige weitere Grabstelen mit ähnlich schematisch-frontalen Personendarstellungen aus dem Gebiet südwestlich von Straßburg gehören ebenfalls noch dem späten 3. oder frühen 4. Jh. n. Chr. an.¹⁸ Einfache, ornamentierte Stelen, welche im 2. Jh. die überwiegende Mehrheit der zivilen Grabstelen darstellen, finden sich in dieser Zeit nicht mehr.

Ab dem zweiten Drittel des 4. Jhs. n. Chr. sind nahezu keine Inschriftenmonumente südlich von Worms bekannt. Die einzigen Ausnahmen bilden zwei Grabinschriften aus Kaiseraugst und ein einzelnes, nur schwer einzuordnendes Grabmonument aus Bad Dürkheim-Leistadt.¹⁹ Das sukzessive Verschwinden der Grabinschriften aus dem epigraphischen Befund ging einher mit einem Verschwinden der Votivinschriften.²⁰ Die letzten Weihinschriften aus dem Oberrheingebiet, welche sicher datiert werden können, gehören zu einer Gruppe von Votivmonumenten aus einem Mithraeum in Gimmeldingen bei Neustadt an der Weinstraße.

- 16 [CIL XIII 5270](#) = [HD076072](#). Der Oberteil der Stele war bereits in der Antike abgeschlagen worden, als die Stele zur Sekundärverwendung in einem frühmittelalterlichen Plattengrab zugerichtet wurde. Da es sich hier um einen *signifer* handelt, befand sich oberhalb der Inschrift möglicherweise ebenfalls eine bildliche Darstellung des Verstorbenen. Eine weitere Stele aus Kaiseraugst ([HD076051](#)) wurde häufig als frühchristliche Grabstele interpretiert und damit dem frühen 4. Jh. n. Chr. zugewiesen; wie BOPPERT jedoch gezeigt hat, gehört die Stele aus epigraphischer Sicht eher dem späten 2. oder frühen 3. Jh. n. Chr. an, BOPPERT 2000, 107–113.
- 17 [CIL XIII 6245](#) = [HD075794](#). Nach CSIR II,10, 60 ahmt die Frisur die Haartracht der *Augustae Severina* und *Magna Urbica* nach; vgl. Faust 312.
- 18 So datiert Faust 182 (= [HD079138](#)) die Grabstele aufgrund der Frisuren in die konstantinische Zeit; auch eine Stele aus Wasselonne ([HD055399](#), dazu DARDAINÉ/WATON 1991) könnte aufgrund der Darstellungsweise in diese Zeit gehören; aus der Nähe von Wasselonne, aus Marlenheim, stammt eine ähnliche Stele, von der die Inschrift jedoch verloren ist (Espérandieu VII,1, 5640; Faust 177; Datierung ebenfalls über die Frisuren); und auch aus Oberhaslach ist eine weitere Stele bekannt (Espérandieu XIV, 8514; Faust 193); letztere scheint jedoch auch ursprünglich keine eingehauene Inschrift besessen zu haben.
- 19 Kaiseraugst: [CIL XIII 5309](#) = ILCV 3128A = [HD079516](#); [CIL XIII 5308](#) = ILCV 3930 = [HD080027](#); Leistadt: [HD078379](#) (vgl. Kraus 19). Hierbei handelt es sich wohl um eine horizontal angebrachte Grabplatte. Nach Kraus war die Oberfläche des Inschriftenträgers von einem „rautenförmigen Netz erhabener Linien“ überzogen. Dies könnte ein Hinweis darauf sein, dass die Platte aus einem Block eines größeren Grabmals der früheren Zeit gefertigt wurde. In den Nordwestprovinzen zeigen einige, besonderes größere, Grabbauten ein solches Rautennetzmuster (e. g. [CIL XIII 5499](#) = [HD081334](#); Willer 89, 116, 120).
- 20 Dazu für die germanischen Provinzen SPICKERMANN 2015; vgl. GHETTA 2008, 78–153 zum an das Untersuchungsgebiet angrenzende Umland von Trier und DERKS 1998, 238 f., welcher einen allgemeinen Rückgang der Votivinschriftpraxis bereits im ersten Drittel des 3. Jhs. n. Chr. sieht.

Im November 325 n. Chr. stiftete Materninius Faustinus, in dem wir wohl den Besitzer der nahe gelegenen *villa rustica* sehen dürfen, ein Kultrelief und drei Altäre.²¹ Die Qualität des Reliefs ist sehr dürftig und korrespondiert mit der sehr unregelmäßigen und ungleichmäßigen Ausführung der Inschriften.²² Hierin dürfte sich ein genereller Niedergang des Stellenwertes von Monumentalinschriften als Medium religiöser Kommunikation widerspiegeln. Dieser Niedergang in Quantität und Qualität der Inschriftenmonumente erstreckt sich jedoch nicht nur auf andere Inschriftenkategorien,²³ sondern auch auf benachbarte geographische Regionen. Ein ähnlicher Mangel an spätantiken Grabinschriften ist genauso charakteristisch für *Raetia* und *Sequania*,²⁴ sowie für die nördlichen Teile der *Germania Secunda*, wobei letzteres Gebiet ohnehin nie einen ausgeprägten ‚epitaphic habit‘ entwickelt zu haben scheint. Ein Prozess des Verschwindens von beschrifteten Grabmarkern prägte darüber hinaus auch die sichtbaren Begräbnislandschaften außerhalb der Städte in unserer Region in der Spätantike. Im Gegensatz zu den rechtsrheinischen Städten, deren Stadtmauern im frühen 3. Jh. n. Chr. weitgehend ohne die Verwendung von Spolien erbaut worden waren, nutzten die linksrheinischen Städte in großer Zahl Grabmonumente aus den vor den Toren liegenden Nekropolen.²⁵ Folglich war ein großer Teil der Grabmonumente, welche außerhalb der Stadt aufgestellt waren, für die Passanten nun nicht mehr direkt zu sehen.²⁶ Die großen Befestigungsbaumaßnahmen des 4. Jhs. n. Chr. führten somit zu einer radikalen Änderung der Funerärlandschaften außerhalb der größeren Städte, womit ein beträchtlicher Teil der Grabdenkmäler des 2. und 3. Jhs. n. Chr. nicht mehr sichtbar war. Wie wir am Beispiel von Mainz noch sehen werden, scheint dieser Prozess zwar nicht allumfassend gewesen zu sein, dennoch wirft dies die Frage auf, wie wir uns den oberirdischen Anblick der Nekropolen der spätantiken *Germania Prima* vorzustellen haben. Inschriften und die sie tragenden Denkmäler waren somit nicht mehr ein notwendiger Teil des Begräbnisrituals, und auch nicht der fortgesetzten *memoria* und anderer ritueller Performanzen am Grab, wie neben den zahlreichen

21 VERMASEREN 1960, Nr. 1313–1322; Inschriften: [HD075148](#), [HD075150](#), [HD075151](#), [HD075152](#); vgl. BERNHARD 2015, 268–270.

22 Zum Relief GHETTA 2008, 122; CLAUSS 2012, 32f.

23 Auch die Meilensteininschriften verschwinden in dieser Zeit aus unserem Gebiet, das späteste uns bekannte Exemplar ist eine Leugensäule des Licinianus Licinius (317–324) aus Hagenbach (CIL XVII/2, 608 = [HD075723](#)); vom Mittelrhein, in Boppard, ist noch eine des Valentinianus und des Valens bekannt (CIL XVII/2, 565 = [HD079835](#)).

24 Vgl. SCHMITZ 2001, 267f.

25 Dies ist gut dokumentiert für die Mauern von *Tres Tabernae*/Saverne (GOUBET et al. 2015, bes. 12–16 mit zahlreichen Beispielen für Spolien im Katalog) und *Mogontiacum*/Mainz (HEISING 2008), sowie zu einem geringeren Grad für die *civitas*-Hauptorte *Argentorate*/Straßburg (BAUDOUX et al. 2002, 241–273) und *Noviomagus*/Speyer (HIMMELMANN/PRIEN 2018; BERNHARD 1989, mit 69f. zu Spolien); zu Stadtmauern in der Spätantike jetzt INTAGLIATA et al. 2020.

26 Abhängig von der Art der Anbringung, dazu unten.

nicht mit Inschriftenmonumenten markierten Bestattungen des 1.–3. Jhs. n. Chr. die anhaltende Verwendung anepigraphischer Sarkophage in der Spätantike zeigt. Gerade im Kontext von archäologisch noch recht gut belegbaren Begräbnispraktiken fällt es jedoch schwer, ein gänzlich unmarkiertes Grab als Fokus dieser Handlungen anzunehmen.²⁷

Wie ist nun die Abwesenheit von Grabinschriften aus dem epigraphischen Befund zu erklären? Die historischen Rahmenbedingungen liefern weniger Erklärungsansätze, als es zunächst scheint. Das Ausmaß der Zerstörungen und Verwüstungen als Resultat der Usurpation des Magnentius oder der germanischen Raubzüge im 3. und 4. Jh. n. Chr. scheint im Lichte der jüngeren Forschung kaum so umfassend gewesen zu sein, dass es das Verschwinden von Inschriften aus dem gesamten Gebiet erklären könnte. Das spätantike urbane Netzwerk in Gallien und im linksrheinischen Germanien ist vor allem durch seine Widerstandsfähigkeit trotz widriger äußerer Umstände charakterisiert. Zwar durchliefen die Städte und größeren Siedlungen, soweit wir sehen können, im 3. und 4. Jh. n. Chr. einen dynamischen Transformationsprozess, blieben jedoch bis in das 5. und 6. Jh. n. Chr. intakt.²⁸ Dies zeigt sich deutlich auch in Saverne, von dem Ammianus Marcellinus berichtet, dass es durch die Alemannen zerstört und 356 n. Chr. von Julian neu erbaut worden sei.²⁹ Das Stadtgebiet scheint auch nach dem Bau der Stadtmauer nicht geschrumpft zu sein, und eine jüngst ausgegrabene Nekropole zeigt eine Bestattungskontinuität vom 4. Jh. n. Chr. bis in karolingische Zeit.³⁰ Auch ökonomische Faktoren können hier keine umfassende Erklärung bieten. Die aus dem gesamten linksrheinischen Gebiet bekannten, sehr zahlreichen Bestattungen in anepigraphischen Sarkophagen mit teils reichen Grabbeigaben zeichnen ein ähnliches Bild einer Gesellschaft, welche noch über genügend Kapital für Geltungskonsum im Funerärkontext verfügte, auch wenn es, selbst in den einzelnen Städten, große Unterschiede in der Ausstattung der Gräber gab und ein Stadt-Land-Gefälle im Reichtum der Ausstattung zu beobachten ist.³¹ Das Bild bleibt heterogen, dies gilt jedoch auch für die Inschriften. Hier ist eine ähnliche Heterogenität der spätantiken epigraphischen Kultur auch für den gesamten Mittelmeerraum zu beobachten,³² und dies betrifft auch die Entwicklungstendenzen einzelner Städte. So lässt sich in Sarrebourg, einer Stadt, welche ansonsten in ihrer Größe und Lage im Verhältnis zu Verkehrsachsen und Bevölkerungszentren Saverne sehr ähnlich war, im 4. Jh. n. Chr. eine Reduktion des Stadtgebietes um etwa zwei Drittel beob-

27 Vgl. den Beitrag PRIEN in diesem Band.

28 KASPRZYK/MONTEIL 2017.

29 Amm. 16,11,11.

30 MEYER 2017, 218 f.

31 Vgl. den Beitrag PRIEN in diesem Band.

32 Vgl. die Beiträge ARBEITER, ARDELEANU, CUBAS DÍAZ und DESTEPHEN in diesem Band zu den unterschiedlichen epigraphic habits selbst innerhalb von Provinzen und Regionen; generell zum Phänomen bereits WITSCHERL 2017b, 35 f.

achten.³³ *Brocomagus*/Brumath erlebte anscheinend ebenfalls einen Niedergang, in dessen Zuge es auch den Status als Hauptort der *civitas Tribocorum* an Straßburg verlor, welches im späten 3. oder frühen 4. Jh. n. Chr. Vorort der nun in *civitas Argentoratensium* umbenannten Gebietskörperschaft wurde.³⁴ Die konkrete Entwicklung hing von einer Vielzahl komplexer Standortfaktoren wie regionalen ökonomischen Trends, der Nähe zu Handelsrouten und Kreuzungspunkten, der Entfernung zu den Provinzhauptstädten, der Politik der Statthalter etc. ab.³⁵ Diese heterogenen spätantiken Entwicklungen waren nicht ohne Konsequenzen für die Bestattungskultur der einzelnen Städte. Einige Siedlungen und Gemeinschaften verschwanden anscheinend gänzlich, und damit auch deren eigentümliche epigraphische habits. Dies betrifft etwa die kleinen Siedlungen der Vogesenhochflächen nördlich und südlich von Saverne, welche im 4. Jh. n. Chr. aufgegeben werden.³⁶ Aus diesen Siedlungen kennen wir eine verhältnismäßig große Anzahl von Grabmonumenten des 1.–3. Jhs., welche sich in ihrer Gestaltung stark von denen der östlich angrenzenden Gebiete unterscheiden, die ‚prisma-‘ oder ‚hausförmigen‘ Grabstelen, die sich im 4. Jh. ebenfalls nicht mehr nachweisen lassen.

Kontinuität in transformierter Form – zur Materialität der Grabinschriften im Umland von Mainz

Ein vielversprechender Ansatz zur Erklärung des Verschwindens ist die Untersuchung von nahegelegenen Regionen, welche dieses Phänomen nicht aufweisen. Aus diesem Grund habe ich das Untersuchungsgebiet für die Zeit ab dem 4. Jh. n. Chr. auf die Nordschweiz und das Gebiet um Mainz an der Grenze zum Mittelrheintal ausgeweitet. Hier ist eine stärkere Kontinuität in der Praxis des Aufstellens von Grabinschriften zu beobachten, und eine bis in die Karolingerzeit aktive funéraire-epigraphische Kultur. Die Gegend um Mainz ist im Verhältnis reich an epigraphischen Befunden aus dem 4. bis 8. Jh. n. Chr.: allein aus Mainz selbst sind bislang 59, allerdings zumeist nur fragmentarisch erhaltene, Grabinschriften bekannt.³⁷ In Städten wie *Bingium*/Bingen und *Aquae Mattiacorum*/Wiesbaden ist die Überlieferung lückenhafter. Wenn wir diese Gebiete mit einbeziehen, kennen wir insgesamt 98 spätantik-frühmittelalterliche Grabinschriften. Winfried Schmitz hat in einer Serie von Beiträgen ein lebhaftes Bild des *epigraphic habit* dieser Zeit im Gebiet am

33 MEYER 2017. Die Stadt lag gegenüber von Saverne auf der anderen Seite der Vogesen.

34 FLOTTÉ et al. 2016 berichten im Zuge von neuen Ausgrabungen über – allerdings kaum sicher zu interpretierende – dynamische Veränderungen in der bislang nur schlecht bekannten urbanen Struktur von *Brocomagus* im 4. und 5. Jh. n. Chr., vermutlich im Zusammenhang mit dem Bau der Stadtmauer im 4. Jh. n. Chr.

35 KASPRZYK/MONTEIL 2017, 43.

36 Zu diesen allgemein MEYER/NÜSSLEIN 2014.

37 FIM; KESSEL 2018.

Mittelrhein und an der Mosel gezeichnet, wo sich deutliche Anzeichen einer Siedlungs- und Sprachkontinuität mit einer Kontinuität in der funérairepigraphischen Praxis verbinden.³⁸ Während die späten Inschriften aus Worms erst im 6. Jh. n. Chr. wieder einsetzen und sich so eine deutliche Lücke auftut, sind in Mainz auch für das 4. und das frühe 5. Jh. n. Chr. einige Inschriften belegt.³⁹

Ein Aspekt, welcher bislang in den Untersuchungen zu spätantik-frühmittelalterlichen Inschriften in dieser Region wenig Beachtung gefunden hat, ist die Materialität der Inschriftenträger und die daraus ableitbaren Implikationen für deren Kontext und damit die mögliche Wahrnehmung.⁴⁰ Während der Spätantike ändern sich nicht nur linguistische und formale Aspekte der Inschriften, sondern auch die Gestaltung der Buchstaben und die Gestalt der Inschriftenträger. Diese sind fast durchweg kleiner dimensioniert als in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten. In der Mehrzahl handelt es sich um grob rechteckige Tafeln oder Platten, die in den meisten Fällen unter 10 und selten mehr als 15 cm tief sind.⁴¹ Dies weist auf die nun gänzlich gewandelte Art der Anbringung und damit auch der Betrachtungsmöglichkeiten der Epitaphe hin, denn frei stehend, etwa am Kopfende des Grabes, können bei der geringen Tiefe nur die wenigsten Monumente gedacht werden. In den meisten Fällen dürften die Platten horizontal über den Begräbnisstätten angebracht gewesen sein, worauf auch die meist eher hochrechteckige Form der Ansichtseite hinweist. Für eine mögliche vertikale Anbringung gibt es bei den meisten Exemplaren keine sicheren Anhaltspunkte. Die Platten konnten auf Laufniveau oder auf einem darüber herausragenden Grabmarker angebracht sein.⁴² Bei den Beispielen aus unserem Untersuchungsgebiet überschreiten Breite bzw.

38 SCHMITZ 2001; SCHMITZ 2004; SCHMITZ 2015. Im Verlauf seiner Studien konnte er ein starkes Stadt-Land-Gefälle sowohl im erkennbaren Grad der Christianisierung als auch in der Verbreitung von Grabinschriften feststellen.

39 Außer dem o. g. Epitaph des *optio* noch z. B. [CIL XIII 7314 = HDo80603](#); [CIL XIII 11921 = HDo78105](#). Dennoch ist die Zahl für das 4. Jh. n. Chr. deutlich geringer als im 3. und auch im 5. Jh. n. Chr. Der Frage, ob sich diese scheinbare Lücke zum Teil auch auf unsere Datierungskriterien zurückführen lässt, die sich oft auf wenige, fest datierte Inschriften aus anderen Gebieten als Eckpfeiler stützen, soll an anderer Stelle nachgegangen werden.

40 Überlegungen dazu finden sich allerdings etwa bei NIKITSCH 2004.

41 Ausnahmen bilden etwa mit 29 cm Tiefe ein Epitaph aus Mainz ([CIL XIII 11920 = HDo78075](#)) sowie zwei aus Bingen mit einer Tiefe von 23 ([CIL XIII 11963 = ILCV 1589 = HDo78706](#)) bzw. 30 cm ([HDo79260](#)).

42 Vgl. MERTEN 2018, 91–94, Nr. 30 zu der *in situ* aufgefundenen, in einem Sockel eingelassenen und auf einer Marmorplatte eingravierten Grabinschrift für Urbicia ([AE 2007, 999 = HDo77378](#)); ähnlich MERTEN 2018, 71f., Nr. 17 = [HDo78760](#), bei der die Inschriftenplatte nachträglich in einer Vertiefung im Estrich auf der Abdeckung eines gemauerten Grabes mit Mörtel befestigt wurde; zur Aufstellung auch RISTOW 2007, 271. Zu den Inschriften aus Trier und ihrer Anbringung vgl. den Beitrag MERTEN in diesem Band. Adolf NEYSES zeigt in seinen Rekonstruktionen zum Coemeterialbau von St. Maximin in Trier auch die vertikale Anbringung an den Wänden des Gebäudes und damit ohne direkten räumlichen Zusammenhang mit dem Begräbnisplatz, NEYSES 1999.

Höhe selten 50 cm. In einigen Fällen besitzen die *tituli* einen nur grob gearbeiteten äußeren Rand, der auf eine sekundäre Verwendung älterer Monumente hinweist. In einigen anderen Fällen ist der Rand jedoch sorgfältig geglättet und zur Front hin angeschrägt. Nur die Frontseite weist Formen der Dekoration auf und ähnelt sich bei den meisten Platten. Oft zeigen diese ein gut proportioniertes, rechteckig konstruiertes Inschriftenfeld, mit dem Text häufig *inter lineas*, zusammen mit einer geringen Auswahl an zierenden Ornamenten, insbesondere dem Christogramm, dem Staurogramm, Palmzweigen, Tauben und Gefäßen. Die Buchstaben weichen, mit dem wachsenden Einfluss der vorkarolingischen Kapitalis seit dem späten 5. Jh. n. Chr., stark von der klassischen *capitalis quadrata* ab, weisen eine größere Variation in den Formen und der Freiheit des Ausdrucks auf.⁴³ Erst in der Zeit ab dem 6. Jh. n. Chr. treten verstärkt gliedernde und strukturierende Elemente, wie Zickzackbänder oder Kreuz- und Kreisornamente auf.⁴⁴ In einigen Fällen lässt sich ein klarer lokaler habit fassen. Dies ist etwa in Wiesbaden der Fall, wo die uns bekannten Inschriften einem einheitlichen Muster folgen: kleine, annähernd quadratische Platten, mit kurzen Inschriften, die alle in das 5. bzw. 6. Jh. n. Chr. datiert werden. Unter ihnen befindet sich ein Beispiel mit Stauro- oder Christogramm, zwei Fälle besitzen gegenständliche Tauben.⁴⁵

Da nahezu alle Epitaphe nicht *in situ* gefunden wurden, ist die Betrachtung der Materialität, und damit auch der Seiten und der Rückseiten, für die Erschließung des Kontextes umso notwendiger.⁴⁶ Die Grabplatte für Baudoaldus aus der jüngeren Kastellnekropole von Kaiseraugst, welche in das 6. Jh. n. Chr. datiert wird, weist auf dem Inschriftenfeld deutliche Spuren von Abnutzung auf. Diese lassen darauf schließen, dass die Platte horizontal über dem Grab angebracht und zumindest für einige Zeit ebenerdig gelegen war, so dass sie bis zu ihrer Wiederwendung als Seite eines Plattengrabes im 7. Jh. n. Chr. der Abnutzung durch Fußverkehr ausgesetzt war.⁴⁷ Die Platte wurde nahe einer in das 7. Jh. n. Chr. zurückgehenden Kirche wiederverwendet. Es ist wahrscheinlich, dass sie ursprünglich in einem Vorgängerbau oder in der Nähe an einem Ort mit Publikumsverkehr auf Fußbodenniveau angebracht war.⁴⁸ Hier wäre eine genauere Untersuchung der Nebenseiten in Hinblick auf eine mögliche Anbringung hilfreich. Bei den in der Sammlung des Mainzer

43 SALWAY 2015, 368f.; BOLLE/MACHADO/WITSCHERL 2017b, 20; WITSCHERL 2017b, 35; KESSEL 2018, 8.

44 Vgl. FIM, pp. 24–31, 34–39, 78f., 120–122; RISTOW 2007, 272f.

45 KESSEL 2018, Nr. 70–75 = [HDo60763](#), [HDo60797](#), [HDo60798](#), [HDo60799](#), [HDo60800](#), [HDo60802](#).

46 Die Epitaphe für Pauta ([CIL XIII 6258](#) = [HDo65138](#)) und Ludino ([CIL XIII 6257](#) = [ILCV 3594](#) = [HDo78464](#)) aus Worms, welche oft in Zusammenhang mit Grabinventaren des frühen 5. Jhs. n. Chr. gebracht werden, sind wohl eher zusammen mit den übrigen Wormser Inschriften in das spätere 5. Jh. n. Chr. zu datieren; vgl. GRÜNEWALD/KOCH 2009, 200.

47 [CIL XIII 5308](#) = [ILCV 3930](#) = [HDo80027](#).

48 Vgl. BOPPERT 2000, 116f.

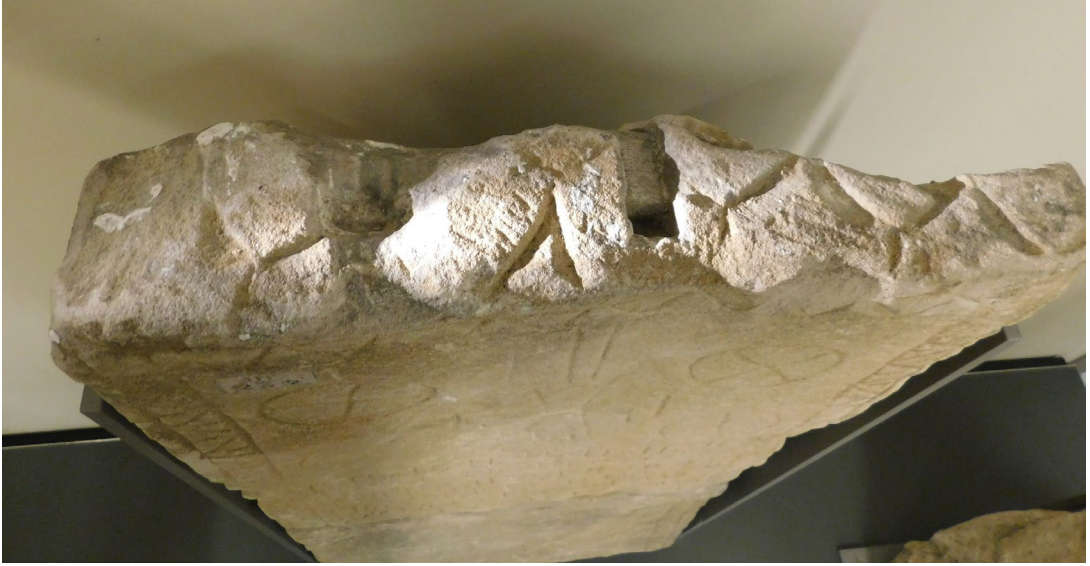


Abb. 3: Oberseite der Grabplatte für Bertisindis und Randoaldus, Mainz, 7. Jh. n. Chr.

Landesmuseums befindlichen Grabplatten aus Worms⁴⁹ lässt sich anhand der sorgfältigen, sich nach hinten verjüngenden Abarbeitung der Nebenseiten ebenfalls eine Einbettung im Estrich eines Fußbodens oder auf einem erhabenen caisson-Marker annehmen. Ein weiteres illustratives Beispiel für den Wert der Autopsie von Nebenseiten bildet die Grabplatte für eine Bertisindis aus Mainz, welche aus dem 7. Jh. n. Chr. stammt. Bei einer genaueren Untersuchung der im Mainzer Landesmuseum ausgestellten Stücke konnten auf der Oberseite Relieferungen festgestellt werden, die in früheren Publikationen nicht erwähnt wurden. Im Streiflicht lassen sich diese sehr deutlich als Schuppenmuster identifizieren, welches in den gallisch-germanischen Provinzen insbesondere als Verzierung der Dächer von Pfeilergrabmälern begegnet (Abb. 3).⁵⁰

Es ist wahrscheinlich, dass diese merowingerzeitliche Grabplatte aus dem Dach eines kaiserzeitlichen Pfeilermonuments, wie sie auch für Mainz belegt sind,⁵¹ gearbeitet wurde. Die Nekropole, in der die Grabplatte gefunden wurde, war vom 1. Jh. n. Chr. bis in fränkische Zeit in kontinuierlicher Benutzung. Daher stellten noch vorhandene römische Grabmonumente, oder deren Überreste, eine bequeme und leicht zugängliche Materialquelle dar. Dass antike Monumente in der Spätantike und im Frühmittelalter als Material für andere Zwecke genutzt wurden, ist an sich nicht überraschend, doch belegt diese Beobachtung den Wert genauerer Aut-

49 Bes. bei KESSEL 2018, Nr. 86–88 = [HD065138](#), [HD078464](#), [HD078465](#); auch an dem aus Mainz stammenden Epitaph des mit 9 Jahren verstorbenen Saturnus aus dem 5. Jh. n. Chr. (KESSEL 2018, Nr. 24 = [HD078106](#)) lässt sich dies gut erkennen.

50 [CIL XIII 7202](#) = ILCV 420 = [HD077994](#).

51 ANDRIKOPOULOU-STRACK 1986, 40–42, 179, Nr. N1; vgl. BOPPERT/ERTEL 2019, 22.

opsie aller Seiten auch schon länger bekannter Monumente, die wertvolle Informationen über den Kontext von Entstehung und Aufstellung liefern kann.⁵² Dies lässt sich auch am Epitaph des Aldvaluhus aus dem 7. oder 8. Jh. n. Chr., gefunden in Worms, exemplifizieren.⁵³ Die Oberfläche der Ansichtseite ist sauber geglättet, mit sorgfältig gearbeiteten Buchstaben und akkuraten, tief eingeschnittenen Rahmen- und Hilfslinien, denen dadurch über das Konstruktive hinausgehend dekorativer Charakter verliehen wird. Die Seiten sind im hinteren Teil nur grob abgearbeitet, das vordere Drittel ist jedoch wiederum säuberlich geglättet. Das Epitaph könnte, zum Teil hervorspringend, in einer Wand eingelassen gewesen sein,⁵⁴ eine Anbringung im Fußboden ist jedoch auch möglich.

Am Grabmonument⁵⁵ für den Abt Pertrammus aus dem Mainz des 7. oder frühen 8. Jhs. n. Chr. lassen sich noch weitere Beobachtungen anstellen: Hier sind alle Seiten des Monumentes grob geglättet, waren also möglicherweise zur Ansicht gedacht. Wegen der geringen Tiefe von 15 cm und dem geraden unteren Abschluss dürfte das Monument jedoch kaum freistehend aufgestellt gewesen sein, eher wäre also auch hier an eine horizontale Anbringung zu denken. Betrachtet man das Layout und die Verzierungen der Vorderseite, so zeigen sich deutliche Parallelen zum Aufbau und der Ornamentierung der aus Mainz zahlreich bekannten Legionärsgrabstelen aus dem 1. und 2. Jh. n. Chr.⁵⁶ Bemerkenswert sind auch Spuren einer bislang unbeachtet gebliebenen roten Ausmalung der äußeren Rahmenlinie, sowie Farbreste in einigen der Buchstaben. Das Inschriftenfeld nimmt den größten Teil der Vorderseite ein, während das obere Viertel von einem eingeschriebenen Dreiecksgiebel mit Rosette⁵⁷ im Giebelfeld gebildet wird, wobei Giebelschrägen und -zwickel mit floralen Ornamenten gefüllt sind (Abb. 4, 5).

Wenngleich die spätantike Ausführung des Reliefs qualitativ deutlich hinter den kaiserzeitlichen ‚Vorbildern‘ zurückbleibt und auch die Einzelmotive differieren, ist dies ein besonders augenfälliges Beispiel für die Bewahrung und Orientierung an seit Langem in Mainz etablierten Grabrepräsentationsformen. Ein weiteres Beispiel einer solchen Rezeption kaiserzeitlicher Formen findet sich in dem Epitaph

52 Zur Wiederverwendung von Teilen der Grabbauten aus der Gräberstraße von Mainz-Weisenau bereits in der Antike jetzt BOPPERT/ERTEL 2019, 22, 24, 112–114.

53 CIL XIII 6256 = ILCV 3417 = HD078459.

54 Hierauf deuten die Spuren einer Verklammerung an der Ober- und den Nebenseiten hin, doch könnten diese auch von der früheren Anbringung in einer Wand des Bergklosters in Worms (vgl. KESSEL 2018, 103) stammen.

55 ILCV 1648A = HD078092 (vgl. KESSEL 2018, Nr. 18). Aus paläographischen Gründen hat LICHT 2017c kürzlich eine etwas spätere Datierung in das frühe 8. Jh. n. Chr. oder später vorgeschlagen.

56 Z. B. CSIR II,5, 132, 135, 138, 142, 143, 145.

57 Rosetten als Zierelement finden sich in Mainz noch bei dem Epitaph der Munetrudis (ILCV 3569 = HD078001) und auf dem Fragment einer spätantiken Grabplatte (KESSEL 2018, Nr. 57 = HD078304) sowie in Bingen bei dem Epitaph des Aetherius (CIL XIII 11963 = ILCV 1589 = HD078706).



Abb. 4: Grabstele für M. Iulius Macrinus, Mainz, claudisch-neronisch.



Abb. 5: Epitaph für Pertrammus, Mainz, 7.–frühes 8. Jh. n. Chr.

für Munetrudis aus dem 6. Jh. n. Chr., welches erneut mit seinem Aufbau im Aediculatypp Vorbilder in Mainzer Stelen findet.⁵⁸ Bislang wurde dies – wie andere in der Merowingerzeit erscheinende Zierelemente – mit einem vagen ‚mediterranen‘ Einfluss oder sogar anhand von koptischen Vorbildern erklärt.⁵⁹ Es ist m. E. jedoch schwer vorzustellen, wie genau sich das Ausstrahlen koptischer Vorbilder nach Mainz dargestellt haben soll, und wiederum scheint der unmittelbare lokale Kontext eine deutlichere Inspiration für die in der Merowingerzeit nach neuen Formen und Dekorsprachen suchenden Mainzer Kunsthandwerker geboten zu haben.⁶⁰ Dass zumindest einige der antiken Monumente aus dem 1. oder 2. Jh. n. Chr. noch in mittelalterlicher Zeit in Mainz entweder in der Stadtmauer oder *in situ* sichtbar waren, in teils direkter Nachbarschaft der spätantik-frühmittelalterlichen Gräberfelder, beweist zunächst ihre bereits besprochene Wiederverwendung.⁶¹ Gleichzeitig wissen wir aus mittelalterlichen und frühneuzeitlichen Berichten, dass die Nekropolen und ihre Monumente noch teils bis in das 18. Jh. hinein sichtbar waren.⁶²

Einen Hinweis darauf, dass die späte Grabinschriftenkultur auch jenseits der Zentren von Schriftlichkeit und alphabetisierter Bevölkerungsschichten rezipiert und daran partizipiert wurde, geben einige wenige Beispiele von Pseudo-Inschriften auf Grabmonumenten (Abb. 6).⁶³ Die äußere Form entspricht jener der sinn-

58 Z. B. CSIR II,5, 60, 61.

59 Die Interpretation als ‚Kopie‘ koptischer Stelen findet sich explizit bei RADEMACHER 1939, 277 und geht zurück auf KÖRBER 1909, 26; vgl. FIM, p. 71. Einige Parallelen zu den äthiopischen Stelen sind in der Tat augenfällig, vgl. z. B. KÖRBER 1909, Taf. 3, 5; bis auf das Muschelmotiv als Bogenfüllung finden sich die von Franz Rademacher genannten Elemente jedoch auch bei den kaiserzeitlichen Aediculastelen (und dies nicht nur im Rheingebiet). Diese vermeintlich ‚koptischen Parallelen‘ lassen sich daher treffender durch übergreifendere mediterrane Kunsttraditionen erklären, vgl. FIM, p. 70 f.; KESSEL 2018, 40.

60 Deutliche Parallelen lassen sich in Mainz etwa in den Stelen CIL XIII 6884 = HD055941 (vgl. CSIR II,5, 61), CIL XIII 6951a = HD056176 (vgl. CSIR II,5, 90), CIL XIII 6971 = HD001201 (vgl. CSIR II,5, 67); CIL XIII 6910 = HD056136 (CSIR II,5, 85), oder HD004490 (vgl. CSIR II,5, 117) finden.

61 Ein weiteres Beispiel aus dem 13. Jh. n. Chr. findet sich in der Wiederverwendung einer römischen Grabstele (CIL XIII 7133 = HD077758), welche von den Bürgern von Eltville in palimpsestartiger Manier genutzt wurde, um ihre Beteiligung an der Erneuerung eines Teils der Mainzer Stadtmauer festzuhalten; hierzu mit weiteren Beispielen FORSTER 2014, 150–152.

62 So berichtet FUCHS in seiner Geschichte von Mainz über die Stadtmauer: „Diese Mauer ... ist von lauter, nach römischer Bauart gehauenen Stücken Quadersteinen gebauet, und an etlichen Orten sind Grabsteine, Legions- und Compagniesteine, ganze Särge ... eingemauert“, FUCHS 1771, 321. Eine Urkunde über die Besitzverhältnisse des Stephansstifts in Mainz von 1280 erwähnt Landstücke an der Zahlbacher Steige, also an der römischen Nekropole, „in Zalbach sitam et tria iugera agrorum ibidem sita in loco, qui dicitur ‚an der Steige‘, ubi lapides Romanorum sunt positi“, zit. nach CIL XIII/2, p. 303; vgl. CIL XIII/2, 1 p. 310 über die Berichte des Johannes Severus zu noch sichtbaren römischen Monumenten im 18. Jh; vgl. auch BOPP/ERTEL 2019, V.

63 Aus Mainz-Kastel: KÖRBER 1893, 296 f. Nr. 236; vgl. BAUER 1926, 13; LICHT 2017b, 7. Ein weiteres Monument dieser Kategorie begegnet uns möglicherweise in KÖRBER 1893,



Abb. 6: Epitaph mit Pseudoinchrift, Mainz-Kastel, 6.–8. Jh. n. Chr.

behaftete Inschriften tragenden Monumente, jedoch zeigen diese keine lesbare Inschrift, sondern Symbole, die Schriftzeichen nur nachahmen, ohne dass ihnen ein über das Ornamentale oder die Nachahmung einer Inschrift hinausgehender Sinn entnommen werden könnte.

Eine Erklärung für diese Kontinuität im Nordteil des hier untersuchten Gebietes könnte in der historischen Entwicklung kirchlicher Strukturen auf dem Gebiet der *Germania Prima* und der *Alemannia* liegen. Bisher fehlen Indizien für die Präsenz christlicher Gemeinden oder früher Kirchen entlang des Oberrheins bis in das 7. Jh. n. Chr. nämlich weitgehend.⁶⁴ Die archäologischen und historischen Quellen für

297 Nr. 237; vgl. Kraus 40d, ebenfalls aus Mainz, auf dem „Buchstaben oder buchstabenförmige Zeichen“ ohne erkennbares Ordnungsprinzip um eine krude Figurenzeichnung angeordnet sind. Ein weiteres Beispiel aus dem nördlich unseres Gebietes bei Bonn liegenden Zülpich bringt SCHMITZ 2015, 100f. Abb. 8. Möglicherweise lag bei einigen der Grabsteine mit Ritzlinienverzierung (etwa aus Andernach RISTOW 2007, Taf. 76b) auch eine Imitation von Schrift zugrunde. Aus dem im westlichen Teil der Provinz *Germania Superior* gelegenen Gebiet ist uns noch eine Pseudo-Inschrift aus *Divio/Dijon* bekannt: PROVOST et al. 2009, 238 fig. 296.

⁶⁴ Allgemein zum Rheingebiet RISTOW 2007; zusammenfassend 291–294; vgl. GRÜNEWALD 2012; RISTOW 2018; WIRBELAUER/KUHNLE 2019; zur frühen Verbreitung des Christen-

Kirchenbauten an den späteren Bischofssitzen von Worms, Speyer, Straßburg und Kaiseraugst sind problematisch, denn ein klares Bild lässt sich aus dieser Zeit über die Präsenz christlicher Gemeinden kaum gewinnen.⁶⁵ In jedem Fall scheinen die Bischöfe dieser Zeit keine prägenden Figuren gewesen zu sein, auch kennen wir keine Märtyrerkulte aus dieser Gegend.⁶⁶ In Mainz hingegen ist eine Kirche als Bischofssitz im 6. Jh. n. Chr. zumindest literarisch verbürgt.⁶⁷ Das Fortbestehen einer modifizierten funerepigraphischen Kultur nur im Nordteil des Untersuchungsgebietes dürfte so einerseits aus der geographischen Nähe zu den Zentren epigraphischer Produktion wie Köln, Bonn, Trier und dem Rheintal zwischen Andernach und Boppard,⁶⁸ andererseits aus der möglichen frühen Existenz eines Bischofssitzes und kirchlicher Infrastruktur in Mainz zu erklären sein. Die frühen Mainzer Epitaphe weisen auf entsprechende Bestattungsgebäude hin, in denen – oder in deren Umfeld – sie angebracht waren und die sich möglicherweise noch nachweisen lassen. Eine genauere Untersuchung der Nebenseiten in Hinblick auf die ursprüngliche Anbringung könnte Rückschlüsse auf deren Form zulassen.⁶⁹ Das weitgehende Fehlen von spätantik-frühchristlichen Grabinschriften im südlichen Teil des Untersuchungsraumes muss im Kontext der Abwesenheit eben solcher Strukturen gesehen werden.

Die Präsenz christlicher Gemeinden mit einem als Vorbild wirkenden Bischof, kann einen wichtigen Katalysator in der Entwicklung einer genuin spätantiken fu-

tums in der *Germania Superior* SPICKERMANN 2003, 502–519 (mit etwas optimistischerer Frühdatierung der Kirchenbauten).

- 65 Wohl etwas zu kritisch RISTOW 2017, 334–338, dort auch mit weiterer Lit. Zur Kritik an der Bischofsliste der Kölner Synode 346 n. Chr., die unsere einzige historische Quelle für spätantike Bischöfe in diesen Städten darstellt, DURST 2008; vgl. DASSMANN 2005, 6f.; RISTOW 2018. Optimistischer in Bezug auf die Existenz von Bischöfen am Oberrhein im 4. und 5. Jh. n. Chr. sind WIRBELAUER/KUHNLE 2019, 84–86. Zu Worms, wo sich vor dem Beginn des 7. Jhs. n. Chr. kein Kirchenbau nachweisen lässt, zuletzt GRÜNEWALD/KOCH 2009, 92. Zu einem möglichen spätantiken Baptisterium unter der Kathedrale von Straßburg KUHNLE/RISTOW 2018, 840; WIRBELAUER/KUHNLE 2019, 85f. Zu weiteren archäologischen Quellen für das Christentum im Rheinland vgl. RISTOW 2007. Bemerkenswert ist auch, dass wir bis zur Gründung der Abtei von Wissembourg im frühen 7. Jh. n. Chr. keine Klöster im alemannischen Gebiet kennen.
- 66 Agathias von Myrina deutet eine geringe Verbreitung des Christentums unter den Alemannen an: Agath. hist. 1,7; wohl mit dem Rückgriff auf frühere Quellen: GOTTLIEB 1969; vgl. WITSCHERL 2017a, 139.
- 67 Hier steht der Nachweis eines noch aus spätantiker Zeit stammenden Vorgängerbaus zum Mainzer Dom unter der Johanniskirche bislang aus. Aus der lobenden Erwähnung der Bautätigkeit des Mainzer Bischofs Sidonius bei Venantius Fortunatus (Ven. For. carm. 2,11–12; 9,11) lässt sich jedoch vermutlich die Existenz eines Bischofs und eines Kirchenbaus im späten 6. Jh. n. Chr. ableiten.
- 68 Dazu SCHMITZ 2001; SCHMITZ 2015; RISTOW 2007.
- 69 Gleiches gilt natürlich für die Exemplare aus Worms. Die drei im Mainzer Landesmuseum ausgestellten Exemplare weisen weitgehend sorgfältig nach schräg hinten abgearbeitete Kanten auf, was auf eine Einlassung im Fußboden oder einem darüber hinausragenden Grab hinweisen könnte.

nerärepigraphischen Kultur dargestellt haben. Kirchen und die zugehörigen Nekropolen als neue Mittelpunkte öffentlichen Lebens in der Spätantike boten differenzierte Möglichkeiten der Statusrepräsentation über die Betonung kirchlicher Würden oder die Lokalisierung der Begräbnisorte relativ zu den Achsen der liturgischen Bewegung oder den Gräbern der Märtyrer.⁷⁰ Eben solche Strukturen scheinen im Oberrheingebiet im 4.–6. Jh. n. Chr. nicht zu existieren, und somit fehlen eben jene Räume und Kontexte weitgehend, welche den veränderten Modi der funerärepigraphischen Praxis genug Spielraum boten, sich im Verlauf des 4. und frühen 5. Jhs. n. Chr. in einer besonderen Dichte wieder zu entfalten.⁷¹

Fazit

Zusammenfassend lässt sich festhalten, dass die ‚funerary landscape‘ entlang des Oberrheins in der Spätantike aus epigraphischer Perspektive besonders von einem generellen Verschwinden der Grabinschriftenmonumente gekennzeichnet ist. Diese fehlen nicht nur in unserem epigraphischen Befund, sondern wurden auch von ihren Aufstellungsorten außerhalb der Städte entfernt, wo sie in den Befestigungsanlagen des 4. Jhs. n. Chr. und in frühmittelalterlichen Grabmonumenten eine neue Verwendung fanden. Eine Form von Kontinuität gab es in signifikanter Form nur in den nördlichen Gebieten um Mainz, das Sitz der spätantiken Verwaltung und eines Bischofs und über den Rhein und die Mosel eng mit den anderen, epigraphisch aktiven Zentren im Nordwesten, insbesondere der Kaiser- und Bischofsresidenz von Trier, verbunden war. Diese Kontinuität erstreckte sich jedoch nur auf die Praxis des Herstellens von mit Inschriften in lateinischer Sprache versehenen Monumenten. Formular, Inhalt, äußere Form und Aufstellungskontexte veränderten sich im Verlauf des 4. Jhs. n. Chr. deutlich. Die Inschriftenträger waren nicht mehr frei aufgestellt, sondern meist horizontal in bauliche Zusammenhänge eingebettet, sie wurden kleiner und veränderten ihr Formular. Gleichwohl scheinen einige Dekorelemente bewusst von früheren Grabstelen übernommen worden zu sein. Mit den letzten Ausläufern im frühen 8. Jh. n. Chr. endete allerdings auch hier die noch in älterer Tradition stehende funerärepigraphische Kultur. Grabinschriften sind für die in größerer Zahl erst wieder ab dem 11. Jh. bekannt. Am südlichen Oberrhein fehlen spätantik-frühmittelalterliche Inschriften nahezu gänzlich, was vermutlich im Zusammenhang mit fehlenden kirchlichen Strukturen

70 Vgl. dazu den Beitrag ARDELEANU in diesem Band sowie grundlegend zu Entwicklung, Strukturierung und (liturgischen) Nutzung von Kirchenräumen in der Spätantike: BRANDENBURG 2005; YASIN 2009.

71 Für Worms könnte die Nähe zu Mainz ausschlaggebend dafür gewesen sein, dass auch hier spätantik-frühchristliche Grabinschriften aufgestellt wurden; zu den möglichen Verbindungen zwischen Mainz und Worms in der Merowingerzeit GRÜNEWALD/KOCH 2009, 90.

und kollektiv genutzten Sepulkralbauten steht. An ausgesuchten Beispielen konnte darüber hinaus deutlich gemacht werden, dass oftmals noch zu leistende, weitergehende Untersuchungen der Materialität der Inschriftenträger, die wichtige Informationen über antike Aufstellungskontexte und damit Wahrnehmungsarten der Grabmonumente und -räume liefern können, nötig und vielversprechend sind. Insbesondere die erhaltenen Grabplatten aus Mainz und Worms könnten hier bei genauer Untersuchung Rückschlüsse auf ihre antike Anbringung und damit die Entstehungsbedingungen des spätantiken ‚epitaphic habit‘ in dieser Region ermöglichen.

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Abbildungsnachweise

- Abb. 1** Jonas Osnabrügge.
- Abb. 2** Musées de la Ville de Strasbourg, Foto: M. Bertola.
- Abb. 3** Landesmuseum Mainz, Inv.-Nr. S 3006, Foto: J. Osnabrügge.
- Abb. 4** Landesmuseum Mainz, Inv.-Nr. S 7, Foto: <https://edh-www.adw.uni-heidelberg.de/edh/foto/Fo15154> (© Alte Geschichte Osnabrück).
- Abb. 5** Landesmuseum Mainz, Inv.-Nr. S 3022, Foto: <https://edh-www.adw.uni-heidelberg.de/edh/foto/Fo16182> (© Alte Geschichte Osnabrück).
- Abb. 6** Landesmuseum Mainz, Inv.-Nr. S 3140, Foto: C. Feist.

HILTRUD MERTEN

Christliche Bestattungskultur in Spätantike und Frühmittelalter am Beispiel von St. Maximin in Trier

Einführung

Die herausragende Bedeutung der Stadt Trier in der Spätantike lässt sich treffend anhand ihrer doppelten Funktion als Kaiserresidenz und Bischofssitz beschreiben. Doch bereits im Zeitraum vom frühen 1. bis zum Ende des 3. Jhs. n. Chr. erlebten Trier und das Trevererland eine wirtschaftliche und politische Blütezeit. Trier konkurrierte mit Reims um den Rang der Provinzhauptstadt der *Gallia Belgica* und hat Reims in der Funktion als Sitz des Provinzstatthalters möglicherweise sogar abgelöst. Mit einiger Sicherheit lässt sich hingegen sagen, dass Trier der Sitz des Finanzprokurators der *Gallia Belgica* sowie der beiden Germanien gewesen ist.¹ Die annähernd 200 Jahre währende Zeit des Friedens und des Wohlstandes wird durch zahlreiche repräsentative öffentliche Großbauten in der Stadt, die in diesen Jahrhunderten entstanden, anschaulich illustriert.²

Der Friede und die blühende Wirtschaft endeten nach der Mitte des 3. Jhs. n. Chr. in den Wirren des so genannten Gallischen Sonderreichs.³ Hinzu kamen in den Jahren 274/275 n. Chr. Raubzüge von Germanen, die immer häufiger die Rheingrenze überrannten. Eine Beruhigung und Konsolidierung der Lage brachte erst die tiefgreifende Neuordnung des Römischen Reiches unter Kaiser Diokletian und der ersten Tetrarchie, die zwischen 284 und 305 n. Chr. das politische Geschehen bestimmte.⁴ Im Jahre 286 n. Chr. wurde Trier zur kaiserlichen Residenz erhoben. Der Ausbau der Stadt zu einer Metropole spiegelt die neugewonnene Würde als ‚Weltstadt‘ wieder.⁵ Trier war nun politisch gesehen die bedeutendste Stadt im Westen des Römischen Reiches außerhalb Italiens. Es war die Zentrale, von welcher aus ein Gebiet regiert und verwaltet wurde, das sich von Schottland bis nach Nordafrika erstreckte.⁶

Neben der überragenden Bedeutung, die die Stadt in politischer und verwaltungstechnischer Hinsicht hatte, trat in der Spätantike außerdem ihre wichtige

1 HEINEN 1985, 95–107.

2 HUPE 2014, 97–108.

3 HEINEN 1985, 90–95.

4 HEINEN 1985, 211–221.

5 HEINEN 1985, 219–223; HUPE 2014, 108–110.

6 HEINEN 1996, 36–39; WITSCHERL 2004/05, 224–236, 270 f.

Rolle als Zentrum des frühen Christentums im gallisch-germanischen Raum. Das Christentum erreichte Trier vielleicht schon am Ende des 2., sicher aber im Laufe des 3. Jhs. n. Chr. Der Trierer Bischofssitz ist der älteste nördlich der Alpen; er wurde vermutlich im letzten Drittel des 3. Jhs. n. Chr. eingerichtet. Der erste Amtsinhaber war Bischof Eucharius, gefolgt von den Bischöfen Valerius und Maternus.⁷ Die nicht unterbrochene Liste der Bischöfe verzeichnet in dieser frühen Zeit als Nachfolger der drei Gründerbischöfe die Namen der bedeutenden Amtsträger Agriculus, Maximinus und Paulinus. Diese Kirchenmänner förderten nicht nur den christlichen Glauben und seine Ausbreitung, sondern sie beeinflussten auch richtungweisend den Gang politischer Entscheidungen.⁸ Unter solchen Vorzeichen kommt der Erforschung der frühchristlichen Epoche Triers aus historischer und archäologischer Sicht ganz besondere Bedeutung zu.⁹

Die wohl wichtigste Quellengruppe, die uns einen unmittelbaren Einblick in das Leben und Sterben im spätantiken Trier gibt, ist fraglos die der frühchristlichen Grabinschriften. Die Anzahl der Trierer Inschriften ist heute mit mindestens 1300 Einzelstücken zu beziffern – eine bemerkenswert hohe Anzahl wie der Vergleich zeigt: Mehr als 42 000 frühchristliche Inschriften kennen wir aus der Stadt Rom, aus Karthago mehr als 4 000.¹⁰ Dem gegenüber sind aus dem Rheingebiet zwischen Köln und Mainz sowie an der Untermosel nur insgesamt etwa 230 frühchristliche Inschriften überliefert.¹¹ Unter diesen 1300 Inschriften aus Trier finden sich auch die etwa 300 Inschriften und deren Fragmente, die bei den umfangreichen archäologischen Untersuchungen der Jahre 1978–1990/95 in St. Maximin unter der Leitung von Adolf Neyses aufgefunden werden konnten. Ein von der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft finanziertes Projekt mit dem Titel „Frühchristliche Grabinschriften der Stadt Trier als Quellen der Sozialgeschichte und Demographie am Übergang von der Spätantike zum frühen Mittelalter“¹² ermöglichte die Erarbeitung des Katalogs und der Auswertung der Maximiner Neufunde im Kontext aller christlichen Trierer Inschriften aus dem Zeitraum vom 4. bis zum 8. Jh. n. Chr.¹³ Diese Quellengruppe bietet also eine solide Basis zur Untersuchung verschiedener Fragen, so nach der Sozialstruktur der Christengemeinde, nach dem Aufbau der kirchlichen Organisation und der Entwicklung von Kirche und Gesellschaft nach dem Untergang des Römischen Reiches.

7 Grundlegend: ANTON 2015.

8 BINSFELD 2003, 28–64; FUCHS 2012, 2, 11–15.

9 HEINEN 1996; BINSFELD 2003, 19–43; FUCHS 2012, 2, 8–38; zur Forschungsgeschichte der christlichen Archäologie in Trier: MERTEN 2011, 15–26.

10 Vgl. den Beitrag ARDELEANU in diesem Band.

11 NIKITSCH 2018.

12 Das Projekt war an der Universität Trier im Fach Alte Geschichte angesiedelt; Projektleiter waren Prof. Dr. Lukas Clemens und Prof. Dr. Christoph Schäfer.

13 MERTEN 2018; Publikation einer internationalen Konferenz zum Thema des Projektes: CLEMENS/MERTEN/SCHÄFER 2015.

Überblick über die frühchristlichen Grabinschriften in Trier – Materialität, Formeln, Dekor, sozialer Status

Die frühchristlichen Grabinschriften aus Trier sind in aller Regel auf Marmorplatten angebracht; häufig werden als Inschriftenträger Fragmente hochwertiger Marmortafeln in Zweitverwendung genutzt, die wohl von der Innenausstattung der Trierer Großbauten stammen dürften. Nur selten finden sich die Grabinschriften auf anderem Material als Marmor wie Kalkstein oder Kohlenkalk. Das Formular der Grabinschriften erweist sich als sehr gleichförmig: Seine wesentlichen Elemente sind die einleitende Ruheformel, der Name des Verstorbenen, die oft detaillierte Altersangabe, der Name der Stifter und abschließend die Stiftungsformel. Im Trierer Material fehlen jahrgenaue Datumsangaben. Der Todestag wird oft, der Tag des Begräbnisses jedoch selten genannt.¹⁴



Abb. 1: Trier, St. Maximin: Grabinschrift für Valerius Leo (Rheinisches Landesmuseum Trier, Inv. 2000,2 Nr. 643).

Ungewöhnliche Wendungen deuten auf nach Trier zugewanderte Personen hin. In der Grabinschrift für den Knaben Valerius Leo (Abb. 1) ist die Formulierung *levis aesto terra* zu lesen.¹⁵

- 14 Als Beispiel ist die Grabinschrift der Rusticula anzuführen: [CIL 13, 3882](#): *Titulum Rusticula ante qu/artum idus Ianuarias decessit / depositionem habuit pridem idus Ia/nuarias annus habu/it XXII in tertium* (Inschrift für Rusticula; sie starb am vierten Tag vor den Iden des Januar [10. Januar]; sie wurde am Tag vor den Iden des Januar [12. Januar] beigesetzt; sie war zwischen 22 und 23 Jahren alt); vgl. [RICG I 153](#), pp. 394–397 mit weiteren Parallelen; TEEGEN 2006, 52f.
- 15 [MERTEN 2018, 95–97 Kat. 31](#): *V(alerio) Leoni<i> insonti levis / aesto terra precamur / qui vixit annis (V)I* (Dem unschuldigen Valerius Leo sei die Erde leicht, bitten wir. Er lebte sechs Jahre).

Diese Formulierung oder eine ihrer Varianten ist in Trier nicht belegt; zu vermuten ist daher, dass die Familie des verstorbenen Kindes wohl ursprünglich von der Iberischen Halbinsel oder aus Nordafrika kam, wo die Formel gängig war. In Trier wurde sie wohl in Erinnerung an die alte Heimat verwendet.

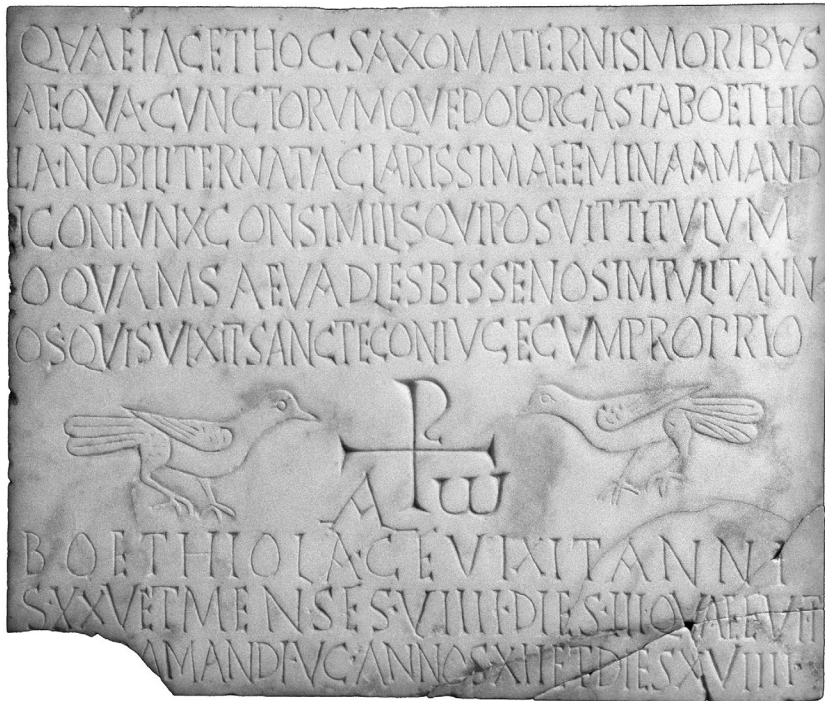


Abb. 2: Trier, St. Maximin: Grabinschrift für Boethiola (Museum am Dom Trier, Inv. Max Fundnr. 323).

Die Texte der Inschriften sind in Prosa formuliert, Inschriften in Gedichtform sind selten. Die Buchstabenformen sind überwiegend sorgfältig und gekonnt gestaltet, was bedeutet, dass die Inschriften in Steinmetzwerkstätten hergestellt worden sein dürften.¹⁶ Als Beispiel für vollendete Verse und hervorragende Handwerkskunst ist die Grabinschrift für die *clarissima femina* Boethiola zu nennen (Abb. 2).¹⁷

16 RICG I, pp. 27–36 § 14–36.

17 [AE 2007, 992](#); MERTEN 2018, 45–49 Kat. 5: *Quae iacet hoc saxo maternis moribus / aequa cunctorumque dolor casta Boethio/la nobiliter nata clarissima femina Amand/i coniunx consimilis qui posuit titulum / o quam saeva dies bisseños imptulit ann/os qui(bu)s vixit sancte coniuge cum proprio. Boethiola c(larissima) f(emina) vixit anni/s XXV et menses VIII dies III quae fuit / [uxo]r Amandi v(iri) c(larissimi) annos XII et dies XVIII* (Die, welche unter diesem Stein, gleich in mütterlichen Sitten und zum Schmerz aller liegt, ist die reine Boethiola, hochgeboren, eine Frau von senatorischem Stand, ebenbürtige Ehe-

Ein weiteres Element der Inschriften sind die Ornamente. Das in Trier verwendete Repertoire ist begrenzt; es umfasst im Wesentlichen das Christogramm in seinen beiden Formen (Chi-Rho und Staurogramm). Vor allem die Verwendung des Christogramms, des einzigen im Fundus der Ornamente genuin christlichen Zeichens, ist ein deutlicher Hinweis darauf, dass der Verstorbene Christ war. Weitere beliebte und häufig gewählte Ornamente sind Tauben sowie die apokalyptischen Buchstaben Alpha und Omega. Hingegen sind Motive wie Bäume, Lämmer oder die Darstellung von Oranten selten.¹⁸ Diese Motive mögen wie manche Formular-elemente von den nach Trier zugewanderten Familien mitgebracht und auf dem Grabstein eines in Trier verstorbenen Angehörigen verwendet worden sein.

Die in den spätantiken Grabinschriften genannten Namen der Verstorbenen und der Angehörigen sind bekannt, allseits beliebt und entsprechend weit verbreitet. Es handelt sich in der Regel um lateinische oder latinisierte griechische Namen; keltische Namen sind praktisch aus dem Repertoire verschwunden. Die Anzahl germanischer Namen, die in Gallien rasch beliebt wurden, ist in Trier erstaunlich niedrig. Ebenso ist der Einfluss des Christentums auf die Auswahl der Personennamen gering.¹⁹ Die in der Spätantike übliche Einnamigkeit wird bis auf wenige Ausnahmen beachtet.²⁰

Über den sozialen Kontext der Verstorbenen geben die Inschriften nur bedingt Auskunft. Die spätantiken Trierer Grabinschriften verzeichnen nur vier Personen, die als Mitglieder des Hochadels entsprechende Prädikate führen.²¹ Die Familie des Verstorbenen wird als Stifter der Grabinschrift genannt, weil das Begräbnis nicht nur nach christlichem Verständnis zumindest in organisatorischer Hinsicht eine Pflicht der Angehörigen war. Weniger begüterte Familien traten in *collegia funeraticia* (Begräbnisvereine) ein, um durch monatliche Beiträge die Summen zur Vorbereitung und Durchführung eines Begräbnisses anzusparen. Die Aufgabe der Bestattung und des Totengedenkens ging später dann auf Organisationen innerhalb der Christengemeinde über.²² Berufe jeder Art werden in den Grabinschriften praktisch nie genannt, da sie für das Seelenheil des Verstorbenen keine Rolle spielten. Im 4. Jh. n. Chr. weisen jedoch Familien, die am kaiserlichen Hof oder im hö-

frau des Amandus, der den Stein setzte. Oh, welch schrecklicher Tag, der 12 Jahre hinwegnahm, in welchen sie heiligmäßig mit dem eigenen Ehemann lebte. Boethiola, eine Frau von senatorischem Stand, lebte 25 Jahre und neun Monate, drei Tage. Sie war die Ehefrau des Amandus, eines Mannes von senatorischem Stand, 12 Jahre und 19 Tage).

18 GOSE 1958, 128f.; RICG I, pp. 50–56 § 43; MERTEN 2018, 20.

19 GOSE 1958, 122f.; RICG I, pp. 79–93; MERTEN 2018, 23f.

20 GOSE 1958, 123; RICG I, p. 81 § 101; MERTEN 2018, 23f.

21 *Clarissima femina*: CIL 13, 3675; RICG I 192, pp. 472–475; MERTEN 2018, 151f. Kat. 77: *clarissima femina, vir clarissimus*: AE 2007, 992; MERTEN 2018, 45–49 Kat. 5; pagane Grabinschrift aus dem Zeitraum der Jahre 293–310 n. Chr.: *vir perfectissimus*: AE 1996, 1095; MERTEN 2018, 282–284 Kat. A 287; je ein *vir venerabilis* wird genannt in: RICG I 29 A, 147, pp. 166–168, 381–383; MERTEN 2018, Kat. 26.

22 KOLLWITZ 1954, 208f.; VOLP 2002, 81–85.

heren Militärdienst tätig waren, auf ihre Stellung hin.²³ Mit fortschreitender Christianisierung werden seit dem 5. Jh. n. Chr. zur Kennzeichnung des sozialen Status kirchliche Würden wie *subdiaconus*, *diaconus*, *presbiter* genannt.²⁴ Die Kirchenhierarchie ersetzte die in dieser Zeit allmählich verschwindende römische Verwaltungshierarchie.²⁵

Eine wichtige Frage ist die nach der Herkunft der Trierer Inschriften.²⁶ Im Süden und Norden vor der Stadt lagen die großen paganen und christlichen Gräberfelder; hier wurden die meisten der 1300 christlichen Grabinschriften gefunden (Abb. 3). Abgesehen von den Epitaphien ohne genauere Fundortangabe stammen weitere Grabinschriften des frühen Mittelalters aus kleinen Begräbnisarealen, die sich um die innerhalb der Stadt eingerichteten Kirchen gruppierten.

Spätantike Nekropolen, Bestattungstypen und Bestattungsformen in Trier

Die frühchristlichen Gräberfelder Triers entwickelten sich seit dem beginnenden 4. Jh. n. Chr. an den Rändern der im Süden und Norden vor der Stadtmauer an den Fernstraßen nach Metz und Mainz liegenden großen Brandgräberfeldern, auf welchen die Trierer Bevölkerung seit augusteischer Zeit bestattete. Im Süden entwickelte sich um die Gräber der ersten Trierer Bischöfe Eucharius und Valerius ein christlicher Friedhof, der heute durch das Gelände der Abtei St. Matthias markiert wird. Im Norden entstand am Ostrand der paganen Nekropole ebenfalls ein weiterer christlicher Bestattungsplatz im Bereich der späteren Abtei St. Maximin. Mit dem Wechsel der Bischofsbestattungen vom Süden in den Norden wuchs die Bedeutung dieses Bestattungsplatzes erheblich. Wie die Grabausstattung und die Grabinschriften aus dem Bereich von St. Maximin deutlich erkennen lassen, setzte hier eine sozial herausragende Gesellschaftsschicht, die im Umfeld des Kaiserhofes zu verorten ist, ihre Verstorbenen bei.

23 RICG I, p. 39: Hofämter: *palatinus*; *a veste sacra*; militärische Ränge: *protector domesticus*; *tribunus*.

24 RICG I, p. 39.

25 BINSFELD 2003, 64–74.

26 GOSE 1958, 128 sortiert die Grabinschriften nach ihrer Herkunft vom südlichen und nördlichen Gräberfeld (400 bzw. etwa 300 Inschriften) sowie „aus unbestimmten Friedhöfen“ (etwa 120 Inschriften). MERTEN 2018, 18–20 berücksichtigt die in den letzten Jahrzehnten im Zuge der Untersuchungen in St. Maximin dort neu gefundenen frühchristlichen Grabinschriften: Ihre Anzahl vom nördlichen Gräberfeld liegt inzwischen bei mehr als 600 Exemplaren. Bei weitem nicht alle Inschriften wurden bei planmäßigen und dokumentierten archäologischen Untersuchungen aufgefunden. Oft handelt es sich um Zufallsfunde, die z. B. beim Ausheben eines Grabes auf einen bis heute genutzten Friedhof zutage kommen.

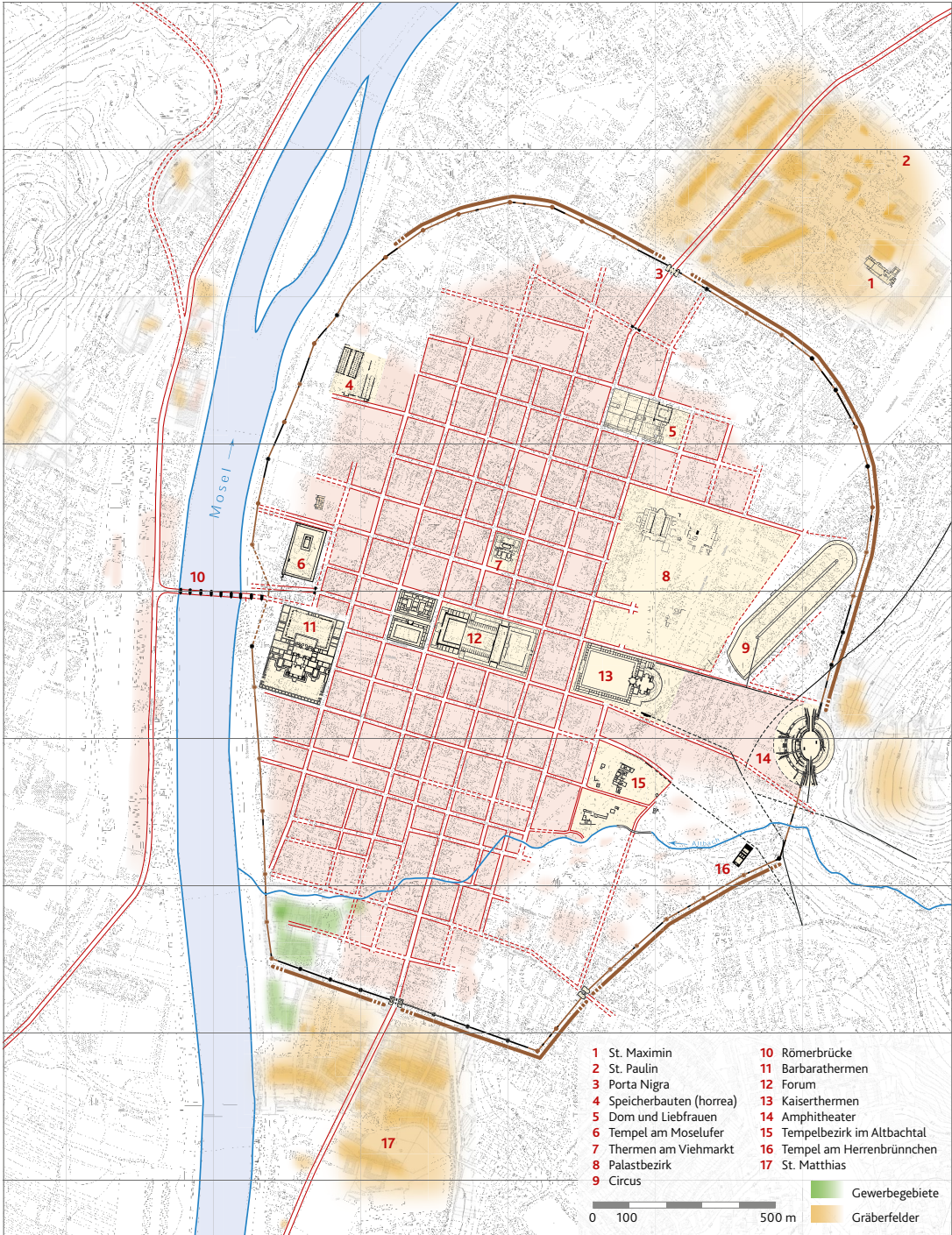


Abb. 3: Trier: Karte der römischen Stadt im 4. Jh. n. Chr.

Die Bestattungsform der Spätantike und des Frühmittelalters ist mit sehr wenigen Ausnahmen die Körperbestattung in einem Steinsarkophag. Die meisten Trierer Sarkophage sind unverziert; als Beispiele für die Verwendung von christlichen Motiven als Dekor sind zwei Reliefsarkophage zu nennen.²⁷ Meist wurden die Sarkophage in die Erde eingelassen; Grabbauten in Gestalt kleiner Kapellen mit darunterliegenden Grüften sind indes sowohl auf dem nördlichen²⁸ wie auf dem südlichen Gräberfeld²⁹ nachzuweisen. Außergewöhnlich ist die spätantike Begräbnishalle unter St. Maximin, die annähernd 1000 Sarkophagen Platz geboten hat.

Grabinschriften finden sich in aller Regel nicht mehr im Zusammenhang mit der Bestattung, für welche sie ursprünglich gedacht waren. Durch ihr charakteristisches Formular und vor allem durch die Verwendung typischer Ornamentik sind die überwiegend auf Marmorplatten gravierten Inschriften als christlich zu erkennen. Ihre Anbringung kann, da sie zumeist nicht mehr *in situ* angetroffen wurden, nur erschlossen werden: So waren sie in Sarkophagdeckel eingelassen oder lagen in einem Rahmen unmittelbar über dem Sarkophag.³⁰ Durch deutliche Spuren von Belaufung ist gesichert, dass Inschriften im Boden innerhalb oder außerhalb eines Gebäudes verlegt waren.

Auch das sorgfältige Herrichten des Verstorbenen zur Bestattung zählt zu den Bestattungsriten der Spätantike und des Frühmittelalters. Trotz des vielfach schlechten Erhaltungszustandes der menschlichen Skelette gelingt es mit Hilfe des Einsatzes verschiedener naturwissenschaftlicher Disziplinen, auch aus geringen Spuren wichtige Anhaltspunkte zur Auswertung der Beobachtungen zu gewinnen. Die in den letzten Jahren bereits durchgeführten Analysen auf dem Feld der Anthropologie und Paläopathologie haben bemerkenswerte Ergebnisse erzielt;³¹ sie geben Auskunft über Geschlecht, Alter, Erkrankungen, Ernährung und Herkunft der in St. Maximin beigesetzten Personen.

Bei der Auswertung der Grabinventare sind wichtige Beobachtungen zur Ausstattung der Verstorbenen und zu den Riten einer Beisetzung zu machen. Hierzu trägt in ganz erheblichem Maße die Textilarchäologie bei.³² Ihr gelingt anhand kleinster textiler Partikel unter anderem der Nachweis der Herkunft bestimmter Stoffarten, wodurch wichtige Erkenntnisse zur antiken und frühmittelalterlichen Handelsgeschichte und Textiltechnik gewonnen werden können.

Technologische Fragen ergeben sich bei der Untersuchung weiterer Bestandteile der Grabinventare. Hier stehen vor allem die in frühmittelalterlichen Grä-

27 Noah-Sarkophag: HEINEN 1996, 63 Abb. 14 (mit weiterführender Literatur); Agricius-Sarkophag: HEINEN 1996, 138–141 Abb. 26.

28 CÜPPERS 1984, 238f. Kat. 125: Grabbau südlich von St. Maximin.

29 SIEDOW 2020.

30 St. Matthias: GOSE 1958, 2 Kat. 2; St. Maximin: Grabinschrift für Exsuperius: MERTEN 2018, 57f. Kat. 10.

31 REIFARTH et al. 2006, 63f.; zusammenfassend: REIFARTH 2013, 43f.

32 REIFARTH 2013.

bern nachzuweisenden Schmuckstücke im Zentrum des Interesses. Die Analyse des verwendeten Metalls wie auch der verarbeiteten Edelsteine in Hinsicht auf ihre Herkunft sowie die Suche nach Verarbeitungs- und Reparaturspuren leisten einen wichtigen Beitrag zur Kenntnis antiker Techniken der Metallverarbeitung. Der Nachweis der Herkunft verschiedener Schmucksteine liefert wie die Untersuchung der Seidenstoffe Hinweise auf das weit gespannte Netz antiker Fernhandelsbeziehungen.

Der Beitrag der Numismatik zu unserer Kenntnis der Bestattungsriten sollte nicht übersehen werden: Hier sei nochmals die Situation in St. Maximin herangezogen: Die Gesamtzahl von knapp 1 300 Münzen, die dort bei den jüngsten Grabungen gefunden wurden, sind nur zum Teil publiziert; sie bedürfen daher einer nochmaligen Betrachtung und Bewertung.³³ Vorarbeiten zeigen, dass neben der statistischen Aufbereitung der Münzreihe beispielsweise wirtschaftsgeschichtliche Fragen untersucht werden können. Zugleich sind wichtige Hinweise auf die exaktere Datierung der verschiedenen Bauphasen der Coemeterialbasilika zu erwarten. Außerdem wird die Deutung von Münzbeigaben im christlichen Grabzusammenhang Hinweise auf lebendige Traditionen und die Denkweise der spätantiken Trierer Eliten erbringen.

Die Coemeterialbasilika unter St. Maximin

In Trier lässt sich frühchristliche Begräbniskultur am Beispiel einer eindrucksvollen Begräbnishalle veranschaulichen, die im 4. Jh. n. Chr. auf dem seit dem 1. nachchristlichen Jahrhundert belegten nördlichen Gräberfeld im Bereich der späteren Abtei St. Maximin entstand (Abb. 4). Die Größe und die kostbare Ausstattung des Bauwerks sprechen für die Protektion der städtischen Christengemeinde durch den in Trier residierenden Kaiserhof.³⁴

Annähernd 1 000 Sarkophage in Verbindung mit qualitätvollen Inschriften und einer Ausstattung der Toten mit kostbaren Gewändern belegen für die Spätantike die soziale Verortung der Bestatteten in den obersten Gesellschaftsschichten.³⁵ Besonders attraktiv waren Bestattungen *ad sanctos*: Gemeint sind Begräbnisstätten in der Nähe der Gräber von Märtyrern und Heiligen. Große Verehrung genoss offenbar schon sehr früh der fünfte Trierer Bischof, Maximinus (335/36–347 n. Chr.), denn die Erweiterung der Coemeterialbasilika hängt wohl vor allem mit der Verehrung seines Grabes zusammen. Um den frühesten bislang bekannt gewordenen Beleg für die Verehrung des Bischofs Maximinus handelt es sich bei einer Inschrift

33 Die Untersuchung der Münzen aus St. Maximin soll in einem Dissertationsprojekt an der Universität Trier durch Marvin Seferi vorgenommen werden.

34 NEYSES 2001.

35 REIFARTH 2013, 131–138, 177–430 (Katalog der 21 untersuchten Gräber).



Abb. 4: Trier, St. Maximin: Grundriss der antiken und mittelalterlichen Bauten.

aus dem 5. Jh. n. Chr., in welcher die verstorbene Urania dem Schutz und der Fürsprache des Maximinus anvertraut wird (Abb. 5).³⁶



Abb. 5: Trier, St. Maximin: Grabinschrift für Urania (Museum am Dom Trier, Inv. Max Fundnr. 598.1).

Verortung der Grabinschriften in St. Maximin

In Anbetracht der zahlreichen Grabinschriften, die im Verlauf der jüngsten archäologischen Untersuchungen in St. Maximin im Zeitraum von 1978 bis 1990 gefunden wurden, stellt sich die Frage nach der Verortung der Epitaphe im Raum.³⁷ Vor allem die eher kleinformatischen frühchristlichen Grabinschriften werden grundsätzlich selten *in situ* gefunden.³⁸ Der ursprüngliche Bezug einer Inschrift zu einem Grab ging mit Ausnahme der unten genannten Beispiele verloren, da die Gräber auch vielfach gestört sind. Das kostbare Material Marmor sowie die durch Christogramme als christlich zu erkennenden Ornamente machten die Inschriftplatten später zu rein dekorativen Elementen, die an Wänden oder in den Estrichen der in eine Kirche umgewandelten Begräbnishalle einen neuen Platz fanden.

36 MERTEN 2018, 88–90 Kat. 29; MERTEN 2021, 715–716: *Urania hic conmendata / spirito Maximini / in nomine / Dei* (Urania wurde hier der Seele des Maximinus anvertraut, im Namen Gottes).

37 NEYSES 2001; MERTEN 2018.

38 NEYSES 1999.

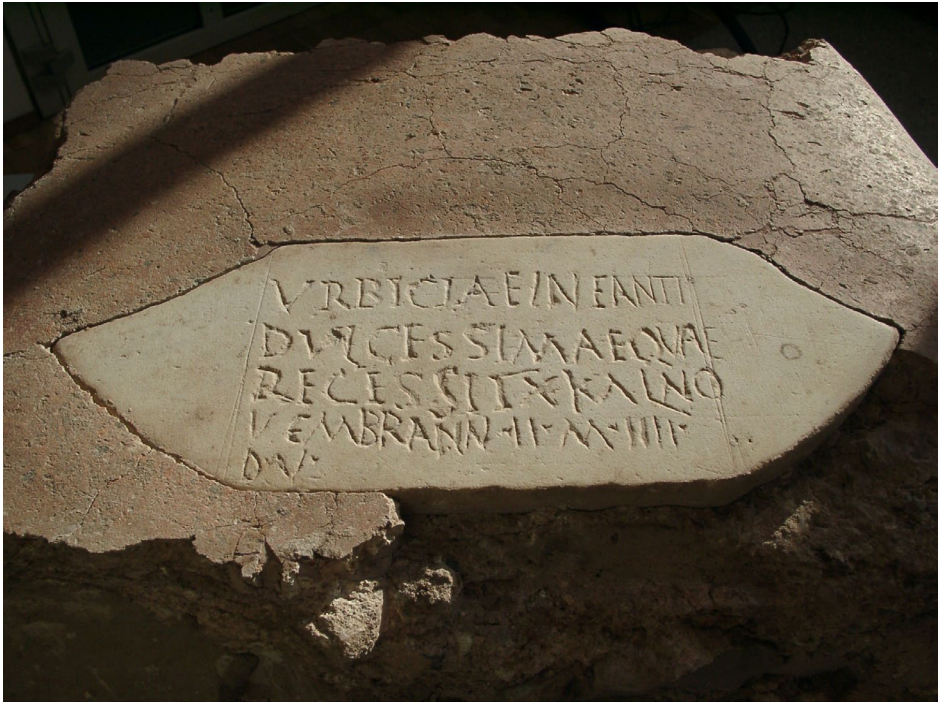


Abb. 6: Trier, St. Maximin: Grabinschrift für Urbicia (Museum am Dom Trier, Inv. Max Fundnr. 504).

Das seltene Beispiel einer Grabinschrift *in situ* stellt ein etwa 40 cm hoher Block aus St. Maximin dar, auf dessen Oberseite die Grabinschrift für das im Alter von etwa zwei Jahren verstorbene Kind Urbicia eingelassen ist (Abb. 6).³⁹

Die Sockel dienten zweifellos der oberirdischen Markierung von Gräbern, da sie erkennbar über das Laufniveau der angrenzenden Bereiche herausragten.⁴⁰ Sie wurden in dem spätantiken Bestattungsbau unter St. Maximin angelegt, wie sich aus der Datierung des Sockels mit der Urbicia-Inschrift in die 2. Hälfte des 4. bzw. in das 5. Jh. n. Chr. ergibt. Außer dem Block mit der Urbicia-Inschrift sind in St. Maximin Spuren von sechs weiteren, ähnlich gestalteten Sockeln nachzuweisen; sie sind jedoch weniger gut erhalten als der Urbicia-Sockel. Die Reste der gemauerten Blöcke weisen indes erkennbare Spuren eines bemalten Estrichüberzugs auf.⁴¹

39 [AE 2007, 999](#); MERTEN 2018, 91–94 Kat. 30: *Urbiciae infanti / dulcissimae quae / recessit X kal(endas) No/vemb(ris) ann(os) II m(enses) IIII / d(ies) V* (Urbicia, dem süßesten Kind, das am zehnten Tage vor den Kalenden des November (23. Oktober) starb; (sie lebte) zwei Jahre, vier Monate, fünf Tage).

40 Beispiele aus Nordafrika und von der Iberischen Halbinsel finden sich in den Beiträgen ARBEITER und ARDELEANU in diesem Band.

41 NEYSES 1999, 416f. (A [Urbicia]), 417f. (A 1), 419f. (B), 422–425 (C), 425–429 (D), 429 (D 1), 429–433 (D 2).

Es ist bekannt, dass die Einbindung der Gräber in rituelle Praktiken am Grab oder im Friedhofsareal üblich waren. So wurden bei der Beisetzung und an Gedenktagen Totenmähler oder Bankette durchgeführt. Solche Gedenkfeiern konnten als Gelage enden, weshalb insbesondere Kleriker diese Gedenkfeiern harsch kritisierten und zu unterbinden versuchten.⁴² Die immer wieder geäußerte Kritik wurde offenbar in den Gemeinden nicht angenommen, da es im Westen bis weit in das 6. Jh. n. Chr. hinein in Kirchenräumen Sockel und *mensae* nachzuweisen sind, die der Durchführung von Gedenkmählern gedient haben dürften.⁴³ Da die Nutzung der Sockel bislang noch nicht abschließend geklärt ist, stellt sich die Frage, ob diese in St. Maximin vielleicht als reduzierte Gestalt eines Tisches zu deuten sind, an dem symbolisch ein Totenmahl gehalten wurde?

Bestattungen in St. Maximin

Ein Blick in das Grabungsareal von St. Maximin zeigt zahlreiche Sandsteinsarkophage dicht gedrängt in mindestens zwei Ebenen. Eindrucksvoller ist die Beliebtheit dieses Ortes als Bestattungsplatz kaum zu illustrieren (Abb. 7).



Abb. 7: Trier, St. Maximin, nördliches Seitenschiff: Blick in die Grabungen von 1980. Im Vordergrund Grabinschrift für Boethiola, in späterer Verwendung verlegt in einem mittelalterlichen Estrich.

Bei diesem Befund stellt sich die Frage, welche Personengruppe in der Begräbnishalle ihre Toten beisetzen durfte. Die Antwort ist eindeutig: Es waren die wohlhabenden und gebildeten Familien aus dem Umfeld des Kaiserhofes, die hier ihre

42 SAXER 1980, 133–149; VOLP 2002, 214–224, 234–239; JENSEN 2008.

43 Vgl. die Beiträge ARBEITER, ARDELEANU und PRIEN in diesem Band.

letzte Ruhe fanden. Für St. Maximin belegen dies zum einen die Inschriften, des Weiteren aber auch archäologische und multidisziplinäre Beobachtungen zum Thema Totenfürsorge, Grabausstattung und Bestattungsriten,⁴⁴ die exemplarisch vor allem durch die Auswertung der Funde und Befunde in 21 untersuchten Sarkophagen erhoben werden konnten.⁴⁵

Einige Beispiele verdeutlichen die große Sorge der Angehörigen für den Körper des Verstorbenen: So wurde der Leichnam fest in Stoffbahnen gewickelt, die mit Harzen oder Ölen getränkt waren. Diese Substanzen dienten wohl nicht der Konservierung des Leichnams, sondern eher der Bindung von Gerüchen, mit denen der Zerfall des Körpers einhergeht.⁴⁶ In St. Maximin findet sich bei zahlreichen Bestattungen auf dem Boden des Sarkophags eine Lage von Hobelspänen, auf die der Verstorbene gebettet wurde. Diese bislang nur in Trier nachzuweisende Maßnahme diente zweifellos der Absorption von Flüssigkeiten, die bei dem Verwesungsprozess entstehen.⁴⁷ Ein ähnlicher Effekt sollte durch die Abdeckung des Körpers mit einer Gips- oder Kalkschicht erzielt werden.⁴⁸

Anders als bei paganen Bestattungen sind Grabbeigaben im Trierer spätantichristlichen Kontext prinzipiell nicht üblich.⁴⁹ Die Toten der gehobenen Gesellschaftsschicht wurden hingegen mit mehreren Schichten wertvoller Textilien bekleidet beigelegt. Die spektakulären Ergebnisse der Textilarchäologie weisen am Beispiel von St. Maximin nach, dass dort mehrere Verstorbene⁵⁰ als Untergewand eine Tunika aus feiner Wolle trugen, die überdies mit echtem Schneckenpurpur gefärbt war. Als Übergewand kleidete man die Toten in eine Tunika aus chinesischer Seide.⁵¹ Überdies sind immer wieder golddurchwirkte Gewebe nachzuweisen.⁵²

Es ist bemerkenswert, dass bei der wertvollen Textilausstattung, die in St. Maximin erhalten ist, keine alters- oder geschlechtsspezifischen Unterschiede bei der Versorgung und Ausstattung der Verstorbenen gemacht wurde.⁵³ Wie das Beispiel eines Kleinstkindes im Alter von 3–9 Monaten zeigt, wurden auch die sehr jung Verstorbenen wie Erwachsene für die Beisetzung in einem entsprechend der Kör-

44 Stand der Forschung: REIFARTH et al. (im Druck).

45 REIFARTH 2013.

46 REIFARTH 2013, 91–112, 125f., 135f.

47 REIFARTH 2013, 27–29, 136f.

48 REIFARTH 2013, 31–40, 128.

49 VOLP 2002, 198–202; vgl. die Beiträge ARBEITER, BIANCHI, NAUERTH und PRIEN in diesem Band; BIERBRAUER 2012 zeigt an Beispielen aus dem Alpenraum und Oberitalien, dass dort im 5.–7. Jh. n. Chr. bestimmte Beigaben (Messer und Kamm bei Männern, Schmuck bei Frauen) zur christlich-romanischen Bestattungskultur gehörten.

50 REIFARTH 2013, 185–202 (Grab 4), 203–212 (Grab 35), 345–362 (Grab 279).

51 Seidengewebe: REIFARTH 2013, 53–56 Tab. 3, 133f.; Gewebe aus feiner Wolle: REIFARTH 2013, 56f., 58f. Tab. 4, 133f.

52 Goldgewebe: REIFARTH 2013, 60–67, 62f. Tab. 5, 134f.

53 REIFARTH 2013, 133f.

pergröße gefertigten Sarkophag hergerichtet und gekleidet.⁵⁴ Die sorgfältige Präparation der Toten mit in Harzen und Ölen getränkten Grabtüchern dürfte auf eine festliche Aufbahrung vor der Beisetzung hindeuten.⁵⁵ Diese Beobachtungen vermitteln ansatzweise einen Eindruck vom Aufwand der spätantik-christlichen Bestattungsriten.⁵⁶

Untersuchungen an den in St. Maximin bestatteten Menschen wurden bereits mit den Möglichkeiten der Anthropologie und der Paläopathologie durchgeführt. Selbst bei schlechter Erhaltung der Skelette sind oft noch Untersuchungen möglich, die zumindest Hinweise auf das Sterbealter des Bestatteten erbringen. Dabei zeigt sich, dass Pathologie und Inschriften zu einem übereinstimmenden Ergebnis führen, nämlich dass die Sterblichkeit von kleinen Kindern und jungen Erwachsenen, vor allem von Frauen, höher war als in anderen Altersgruppen.⁵⁷

Bestattungen am Übergang von der Spätantike zum Mittelalter in St. Maximin

Bisher wurden Ergebnisse der Untersuchungen spätantiker Gräber präsentiert. Es erhebt sich die Frage, ob und wie sich der Übergang von der Antike zum Mittelalter in den Bestattungssitten fassen lässt. Das Christentum hatte an Akzeptanz, Einfluss und Macht gewonnen, als es sich am Ende des 4. Jhs. n. Chr. als Staatsreligion etablieren und damit die paganen Kulte allmählich in den Hintergrund drängen konnte. Die außerhalb der Städte auf den großen Gräberfeldern liegenden Heiligengräber und Grabbauten besaßen weiterhin größte Anziehungskraft. Auch nachdem die Grabbasiliken in Kirchenräume zur Feier von Gottesdiensten umgewandelt worden waren, blieben sie bevorzugte Bestattungsorte einer vermögenden Gesellschaftsschicht. Am Beispiel von St. Maximin lässt sich zeigen, dass es nun außer der christlich-romanischen Bevölkerung wohl auch die zum Christentum konvertierten fränkischen Eliten waren, die dort bestatteten. Sie gaben ihren Toten jedoch vielfach anstelle von kostbarer Bekleidung wertvollen Schmuck mit ins Grab.⁵⁸

54 REIFARTH 2013, 383–391 (Grab 303).

55 KOLLWITZ 1954, 209–212; REIFARTH 2013, 135 f.

56 BLÜMNER 1911, 482–511 zu paganen Bestattungsbräuchen in der Kaiserzeit; SAXER 1980, 115–117, 281–296, 311–314; TREFFORT 1996, 65–84 zu christlichen Bestattungsbräuchen in karolingischer Zeit.

57 TEEGEN 2006; REIFARTH et al. (im Druck).

58 Um die schwierige Definition der Begriffe Romanen, Germanen/Franken wird in der Forschung seit Jahren eine vehemente Auseinandersetzung im Feld der frühgeschichtlichen Archäologie geführt. Es ist im Zusammenhang dieses Beitrages nicht angebracht, in der Diskussion eine Stellung zu beziehen. Deshalb sei auf den aktuellen Überblick über die Diskussion verwiesen, der sich bei MEIER 2019, 92–99, findet; zur Bewertung des Problems aus archäologischer Sicht vgl. die instruktive Darstellung von STEIN 2004.

Als beeindruckendes Beispiel einer solchen Grabausstattung ist eine große Goldscheibenfibel (Dm. 6,1 cm) mit Filigrandekor sowie Bergkristall-, Granat- und Glaseinlagen zu nennen (Abb. 8).



Abb. 8: Trier, St. Maximin Grab 278: Goldscheibenfibel (Museum am Dom Trier, Inv. Max 200.1).

Die Fibel wurde in St. Maximin in Grab 278 im Sommer 1981⁵⁹ gefunden. Das Grab war für die Bestattung eines weniger als zwei Jahre alten Kindes angelegt worden.⁶⁰ Der Sarkophag für das Kind wurde aus einem reliefverzierten Kalksteinblock, der ursprünglich zu einem paganen Grabdenkmal gehört haben dürfte, umgearbeitet, indem man den Block aushöhlte.⁶¹ Auf den Wohlstand der Familie deutet nicht nur die Bestattung des Kindes im Kirchenraum in einem eigens gefertigten Steinsarkophag hin, sondern auch weitere Schmuckbeigaben. Außer der Scheibenfibel enthielt das Grab eine Riemengarnitur sowie einen großen quadratischen silbertauschierten Gürtelbeschlag. Die Schmuckstücke waren offenbar lange im Gebrauch, denn sie weisen deutliche Abnutzungspuren und wohl auch Reparaturen auf.⁶² Das verstorbene Kind wird diese Stücke mit Sicherheit nie getragen haben, da sie eindeutig zur Ausstattung einer erwachsenen Frau (Scheibenfibel) und eines Mannes (Gürtelbeschlag) gehören. Der Schmuck mag also dem Kind von den trauernden Eltern oder anderen Familienangehörigen als Zeichen der Verbundenheit mit ins Grab gegeben worden sein.

⁵⁹ Grab 278: NEYSES 2001, 68–70; CLEMENS et al. 2019, 71–75.

⁶⁰ Altersbestimmung: CLEMENS et al. 2019, 70, 73.

⁶¹ MERTEN 2018, 292f. Kat. A 298.

⁶² CLEMENS et al. 2019, 73–76.

Das allmähliche Vordringen germanischer Elemente in eine romanisch geprägte Tradition lässt sich auch anhand epigraphischer Zeugnisse veranschaulichen. Die sehr sorgfältig gearbeitete Grabinschrift für Ebraharius wurde in St. Maximin gefunden und ist an die Wende vom 7. zum 8. Jh. n. Chr. zu datieren (Abb. 9).⁶³



Abb. 9: Trier, St. Maximin: Grabinschrift für Ebraharius (Museum am Dom Trier, Inv. Max Fundnr. 370).

Die Inschrift wurde von der Mutter des Ebraharius, die den Namen Ebrechildis trug, gestiftet. Die Familie blieb ihren Wurzeln verbunden, da die beiden genannten Generationen germanische Namen (in romanischer Umformung) tragen.⁶⁴ Romanischen Einfluss verrät jedoch deutlich die Übernahme der Sitte des Setzens einer Grabinschrift. Das Formular ist dasjenige, das sich seit der Spätantike für die Trierer Inschriftenproduktion herausgebildet hatte und das bis weit in das

63 FUCHS 2006, 16f. Kat. 10; MERTEN 2018, 53f. Kat. 8: *Hic requiescit Ebra/harius qui vixit annus plus minus / XXXV Ebrechildis / mater sua cum doloris / et lacrimis plina VI k(a)l(en-das) / Iun(ia)s titulum posuit in pa/ce* (Hier ruht Ebraharius, der ungefähr 35 Jahre lebte. Ebrechildis, seine Mutter, hat mit Schmerzen und voller Tränen am sechsten Tag vor den Kalenden des Juni [27. Mai] den Grabstein gesetzt, in Frieden).

64 FUCHS 2006, 17.

8. Jh. n. Chr. hinein ohne nennenswerte Änderungen weiterbenutzt wurde.⁶⁵ Über den familiären Hintergrund des Verstorbenen gibt die Inschrift keine Auskunft, doch steht fest, dass Mutter und Sohn einflussreiche Mitglieder der Trierer Christengemeinde gewesen sein müssen. Zweifellos stand die Familie auch in engem Kontakt zu dem Benediktinerkonvent, der sich im Bereich der spätantiken Begräbnishalle mutmaßlich zwischen dem 6. und 8. Jh. n. Chr. eingerichtet hatte.⁶⁶ Nur so ist es zu erklären, dass Ebraharius in der Kirche beigesetzt werden konnte.

Um ein spätes Beispiel der Verbindung romanischer und germanischer Elemente handelt es sich bei dem Grabstein des Amulricus, der wahrscheinlich aus St. Maximin stammt.⁶⁷ Er ist an die Wende vom 8. zum 9. Jh. n. Chr. zu datieren (Abb. 10).



Abb. 10: Trier, St. Maximin (?): Grabinschrift für Amulricus (Rheinisches Landesmuseum Trier, Inv. Reg. 93).

Der Verstorbene trägt den germanischen Namen Amulricus, die Eingangsformel der Inschrift ist noch antik, die Buchstabenformen lassen das Bemühen um einen ‚klassischen‘ Duktus erkennen. Die Platte stammt vermutlich aus dem Bereich von St. Maximin; eine Herkunft des Epitaphs aus der Kirche ist nicht zu belegen.⁶⁸ Die Form des Grabsteins ist eindeutig fränkisch: Den oberen Abschluss des Steins bil-

65 MERTEN 2018, 21–23.

66 FUCHS 2012, 2, 51–55.

67 RIGG I, 1*, p. 593: *Hic [r]equies[ci]t / Amulricu[s] / levita et monachus obiit III / non(as) Marc(ias)* (Hier ruht Amulricus, Priester und Mönch. Er starb am 4. Tag vor den Nonen des März [4. März]); vgl. FUCHS 2006, 52f. Kat. 29, 53 Anm. 2 (zum Fundort).

68 FUCHS 2006, 52.

det ein flacher Giebel, der zwischen zwei runden Säulenstümpfen steht. Die untere Kante des Steins ist nur grob abgearbeitet; diese Partie war in den Boden eingegraben, sodass die Inschrift senkrecht auf dem Grab stand.

Fazit

Ausgehend von einem bereits sehr guten Forschungsstand wird es nicht zuletzt dank eines interdisziplinären Ansatzes gelingen, im Rahmen eines seit 2017 von der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft geförderten Projekts mit dem Titel „Frühchristliche Bestattungstraditionen in Spätantike und frühem Mittelalter. Fundmaterial aus Grabkontexten der Coemeterialbasilika unter St. Maximin vor Trier“⁶⁹ am Beispiel dieses prominenten Trierer Fundplatzes den Wandel von Bestattungssitten am Übergang von der Antike zum Mittelalter in zahlreichen Facetten nachzeichnen zu können.

Im Rahmen von archäologischen Untersuchungen in den Jahren 1978–1990/1995, die in und um die ehemalige Abteikirche von St. Maximin durchgeführt wurden, konnten grundlegende Beobachtungen zur Bauabfolge und damit zur Datierung des spätantiken Großbaus und seiner verschiedenen Phasen gemacht werden.⁷⁰ Außerdem sind mit der Auswertung der spätantiken und mittelalterlichen literarischen und urkundlichen Quellen und deren Gegenüberstellung mit archäologischen Beobachtungen wichtige Ergebnisse für die Baugeschichte von St. Maximin, vor allem für die Phase des romanischen Neubaus der Abteikirche in ottonischer Zeit, erzielt worden.⁷¹

Im Zusammenhang der Frage nach der Entwicklung der christlichen Bestattungskultur kommt der Untersuchung der etwa 300 epigraphischen Zeugnisse, die bei den Grabungen der letzten Jahrzehnte in St. Maximin zutage gefördert wurden, ein besonderer Stellenwert zu: Es zeigt sich an diesem Beispiel erneut, welchen bedeutenden Beitrag Inschriften zum Gesamtbild eines Fundplatzes beisteuern können. Von ihrem Aufbau her erscheinen die frühchristlichen Trierer Grabinschriften insgesamt sehr schematisch, ihr Inhalt wirkt durch die Verwendung eines Formulars neutral; überdies sind sie stark faktenorientiert.⁷² Dennoch liefern diese Texte wichtige Erkenntnisse unter anderem zur Demographie: Eine hohe Mortalitätsrate unter kleinen Kindern und jungen Frauen beispielsweise lässt sich anhand der Inschriften wie auch durch paläopathologische Untersuchungen erkennen. Eine Aussage zur Mentalität der frühen Christen ist die Tatsache, dass bisweilen im sehr einheitlichen Trierer Formular ungewöhnliche Wendungen erscheinen, die jedoch in

69 Das Projekt ist an der Universität Trier im Fach Mittelalterliche Geschichte angesiedelt; die Projektleitung liegt in den Händen von Prof. Dr. Lukas Clemens.

70 NEYSES 2001; WEBER 2006.

71 NEYSES 2001, 100–190.

72 MERTEN 2018, 27–30.

anderen Regionen des Reiches gebräuchlich waren. Diese Reminiszenz an die alte Heimat drückt die offensichtlich noch immer starke Bindung der nach Trier Zugewanderten an ihre Herkunftsregion aus. Schließlich sind Inschriften Indikatoren der sozialen Stellung einer Familie, denn nur Wohlhabende und Reiche konnten sich den Luxus eines in einer Werkstatt gefertigten Epitaphs leisten. Die frühchristlichen Grabinschriften bilden also auch in Trier überwiegend die gehobenen Gesellschaftsschichten ab.

Wie am Beispiel der antiken Begräbnishalle von St. Maximin in Trier gezeigt werden kann, lassen sich Fragen nach den sich ändernden christlichen Bestattungssitten an der Wende von der Spätantike zum frühen Mittelalter durch die Bündelung von Untersuchungsergebnissen verschiedenster Quellengruppen und Techniken beantworten. Zu den Grabinschriften, die in ihren überwiegend oft nüchternen Texten Einzel- oder Familienschicksale beschreiben, treten neben den Aussagen weiterer historischer Disziplinen (Numismatik, literarische und urkundliche Überlieferung) verschiedene naturwissenschaftliche Teilgebiete (Anthropologie, Restaurierungswissenschaft, Textilarchäologie, Paläopathologie) mit ihren beeindruckenden Ergebnissen hinzu. Es erweist sich, dass die in den letzten Jahren verstärkt genutzten Möglichkeiten einer kontextbezogenen, multidisziplinären Auswertung ganzer Grabkomplexe es möglich machen, Lebensbilder einzelner Mitglieder der frühen Trierer Christengemeinde mit einer Fülle von Details entwerfen zu können.

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MORGANE UBERTI

Les épitaphes en leur *milieu*

Remarques à partir du matériel épigraphique
de l'Aquitaine tardo-antique et alto-médiévale

Introduction : Que fait l'inscription ?

De la communication épigraphique aux pratiques de l'espace

En adoptant une approche fonctionnelle des pratiques de l'écrit, l'inscription se définirait en vertu de sa qualité informative et sa force de communication.¹ Ce parti pris fait écho à la notion d'écriture exposée telle que l'avait posée Armando Petrucci à partir des écritures urbaines de l'Italie médiévale et contemporaines puis adoptée par Angela Donati et Gian Carlo Susini pour les inscriptions antiques :² des écrits présentant des qualités suffisantes de lisibilités, visibilités et accessibilités pour la transmission d'un message adressé au plus grand nombre. La fonction communicative est également celle mise en avant par Robert Favreau dans sa définition des inscriptions médiévales à laquelle il articule la question de la temporalité du message donnant là toute son importance à la matérialité même de ces écrits.³ Monumentalité et matérialité comptaient également comme des éléments clés dans la mise en avant de la notion de perception, et partant de communication, telle que la défendait Gabriel Sanders dans son « arbitrage du musée épigraphique ». ⁴ Dire cela ne revient néanmoins pas à poser la publicité comme une valeur intrinsèque à l'objet épigraphique, ni fondamentalement intentionnelle, autrement dit comme sa seule finalité, même pour les écritures exposées.⁵ Par ailleurs, cette publicité du

1 Je remercie Isabelle Cartron pour ses suggestions de lecture sur l'actualité de l'archéologie funéraire en France; Vincent Debiais et Estelle Ingrand-Varenne pour leur vigilance et leurs remarques à l'heure des premières versions de ce texte.

2 PETRUCCI 1985; PETRUCCI 1993; DONATI/SUSINI 1986, la notion est régulièrement rediscutée à l'occasion d'événements scientifiques et de programmes de recherches collectifs réunissant des spécialistes d'horizons disciplinaires divers (DONATI 2016; FRAENKEL *et al.*, *Ecritures exposées, écritures dans l'espace : la fabrique des espaces publics*. Cycles de rencontres ayant eu lieu en 2021. Scripta-PSL, Paris pour le contenu de ces rencontres et des discussions engagées, en attendant la publication, lire les comptes-rendus en ligne proposés par V. Debiais: <https://devisu.hypotheses.org/1438> (consulté le 09/04/2021); <https://devisu.hypotheses.org/1242> (consulté le 9/12/2020).

3 FAVREAU 1989.

4 Titre éponyme de SANDERS 1984.

5 Sur ce point, on se reportera à article de Béatrice Fraenkel interrogeant l'écriture exposée au titre de sa visibilité, l'auteur défend que « La notion de visibilité a permis de

message inscrit n'est jamais que potentielle et relative, elle se nourrit d'un environnement, de la pratique de cet environnement et donc des modalités d'expériences de l'inscription. Toutes ces composantes établissent une situation de communication, le milieu ambiant comptant comme un élément déterminant non pas tant au titre d'un contexte situationnel augmenté⁶ à l'origine d'un « paysage épigraphique » mais plutôt au titre du dispositif.⁷ La communication épigraphique relève d'un système d'interconnexions qui s'appuie sur une mise en *présence* et en *lieu* de l'écriture – une *topographie* – et son agencement avec un environnement vécu : c'est finalement la ligne suivie par Mireille Corbier pour la cité antique ou encore V. Debiais dans son étude sur la communication médiévale.⁸ Dès lors, à l'échelle de la nécropole, la communication épigraphique serait le produit d'un tissu de relations complexes, liant l'épithaphe dans toutes ses dimensions (texte, graphie, monument) à la nécropole, à la sépulture et à ses spectateurs suivant des degrés de proximités variables.⁹ Au-delà d'une analyse des modalités de transmissions et de diffusion du message, la voie de la communication épigraphique permet deux choses : « contextualiser » pleinement l'inscription, soit revenir à l'étymologie même du terme – *contextus* : « assembler et relier pour former un tout » et lui reconnaître une capacité d'action dans et avec son environnement et dans les processus sociaux qui s'y

mettre en évidence d'autres fonctions de l'écriture exposée que celle évoquées par la notion de lisibilité : la fonction informative n'est plus centrale » conduisant ainsi à « poser un premier constat : l'exposition d'écrits n'implique pas nécessairement une offre de lecture. L'écriture exposée, même dans sa forme monumentale, n'est pas en soi l'indice d'une volonté d'information et de communication publique. » : FRAENKEL 1994, 104.

- 6 Pour les différents contextes à travers lesquels peut être abordé une inscription: IN-GRAND-VARENNE 2017, 77–79.
- 7 La notion de paysage épigraphique attribuée à G. C. Susini a permis d'ancrer le contexte topographique de l'inscription comme un élément déterminant pour la compréhension du message, au même titre que la graphie, le monument ou le texte : l'environnement constitue dès lors une composante essentielle du contexte épigraphique. La notion a connu une réelle postérité dans les études épigraphiques où elle est convoquée pour discuter des paysages aux échelles variables du site (cité, nécropole) à la province (RUIZ GUTIÉRREZ 2014). Elle est un élément particulièrement opérant dans les études portant sur la communication épigraphique dans la mesure où le lieu de l'inscription est pris comme un élément orientant les significations du message, sur le modèle de la théorie linguistique pragmatique (PEREIRA GARCÍA 2015). Mais d'une certaine manière, l'inscription y demeure passive, si le contexte agit sur elle, elle n'agirait pas sur son contexte. A cette première limite, fait écho celle d'une définition qui est d'abord relative à l'état reconnu a posteriori par le chercheur. Or l'espace désigné par paysage épigraphique est d'abord le résultat d'actes d'écritures sur un espace que ces actions ont transformé in fine en paysage épigraphique.
- 8 CORBIER 2006; DEBIAIS 2009.
- 9 Ces degrés de proximité reposent sur l'accessibilité, la lisibilité, et s'établissent donc de manière dynamique dans l'espace: ils orientent la communication épigraphique. Pour une approche proxémique des rapports entre l'inscription et son lecteur: DEBIAIS 2009, 76.

jouent au-delà même du moment de son installation. En d'autres termes, c'est bien une écologie de l'inscription qui est à l'œuvre. Aussi, le propos tenu ici ne questionnera pas véritablement le paysage funéraire dans l'*oecumene* tardo-antique, il se saisirait plutôt du mot même – *oecumene* – pour penser la nécropole sur le mode de l'écoumène, notion propre au géographe et philosophe Augustin Berque. Dans ce glissement orthographique et sémantique s'ouvre une autre approche du « milieu » funéraire : il serait d'abord une « relation mouvante, aux limites mobiles comme le sont les horizons, aux focalisations changeantes, en évolution constante mais connaissant de brusques variations d'équilibre ». ¹⁰ Les épitaphes y sont considérées en lien, en forces, en résultats puisque « dans l'écoumène, le lieu et la chose participe l'une de l'autre ». ¹¹

Dans la perspective des actes du colloque d'Heidelberg, contextualiser reviendrait alors à analyser les modalités d'interactions entre l'inscription et son *milieu* et comment ces dernières génèrent, transforment et sont transformées par l'espace qui est autant espace écrit qu'espace potentiel de lecture. Dans l'élan d'un *spatial turn* touchant les humanités au sens large, cette pragmatique de l'inscription a d'abord été affaire des anthropologues de l'écriture, ¹² elle occupe néanmoins depuis quelques temps les sciences historiques en témoigne l'ouvrage récent dirigé par Gareth Sears, Peter Keegan et Ray Laurence dédié aux espaces urbains antiques. ¹³ Plutôt que de considérer l'espace urbain antique comme un théâtre de circonstances (favorables ou non à la communication épigraphique), les différents auteurs de l'ouvrage se sont attachés à ses dynamiques et à la place de l'écriture dans leur établissement (mouvements, interactions entre acteurs) dépassant alors les travaux de M. Corbier pour voir dans ces interrelations engageant l'inscription un processus de production d'un espace spécifique : l'espace écrit (*written space*). ¹⁴ C'est une logique finalement proche qui commandait la notion de « *ordo* épigraphique », proposée par V. Debiais à propos du rôle structurant des inscriptions médiévales dans leur lieu, au premier rang desquels se compte le sanctuaire : l'inscription est « facteur d'ordre et de cohérence dans l'organisation des données sensibles » et de fait affecte la nature même de l'espace, qu'elle « influence » voire transforme. ¹⁵ La vision de l'écriture et l'expérience de l'espace qu'elle induit compte

10 BERQUE 2009, 141. A. Berque définit l'écoumène comme une relation entre la terre et les hommes. C'est en défendant la part géographique de l'être (« il manque une géographie à l'ontologie ») qu'il invite à une appréhension interrelationnelle dans la définition des espaces.

11 BERQUE 2009, 24.

12 Dans le paysage francophone, nous renvoyons aux travaux de B. Fraenkel (en particulier FRAENKEL 1994; FRAENKEL 2018), qui a plus souvent recours à l'expression « d'espace graphique ».

13 SEARS/KEEGAN/LAURENCE 2015.

14 LAURENCE/SEARS 2015.

15 DEBIAIS 2009, 361. Selon l'auteur « Le concept d'*ordo* doit être entendu avec l'intégralité de ces acceptions car, il désigne l'organisation, la structuration des objets dans un cadre

comme des éléments décisifs dans ces approches. Et c'est bien par le prisme d'une inscription plutôt vue que lue qu'Antony Eastmond en vient à discuter les relations entre écriture et paysage.¹⁶ Ainsi, de la statue Pasquino à l'obituaire lapidaire d'un cloître médiéval aragonais en passant par les inscriptions monumentales de la Perse Achéménide et les graffitis de Restif de la Bretonne dans l'île Saint-Louis à Paris, les questions demeurent les mêmes :¹⁷ comment les inscriptions agissent-elle *en* (soit : dans et sur) et avec un cadre spatio-temporel donné et comment la présence de l'écriture participe à la (re)définition d'un espace social ou encore à son *organisation* ?

La nécropole qui donne à voir des inscriptions peut être le terrain d'un tel questionnement qui mêle la question des pratiques spatiales¹⁸ à celle d'un artefact agissant, dans le temps, se situant d'une certaine manière à la croisée des principes qui animent le *spacial turn* et le *material turn*. Finalement, la problématique de l'article pourrait se résumer à la question suivante : que fait l'écriture épigraphique à et dans l'espace funéraire pris comme espace de pratiques ? Il ne s'agit donc plus de réfléchir à ce qui détermine le geste épigraphique, ni même à son efficacité communicative mais aux dynamiques impulsées par l'épithaphe dans la pratique du lieu, en tant qu'elle l'occupe physiquement. Que fait-elle au lieu, qu'est-ce que ce lieu-là, parce qu'il est habité, lui fait-elle ? Dans cette perspective, l'approche archéologique intervient comme un mode d'enquête approprié parce qu'elle permet de revenir sur les différentes phases d'évolution d'un espace et de ses composants.

Après une courte synthèse sur l'*epigraphic habit* dans l'Aquitaine tardo-antique et alto-médiévale afin de situer nos inscriptions funéraires dans leur contexte graphique, nous nous arrêterons sur les dynamiques spatiales à l'œuvre dans l'espace funéraire pris comme paysage et lieux d'expériences en se focalisant sur quelques cas aquitains. Si le tout échoue sans doute à révéler *une* épigraphie de l'Aquitaine, tout à fait artificielle au regard de la nature de nos sources, il pose la question des logiques qui transforment la perception d'un espace funéraire en celle d'un lieu inscrit ; les inscriptions de l'Aquitaine tardo-antique servant dès lors l'essai d'une modalité d'approche du matériel épigraphique en ses milieux.

préétabli, il renvoie également à la finalité de cette mise en ordre, l'inscription structurant l'espace autour de l'image du texte afin de lui accorder une fonction spécifique ».

16 EASTMOND 2015b, 3. Dans l'ouvrage, se reporter en particulier à l'article de CANEPA 2015 qui pose, entre autres, la question de l'impact des inscriptions dans l'expérience du paysage iranien, depuis le V^e s. avant notre ère au VII^e s. apr. J.-C.

17 Respectivement: NEWSOME 2015; CANEPA 2015; DEBIAIS et al. 2018; FRAENKEL 2018.

18 BOURIN/ZADORA-RIO 2007, 39: « L'expression de pratiques spatiales renvoie à des formes d'utilisation de l'espace liée à un mode de vie. Conçue comme l'action d'un sujet, elle résulte de choix plus ou moins conscients, qu'on peut considérer comme sociologiquement déterminés. En ce sens large, les pratiques de l'espace vont de l'organisation spatiale de l'habitat et des ressources à celle des parcours et des gestes quotidiens ». C'est bien la question des parcours et des gestes qui nous occupent ici.

Les inscriptions funéraires face à l'*epigraphic habit* de l'Aquitaine tardo-antique et alto-médiévale – remarques générales

Au regard des événements politiques qui la traversent – installation du pouvoir wisigothique au V^e s. apr. J.-C., incursions franques à l'aube du VI^e s. apr. J.-C., morcellement du territoire au cours du VII^e s. apr. J.-C. – et des figures qui y sont attachées – Ausone, Sidoine Apollinaire ou encore Venance Fortunat – l'Aquitaine s'est forgée l'image d'un espace à la fois théâtre d'un « choc des cultures »¹⁹ et profondément empreint de Romanité.²⁰ S'il n'est pas question ici de discuter plus avant les fondements d'une telle construction historiographique, sa portée n'est néanmoins pas neutre en ce qu'elle a contribué à façonner l'image d'une région présentant une identité spécifique et partant berceau d'identités spécifiques, au regard de la Gaule contemporaine.²¹ Les inscriptions peinent pourtant à s'en faire le reflet en raison de leur nombre, leur laconisme, leur diversité ainsi que de leur inégale dispersion sur l'ensemble du territoire, en temps et en lieux. Nous pourrions alors considérer défauts et silences des sources comme les caractéristiques, en creux, d'une culture écrite proprement aquitaine, mais le pari est bien incertain.

Le phénomène épigraphique dans le Sud-Ouest gaulois

Il est clair que par le nombre d'inscriptions lapidaires connues (136), les deux provinces d'Aquitaine Seconde et Novempopulanie ne comptent pas parmi les provinces les mieux dotées à l'échelle de l'Empire. Pour la seule Gaule, la production épigraphique du Sud-Ouest se situe par exemple loin derrière les provinces de Narbonnaise ou encore de Lyonnaise en dépit de la densité d'occupation du territoire durant l'Antiquité tardive, tant en ville qu'à la campagne.²² Si cette première distinction quantitative montre sans doute l'importance d'une prise en compte des diversités régionales pour comprendre la complexité du phénomène épigraphique dans l'Antiquité tardive, elle ne peut être considérée comme un élément témoignant d'une pratique particulière de l'écriture épigraphique dans la région. Au-delà donc de ce qui relève avant tout de l'état documentaire, le phénomène épigraphique aquitain suit néanmoins et à sa mesure les grandes tendances reconnues à l'échelle de l'Occident tardo-antique. Ainsi la production épigraphique d'Aquitaine seconde et Novempopulanie suit peu ou prou le rythme qui a été éta-

19 Expression éponyme empruntée à un ouvrage de Michel Rouche: ROUCHE 2003.

20 Il s'agit de la thèse défendue par M. Rouche: ROUCHE 1979.

21 Pour un renouvellement des études sur l'Aquitaine tardo-antique et alto-médiévale, après M. Rouche, consulter: CARTRON 2010; BAYARD 2014.

22 GUYON 1997.

bli à l'échelle de l'Empire.²³ La documentation témoigne en effet d'une baisse du nombre d'inscriptions à partir de la seconde moitié du III^e s. apr. J.-C., et passée la dynastie sévérienne, les traces épigraphiques apparaissent plus erratiques. Le IV^e s. apr. J.-C. marquerait un jalon avec une apparente reprise de la production épigraphique (ténue toutefois) qui progresserait jusqu'au VI^e s. apr. J.-C. après quoi la pratique épigraphique se fait plus difficilement perceptible : ce constat est celui posé par Mark A. Handley à partir des inscriptions funéraires gauloises et hispaniques.²⁴

Pris dans son ensemble, le matériel épigraphique aquitain apparaît plutôt hétérogène en raison des matériaux utilisés (calcaire, marbre, terre cuite, métal), ses formes et la technique engagée (inscriptions peintes, inscriptions lapidaires plus ou moins monumentales comptant quelques graffitis, petits objets inscrits), ses contextes (entre véritable écriture exposée et écrits plus réservés à la visibilité dite contrariée ou restreinte)²⁵ et ses contenus. Ainsi, si 90 % du matériel est constitué sans surprise d'inscriptions funéraires,²⁶ il faut également compter avec les quelques traces d'une épigraphie officielle, quelques *tituli votivi* et les traces erratiques d'inscriptions mineures plus difficiles à catégoriser.²⁷ Parmi ce matériel hétérogène, inégalement distribué dans le temps et dans l'espace et témoignant de formulaire se révélant souvent singuliers,²⁸ les inscriptions affichant une formule de datation sont rarissimes (six inscriptions si l'on met de côté les miliaires du IV^e

23 Pour des synthèses sur les inscriptions de l'Aquitaine romaine et les habitudes épigraphiques: NAVARRO CABALLERO/PRÉVÔT/RUIZ DARASSE 2021. Pour une approche spatiale de la pratique: CLEARY 2015.

24 L'auteur s'appuie alors sur des datations estimées, la majorité du matériel ne bénéficiant pas d'une date donnée dans l'inscription: HANDLEY 2003, 181-186. Si ce mouvement apparaît commun à l'ensemble de la production épigraphique pour le moins en Occident, il n'en demeure pas moins que sa coïncidence avec les découpages en période de l'histoire, cumulée à nos propres difficultés de datation pour ces inscriptions de l'entre-temps invite peut-être à prendre avec plus de mesure les impressions de déclin, ou pour le moins à en atténuer les points d'inflexion.

25 C'est le cas des inscriptions *endotaphes* (enfouies dans la tombe). Sur ce matériel, je me permets de renvoyer à UBERTI 2018; pour des contextes analogues avec inscriptions cachées ou enfouies dans les tombes dans l'Antiquité tardive voir les contributions ARBEITER, ARDELEANU, FELLE, VALEVA et ZIMMERMANN dans ce volume.

26 Nous faisons entrer ici dans le champ des inscriptions funéraires toutes les inscriptions trouvées en contexte funéraire ou dont le discours relève d'un discours funéraire. Le champ embrasse donc au-delà de la seule catégorie des épitaphes qui bien entendu constituent la très large majorité de ces inscriptions.

27 Ainsi, 107 inscriptions funéraires, 29 inscriptions « autres » (dédicaces, bornes routières), deux ensembles peints (hypogée des Dunes, Poitiers et dans l'église de Saint-Savin-sur-Gartempe) à côté desquels on rencontre des graffitis et du mobilier inscrit (un lot important de bagues notamment). Ces inscriptions ont été étudiées dans le cadre d'une thèse de doctorat soutenue en 2014 à l'Université Paris IV-Sorbonne: UBERTI 2014.

28 Sur la diversité des formulaires, en particulier pour les épitaphes: TREFFORT/UBERTI 2010. Notons par ailleurs la rareté des inscriptions versifiées pour la région.

s. apr. J.-C.).²⁹ Face à l'hétérogénéité textuelle et formelle de l'ensemble du matériel épigraphique aquitain et sa dispersion sur le territoire, ces rares inscriptions datées ne peuvent donc être utilisées comme des jalons sûrs permettant de dater avec finesse la part plus large des inscriptions non datées, notamment le lot important d'inscriptions funéraires. De surcroît, près de 60 % de nos inscriptions proviennent de découvertes anciennes (entre le XVII^e s. et la première moitié du XX^e s.), une bonne part d'entre elles ont disparues obligeant à une analyse extrêmement prudente des objets comme celle de leur contexte. Dès lors, les datations proposées pour les inscriptions de l'Aquitaine tardo-antique et alto-médiévale – qui s'appuient sur les formes du support, la graphie voire le contexte archéologique – demeurent très ouvertes.

Ces caractéristiques documentaires contrarient de fait toute possibilité de synthèse sur une *epigraphic habit* de l'Aquitaine tardo-antique et alto-médiévale. Surtout, elles compromettent la quête d'une spécificité régionale, d'une identité épigraphique véritablement unifiante et distinctive à l'échelle de la totalité du matériel mais aussi pour ce qui concerne l'épigraphie funéraire ; à ce titre, cet article est le constat d'un échec. Il n'est pas *une* épigraphie funéraire de l'Aquitaine tardo-antique et alto-médiévale mais bien des pratiques graphiques en contexte funéraire qui pour certaines trouvent des échos ici et là en Gaule, voire hors de Gaule, à des échelles et des degrés divers : support, brièveté des formulaires, formes graphiques. Mais ces résonances disent finalement peu, au mieux elles témoignent d'une circulation des pratiques dont les dynamiques restent difficiles à saisir. Quant aux particularités, un regard honnête sur le matériel ne permet en aucun cas d'en faire des tendances représentatives provinciales, en raison de leur localisme, leurs disparités et leur trop grande variabilité. Face à un tel constat, celui d'une capacité de représentation limitée des inscriptions funéraires d'Aquitaine pour discuter une épigraphie régionale, le chemin pris est souvent celui d'études plus situées, soit par leur problématique, soit par leur emprise et dont les conclusions dépassent le seul cadre régional au profit de réflexions pouvant être étendues à d'autres espaces.³⁰ Qu'il s'agisse donc de l'épigraphie funéraire et plus largement de l'*epigraphic habit*, le Sud-Ouest gaulois témoigne d'abord de la richesse et de la diversité de la culture écrite entre les IV^e et le VIII^e s. apr. J.-C. Les inscriptions d'Aquitaine sont avant tout les reflets d'une période – l'Antiquité tardive – entendue comme le champ des « expérimentations » ; elles rappellent que les pratiques graphiques sont loin d'être éteintes une fois passée le III^e s. apr. J.-C. mais plutôt

29 On compte quatre inscriptions datées au moyen des fastes consulaires (réf.: *ILA Bordeaux* 391; *ILTG* 145; *CIL XIII* 11065, 1118). Sur les six inscriptions datées par l'année régionale seule deux donnent le nom du roi (*NICG* 284; *CIL XIII* 905=MOURRE CASAS 2008), les autres en sont exemptes; sur ces formes de datation anonymes: UBERTI 2020.

30 En s'arrêtant sur le support par exemple ou l'identité des individus: UBERTI 2015; TREFORT/UBERTI 2010.

qu'elles se transforment et se diversifient, témoignant là de la vitalité de la culture écrite sur le temps long.³¹

Les inscriptions funéraires d'Aquitaine seconde et Novempopulanie : rythme, distribution, formes

Dans ce cadre très général et tout en gardant à l'esprit les remarques posées en amont – hétérogénéité du matériel, difficultés de datation – il est possible de dégager deux phases dans la production épigraphique tardo-antique et alto-médiévale d'Aquitaine, en particulier pour les inscriptions funéraires. Ce dont nous nous préoccupons désormais. Ce phasage qui vient distinguer de manière un peu artificielle une production tardo-antique et une production alto-médiévale se manifeste par la provenance de ces inscriptions ainsi que par la nature des supports de l'épithaphe et leur monumentalité.³² Convenons dès à présent d'une nette disproportion entre la production des IV^e–V^e s. apr. J.-C. (17 inscriptions) et celle correspondant au VI^e–VIII^e s. apr. J.-C. (95 inscriptions). Une telle différence quantitative n'est néanmoins pas gage de représentativité. Elle relève d'abord des dynamiques de la recherche archéologique dans ces régions, les inscriptions « tardo-antiques » (Fig. 1), ont été trouvées plus souvent fortuitement dans l'ensemble du territoire quand la majorité des inscriptions « alto-médiévales » proviennent de fouilles d'ensembles ruraux, un site révélant à lui seule parfois plus d'une trentaine d'inscriptions (Neuvicq-Monguyon).

Pour les IV^e–V^e s. apr. J.-C., les inscriptions apparaissent dispersées sur l'ensemble du territoire ; elles ont été trouvées dans les chefs-lieux de cités, au sein des nécropoles suburbaines mais aussi dans les campagnes. Les quatre épithaphes provenant des campagnes du diocèse épiscopal bordelais pourraient être mises en relation avec le dense réseau de *villae* attesté à cette période dans cette zone.³³ Enfin, ces épithaphes tardo-antiques ont pour la quasi-totalité été gravées sur des plaques pour lesquelles il demeure souvent difficile de restituer le contexte monumental, à l'instar de l'épithaphe du petit d'Adelfus datée du V^e s. apr. J.-C. (décès en 405 apr. J.-C.) (Fig. 2).³⁴ Une épithaphe bordelaise néanmoins, celle de Flavinus (Fig. 5), montre que ces plaques

31 L'idée est ainsi défendue et illustrée par la synthèse de BOLLE/WITSCHER/MACHADO 2017a; voir en particulier BOLLE/WITSCHER/MACHADO 2017b, 15–30, 25 (« the Late Antique period was a phase of experimentation in terms of the culture of writing »).

32 Ce tournant, perceptible à l'échelle de l'Occident devrait être pris comme une période de seuil (*liminal period*) plutôt que comme un temps de rupture marquant la fin de l'épigraphie tardo-antique : WITSCHER (sous presse).

33 BALMELLE 2001.

34 ILA Bordeaux 391: *Depositio Adelfi [...] / an(n)orum n(umero) III mensium [...] / et triduo p(ost) c(onsulatum) dom(ini) n(os)tri / Honori Augusti / Sextum) Chrisme posuit / pater Maurusius et Ursa m(ater).*

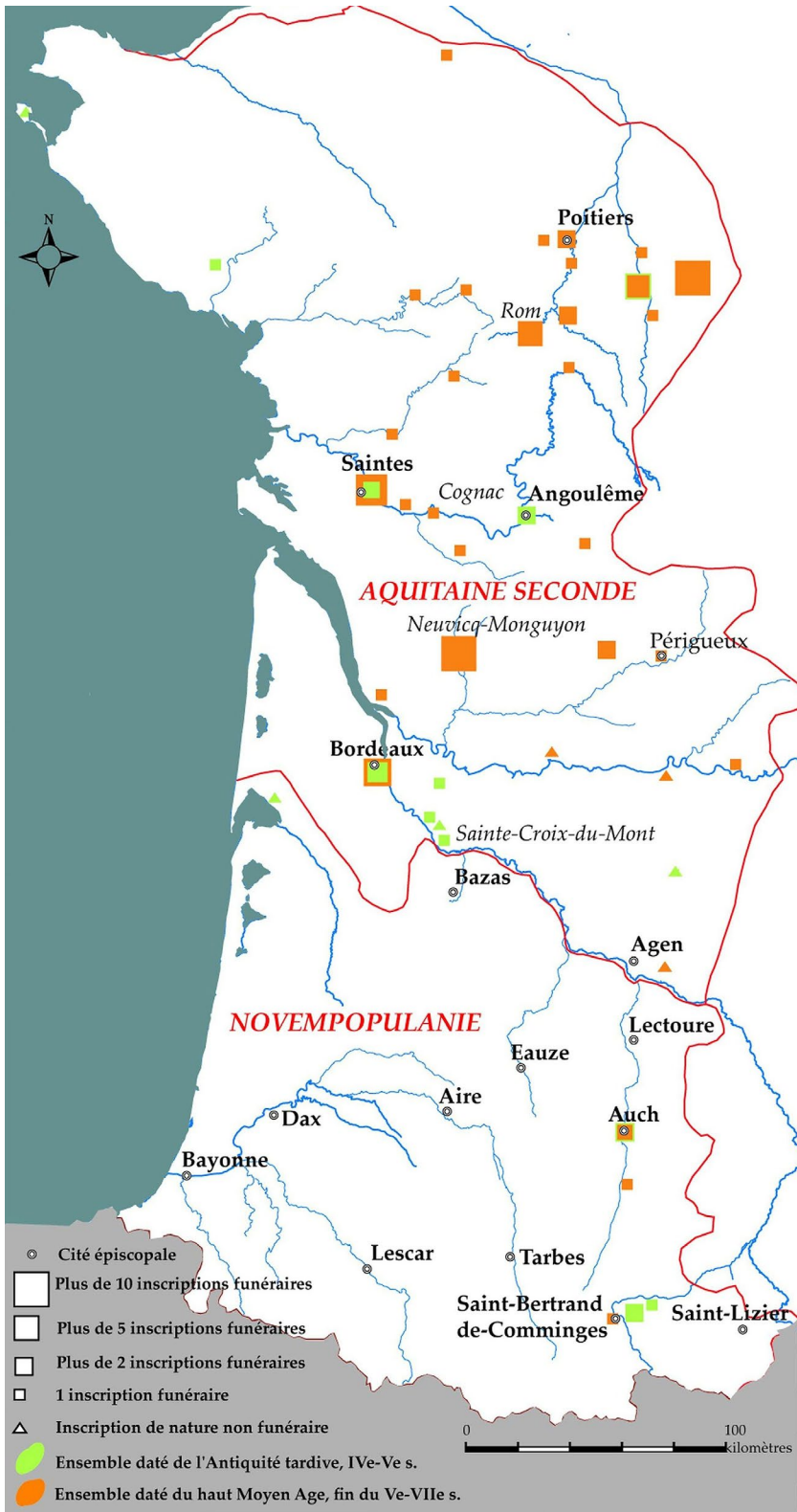


Fig. 1: Pratique épigraphique entre Loire et Pyrénées, IV^e-VIII^e s. apr. J.-C.

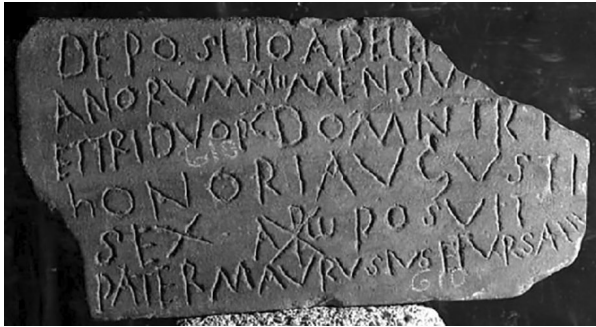


Fig. 2 : Epitaphe d'Adelfus, Sainte-Croix-du-Mont.

pouvaient éventuellement être encastrée dans les couvercles de sarcophages, bien que l'unicité de ce cas dans la région ne permet pas d'en généraliser la pratique.³⁵

Passé la fin du V^e s. apr. J.-C., les témoignages épigraphiques se font de plus en plus rares au sud de la province et le paysage épigraphique finit par se circonscrire entre Loire et Garonne, les foyers épigraphiques changeant de nature. Les cités épiscopales n'ont en effet livré que très peu de vestiges épigraphiques pour la période. Le matériel épigraphique qui se caractérise par des inscriptions gravées directement sur les couvercles de sarcophages est issu dans sa quasi-totalité de nécropoles rurales très souvent en relation avec d'anciennes agglomérations secondaires qui perdurent au haut Moyen Age sous la forme de *vici* voire de possibles centres paroissiaux pour certains.³⁶ Ce surinvestissement épigraphique des campagnes à l'époque mérovingienne demeure caractéristique de l'Aquitaine Seconde.³⁷ A titre de comparaison, nous pourrions évoquer la province limitrophe d'Aquitaine Première qui témoigne d'une expression épigraphique d'abord urbaine, il en va ainsi de la Viennoise du Nord et également de la Belgique Première.³⁸ Toutefois, ce panorama général peut être imputé à une conservation différentielle de la documentation (plus grandes pertes en milieu urbain)³⁹ mais aussi à des pratiques épigraphiques singulières, locales, propres à un groupe socio-culturel qu'il resterait à définir.

L'écriture épigraphique a donc pris une place variable en temps et en lieu, dans le Sud-Ouest gaulois tardo-antique et alto-médiéval. Si elle est donc loin d'être un élément marquant l'espace aquitain, elle n'en demeure pas moins, même sporadiquement, un composant de ce paysage, comme elle s'inscrit dans le champ des

35 *ILA Bordeaux* 48. Sur ce type d'installation: UBERTI 2015; voir aussi des cas analogues dans les contributions ARBEITER et MERTEN dans ce volume.

36 TREFFORT/UBERTI 2010.

37 A ce titre, il témoigne d'une inversion de la tendance antérieure antique: CLEARY 2015.

38 RICG VIII, RICG XV et RICG I.

39 Il faut néanmoins convenir que les fouilles les plus récentes d'ensembles funéraires tardo-antiques et mérovingiens des cités métropolitaines de Poitiers et Bordeaux n'ont pour l'heure pas contrariées cette impression: JÉGOUZOT et al. 2015; LEROY/PONS-MÉTOIS/SCULLER 2015; PERROT/DEMANGEOT 2017.

pratiques funéraires. Dans ce contexte, il s'agit donc d'interroger le rôle joué par l'épitaphe dans l'expérience de la tombe et celle de la nécropole pour in fine évaluer sa capacité à (re)définir/produire un lieu particulier à la fois cité des morts et lieu d'écriture. En filigrane, se pose le potentiel de l'épitaphe pour penser la gestion comme les pratiques de l'espace funéraire ou celle de la sépulture.

La nécropole : du paysage au lieu d'expériences

L'ambition de cet ouvrage témoigne du renouvellement des approches autour de l'espace funéraire pour la période ancienne en ce qu'il est composé autant d'objets – naturel ou anthropique – que de pratiques. En France la question a été récemment formulée à la faveur non plus donc d'une « profondeur » (la tombe, la sépulture) mais bien de ce qui est visible, de la « partie émergée » du cimetière chrétien alto-médiéval, médiéval et moderne (les modalités de signalisation des sépultures, la végétation, une situation articulée à un environnement) au titre du paysage.⁴⁰ Un tel positionnement amène naturellement aux grands principes attachés à l'archéologie du paysage qui articule actualité et historicité : le paysage étant pris comme un territoire mouvant, fruit d'une construction complexe impliquant acteurs, objets et circonstances.⁴¹ La trajectoire prise par la recherche française dans le domaine de l'histoire et l'archéologie funéraire bénéficie par ailleurs de l'attention portée par les historiens, en particulier médiévistes, à la notion d'espace. De fait, l'espace a ainsi été conceptualisé au titre du processus « d'inscription spatiale ».⁴² Il est considéré pour les pratiques qui s'y exercent, leur variabilité, leur subjectivité, leur relation sur le temps long. Dès lors, trois niveaux d'analyse sont systématiquement impliqués dans l'appréhension de l'espace funéraire : son organisation, sa gestion, ses usages ou pratiques, le tout étant soumis à l'épreuve du temps. L'introduction d'une dynamique temporelle a été ainsi l'occasion de reconnaître et distinguer deux temporalités à l'œuvre dans la nécropole : l'une relative à l'événement des funérailles, l'autre aux traces de l'événement, soit la tombe fermée et à travers elle l'entretien du souvenir d'un mort jusqu'à son oubli. Partant, l'espace se trouve modifié, investi et fréquenté inégalement dans le cadre de ces deux grands « temps funéraires ».⁴³

40 GAULTIER/DIETRICH/CORROCHANO 2015a.

41 L'appréhension d'un tel paysage est néanmoins compromise par l'opération archéologique elle-même: GUILLON 2015, 17. Sur une temporalité propre au paysage, mais aussi des essais de définitions: INGOLD 1993. Pour une synthèse efficace sur les directions prises par l'archéologie du paysage depuis les années 1970: TURNER 2011. Enfin, l'on renverra une nouvelle fois au travail d'A. Berque qui s'inscrit logiquement dans cette approche dynamique du paysage: BERQUE 2013.

42 DEVROEY/LAUWERS 2007, 448.

43 Sur les temps funéraires à partir de l'étude archéologique des nécropoles alto-médiévales, notamment en Aquitaine Seconde: CARTRON/CASTEX 2016. Les auteurs s'appuient,

Ainsi, s'établit le champ d'expériences en contextes, la nécropole comptant à la fois comme un lieu concret, topographiquement déterminé et un lieu relationnel et en devenir. La perspective est un biais fécond pour appréhender l'inscription dans un espace parcouru et en évolution et aussi comme partie prenante de celui-ci. Par nature, elle est liée aux temps funéraires précités, inférée par l'événement du décès et soutien de la remémoration du défunt. Affaire d'intentionnalités comme d'effets, l'épithaphe est elle-même objet d'expériences au titre de sa réalisation – geste d'écriture affectant la matière – comme de sa réception – expérience de vision, de lecture. Suivant ces points de vue, elle n'est pas seulement sujette à des dynamiques extérieures mais relève elle-même d'une dynamique agissante : elle marque la rupture en signalant le passage dans l'au-delà, elle lie le présent à l'absent, soit le vivant au mort, elle établit un contexte communicationnel, elle anime un espace, comme elle entre en relation avec ses composants.

La conjugaison des qualités de l'inscription avec les approches dynamiques de la nécropole conduit donc à questionner la place de l'épithaphe (et/ou plus largement de l'écriture) dans l'apparence d'un paysage funéraire, sa structuration, sa gestion et ses pratiques en tant qu'il est un espace parcouru, vécu variablement au fil du temps. En d'autres termes, l'épithaphe se donne ou non à voir, incite à des mobilités, destine autant qu'elle produit un lieu (de la sépulture à la nécropole), ce même lieu ayant aussi commandé son installation.

Paysage funéraire et écriture : visibilité et affordances

Prise comme paysage, la nécropole est un lieu qui se donne à voir au sein d'un environnement plus vaste. Les modalités de sa perception sont diverses, elles dépendent tout autant de ses liens avec l'environnement naturel ou anthropique dans lequel elle prend place que de son accessibilité : ses manières de marquer un territoire. La recherche récente montre en effet que le paysage naturel peut compter comme un élément dans l'élection de l'espace funéraire, en raison d'une situation particulière plus ou moins spectaculaire (une île, un promontoire) ou encore de son histoire ;⁴⁴ et si l'on en reste à l'Aquitaine, la situation culminante de la nécropole mérovingienne de Neuvicq-Monguyon dont il sera question plus loin mérite à ce titre d'être soulignée. Indéniablement, la topographie participe à une visibilité (i.e. tension entre visuel et visible) de l'espace funéraire, à sa présentation et sa perception donc, tout en l'attachant à des objets qui lui confèrent des qualités particulières et déterminent ses modalités de fréquentations (le lieu de culte, la route etc.). Reste

entre autres, sur la fouille de la nécropole mérovingienne de Jau-Dignac-et-Loirac (Gironde).

44 Pour le haut Moyen Age, pour la Grande-Bretagne et en Gaule, respectivement: ORSINI 2017, l'auteur a recours à une analyse du « bassin visuel » afin d'estimer la portée des installations funéraires (*tumuli*) sur le territoire; CARTRON 2015.

à savoir quelle place prend l'écriture dans ce paysage embrassé, image ou représentation de l'espace funéraire. Dans quelle mesure et comment l'écrit s'offre-t-il aux yeux voyageurs d'un spectateur et potentiel lecteur ? Comment les composants de ce paysage guide ainsi ce vagabondage oculaire jusqu'à l'écrit ou à l'inverse le contraire ?⁴⁵ Comment s'établit le point de vue sur l'écriture, le paysage funéraire se perçoit-il véritablement inscrit ? Et quelle incidence l'écriture elle-même a-t-elle dans les relations nouées entre l'homme et ce milieu ?

Quand l'écrit se couche

Pour l'Antiquité classique, *a fortiori* dans l'Occident romain, l'image attachée à l'espace funéraire est celle d'un paysage largement ouvert aux passants et qui s'impose à l'observateur, en raison de l'emplacement des monuments funéraires, le long des voies et de la monumentalité de ces structures de signallement et leur verticalité. Dans ce contexte, et en raison du dispositif même d'écriture, soit une écriture de front, le *titulus* s'offrait de fait sans restriction au regard. Cette frontalité caractéristique des inscriptions antiques associée à leur emplacement dans des lieux traversés par tous et toutes a été interprétée comme la trace de l'intention d'universalité du message épigraphique et comme le témoignage d'une publicité non restrictive.⁴⁶ Si la lisibilité peut toutefois être contrariée par la taille parfois réduite des caractères inscrits, la verticalité des monuments funéraires antiques s'imposait à l'œil. C'est cette a priori visibilité générique de l'écriture via une empreinte spatiale particulière qui pouvait susciter l'arrêt du passant, la lecture véritable impliquant quant à elle un arrêt volontaire.⁴⁷ À l'évidence, la verticalité du support inscrit constituait une première source d'attention, soutenue dans un second temps par le texte, la mise en page et son contenu. Ces dispositions d'ordre structurel, architectonique, viennent soutenir l'image d'un espace funéraire perçu comme espace d'écriture. L'image offerte est d'emblée celle d'un paysage inscrit qu'il soit ensuite parcouru de manière directe, intentionnelle ou plus indirecte.⁴⁸ En tout état de cause, l'écrit joue ici un rôle fort dans la perception du milieu et les actions potentielles permises. Cet environnement est en effet marqué par les opportunités *manifestes* de lecture qu'il offre,

45 La métaphore du chemin pour décrire l'activité du lecteur est requise par Emmanuelle Valette-Cagnac dans son ouvrage sur la lecture à Rome. Elle se rapporte à la dynamique de la lecture et « au rôle de l'œil dans la construction du sens ». Si dans l'ouvrage cité, elle se prête plus directement aux conceptions classiques des mécanismes de lecture, elle se prête également à une conception du paysage – comme fragment perçu – et dans le cas précis, sur les moyens qui permettent de guider l'œil jusqu'à l'objet à lire: VALETTE-CAGNAC 1997, 34–42.

46 SUSINI 1968, 76 ainsi que VALETTE-CAGNAC 1997, 76. L'universalité du message est en outre exprimée souvent dans le texte même par l'appel au passant.

47 CORBIER 1987, 39.

48 KEEGAN 2015, 53–55.

induisant une attitude *disposée* (*ready*) de la part des passants amenés à traverser la nécropole. Si pour le Sud-Ouest gaulois, les monuments funéraires inscrits antiques ont avant tout été découverts en remploi dans les enceintes tardo-antiques des capitales de cités (en particulier Saintes, Périgueux, Bordeaux), leurs formes (cippes, stèles, autels funéraires, éléments de parement ou structures architectoniques intégrés à la maçonnerie d'un mausolée) témoignent bien de cette monumentalité dressée.⁴⁹ L'examen des épitaphes tardo-antiques et alto-médiévales de la région témoignent alors d'une transformation de « la ligne de regard » sur l'écriture, en raison de la disparition, néanmoins progressive, d'une frontalité épigraphique au profit de sépulcre dont le discours s'exposait concrètement face au ciel. Certaines des épitaphes les plus anciennes du corpus témoignent en effet du maintien mesuré d'une verticalité épigraphique çà et là au cours du IV^e s. et de la première moitié du V^e s. apr. J.-C. L'examen de certains blocs inscrits ou de dalles monumentales pose de fait la question de leur intégration au sein d'ensembles maçonnés qui animaient toujours le paysage funéraire dans l'Antiquité tardive. Il en va ainsi de la double épitaphe réalisée à la mémoire de Valeria Severa et Pacius Patroclus dont la réalisation peut être située dans la première moitié du IV^e s. apr. J.-C. : le décès de la défunte y est daté de l'année du consulat de Rufinus et Eusebius (347 apr. J.-C.). Inscrite sur une imposante dalle de marbre découverte dans le cimetière de l'église Saint-Just-de-Valcabrière, le cadre d'anathyrose visible sur sur l'une des faces latérales de la dalle suppose son intégration à une structure funéraire bâtie.⁵⁰ L'inscription versifiée de Saint-Cricq-Châlosse (Landes), dédicace du père à son enfant disparu,⁵¹ en est un autre exemple et l'on peut également s'interroger sur le contexte d'exposition du bloc commémorant la défunte Alogia, découvert en 1860 dans l'ensemble funéraire tardo-antique dit de Saint-Ausone à Angoulême (Charente). Ces quelques exemples ne viennent néanmoins pas contredire la tendance à l'œuvre dans d'autres régions de l'Empire, celle d'une horizontalité de l'écriture funéraire.⁵²

Les sarcophages inscrits aquitains interviennent comme une trace évidente de ce basculement du regard (Figs. 6, 7, 8, 10). Le sarcophage compte comme un contenant funéraire monumental caractéristique de la Gaule des V^e-VII^e s. apr. J.-C. et son usage marque très largement le paysage funéraire de l'Aquitaine tardo-antique et alto-médiévale, tant en milieu urbain que dans les campagnes, un paysage à plat donc ;⁵³

49 Pour la typologie des monuments funéraires inscrits antiques aquitains se reporter aux divers volumes des *Inscriptions Latines d'Aquitaine* (ILA) ainsi que LAURENS 1997.

50 SCHENK-DAVID 1991, 80; cfr. des exemples analogues dans la Péninsule Iberique, en Afrique du Nord et en Germanie dans les contributions ARBEITER, ARDELEANU et OSNABRÜGGE, dans ce volume.

51 *ILA Landes 23*: l'inscription a été datée du IV^e s. apr. J.-C. par les éditeurs, qui s'appuient sur la forme des lettres pour leur datation.

52 En Gaule, les structures de signalement verticales existent néanmoins mais apparaissent plus rares, a fortiori pour les inscriptions: GRALL 2015.

53 Pour une synthèse récente sur ce monument funéraire: CARTRON/CASTEX 2015.

la déambulation dans la nécropole « ouverte » se réalisant plus vraisemblablement entre des tombes signalées par des couvercles affleurant à la surface du sol.⁵⁴ L'écrit se déploie justement sur le couvercle et non sur la cuve, marquant un peu plus cette horizontalité. Quelle que soient les modalités d'accès jusqu'au message (enclos funéraire, mausolée, hypogée, église) hélas impossible à estimer compte-tenu de la documentation à notre disposition, cette localisation de l'écriture établit des circonstances de visibilité et de lisibilité évidemment différentes qu'en cas de vision frontale. En se soustrayant à la portée d'un regard vagabond, l'écriture ne participe plus à l'éveil de l'attention du simple passant. La fortune d'une rencontre avec le défunt et son souvenir via l'écriture se trouve compromise. L'inscription interviendrait en aval, sa vision étant une conséquence de visites motivées, liées à la ritualité funéraire (funérailles, événements commémoratifs), à l'entretien de la tombe ou à des liens interpersonnels, privilégiés entre morts et vivants. Il faut en effet s'approcher auprès de la tombe et s'y trouver à l'aplomb pour voir puis lire l'épitaphe : visibilité et lecture impliquent un autre arrêt, d'autres mouvements, une autre forme de kinesthésie que les inscriptions visibles de front. À l'évidence, ces inscriptions au sol ne relèvent pas de la même visualité que les épitaphes antiques, celles par exemples qui animaient la route rejoignant Ostie à *Portus* (nécropole de l'Isola Sacra).⁵⁵ Pour nombre de nécropoles tar-do-antiques et alto-médiévales, les épitaphes se découvrent au fil d'une *peregrinatio* plus investie, plus concernée. Dans ce bouleversement de perspectives, c'est aussi la transformation d'un rapport à l'espace (et son horizon) qui est en jeu.

Regarder l'épitaphe et au-delà

Enfin d'éprouver mieux les choses, regardons maintenant le cippe inscrit élevé à la mémoire de *Domitia*, citoyenne trévière morte l'année 261 apr. J.-C., sous le consulat de Postume (Fig. 3).⁵⁶

Trouvé en remploi dans l'enceinte tar-do-antique de Bordeaux, le monument originellement dressé dans l'une des nécropoles bordelaises, commémore par une double épitaphe le souvenir de *Domitia*. Les deux inscriptions se lisent sur deux faces moyennes du cippe, l'une comptant comme une face latérale. À la frontalité évoquée précédemment s'ajoute ici la perception très nette de l'espace, puisque lire, voire, implique bien une itinérance se réalisant autour et par-delà le monument. Qu'elle soit strictement visuelle (simple mouvement oculaire) ou kinesthésique, l'appréhension

54 Sur la visibilité des sarcophages dans la Gaule tar-do-antique alto-médiévale: MORLE-GHEM 2015.

55 KEEGAN 2015.

56 *ILA Bordeaux 107*: Texte A: *[D(is) M(anibus)] / et Memor(iae) / Domitiae, / ciuis Tre/uer(ae), d(e)ff(unctae) an(norum) / XX, Leo con/iugi kariss(imae) / posuit*. Texte B: *hic iacet / exanīmēn / corpus Do/mitiae, ciu(is) / Treuer(ae) / d(e)ff(unctae) V k(alendas) Febr(uarias) / Postumo / co(n)s(ule)*.



Fig. 3 : Cippe de Domitia, extrait de l'enceinte tardo-antique de Bordeaux.

d'inscriptions dressées conduit l'œil à voir au-delà de l'inscription même, derrière elle, à embrasser le paysage ambiant, à en percevoir l'horizon, à en éprouver la profondeur, les mouvements, à considérer un *panorama* marqué donc par l'écrit, qui s'y établit et le compose à l'instar des ruines qui construisent la représentation romantique d'un Bordeaux antique en partie démantelé à la fin du XIX^e s. (Fig. 4).

Ce contrepoint contemporain n'est pas gratuit ici, cette lithographie de l'érudite et artiste Léo Drouyn permet, mieux que le plan archéologique, de renouer avec ce qu'implique l'appréhension d'un environnement au même titre que la particularité du monument funéraire de Domitia a le mérite de convoquer plus facilement les dimensions impliquées par une occupation de l'espace, celle du corps et de l'inscription.

A Bordeaux toujours, près d'un siècle après le décès de Domitia, les modalités engagées pour voir et lire l'épithaphe du soldat Flavinus (ou Elainus) inhumé dans la nécropole tardo-antique dite de Saint-Seurin étaient autres (Fig. 5).⁵⁷

57 *ILA Bordeaux 48*: <h>ic iac[e]<i>t Fla(u)inus de numero {N}<M>at/{f}<t>iacorum Seniorum qui uixs<i>t / annus qua<d>raginta et qui/nque et di{s}misit gr(an)de / crudeli<a>te vxori et filis <s>{f}uis. Pour une édition complète: <https://petrae-xml.huma-num.fr/documents/160100900048> (consulté le 10/03/2021). Les trous visibles aux quatre coins de la dalle font écho aux dispositifs que l'on rencontre sur certaines *mensae* africaines ou provenant des provinces danubiennes, rhénaniennes, italiennes et hispaniques (voir les contributions de ARBEITER, ARDELEANU, GATIER, MERTEN, OTT, PRIEN et VALEVA dans ce



Fig. 4 : Léo Drouyn, Bordeaux, 1868. Lithographie.



Fig. 5 : Le sarcophage de Flavinus, nécropole Saint-Seurin, Bordeaux.

Découverte le 13 décembre 1909 lors d'une fouille opérée à proximité de la basilique médiévale Saint-Seurin de Bordeaux, l'inscription sur plaque de marbre, encastrée dans le couvercle d'un sarcophage, se trouve alors au plus près du sol.⁵⁸ Si la documentation de fouille de l'archéologue ne permet pas de discuter avec précision des modalités d'exposition du sarcophage ici (mausolée ou enclos) sa réutilisation pour une seconde inhumation suppose néanmoins sa visibilité sur un certain laps de temps.⁵⁹ Ici voir la sépulture et l'épithaphe obligeait à s'approcher et à baisser les yeux. Une telle focale, orientée vers un sol immobile, transforme de fait l'appréhension de l'ambiant (qui en vient à disparaître de la vue) et conduit à la perte même d'une perception de l'horizon et avec lui d'un espace environnant et animé, avec sa succession de plans et ses lignes de fuites. C'est donc en raison des formes de proximités impliquées par l'horizontalité de l'écriture qu'il ne peut y avoir de véritable expérience synoptique révélant un espace proprement graphique, quand bien même la nécropole réunirait nombre de tombes inscrites comme en témoigne certains ensembles funéraires aquitains d'époque mérovingienne, nous y reviendrons. Le plan de l'écriture pour la dialectique visuel/visible qu'il implique joue un rôle essentiel dans la qualification de l'espace – si la nécropole antique peut être qualifiée aisément d'espace écrit en raison des logiques évoquées plus haut – l'attribution d'emblée d'une telle qualité pour nombre d'aires funéraires tardo-antiques inscrites est loin d'être évidente. Pour mieux comprendre, nous pourrions convoquer la différence qui se joue entre le *volumen* et le *codex* : alors que le déroulement du rouleau pour la lecture conduit bien à une vision panoramique du « livre », la lecture étant par ailleurs rythmée par la verticalité des colonnes, la consultation des feuillets du manuscrit ne peut rendre compte dans le même mouvement du tout qu'il compose pourtant. Suivant un raisonnement analogique, il en va finalement de même de la relation entre les inscriptions déposées au plus près du sol et paysage funéraire : si elles en sont partie prenante, leur perception conjointe est empêchée. Enfin, en passant par la *pagina*, ses formes et l'écriture qui la rythme, on revient, par la bande, au paysage, les deux termes disposant d'une étymologie commune : *pangere*. Le mot dit en effet autant la composition écrite que l'ancrage dans l'espace, la terre (*pagus*) a fortiori.⁶⁰

volume). Ces installations sont destinées aux offrandes (versement d'eau, dépôt de nourriture). Je remercie Stefan Ardeleanu pour cette dernière observation.

58 Sur les fouilles de Paul Courteault: CARTRON 2009, 40–42.

59 COURTEAULT 1909. Le sarcophage contenait le corps de deux sujets en position primaire, un homme et une femme, la femme aurait été déposée dans un second temps: ce sont les seuls éléments de contextes dont nous disposons. Sur la nécropole tardo-antique de Saint-Seurin et son organisation: BARRAUD et al. 2009.

60 Sur les liens entre les acceptions à donner à paysage suivant les origines reconnues au terme: FILLERON 2008 ; pour une analogie, terre/surface et page, voir également INGOLD 2018.

De fait, la nécropole présentant des épitaphes s'exposant face au ciel n'apparaît pas comme le paysage d'écriture et le vaste champ d'appel à la lecture auquel donne *lieu* la nécropole antique, l'écriture s'y montrant plus réservée. Cette discrétion de la mémoire épigraphique qui accompagne la transformation plus générale du paysage funéraire entre Antiquité et Moyen Âge en termes de topographie, de monumentalité,⁶¹ compromet la perception de la nécropole comme paysage inscrit. Pour l'Aquitaine et la Novempopulanie, les tombes – inhumations en pleine terre, sous tuiles, en sarcophages – et les éventuels monuments qui signalaient les sépultures se rapprochent ainsi de la terre.⁶² Cette apparente *réserve* se traduit à l'échelle de l'épitaphe (lorsqu'elle est requise !) par une tendance à la réduction des dimensions du support épigraphique et, nous l'avons vu, par une autre relation spatiale à l'environnement forçant l'intériorité. Cette forme de négation du dehors fait écho aux mots de Saint Augustin pour qui la contemplation du paysage est avant tout un obstacle à l'introspection et à la rencontre avec le divin : « Et les hommes s'en vont admirer les cimes des montagnes, les vagues énormes de la mer, le large cours des fleuves, les plages sinueuses des océans, les révolutions des astres et ils se détournent d'eux-mêmes ».⁶³

Ainsi, l'écriture se rapproche du sol et s'allonge à l'égal du corps dont elle signale la présence. C'est peut-être ici que se jouerait l'adoption de l'horizontalité des épitaphes tardo-antiques : dans la similitude matérielle, physique avec le corps étendu auquel l'écrit se suppléait. Le sarcophage, la dalle inscrite déposée à même la terre du cimetière, celle participant au pavement de l'église tout comme le tapis de mosaïque, présentent de fait une certaine corporalité. Figure du corps étendu qu'elle incarne, l'épitaphe engagerait alors de la part de son spectateur les mêmes postures de recueillement auprès du cadavre exposé lors des funérailles. Dans cet engagement des corps impliqué pour *visualiser* l'épitaphe, l'écriture participe pleinement et activement (plus ?) à la construction d'un espace particulier parce qu'elle joue un rôle dans ses pratiques et son appropriation.

61 La transformation des paysages funéraires dans l'Antiquité tardive se mesure à travers la modification des formes de proximités – l'articulation avec le sanctuaire induit par exemple d'emblée une première restriction du public – ou encore la typologie des sépultures et les dispositifs monumentaux associés. Ces conditions d'accès, de marquage de l'espace et de monumentalisation posent la question d'une forme d'intimité ou de privatisation du souvenir épigraphique dans l'Antiquité tardive qui fait écho à un processus d'intériorisation dont témoignerait l'architecture tardo-antique: HANSEN 2001.

62 Pour la Gaule de l'Antiquité tardive et du haut Moyen Âge, les fouilles réalisées ces trente dernières années montrent néanmoins la construction de mausolées ainsi que des hypogées dans certaines nécropoles suburbaines comme dans les campagnes. En Aquitaine, des cas sont par exemple attestés à Poitiers (PALAZZO-BERTHOLON/TREFFORT 2010), Bordeaux (MICHEL 2012) ou encore Jau-Dignac-et-Loirac (CARTON/CASTEX 2007). Parmi ces ensembles monumentaux, seul l'hypogée des Dunes (Poitiers, VII^e-VIII^e s. apr. J.-C.) a révélé des inscriptions, celles-ci prennent place à l'intérieur du monument.

63 Aug. conf. 10, 8, 15: utilisé par BERQUE 2009, 55.

L'épitaphe et ses expériences

Evaluer l'efficacité de l'épitaphe dans la nécropole revient à considérer son inscription spatiale comme décisive dans les dynamiques qui s'y exercent (entre homme et objet, entre l'objet et l'espace, entre l'homme et l'espace) et les données sensibles qu'elles engagent (réception, lecture, gestes). La démarche oblige donc de se rapprocher au plus près de l'épitaphe, de sa dimension physique comme de ses conditions d'exposition, soit comme la trace archéologique de pratiques au sein de la nécropole.

Visibilité, lisibilité : l'établissement de proximités

Une fois au plus près du monument, l'épitaphe se donne à voir de diverses manières, suivant différents sens de lecture, révélant là l'absence de codification des positions ou des modes de recueils face à la tombe. Ces sens de lecture sont les signes de stationnements particuliers et rendent donc compte d'une manière



Fig. 6 : Couvertres de sarcophages provenant d'Antigny et Savigné. En haut à gauche : couvercle de sarcophage de Savigné, inscrit au nom de Domaredo ; en bas à gauche : couvercle de sarcophage d'Antigny, inscrit au nom de Rumula ; à droite : couvercle de sarcophage d'Antigny, inscrit au nom de Magnefrude.



Fig. 7 : Couvercles de sarcophages provenant de Rom et de Civaux.

d'être au monument, à l'écriture, au défunt et dans le même temps à l'espace funéraire dans sa globalité. Les épitaphes inscrites sur les couvercles de sarcophages aquitains obligent plus souvent à un positionnement pied à pied avec le défunt pour être lues, comme en témoigne les couvercles de sarcophages provenant des nécropoles mérovingiennes de Savigné et d'Antigny (Fig. 6).⁶⁴

Ces modalités de lectures ne sont toutefois pas systématiques puisque le défunt peut se présenter « tête en bas », au pied du lecteur, comme c'est le cas pour certaines inscriptions funéraires provenant des ensembles funéraires alto-médiévaux de Civaux et de Rom : l'épitaphe de Marina et celle de Lopeceña et Dedimia ont été gravées sur la traverse de tête du couvercle suivant une ligne d'écriture contraire à la perspective engagée par la trapézoïdalité du sarcophage (Fig. 7).⁶⁵

64 Sur ces nécropoles poitevines découvertes à la fin du XIX^e s. et fouillées par le père Camille de La Croix: LA CROIX 1886; GINOT 1929.

65 Sur l'épitaphe double de Lopeceña et Dedimia: ICG II 360 et TREFFORT/UBERTI 2010, 209; l'inscription a été découverte avant 1868 date de sa première mention, nous ne connaissons rien en revanche des circonstances de la fouille dont le sarcophage est issu, les seuls éléments archéologiques transmis concernent son contenu, la cuve révélant les restes d'un seul individu: TREFFORT 2000, 201-203. L'épitaphe de Marina est quant à elle inédite, elle a été trouvée le 10 février 2010 en compagnie d'Hélène Cruzat, conservatrice du Musée de Civaux, lors d'une visite de la nécropole. Le couvercle sur lequel elle prend place se situe au nord de la chapelle Sainte-Catherine, contre le mur qui clôt le cimetière: il ne s'agit pas de sa position originelle mais bien d'un déplacement qui s'inscrit très vraisemblablement dans le contexte de la patrimonialisation de la nécropole mérovingienne

À Civaux, cette disposition de l'écrit n'est toutefois pas la seule et quelques couvercles de sarcophages présentent une inscription se lisant depuis les pieds ;⁶⁶ cette diversité de mise en page laisse envisager la variabilité des circulations et une écriture qui s'adapterait à ces dernières, soumises peut-être à l'accumulation des tombes dans un espace en évolution. Dans un même temps, la réservation systématique de l'écriture en partie haute, quelle que soit la direction de la ligne, pose aussi la question d'un enfouissement partiel du couvercle.⁶⁷

L'écrit peut aussi se développer sur la longueur du sarcophage, de la tête vers les pieds : cette disposition est celle rencontrée pour l'ensemble des sarcophages mérovingiens de Neuvicq-Monguyon⁶⁸ ou encore sous une forme moins monumentale sur l'arête aplanie d'un couvercle de sarcophage en marbre trouvé lors des fouilles de la basilique dite du Plan à Saint-Bertrand de Comminges. Cette épitaphe tardo-antique qui commémore le décès d'Aemiliana se développe sur l'arête sommitale aplanie du couvercle (Fig. 8).⁶⁹ La dimension des lettres (inf. à 4 cm) invite implicitement le public potentiel à s'approcher au plus près du défunt pour lire, comme s'il était penché sur le corps allongé dans le lit mortuaire.⁷⁰

depuis la fin du XIX^e s. Pour un bilan des découvertes réalisées à Civaux depuis le XVIII^e s.: BOISSAVIT-CAMUS/PAPINOT/PAUTREAU 1990.

66 Par exemple, l'inscription de Pientia: ICG II 576C.

67 A Civaux comme à Rom, il demeure toutefois impossible de raisonner véritablement en contexte. À Civaux, le plan établi ne peut être considéré comme le reflet d'un état alto-médiéval en raison de l'utilisation de cet espace comme cimetière paroissial et des nombreux remplois (et éventuels déplacements) depuis le XVIII^e s. jusque dans le courant du XX^e s.: pour l'état actuel de la nécropole mérovingienne et ses possibilités d'études voir: MORLEGHEM/ROUGÉ 2017. À Rom, les contextes de découverte des inscriptions demeurent inconnus et les sarcophages récemment mis au jour et localisés sont quant à eux anépigraphes. Pour un bilan des découvertes archéologiques à Rom, je renvoie à nouveau à Treffort 2000.

68 Sur cette nécropole, l'article de référence reste: MAURIN 1971. Je me permets également de renvoyer à UBERTI 2015 ainsi que UBERTI (2023): ces deux articles s'appuyant déjà largement sur les inscriptions qui y ont été trouvées.

69 Sur cette inscription: ILTG 111 = SABLAYROLLES/BEYRE 2006, n° 410 ainsi que SCHENK-DAVID 1991, 76–78. Les caractéristiques graphiques et formulaires, le support conjugué au contexte archéologique de la découverte invite à situer la réalisation de cette inscription au cours du VI^e s. apr. J.-C.

70 Le sarcophage d'Aemiliana a été découvert en 1913 dans le cadre des fouilles menées par Raymond Lizop dans la basilique chrétienne du Plan, à Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges. La tombe, disposée dans l'axe du chœur, faisait partie d'un ensemble de six sarcophages situés à l'extrémité orientale de la nef, du côté du mur septentrional. Les fouilles conduites au Plan révèlent des modalités d'exposition variées pour les sarcophages prenant place dans le lieu de culte: certaines tombes étaient manifestement enfouies sous le dallage de la première basilique, pour d'autres au contraire, le couvercle affleurait au niveau du sol. La description d'ensemble laissée par l'archéologue ne permet néanmoins pas de préciser les conditions de visibilité du sarcophage d'Aemiliana. Le couvrement de la tombe par un dallage, comme le laisse entendre R. Lizop, aurait toutefois pu intervenir plus tardivement. Sur ces fouilles: LIZOP 1914, part. 259 f. (pour le sarcophage d'Aemiliana).



Fig. 8 : Epitaphe d'Aemiliana, Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges.

Les découvertes citées ici ne permettent la restitution de gestes et de positions qu'aux marges de la tombe en raison de rares informations de contexte transmises, et excepté pour la nécropole mérovingienne de Neuvicq Monguyon discutée plus loin, nous manquons malheureusement pour l'Aquitaine de fouilles récentes permettant d'ancrer les conditions de visibilité et lisibilité dans un environnement plus large. Néanmoins ces sens de lecture, quels qu'ils soient, pourraient témoigner des modalités d'exposition du monument funéraire en plus de leur portée figurative. A ce titre, la disposition de l'écrit répondrait également à une problématique spatiale voire paysagère, ou tout du moins s'en ferait l'écho.

L'épitaphe et la gestion de l'espace funéraire

Enfin l'épitaphe agit comme un signal, elle identifie la sépulture, incarne le défunt et situe son souvenir et de fait distingue un mort parmi les autres. A l'échelle d'ensembles funéraires mêlant tombes épigraphes et tombes anépigraphes comme on en rencontre dans l'Aquitaine tardo-antique et alto-médiévale, le recours à l'inscription pose en effet la question d'un acte répondant à une stratégie de distinction, non pas seulement au titre de l'identification personnelle mais aussi au titre d'un capital symbolique qu'il resterait à définir. Mais à l'évidence, le choix d'une inscription doit être discuté dans le cadre plus large des pratiques de différenciation des sépultures au sein des espaces funéraires ; les nécropoles tardo-antiques et alto-médiévales révélant souvent des défunts privilégiés soit par le soin porté au corps ou la sépulture-même, soit par la monumentalité funéraire et/ou par la localisation

de la tombe. Par exemple, pour le Sud-Ouest Gaulois, si nombre d'inscriptions funéraires ont été trouvées isolées (en particulier pour les IV^e-V^e s. apr. J.-C.), nombre de sarcophages inscrits mérovingiens s'installaient dans des nécropoles dites de plein champ à côté de sarcophages anépigraphes. Seule une étude conjointe de la relation spatiale de la tombe inscrite aux tombes silencieux, la typologie du monument, son décor, l'étude taphonomique corrélée à l'inscription même (forme et contenu) permettrait d'estimer les degrés de valeur d'un souvenir épigraphique dans ces stratégies funéraires.⁷¹

A un moindre niveau, l'inscription peut avoir compter dans la gestion raisonnée de l'espace comme dans celle de la sépulture : les réutilisations de sarcophages inscrits, attestées dans l'Aquitaine tardo-antique et alto-médiévale, en sont un exemple, la sélection épigraphique au sein d'un groupe de sépultures apparentées par leur topographie en est un autre. La nécropole mérovingienne d'Antigny fouillée en 1864 a ainsi révélé une distribution des tombes suivant des petits groupements de sarcophages accolés.⁷² Les indications laissées par l'archéologue dans ses notes de terrains révèlent qu'au moins pour deux de ces ensembles (l'un composé par trois sarcophages, l'autre par quatre), la mémoire épigraphique demeurait sélective : elle ne concerne que deux tombes au sein de chacun de ces groupes.⁷³ La réutilisation de sarcophages inscrits et a priori destinés à l'individu désigné par le nom inscrit sur le couvercle pose la question de la valeur de ce nom et de son éventuelle dimension communautaire plutôt que personnelle. L'inscription dans l'un ou l'autre cas marque l'emplacement et en définirait alors les usages à venir, libérant l'inscription de sa première destination pour l'ouvrir au contexte de ses pratiques : celles d'inhumations autorisées au sein ou à proximité d'une sépulture signalée par un souvenir épigraphique amené à s'étendre tant sémantiquement que spatialement, une écriture qui viendrait finalement réserver l'espace (et la terre) d'inhumation. Dans notre région et en raison de l'ancienneté des découvertes et des lacunes documentaires, l'organisation précise des espaces funéraires révélant des inscriptions reste difficile à préciser (voire même à identifier). Partant, il est difficile d'aller au-delà des hypothèses et des questions dans la mise en relation entre gestion de l'espace funéraire et écriture exposée. De fait, aucune dynamique spatiale récurrente liée à l'usage de l'écriture exposée dans ces nécropoles mérovingiennes n'a pu être décelée.

Incontestablement, l'écrit sur la tombe intervient comme un véritable indice archéologique, écho de la disposition et des modes d'exposition des monuments, écho des cheminements au sein de l'espace funéraire, écho des interactions possibles entre l'inscription et les différents acteurs qui fréquentent l'espace d'inhumations,

71 Aucune nécropole en Aquitaine ne réunit l'ensemble de ces informations.

72 Sur la nécropole mérovingienne d'Antigny: LA CROIX 1886. Sur l'organisation de la nécropole et la situation des sarcophages inscrits: LA CROIX (sans date).

73 Ces quatre épitaphes sont inscrites sur des couvercles du sarcophage; sur ces inscriptions: LA CROIX 1886, 259f.

écho éventuel de la place du défunt au sein d'un groupe donné. Outre le contexte physique de l'inscription, l'accessibilité de l'écrit épigraphique par des circulations prévues, sa disposition au sein d'espaces ouverts ou fermés sont par ailleurs autant d'indices sur le caractère plus ou moins sélectif d'une mémoire épigraphique et sa portée.

Voir la tombe, fréquenter le lieu

L'inscription dans l'expérience et la construction du lieu : le cas de la nécropole mérovingienne de Neuvicq-Monguyon (Charente)

Pour l'Aquitaine tardo-antique et alto-médiévale, seul le site de la nécropole mérovingienne de Neuvicq-Monguyon peut être exploité pour réfléchir non seulement aux rapports de proximités qui s'établissent entre le spectateur et l'épitaphe, mais aussi à l'impact des inscriptions sur les manières de vivre le lieu pour lequel elles ont été produites (et qu'elles construisent dans un même mouvement).⁷⁴ Très concrètement, il s'agit de s'interroger sur l'inscription funéraire dans la structuration de la nécropole, son rapport aux autres tombes et à la sépulture et son incidence dans les modalités de fréquentation de cette dernière.

Découverte au cours du XIX^e s., la nécropole a fait l'objet d'une fouille en 1964. Cette dernière opération a permis de révéler la limite méridionale de l'espace funéraire et d'en estimer l'utilisation entre la fin du V^e et le VI^e s. apr. J.-C., avec un seul niveau de sépulture. Entre sa découverte et les fouilles de 1964, la nécropole a livré un important matériel épigraphique (38 inscriptions) qui se caractérise par l'inscription d'un nom en grandes capitales sur le couvercle du sarcophage (Fig. 9). Le nom est gravé du côté de la tête et occupe toujours le pan de la bâtière tourné vers le sud, excepté pour deux couvercles plats.

L'orientation au sud peut enfin répondre à une volonté de préservation du souvenir épigraphique, vraisemblablement plus protégé du développement de mousses par une exposition méridionale. L'exposition méridionale pourrait également répondre à des enjeux de lisibilité (jeux d'ombre) en dépit d'une taille empirique qui ne favoriserait pourtant pas le clair-obscur recherché dans les pratiques épigraphiques traditionnelles antiques. Cette disposition systématique, valable pour l'ensemble de la nécropole et à laquelle s'ajoute la taille des inscriptions, plaide en faveur de la visibilité de ces dernières, suivant des points de vue particuliers que l'on imagine conformes aux cheminements pris dans l'espace funéraire. Le plan établi par Louis Maurin (Fig. 9) montre des alignements de sarcophages, les tombes étant rassemblées par petits groupes (2 à 5 sarcophages accolés, peut-être plus notamment dans la partie orientale de la fouille, où l'on se trouve en limite de zone). Les

74 Sur le site de Neuvicq-Monguyon, voir MAURIN 1971 (et supra).

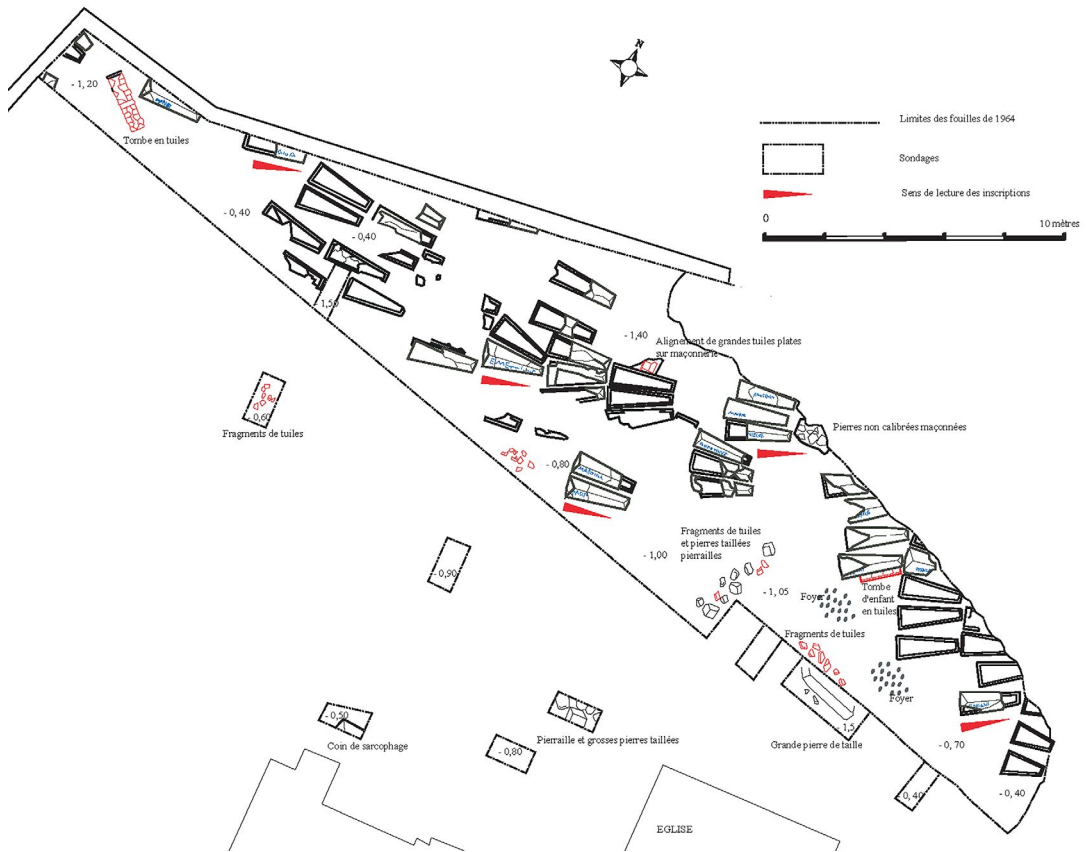


Fig. 9 : Plan archéologique de la nécropole de Neuvicq-Monguyon, fouilles de 1964.

tombes ne se trouvent donc pas toutes immédiatement accessibles. Néanmoins, la dimension des inscriptions permettait leur lecture à une certaine distance (Fig. 10).

Aussi, il n'était pas nécessaire de se trouver au pied du couvercle pour voir et peut-être déchiffrer le nom inscrit, le regard quittait toutefois la ligne d'horizon. Enfin, si l'on réfléchit aux progressions au sein de cet espace funéraire, et si l'on considère l'écrit comme un élément à voir, il semblerait qu'un axe ouest-est ait été privilégié, sa trajectoire étant réservée au sud de la nécropole, les déplacements au nord des groupements de sarcophages ne permettant pas la lecture de ces inscriptions.

Ici, l'écrit, au même titre que la disposition des sépultures, semble bien participer à la construction d'un espace cohérent par les pratiques ou mobilités – déambulation, stationnement – qu'il engage. Les traces de foyers révélées par la fouille montrent par ailleurs que l'aire funéraire pouvait être fréquentée et occupée de diverses manières.⁷⁵ Trancher sur le rôle déterminant de l'écriture dans l'organisa-

75 MAURIN 1971, 158. Sur les 'festins' dans les nécropoles mérovingiennes: EFFROS 2002.



Fig. 10 : Sarcophages en place dans la nécropole de Neuvicq-Monguyon.

tion de l'espace ou au contraire son adaptabilité demeure néanmoins impossible (et serait d'ailleurs inutile). De manière très concrète, il est très difficile pour Neuvicq-Monguyon de proposer un scénario pour la réalisation des épitaphes au regard des temps funéraires autant qu'il est difficile d'établir des phasages dans l'installation des sépultures – taillée avant déposition du sarcophage, *in situ* et à quel moment ? La disparité formelle des inscriptions (en termes de technicité comme de graphie) supposent des réalisations qui ont été le fait de plusieurs mains, tout en respectant un même schéma : une même localisation, une même monumentalité et un même discours, celui d'un nom seul. En dépit de ces traits communs, il est vrai qu'elles nous apparaissent plus naturellement comme « circonstanciées », réalisées au fil des décès,⁷⁶ or force est de reconnaître la difficulté à estimer le laps de temps qui sépare la gravure d'une épitaphe et du monument signal de celle du décès ou encore de la déposition.⁷⁷ A Neuvicq-Monguyon la question est rendue plus épineuse encore en raison d'une réutilisation quasi systématique des sarcophages fouillés en dépit du nom unique qui y était inscrit.⁷⁸ L'inscription a-t-elle été

76 La cohérence entre espace et écriture pourrait néanmoins poser la question d'une réalisation épigraphique dans un même mouvement à la manière finalement de ce que l'on peut rencontrer pour le monde médiéval et certains obituaires lapidaires. L'idée est sans doute anachronique, mais au bout du compte, rien de l'interdit ici.

77 L'effet de synchronie entre le geste d'écriture et l'événement mentionné n'est qu'un écueil du processus éditorial et d'une nécessité à dater l'objet inscrit : les cas d'inscriptions se datant « elles-mêmes » ou induisant une contemporanéité entre réalisation graphique et événement sont en définitive très rares et relève plus souvent de l'épigraphie juridique, où l'inscription vaut publication du droit et donc devient acte même du droit.

78 À Neuvicq, la fouille des sarcophages a montré qu'il pouvait y avoir jusqu'à quatre individus déposés, entraînant des phénomènes de réductions des restes des premiers

réalisée lors d'un premier décès au sein du groupe familial destiné au sarcophage ou à l'inverse marque-t-il à la manière d'un sceau (dont il reprend la croix d'invocation), l'inaliénabilité de la tombe : la fin de ses usages et sa fermeture jusqu'à la fin des temps ?

Peu importe ici, retenons surtout que le plan archéologique rend difficilement compte de la mouvance d'un espace funéraire qui n'aurait toujours été qu'en cours d'écriture jusqu'à son abandon. Il faut signaler ici qu'aucun couvercle anépigraphique n'a été attesté à Neuvicq soulignant là le caractère systématique de l'écriture pour ce type de sépulture, pour le moins dans la zone fouillée : celle-ci peut-être représentative de l'ensemble funéraire (notons néanmoins l'existence de sépulture sous tuiles dans ce même espace) ou au contraire compter comme un espace privilégié au regard d'un ensemble plus étendu. L'écriture se serait établie au grès des inhumations, qu'elles soient primaires ou dernières. Ainsi, le geste et sa trace doivent être corrélées aux diverses pratiques qui se sont exercées dans l'espace funéraire, elles-mêmes déterminées par le sens donné au message inscrit, un sens amené à se transformer au cours du temps et des usages de la sépulture. Concrètement, rien n'interdit que le nom unique inscrit à l'occasion d'un seul décès et relatif à un individu se soit vu doter au fil des réutilisations de la sépulture d'une valeur plus collective, identifiant in fine l'ensemble du groupe inhumé.⁷⁹ A bien des titres, tout est affaire de rétroaction et de mouvements, l'inscription, en tant que signal identifiant de la sépulture et témoin de ces usages, révèle autant qu'elle induit des gestes autour de la sépulture et partant des mobilités dans l'espace d'inhumations, entre commémoration, ritualité et gestion funéraire.

Ces dynamiques, qui reposent sur la qualité communicative de l'épithaphe, participeraient autant à sa structuration, une *scénographie*, qu'elles sont à l'origine d'une *chorégraphie* ou pour le moins de gestes et de mouvements qui servent à la fois la dramaturgie et l'appréhension de la nécropole. Si la part active, motrice et *spectaculaire* des épithaphes a été admirablement soulevée pour les ensembles funéraires tardo-antiques de *Tipasa* (Algérie), à St. Salsa et St. Alexandre dans ses contextes liturgiques,⁸⁰ elle doit être également posée pour tous les ensembles funéraires présentant des traces épigraphiques, même pour les environnements plus modestes, du reste les plus fréquents. Si à Neuvicq, la nature même du site, la partialité de l'espace fouillé et la documentation archéologique disponibles ne permettent nullement de restituer des scénarios aussi convaincants et stimulants que ceux propo-

défunts. Les données de fouilles ne témoignent pas de faits de vidanges: MAURIN 1971, 186–189. Ces réutilisations de sépultures sont très courantes dans la Gaule alto-médiévale (GLEIZE 2015) et sont attestées à maintes endroits dans l'*oecumene* tardo-antique; voir les contributions ARBEITER, ARDELEANU, BIANCHI, CUBAS DÍAZ et GATIER dans ce volume.

79 Pour une discussion sur la relation entre inscription personnelle et nominale et contenu collectif du sarcophage: UBERTI (sous presse).

80 ARDELEANU 2018; pour la part prise par les épithaphes dans les cheminements liturgiques voir aussi les contributions ARBEITER, ARDELEANU et MERTEN dans ce volume.

sés pour St. Salsa en termes de cheminements, l'apparente cohérence de l'ensemble pose pour le moins la question des corrélations entre aménagement du lieu funéraire et inscriptions dans la fabrique d'un lieu funéraire comme lieu inscrit.

Appréhender la nécropole : d'une écologie de l'inscription à l'esprit du lieu

Dans les pages qui précèdent, l'épitaphe a d'abord été considérée au titre de sa dimension matérielle, physique mettant l'accent sur qualités topographiques et visuelles. Dans sa mise en *contextes*, suivant diverses échelles propres au paysage funéraire – la nécropole, le monument, la sépulture – s'établit ainsi une topologie de l'écriture – une étude de ses lieux – mais surtout une écologie de l'inscription – soit ses interactions avec son environnement et tous les composants de cet environnement. Il revient à l'archéologue-épigraphiste de déterminer ces interactions en introduisant les expériences liées à la fréquentation de l'espace funéraire questionné, un espace sans cesse en mouvements. Suivre ce cheminement permet dès lors d'évaluer la part tenue par l'écriture dans un sens global du lieu (*global sense of place*) : soit la manière dont l'écriture participe de l'attachement au lieu et de ses qualités.⁸¹ De ce point de vue, les paysages funéraires tardo-antiques et alto-médiévaux diffèrent bien sûr de leurs précédents antiques : l'écriture n'y est pas *représentée* de la même manière, partant elle n'y est pas perçue et expérimentée également. Posant en 1994 la visibilité de l'écriture comme un élément décisif de la transformation de l'espace en espace écrit (ou plus précisément inscrit), B. Fraenkel dépasse en 2018 l'enjeu de la seule visibilité en posant cette fois-ci l'acte du scripteur, comme un nouvel élément décisif dans cet aménagement de l'environnement.⁸² Le scripteur s'emparerait d'un milieu, par ses déambulations, par le parcours de sa main même dans l'espace élu, par le lieu qui abrite l'exercice graphique. Dans la mise en lien du milieu ambiant – la page, un lieu géographiquement circonscrit – l'anthropologue met également en exergue la part émotionnelle relative à cette expérience de l'espace que l'on inscrit. Retenons de ces approches le visible, l'engagement et l'attachement comme des modalités de transformation du lieu par l'écriture. Et il apparaît à peu près clair que les différences de perspectives entre la nécropole antique

81 MASSEY 1991. Le positionnement de Doreen Massey sur le lieu (*place*), situé dans la lignée des travaux d'Henry Lefebvre (*La production de l'espace*) engage un certain nombre de notions qui permettent d'approcher les mécanismes qui construisent la qualité d'un espace (*placeness*) et donc font lieu: l'événementialité (*eventfulplace*), la sérendipité liée aux fréquentations, la connexion à d'autres lieux, entre autres. Cette approche du lieu est peu ou prou celle retenue dans le *Dictionnaire de la géographie et de l'espace des sociétés* (LÉVY 2003; BERQUE 2003), elle y permet l'élaboration de concept spécifique telle que celui de « lieuité ». Retenons que qu'elle que soit l'angle de vue, (l'espace social ou l'environnement), il s'agit toujours de considérer cette construction de l'espace particulier qu'est le lieu via les relations qui s'y exercent en-lui et par-delà.

82 FRAENKEL 2018.

manifestement inscrite et la nécropole tardo-antique révélant l'inscription tiennent dans les formes de visualité de l'écrit et ses logiques cinétiques. Si poser un constat si généralisant et historicisant est très certainement risqué et pourrait être mise en péril par des études très locales et très documentées, il permet toutefois une chose : c'est peut-être bien en se focalisant sur ces deux phénomènes – visualité et cinétique (allant jusqu'à la kinesthésie) – que s'évalue la part prise par l'épithaphe tant dans l'établissement d'un paysage que dans la fabrique du lieu.⁸³

Maintenant que les logiques d'actions sont posées, revenons-en à la question liminaire : que peut faire l'écriture épigraphique à la nécropole, paysage et lieu ? Si s'emparer du matériel épigraphique de l'Aquitaine tardo-antique relevait de la gageure pour y répondre, le cheminement suivi a permis néanmoins de questionner l'acception/notion jusqu'alors plus souvent statique de « paysage épigraphique » de la même manière qu'elle invite à un léger déplacement conduisant d'un espace écrit qui a marqué l'historiographie (*written space*) vers un lieu écrit (*written place*). Il est apparu que ce paysage funéraire plus ou moins graphique s'établissait avant tout dans une tension entre sa perception et les modalités de son expérience. C'est par ce biais, en offrant et en engageant des actions particulières en son sein de la part du passant/spectateur devenu alors visiteur qu'il se transforme en un lieu. Et c'est bien là que se pose véritablement la capacité de l'écriture à agir dans l'établissement d'un lieu écrit par-delà elle-même. Si le *titulus* constitue en effet un lieu *per se*, en tant qu'il occupe physiquement l'espace, il est aussi l'occasion d'événements dans cet espace, au premier chef celui d'une vision et d'une lecture et avec elle celui d'une remémoration et d'une rencontre avec le défunt. Partant, l'épithaphe participerait au seul titre de cette expérience-événement à l'appropriation de l'espace funéraire et à une manière de l'occuper ; c'est bien ce dont témoigne l'analyse de la nécropole mérovingienne de Neuvicq-Monguyon.

Élément déterminant dans l'attachement à la nécropole, artefact opérant dans les mobilités et partant les rencontres qui peuvent s'y réaliser au-delà et au-dessus d'elle, l'écriture sur la tombe intervient indéniablement dans la qualité du lieu (*placeness*), et intervient d'une certaine manière comme l'une de ses idiosyncrasies. Dès lors, que les écritures s'y accumulent ou s'y montrent plus sporadiques, définitivement la nécropole devient autant lieu funéraire que lieu écrit, entérinant le sens mémoriel de son *milieu*. Dans la connexion que l'épithaphe réalise entre morts et vivants, dans l'évocation donc d'un au-delà – autre lieu – elle contribue à la spécificité du lieu nécropole et à son ambivalence. Le sens global du lieu (*global sense of place*), autrement dit sa spécificité, se construit aussi dans la potentialité des relations d'un lieu donné avec d'autres lieux.⁸⁴ Dès lors, la perspective écologique

83 L'usage du terme « lieu » n'est pas neutre du côté de la géographie et le détour vers la discipline en vaut la peine: voir supra.

84 MASSEY 1991 : le global du '*global sense of place*' s'entend aussi au titre d'une globalisation propre au monde contemporain et aux interconnexions entre lieux même éloignés.

qui n'a été posée jusqu'ici qu'au ras du sol s'ouvre vers l'au-delà : une écologie de l'épithaphe ne saurait être complète autrement. A cet égard, la mise à plat de l'écriture force une relation intime, au mort et à ses lieux, de la nécropole aux cieux. En portant le regard à *terre*, l'attention n'est plus divertie, la sensibilité n'admettant qu'un seul plan, une surface retranchée, une seule présence favorisant ainsi une intériorité dont on retrouve les échos dans la spiritualité chrétienne tardo-antique.

Conclusion

La *place* prise par l'écriture dans les espaces funéraires tardo-antique et alto-médiévaux du Sud-Ouest gaulois apparaît d'abord symptomatique de tendances partagées avec d'autres régions de l'Empire : horizontalité, plus grande proximité à la sépulture, sélectivité de la mémoire épigraphique tant en raison de ses dispositifs visuels que son accessibilité, caractère exceptionnel de la pratique. Cette mise en retrait de l'écriture participent bien entendu à la transformation et redéfinition du paysage funéraire Aquitain dans l'Antiquité tardive dans la mesure où elle s'y installe autrement et moins que durant les siècles précédents. Si le souvenir épigraphique semble continuer à s'exposer plus souvent à l'extérieur, participant toujours du paysage – les cas d'inscriptions funéraires découverts au sein du sanctuaire sont exceptionnels – et s'il l'on doit convenir du maintien mesurée d'une épigraphie monumentale, de façade, l'inscription tend bel et bien à se soustraire au regard du flâneur. L'écriture s'abaisse, se rapproche du sol et de la terre, et partant du corps. A ce titre, les nombreux couvercles de sarcophages inscrits découverts dans la région accusent encore un peu plus cette plus grande proximité au corps puisque l'écriture s'y trouve alors gravée à même le contenant des restes du défunt. Lieu de rencontre entre mort et vivant, entre vivants, occupant une situation particulière dans son environnement, l'épithaphe intervient bien comme l'une des signes des manières d'être dans et à l'espace funéraire et à la sépulture. Dès lors, phénomène de réutilisation, relation de sépultures épigraphes aux sépultures anépigraphes, organisation de l'espace funéraire, doivent systématiquement être appréhendées en comptant l'écriture non pas au titre d'un composant anecdotique servant l'identification d'une sépulture (ou réjouissant l'épigraphiste) mais bien comme un composant en relation avec tout son environnement, les acteurs qui s'y meuvent et les événements qui s'y déroulent. Par sa présence dans la nécropole, l'écriture a toujours partie liée aux actes qui *ont lieu*.

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Abstracts

ACHIM ARBEITER

Bestattung und Kommemoratio n im frühchristlichen Hispanien

Materielle, ikonographische und inschriftliche Aspekte

Abstract The present contribution sets out to provide a panoramic overview of Hispanic funerary spaces and burial habits. Its chronological frame includes the whole of Late Antiquity (4th to 7th, but especially the 5th and 6th c. AD) and it takes into account a wide range of social groups, most of which were progressively christianized. The only painful lacuna in this panorama consists of the Visigothic royal tombs, as it is still impossible, unfortunately, to describe their local and formal characteristics. The most spectacular and earliest testimonies of the transition to Christianity are the City-of-Rome type sarcophagi with their figurative reliefs, followed by clearly autochthonous pieces and by other imported examples from North Africa and Gaul. Of course, all of these decorated sarcophagi are overwhelmingly outnumbered by (nearly) undecorated monolithic containers of local production. At the same time, mausolea continued to serve as accommodation for privileged burials. Although the old custom of celebrating funerary meals was censured by the Church, its traces can be detected at several places. Occasional efforts to prohibit interments within church buildings remained largely ineffective. The ancient prohibition to bury the dead within the urban *pomerium* gradually grew weaker, also on the Iberian Peninsula, from the 5th c. AD onwards. The materiality of the inhumations, which normally have a west-east orientation, tangibly illustrates the manifold levels of society, spanning from extreme poverty to noticeably elaborate constructions or even to the use of sarcophagi. Secondary burial was a common phenomenon. The inventory of personal outfits and dedicated depots ranges from many ordinary objects to some exceptionally rare findings of outstanding character. Beyond the individual case of a psalmic inscription found inside a tomb, which was restricted to the defunct person's 'privacy', there are countless epigraphic and iconographic messages. The most prominent may be the funerary mosaics, including figurative examples. The funerary mosaics, the tombs decorated with *opus signinum* or inscribed slabs, as well as the visible lids of sunken sarcophagi, raise a special question: did these funerary monuments preserve the general floor level, or did they extend above the surface? Sometimes, the latter seems to be the case, as the evidence from different monuments suggests. As an illustration of especially instructive Hispanic sepulchral inscriptions, examples from Mértola (*Lusitania*) are presented. The paper ends with a discussion of the Pascentius epitaph from Torrebaja (Badajoz), extraordinarily rich in content.

Keywords Late Antique *Hispaniae*, funerary monuments, iconography, epitaphs, commemorative practices, burial

STEFAN ARDELEANU

Materializing Death in Late Antique North Africa

Epitaphs, Burial Types and Rituals in Changing Funerary Landscapes

Abstract This contribution gives an updated overview of funerary habits and epigraphy in Late Antique North Africa. It covers a vast geographical area incorporating the provinces of *Africa Proconsularis*, *Byzacena*, *Numidia Militana*, *Numidia Cirtensis*, *Mauretania Caesariensis* and *Mauretania Sitifensis*. After Italy, North Africa has by far the highest number of preserved Late Antique epitaphs in the West, and in some regions (including rural areas) the abundance of epigraphic material can be taken as evidence for a veritable revival of written self-representation in funerary contexts. After a general decrease of epitaphs – still poorly understood – during the later 3rd and the 4th c. AD, many regions saw remarkable peaks in numbers in the 5th and 6th c. AD. This may be connected to general trends of economic and demographic stability, as well as to the spread of the popular martyr cults. At the same time, ‘interiorized inscriptions’ and ‘closed’ funerary spaces, but also ‘hidden’ epigraphic representation gained relevance, while the habit to express professions and offices was nearly totally abandoned (except for the military and the clerical milieu). Individual and familial funerary representation, however, was still practiced alongside the generally growing trend of collective representation in ‘homogenous’ epitaphs and funerary iconography.

The emphasis of this chapter is on the materiality of epitaphs, their integration in commemorative funerary rituals and the mutual interconnectedness between new developments in funerary customs, tomb types and epigraphic tomb signaling. The role of tombs as markers of social distinction in a period of transforming urban landscapes is analyzed by discussing several local case studies. Although many micro-regional differences in funerary practices can be traced, North Africa also shared multiple similarities with the Western and Central Mediterranean. Attentive analysis of the epitaphs’ materiality, their original spatial setting, their iconography and their visibility allows for reconstructions of social hierarchies, of liturgical movement and of their perception within these transforming funerary landscapes.

Keywords North Africa, funerary epigraphy, commemorative rituals, Late Antique tomb types, social hierarchies

CLAUDIA NAUERTH

Traditionelle Elemente in der christlichen Grabkultur Ägyptens

Abstract This paper presents an interpretation of some Late Antique grave stelae from Egypt, in particular from the Fayyum. There are signs of remarkable changes in the funerary culture of Late Antique Egypt. This contribution focusses on traditional elements of funerary iconography and their transferal to a Christian context. Prime examples include the Egyptian 'Anch', the hieroglyph for 'life' consisting of a T surmounted by a loop, reused as a form of the cross; the 'Orans' figure; and the mother-and-child-group, serving as a model for both the goddess Isis lactans with Harpokrates and for Maria as mother of Jesus.

Keywords Late Antique burial habits, Fayyum, funerary stelae, iconography and epitaphs, anch, orans, mother-and-child-group

DAVIDE BIANCHI

Funerary Customs in Sacred Spaces

Privileged and Monastic Burials in the Provinces of *Palaestina* and *Arabia*

Abstract The aim of this paper is to reflect on the relationship between burials and sacred spaces in the provinces of *Palaestina* and *Arabia*. Some peculiar case studies in monastic and rural contexts will be analysed, taking into account their typology, their arrangement in the built environment and their relation with the surrounding architectural space. Moreover, the key patterns of funerary customs in the regions under examination will be defined, considering the number of people buried in individual or collective tombs, the funerary objects and the epigraphic records.

A holistic approach, involving many disciplines related to funerary research, will therefore be undertaken. Particular attention will be paid to the results of bio-archaeological analysis of skeletal remains found in the burials of the *coenobia* of Mt Nebo and St Lot at Deir 'Ain 'Abata, in order to better understand the identities of the deceased. Epigraphical analysis of mosaic epitaphs in the monastery of Kyria Maria at Scythopolis-Beth Shean will be used to study familial burials in the Palestinian ecclesiastical context. A reflection on funerary goods will be applied to the tombs found in the churches at Umm er-Rasas in order to define the sepulchral habits of the local elite and the commemorative practices for their deceased.

Keywords Privileged burials, monasticism, funerary goods, bio-archaeological analysis, funerary epigraphy, *pellaikon* tombs

PIERRE-LOUIS GATIER

**L'épigraphie et les pratiques funéraires dans la province
protobyzantine d'Arabie (IV^e–VII^e s. apr. J.-C.)**

Abstract During the Early Byzantine period (4th–7th c. AD) the funerary epigraphy of the *Provincia Arabia* saw a very strong decrease in terms of quantity and content, in contrast to developments further south (in *Palaestina Tertia*, the country of Moab, Zoora and the Negev). First of all, stelae became rare in *Arabia*. Subsequently, in the course of the 4th and at the beginning of the 5th c. AD, inscriptions of foundation or ownership of tombs diminished in number. This is particularly obvious in the Hauran, the northern part of the province, where funerary epigraphy had been flourishing during the Roman Imperial period, and where epigrams were still frequent on 4th c. AD tombs. Although a slight revival of funerary stelae apparently took place in the 6th c. AD, this downward trend continued until the complete disappearance of Christian funerary epigraphy in the Early Islamic period. All of the scarce funerary inscriptions from the Early Byzantine period we possess are christianized, either by engraved crosses or by Christian formulas. New practices also appeared. Anepigraphic stelae, simply decorated with crosses, became common in necropolises; offerings were made to Christian shrines for the rest of the deceased, while the rest of the dead were usually buried elsewhere; privileged tombs, finally, were built in or next to certain churches, the clergy and elite families being the main beneficiaries of these privileged tombs.

Keywords *Provincia Arabia*, Jordan, Syria, Hauran, Early Byzantine period, Greek inscriptions, Aramaic inscriptions, tombs, funerary epigraphy, Christianization

SYLVAIN DESTEPHEN

The Funerary Epigraphic Landscape of Late Antique *Asia Minor*

Abstract The conversion of *Asia Minor* to Christianity is a long-lasting process spanning several centuries, from the 1st to 6th c. AD. As written sources only provide episodic and fragmentary evidence, the spread of the new religion, albeit thoroughly studied, is still a complex phenomenon. Fortunately, however, we have a large amount of funerary inscriptions at our disposal, preserved throughout *Asia Minor* (especially in inner Anatolia, but also in some coastal necropoleis). Although less abundant than in the early Roman period, Late Antique epigraphic material in *Asia Minor* clearly reveals how Christianity influenced the phrasing, decoration

and, above all, self-representation of individuals and families, who displayed and claimed a denominational affiliation.

Keywords epitaphs, epigraphic habit, Late Antiquity, Christianisation, funerary *formulae*, *Asia Minor*

JON C. CUBAS DÍAZ

Burying between *Lamos* and *Kalykadnos*

The Many Faces of the Late Antique Funerary Landscapes of Eastern Rough Cilicia

Abstract This paper deals with the funerary culture of Rough Cilicia in Late Antiquity. The settlements discussed offer an insight into the multifaceted funerary landscapes of Late Antique Rough Cilicia, which present a strongly nuanced diversity. Furthermore, these settlements clearly show the potential of combining archaeological and epigraphic approaches when analysing evidence of mortuary practices.

The Jewish and Christian communities of *Korykos* obviously shared similar ideas regarding the conception, use and function of funerary monuments. The epitaphs produced for Christian and Jewish citizens were similar in format, structure, content and design; so were the funerary monuments and their spatial setting. Also, iconographic representations of religious motifs were an integral part of funerary monuments of Christians and Jews alike.

In many necropoleis, proximity to the street remained a decisive factor in the spatial organization and design of funerary spaces. Under the influence of Christianity, church buildings became another central factor in the spatial layout of funerary monuments. This supra-regional phenomenon is clearly noticeable in Rough Cilicia: burial zones in Late Antiquity were often accentuated by church buildings, exercising great power in attracting burials. At the same time, commemorative structures change through spatial relocation of practices to church buildings and the new role of the entire community as the primary target group.

Contemporaneously, alternative concepts for funerary spaces, following standards of their own, were developed and practiced in other settlements in the region, like Karakabaklı. The inhabitants of this affluent, but also quite modestly sized community built their funerary monuments in the immediate vicinity of their houses, far away from the main road. A comparison with contemporary findings from the nearby settlement of Işıkkale is particularly noteworthy in this context, since radically different concepts were pursued there in more than one instance.

Keywords burials, mortuary practices, epitaphs, epigraphy, funerary monuments

JEREMY OTT

Burying at Corinth in Late Antiquity

Evidence from the Late 5th to the Early 7th Century

Abstract Corinth possesses one of the most extensive bodies of archaeological evidence for Late Antique burial practices within the territory of modern Greece. This paper examines the burials of the late 5th to early 7th c. AD, a time of major urban and religious change. Throughout much of this period, land near Corinth's old northern cemetery remained in heavy use for burial, while a new, contracted Late Antique city wall drew graves, often in small clusters, to its periphery. Two 6th c. AD cemetery basilicas attracted burials of the Christian elite, while additional holy sites might be associated with the graves of a broader spectrum of society. Elements of the mortuary sphere of the 5th c. AD endured, with modifications, to the early 7th c. AD. Ceramics, which are usually to be associated with the graveside anointing of the body, were deposited in less than half of graves, and in the 6th c. AD the lekythos became one of the most frequently deposited vessels alongside pitchers. Lamps continued to be widely employed at the funeral and in subsequent commemoration. Vaulted chamber tombs, constructed using masonry or rock-cut, became a popular, and costly, tomb type from the 6th to early 7th c. AD, joining the cist and tile graves already in use. Corinth's epitaphs, which were usually produced for built or rock-cut tombs, are distinctive in the details of tomb purchase sometimes included, and served largely as statements of ownership of mortuary real estate. For epitaphs and, to a lesser degree, the use of rock-cut tombs, a Corinthian influence is visible within the northeast Peloponnese. More broadly, Corinth compares well in its mortuary traditions to cities throughout the province of *Achaëa*, while standing apart from most smaller communities in the wide range of its tomb types and the presence of an upper level of highly ornate tomb construction.

Keywords Corinth, Greece, Early Byzantine cemeteries, mortuary archaeology

JULIA VALEVA

**Architecture and Decoration of Late Antique Tombs
in the Diocese of *Thracia* and Eastern *Illyricum***

Abstract The aim of this article is to present a survey of the funerary monuments commissioned by the members of the well-to-do strata of Late Antique society in the Balkan provinces of the Roman Empire, with regard to both architecture and decoration. While this scope may prove ambitious, an attempt to give an idea of the cultural phenomena and developing ideas, ideals and art forms in this broad region of the empire, which has its general idiosyncrasy notwithstanding inevitable local peculiarities, seems nevertheless well-timed. The monuments are innumerable,

and the relevant publications countless as well – mostly summaries focused on the monuments in a specific modern country. In this article the emphasis is laid on the evidence from Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, and North Macedonia. The funerary monuments of Hungary are also discussed because of the shifts in the administrative policy of the Empire, and, importantly, because of their intermediary place between the funerary customs and art of Rome/Italy and the Balkans. Therefore, the chosen method is to describe some main architectural types and iconographies of the funerary monuments, rather than to comment on the achievements and the shortcomings of their publication and interpretation. This contribution, brief as it may be, should be considered as an invitation to scholars working in the field of funerary contexts to consider the evidence from the Balkan provinces, recognizing its characteristics and differentiating, if possible, between the local traditions and the influences coming from both East and West.

Keywords Balkan provinces of the Roman Empire, Late Roman funerary architecture, Late Antique iconography, Roman mausolea, mausolea in private estates, *martyria*.

DONATELLA NUZZO

Le iscrizioni sepolcrali della provincia *Apulia et Calabria* in età tardoantica (IV–VII s. d.C.)

Abstract The aim of this paper is to survey the funerary epigraphic landscape of *Apulia et Calabria* in Late Antiquity (here a ‘long’ Late Antiquity) until the middle of 7th c. AD. As in the other Eastern and Western provinces, the quantity of attested inscriptions drastically decreased compared to the 1st and 2nd c. AD. In addition, the Late Antique epigraphic documentation in *Apulia et Calabria* appears to be concentrated only in some cities of the middle and central area of the *provincia* (especially *Luceria*, *Canusium* and *Venusia*), while in rural areas it seems to be totally absent. Most of the Late Antique funerary inscriptions collected in *Apulia et Calabria* are Jewish, and were found in the important Venosa catacombs; but there are also a lot of epitaphs by Christians. In the paper some aspects of these inscriptions are considered: distribution, chronology, epigraphic supports, *formulae*, language and associated funerary contexts. The use of the epigraphic medium in the funerary habit appears to be related only to the local *élites* – both Christian and Jewish – that were able to equip their tombs with epitaphs. The qualitative level, however, is not always high: a lot of inscriptions are carved into local stone slabs, rather than – only in very rare cases – on marble. *Tituli picti* constitute the most numerous category within the epigraphic documentation.

Keywords Funerary inscriptions, Late Antique cemeteries, *provincia Apulia et Calabria*, Christian and Jewish communities, hypogaea

NORBERT ZIMMERMANN

Die römischen Katakomben

Überlegungen zu Besitzverhältnissen, zur räumlichen Nutzung und zur Grabtypologie anhand der Katakomben Domitilla, SS. Marcellino e Pietro und Randanini

Abstract This contribution about the funerary landscapes of Rome's catacombs seeks to introduce the reader to some general characteristics of the catacombs, and to draw attention to the archaeological framework in which inscriptions were embedded in this particular type of funerary monuments. The paper will discuss the juridical and economic preconditions that led to the development of the funerary system of catacombs. Who were the owners of the catacombs? Who owned the tombs within the catacombs, and how were they purchased? How was tomb ownership articulated (or not articulated)? In order to answer these questions this contribution will first address general issues concerning ownership in the Roman catacombs (plots, funerary spaces, tombs), use of space within sepulchral areas and different burial types. Depending on certain local preconditions in a given catacomb, such as the quality of the tufa and the different working traditions of the *fossore*s (gravediggers), it is possible to identify archaeological evidence for several hardly known characteristics of funerary practices within the catacombs. On the one hand, the comparison of certain catacombs allows us to trace some general developments in the evolution from early, small-scaled complexes of the 3rd c. AD to huge necropoleis of the 4th c. AD. On the other hand, significant differences can be observed between *coemeteria* predominantly used by Christians and those predominantly used by Jews. The examples discussed in this contribution include the Christian catacombs of Domitilla and SS. Marcellino e Pietro, as well as the Jewish catacomb of Vigna Randanini. The paper will focus on the characterization of these catacombs from an explicitly archaeological perspective, which includes the positioning and materiality of funerary inscriptions, largely leaving their content aside.

Keywords Roman catacombs, tomb typology, ownership of tombs, funerary plots, collective tombs, *fossore*s, collective necropoleis

ANTONIO ENRICO FELLE

Paesaggi epigrafici nelle necropoli della Roma tardoantica

Alcuni casi esemplari per una 'epigrafia archeologica'

Abstract Of the inscriptions in the catacombs of Rome, a large majority still exists in its original context. This offers an exceptional opportunity to consider all characteristics of these 'written monuments' (material composition, execution techniques, writing types, textual content and the presence of images) in relation to their re-

spective contexts. The amount and quality of the inscriptions (not exclusively epitaphs: also funerary graffiti and Damasus' *elogia martyrum*) define different 'epigraphic landscapes' within the catacombs, that obviously change along their *longue durée*, from the very beginnings (in the last decades of 2nd c. AD) to the last burials (in the 5th c. AD).

The case-study considered here is the epigraphic dossier of the Domitilla catacomb, the largest funerary complex in the *suburbium* of Rome in Late Antiquity. Its quantitatively and qualitatively rich 'epigraphic landscape' could offer new insights into the history and development of the catacomb, but also help to investigate the actual management of a Christian collective and/or communitarian funerary complex in Late Antique Rome.

Keywords Late Antique Rome, Christian Catacombs, Epigraphy by Christians, Epigraphic Archaeology

FULVIA MAINARDIS

Luoghi, monumenti, epigraphic habit

Note sulle necropoli tardoantiche della parte orientale della *Venetia* et *Histria*

Abstract The paper examines the Late Antique funerary landscape and its epigraphic record in the towns of Eastern *Venetia* (*Aquileia*, *Iulia Concordia*, *Tergeste*, *Iulium Carnicum*, *Forum Iulii*). Some cases are studied to outline the materiality of the region's epigraphic culture and its relation with the topography of preexisting cemeteries. Unfortunately, for several contexts (even important ones like *Aquileia*) the reconstruction can only be fragmentary, due to the effects of spoliation and reuse that have completely uprooted the ancient contexts. Several cases of continuity with the burial grounds of the Imperial period are evident, as well as a small number of tombs that cannot immediately be attributed to the new religion, according to the taphonomic choices.

Keywords *Venetia* orientale, *Aquileia*, *Iulia Concordia*, *Tergeste*, *Iulium Carnicum*, *Forum Iulii*, epigrafia funeraria tardoantica, necropoli

ROLAND PRIEN

Shifting Burial Rites – Shifting Identities?

Late Antique Burial Practices on the Rhine Frontier

Abstract Numerous Late Antique burials are known from the urban and rural sites along the Rhine border and throughout its hinterland. The Palatinate offers an especially vast range of archaeological material. Until now, however, this extensive material has mostly been the subject of chronological studies or has, on rare occasions, been discussed with regards to the ethnic identity of those buried. The actual burial rites and grave contents, as well as further aspects of the cult of the dead, have most often not been considered. The extensive material sources certainly allow for deep insights into Late Antique burial practices in a border region of the Roman Empire, which was exposed to various cultural influences and whose emerging ‘border society’ became a model for the burial customs of the early Middle Ages. This paper gives a brief overview of selected burial grounds from towns and *villae* along the Upper and Lower Rhine. Due to the absence of structures above ground, it focuses on the grave goods and their possible functions within burial rites.

Keywords Burial Rites, Late Antiquity, *Germania*, Ethnic Identities, Christianisation

JONAS OSNABRÜGGE

Transformation und Verschwinden

Inschriften in der Funerärkultur an Oberrhein und südlichem Mittelrhein in Spätantike und Frühmittelalter

Abstract Epigraphic and funerary culture along the Upper Rhine Valley underwent many changes in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages. While several hundred funerary inscriptions from the 1st to 3rd c. AD are known to us, the amount of newly erected epitaphs sank rapidly during the 4th c. AD, all but disappearing from the cities and the countryside. Even from larger cities, almost no funerary inscriptions are known, while at the same time, the area features many richly furnished burials. During this time, a large amount of inscribed funerary monuments disappeared from public view, being used to build the Late Antique city walls of numerous cities in the Rhine Valley.

On the other hand, apart from this abrupt end of the epitaphic habit, some areas show signs of continuity, especially when taking the area along the Middle Rhine into consideration. This continuity went along with a transformation of the epitaphs’ external and internal form. The content of the inscriptions and the letter forms changed, and so did the monuments, along with the way they were positioned. A closer inspection of the so far largely neglected lateral sides of the epitaphs offers new information about their positioning, possibly in so far unknown

burial buildings, as well as on the re-use of earlier funerary monuments. Some decorative aspects of the later epitaphs might even consciously emulate earlier forms from the same places.

The aim of this paper is to trace the local developments of the epitaphic culture during Late Antiquity, contrasting the relatively inscription-rich area to the north with the almost empty south. A possible explanation for the scarce evidence in the south, other than a general decline of epigraphic culture, might be found in a low activity of Christian communities and the nearly total absence of burial in collectively used funerary buildings, which offered an attractive context for epigraphic communication in other areas.

Keywords Epitaphic Culture, Late Antiquity, Funerary Inscriptions, *Germania*, Upper Rhine Valley

HILTRUD MERTEN

Christliche Bestattungskultur in Spätantike und Frühmittelalter am Beispiel von St. Maximin in Trier

Abstract Early Christian grave inscriptions are among the most important sources which provide us with an insight into life and death in Late Antique Trier. The number of inscriptions is high, consisting of about 1 300 individual items. In comparison: more than 42 000 Christian inscriptions of the Late Antique period are known from Rome, about 4 000 from Carthage. The numerical proportions show the importance of the Christian community at Trier. These epigraphic sources offer a reliable basis for an investigation into the social structure of the Christian community and church organisation, as well as into the development of church and society after the collapse of the Roman Empire.

Christian funerary culture can be illustrated impressively by the example of a 4th c. AD cemetery basilica discovered on the site of the later abbey of St Maximin. Size and equipment of the building suggest that the Christian community was protected by the imperial court residing in Trier. Nearly 1 000 sarcophagi, the high-quality of the inscriptions and the fact that the dead were dressed in precious robes indicate that the persons buried were members of the upper social classes.

Members of the high society were predominantly buried near the graves of saints. These tombs, enjoying the powerful protection of bishops venerated as saints, can be found on both the northern (St Maximin/St Paulin) and the southern cemetery (St Matthias).

After the fall of the Roman Empire, the holy tombs continued to retain their attraction. The example of St Maximin shows that burials in the funeral hall continued to be of the same social class. Funeral rites, however, changed, as noble and wealthy Franconian families provided their dead with precious jewellery instead

of sumptuous clothing. Concerning Christian funerary culture, the transition from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages did not result in a rupture but proceeded gradually.

Keywords Early Christian epitaphs, cemetery basilica, Late Antique textiles, inhumation *ad sanctos*, change of burial practices.

MORGANE UBERTI

Les épitaphes en leur *milieu*

Remarques à partir du matériel épigraphique de l'Aquitaine tardo-antique et alto-médiévale

Abstract Based on the study of some Late Antique and Early Medieval epitaphs from Southwestern Gaul, the article asks the following question: How did inscriptions shape funerary spaces and how did they work/act within these spaces, if we consider them as spaces of social practices? In other words, what do they 'offer' (if we consider the concept of 'affordance')? It is therefore no longer appropriate to determine the epigraphic gesture, neither appreciate its communicative value, but to analyze dynamics driven by epitaphs in the experience and the making of place, in this case the necropolis, insofar it physically inhabits it. In which way do epitaphs affect their surrounding space, what does this space, because it is visited, affect it in terms of uses and meanings? How are the relationships set up between the epitaph and its environment and all that composes it (other tombs, visitors, landscape) over time? In this respect, archaeological approach is an adequate mode of investigation since it allows looking back at the evolution of space and its component over time.

After a short presentation of epigraphic habits in the Late Antique provinces of *Aquitania* and *Novempopulania* in order to fit epitaphs into their local writing context, the paper focusses on spatial dynamics at work in the funerary space as a landscape and a place of experience, drawing on few cases study from *Aquitania*. If the whole fails to capture the portrait of *one* specific funerary epigraphic habit in *Aquitania*, it raises the question of processes both visual and kinetics in changing the perception of a funerary space to a written place, and so the role played by inscriptions in the making of 'placeness'. Thus, funerary inscriptions from Southwestern Gaul are an opportunity to explore a way of approaching the epigraphic material in its *milieu*, that is, an ecology of inscriptions.

Keywords Late Antique epigraphy, South Western Gaul, necropoleis, visuality, motions, placeness, burial practices

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