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. 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. 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).

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 Mohedine 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 To these numbers, several hundred unpublished Late Antique epitaphs in the garden of Carthage’s Byrsa museum have to be added.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.
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. 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. 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. Provincial and municipal administration – as many civic inscriptions of the later 4th c. AD show – was still fairly efficient. At the same time, urban life, as in other regions in the West, underwent profound transformation: some towns shrank drastically, others maintained their previous extension or continued to grow. Many cities were equipped with defenses, new urban nuclei developed ubiquitously. Some 350 churches are known from North Africa, a showcase area of Early Christian sacred
Especially those shrines dedicated to the new urban patrons, the martyrs, became the new *foci* of many urban communities. 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. Since Duval’s article from 1988, nearly 1000 new Late Antique epitaphs were published, scattered in a confusing mass of single articles and monographs. 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).

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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.
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. 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, 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. 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. In 1995, C. Galvão-Sobrinho

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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, Maetutaris, Carthage, Leptiminus) and dates with Vandal regnal years (Madauros, Theveste, Ammaedara, El Erg, Onuissia, 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 laterally 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.

20 Duval 1988, 300–303; Bejaoui 2015, 58–86.
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/Bejaoui 2011; new Byzantine epitaphs: Baratte/Bejaoui 2009.
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: Bejaoui 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, 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. 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. The majority of building and dedicatory inscriptions from churches, however, stems from buildings with a clearly funerary character as their primary function. The growing importance of commemorative representation through funerary epigraphy, observed also in other Western provinces during the 5th c. AD, 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. The first burials in churches are dated to the later 4th c. AD (Sittifes, Hippo, Theveste) and, from then on, this new habit spread unstoppably across North Africa. In total, 170 churches with a partly or primarily funerary function are known (Fig. 3). 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,

27 Monceaux 1908; Berthier 1942; Hamdoune 2011; Bejaoui 2015; Bejaoui 2016; Hamdoune 2016.
28 E.g. Hr. Sokrine (Bejaoui 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.
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.
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. 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’. 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. 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 Knisia, 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, Hadrumetum, 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. 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.
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 cloisonné 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.
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 necropoleis, 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 burial 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).\(^{38}\)

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38 Ardeleanu 2018, 478–497; Ardeleanu (in press).
Tipasa’s civic elites seem to have preferred autonomous mausolea and *areae* in Matarè 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 extra-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, 314 f.; Fiocchi Nicolai 2016, 626; for the other two clerical epitaphs, the provenience is unknown: Kadra 1989a; Kadra 1989b; Bockmann 2013, 219–222; Byzantine military epitaphs: ILAlg I, 3433–3434.

\(^{40}\) Duval/Prévote 1975; Baratte/Bejaoui 2009; Baratte/Bejaoui 2011; Rocca/Bejaoui 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.


\(^{43}\) Ardeleanu 2019, 411–424 (Chevillot), 424–430 (Borgeaud).

\(^{44}\) Tipasa (perhaps ‘municipal’ *areae*): Ardeleanu 2018, 492 f. figs. 3, 7; Stifts, 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 (ffratres); Ammaedara, ‘monument VII’: Baratte et al. 2014, 327; Acholla (familial burial area, relatives as dedicators), Hadrumetum, Carthage: Duval 2003, 763; Leptiminus (elite in ‘catacombs’):
Materializing Death in Late Antique North Africa

naling followed ‘egalitarian’ patterns (similar materials, formulae, iconography), whereas in Cartennae, Acholla and Leptiminus both collective identity and individual portraiture were displayed in epitaphs. Although they could be attached to churches (Ammædara II), these areae ‘rivaled’ 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: IL.Tun 1179,1, 1179,4.

Duval 1976, 62; Duval 2003; Ben Lazreg et al. 2006, 365; Ben Lazreg 202. 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). 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. In Demna and Uppenna tomb markers show great uniformity in ornament, formulae and symbols, signs of a non-hierarchic, ‘egalitarian’ representation. New evidence from Bulla Regia shows that Christian communities – contubernia Christianorum – were responsible for and paid for the production of epitaphs for some members, but it is still debated to what extent the African church itself owned and organized cemeteries. Individual representation, however, was still possible within these trends. Portraiture, rich clothing and narrative scenes appear on epitaphs in burial churches. Also, a clear family-bound representation is evident in the mosaics: some epitaphs refer to professions and offices in their texts and iconography. 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 Quattrochi.


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, 93 f.; Terry 96, 103, 105, 113, 116; Horrea Caelia: Ghalla 1998, 114 f.

51 Sitifis I: AE 1966, 552 (mater fecit); Bou Kaben, burial church (Caii Iulii; filius, relatives, heredes as dedicators): ILC 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. 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). *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.](image)

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.

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*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, Ammadedara, Choud el-Batel, Carthage, Furni, Uppenna*) had a wide distribution in Late Antiquity.

*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*. 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. 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.

Outright destruction and superimposing multiple tombs were not uncommon in order to create physical proximity to the saints. While it is well-known that the most privileged burial spots, such as apses or choirs, 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 (Bejaoui 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).
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.
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. 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. On the other hand, only very few clerical epitaphs

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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. 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). Only recently, some proper stratigraphic excavations in Late Antique cemeteries and burial churches have been undertaken. 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. 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. 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

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).


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

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


from associated graves in Carthage,\textsuperscript{72} in Ti-
pasa, Thabraca, Uppenna and Ammaedara up to seven burials were recorded in a sin-
gle tomb marked by one epitaph.\textsuperscript{73} One has to ask, therefore, to which individual an epi-
taph 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 suc-
cessive epitaphs installed over the very same container (Fig. 10).\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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, Su-
san T. Stevens’ studies at Carthage show that unmarked tombs were used in verti-
cbral burial stacks for sequential and familial burial up to four times.\textsuperscript{76} Cemeteries in Sitifis and the Tell had ‘ephemeral’ anepigraphic markers: stone and earth mounds, tiles with crosses and ‘carreaux de terre cuite’.\textsuperscript{77}

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

\textsuperscript{72} Stevens/Garrison/Freed 2009, 43–72.
\textsuperscript{73} Lancel 1997, 808; Terry 52; Downs 2007, 113, 471, 510–512; Baratte/Bejaoui 2011, 172.
\textsuperscript{74} AE 1958, 148a, b; first Supserik and his coniux Germana were interred (signaled by a mo-
saic 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.
\textsuperscript{75} E.g. Carthage, Bir el Knissia: Stevens 2008, 83; Demna: Yasin 2009, fig. 2.18.
\textsuperscript{76} Stevens/Kalinowski/Van der Leest 2005, 477; Stevens/Garrison/Freed 2009; cf. Eger 2012, 83f.
\textsuperscript{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*. 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. 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. 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. 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).


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 δ15N 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.
Late Antique funerary mensa
Teminus, 'mensa' on Late Antique epitaph
Imperial-period mensa
Funerary mensa in church

Late Antique capsa, 'caisson'
Imperial-period capsa
Late Antique stela/araula
Late Antique inscribed sarcophagus
Catacomb, funerary crypt/gallery

Mausoleum (new and reused)
Drum tomb with chapel/tumulus
Funerary chapel (no church)

Hypogaeum (new and reused)

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, Sittifis, 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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{84} There are isolated cases in Sittifensis, Numidia, central and Western,\textsuperscript{85} as well as Eastern Proconsularis.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{87} Epitaphs were also placed on the coffins’ long front,\textsuperscript{88} or on lateral sides.\textsuperscript{89}

\textsuperscript{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).

\textsuperscript{83} Wooden and lead coffins are attested from the Djeddars, Ruscucuru, Tipasa, Bou Takrematen, Thabraca (8x lead), Bulla Regia, Macctaris, 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.


\textsuperscript{86} Numerous in Carthage, few in Demna and Naro: Mahjoubi 1978, 422; Dresken-Weiland 2003, 405–409.

\textsuperscript{87} Caesarea: AE 1983, 984; Tipasa: Ardeleanu 2018, nos. 21, 25, 26, 34, 37, 46, 47, 61 (lids’ upper sides), 35, 36 (lids’ lateral side); Theveste (lids’ upper sides): AE 1995, 1740, 1748, 1751, 1752 (stone); ILAlg I, 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?).

\textsuperscript{88} 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.\textsuperscript{90} Inscribed sarcophagi reacted to new installations in areae, churches and mausolea, since only their epitaphs were visible on circulation level.\textsuperscript{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 2,000 members, which surely was not the case.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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. 1).\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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

\textsuperscript{90} Tipasa: Ardeleanu 2018, nos. 19, 27?, 31, 69; Theveste: Kadra 1989a, 269 pl. I, XI.
\textsuperscript{92} For high-class sarcophagi in Cilicia and Aquitania, see the contributions Cubas Díaz and Uberti in this volume.
\textsuperscript{93} Some inscriptions can barely been read: Ardeleanu 2018, nos. 34–36.
\textsuperscript{94} Fournet-Pilipenko 1961; Rep. III. Recent surveys revealed undocumented Late Antique strigilated sarcophagi in Caesarea, Tipasa, Hippo and Thugga: Ardeleanu 2019, 409.
\textsuperscript{95} For clearly elite contexts in Rusucurru, Caesarea, Tipasa, Blad Guitoum, Rusicade, Carthage: Fournet-Pilipenko 1961; Leveau 1983; Rep. III, p. 274f.
\textsuperscript{96} On this workshop and exports: Duval 1995, 195; Teatini 2010; cf. the contribution Arbei-ter in this volume.
and other tombs. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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

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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 Arbeiter and Valeva in this volume.
100 Cf. Meinecke 2018, 65 f.
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. 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. 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.

Other familial or individual mausolea and memoriae for martyrs, mostly with apsidal ground plans, were embodied in or attached to burial churches. 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.

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 times zone before the Vandal conquest, but reliable post-Roman dates are available only in Ausum and near Diana Veteranorum.


104 Tipasa: Ardeleanu 2018, nos. 17 (lintel of memoria), 22, 30?, 38?, 39?, 48, 50?; Siti-fis: CIL VIII 8638, 8639, 8642, 8648 (all AD 405), 8634 (AD 440, tabula); Auzia: ILCV 4839 (AD 305; carmen, tabula); Février 1964, 151; Cuicul: ILAlg II, 3, 8304 (37 × 50 × 8 cm; AD 463; tabula); Bir Aida (64 × 55 × 12 cm; tabula): ILAlg II, 3, 7496; Tébessa Khalia: CIL VIII 2035 (lintel?; carmen; late 3rd c. AD); Thaenae (lintel?): ILAfr. 38(25). Many carmina in Auzia, Sitifis Theveste, Mactar: Hamdoune 2011.

105 Oued Rchezel: Berthier 1942, 54; Theveste, Thagamuta, Thabraca, Mactaris, Furni, Carthage, Uppenna, Demna: Duval 1995, 198 Stevens 2008, 81 f.; 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: Witschel 2017, 49 f.
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.\textsuperscript{107} Catacombs and burial crypts are known from central Numidia, the Hautes Steppes, the Sahel and Carthage (Jewish and Christian);\textsuperscript{108} single or family hypogea, richly decorated and inscribed, from all African provinces.\textsuperscript{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).\textsuperscript{110}

\textsuperscript{107} Duval 1995, 201; in Tipasa and Leptiminus, periodic freque ntation 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.


\textsuperscript{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 sepulcrum and a cella: ILCV 1589). Also the epitaphs' materiality (roughened surfaces), their layout (scarcity of formulae, single names) and iconography (anchors, doves, olive trees, orantes) are
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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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 \textit{2012}, esp. 677–683 (with identical combinations of symbols). From the W-Hanafi-necropolis: *AE* \textit{1985}, 950 (orans; 53 × 22 × 1 cm), \textit{Leveau} \textit{1984}, 210 n. 6 (dove, anchor; 10 × 15 cm); E-Nsara-necropolis: \textit{CIL VIII} 21428 (67 × 28 cm), 21434 (46 × 34 cm); undetermined provenance: *AE* \textit{1985}, 966 (16.5 × 11 × 2 cm); \textit{CIL VIII} 9589 (dove, anchor; 74 × 20 cm), 9591 (roughened frame; 64 × 28 cm; cf. \textit{Duval} 1988, fig. 9); 21421 (olive tree, anchor; 29 × 27 cm); \textit{Leveau} \textit{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: \textit{LEYNAUD} \textit{1922}; \textit{ENNABLI} \textit{1982}, nos. 24, 34; \textit{ENNABLI} \textit{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: \textit{Duval} \textit{1995}, 201; \textit{Bejaoui} \textit{2016}.

\textsuperscript{111} \textit{Ben Lazreg} \textit{2002}, esp. fig. 8 with a deceased? as Orpheus; \textit{Ben Lazreg} et al. \textit{2006}; \textit{Ben Lazreg} \textit{2021}.

\textsuperscript{112} \textit{Ben Lazreg} \textit{2002}, 341; \textit{Ben Lazreg} et al. \textit{2006}, 349; \textit{Sterrett-Krause} \textit{2017}; \textit{Ben Lazreg}/\textit{Stirling}/\textit{Moore} \textit{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: Fèvrier 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: Geell 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); Stifis: anepigraphic stelae/stone piles marking Late Antique tombs: Guéry 1985, 244–307; Fèvrier 1964, 147; Satatis: CIL VIII 5749 (arula with DMS, late 3rd/early 4th c. AD); homogenous series of Christian 4th c. AD-stelae, all with one formula (redditto) and dies natales in Ain Kahla (36), Teniet Anouda (16) and Dj. Snobra (15): ILAlg 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, 7471m, 7471n; 3rd c. AD-funerary altar from Theveste, where onomastics indicate an Early Christian context: Fèvrier 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 Prié in this volume): Eger 2012, 85–92 with other local exceptions.

\(^{115}\) Fèvrier 1986; Hamdoune 2018, 433–471.

\(^{116}\) E.g. in Ain Barchouch (CIL VIII 2780; Ben Baaiz 2000, 74, 264 suggests a Byzantine date) or a rural villa nearby (Ben Baaiz 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.

\(^{117}\) Fèvrier 1962, 153 dates the last stelae from Eastern Caesariensis to the mid-3rd c. AD.
A widespread burial-marker type in North Africa’s open air-cemeteries was the *cupa* or *cupula*, 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 Francophone 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. 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. As in

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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 Sitifis, AD 254 and 296); Sirifis: CIL VIII 8646 (late 3rd c. AD?); Thamallula: CIL VIII 20597 (300 AD); Février 1964, 149 (AD 287); Satafis: Février 1964, 147 (AD 259).
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.


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). 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. *Symposia* and dining banquets (*cubicula*) are mentioned in inscriptions from clear Christian contexts. There is not only evidence from Christian tombs for food offerings during the funeral, but even more data for commemorative dining at the tombs. The most fascinating burial type with a clear ritual function is the funerary *mensa*. *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.

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123 ILAfr. 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 aeterna* (*ILAfr. 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, 91–96; *Duval* 1976, 14; *Jensen* 2008, 108–111; cf. the contributions *Merten*, *Ott* 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 Rhezel.

127 There is still no synthesis of this type; some remarks: *Gsell* 1901, 405; *Duval* 1995, 198 f.; *Jensen* 2008.
on the tables: *cibi ponuntur calicesque et copertae*. 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. Some *mensae* preserved sophisticated flooding installations, cisterns and basins, others are basins themselves, on which epitaphs could have been carved. 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.

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. An epitaph from *Auzia* explicitly mentions a *mensa cum titulum refrigerationis*. 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. 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  Prévot 1984, 208–210 with (incomplete) distribution.
130  *Caesarea*: Leveau 1983, 97, 101; 139, 143; Leveau 1999, 94; *Tipasa*: Bouchnaki 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, *Mophi*, 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, 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 322 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): ILAlg 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.
'ritualized inscriptions'. 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. We also have to consider decontextualized examples, such as a vast homogenous group from *Mactaris* (Fig. 17). Their attribution to the *mensa*-type has long been disputed,
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). In Late Antiquity, the epitaphs ‘move’ from associated *stelae* to the horizontally placed table itself. There are huge *mensae* built over several tombs and certainly used by larger groups for dining (Fig. 18). 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. In *Leptiminus*, an impressive amount of 4th–7th c. AD glass excavated over and around Early Christian underground tombs gives spectacular insights in these

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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. 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. 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. At Belalis Maior, even 7th c.-epitaphs with libation holes are attested. Several clerical epitaphs from elsewhere mention mensae as the type of tomb employed.

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,

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.
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. 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. 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), 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. 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. These new urban foci had a distinct funerary character, especially the churches of

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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): Witschel 2017, 49 f.
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.
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 fore-runners. 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. 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.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Late Antique tomb type</th>
<th>continued/new extra-urban necropoleis</th>
<th>extra-urban coemeterial churches</th>
<th>new intra-urban burial fields</th>
<th>burials in intra-urban churches</th>
<th>(epigraphic) tomb signaling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sitifis (MS)</td>
<td><em>formae</em>, cist tombs (stone&amp;tiles), tile-roofed tombs, mausolea?</td>
<td>2 continued? (E; N: ?)</td>
<td>not recorded</td>
<td>NWW-quarter (around basilicae A+B) NW: vast intra-urban cemetery in insula</td>
<td>NWW-quarter (basilicae A+B)</td>
<td><em>cupae</em>, mosaic epitaphs, stone covers, <em>mensae</em>, plates for mausolea, stone mounds, anepigraphic stelae, tiles with cross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuicul (N)</td>
<td>sarcophagi, cist tombs (stone&amp;tiles), <em>formae</em>, crypts</td>
<td>1 continued (SE)</td>
<td>SE (burial church in necropolis)</td>
<td>2 (S around Cresconius-basilica; W around burial church; byz?)</td>
<td>S (Cresconius-basilica) W (burial church)</td>
<td>mosaic epitaphs, flat stone covers, mausoleum tituli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thamugadi (N)</td>
<td>tile-roofed tombs, sarcophagi, <em>formae</em>, cist tombs (stone&amp;tile), hypogaeae or vaulted crypts</td>
<td>3 continued (N, W, E) 1 new? (S, huge necropolis)</td>
<td>NW (basilica I; M), NE (basilica IV) S (basilica XI)</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>’basilica VII’ in ‘Donatist quarter’; SW: basilica IX, M</td>
<td>mosaic epitaphs, flat stone covers, sarcophagi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thabraca (P)</td>
<td>relief sarcophagi, sarcophagi, funerary chapels, areae, cist tombs (stone&amp;tiles), hypogaeae?, lead coffins</td>
<td>1 or 2 continued (E? with area?; NW)</td>
<td>1 or 2 (NW: ‘martyr’s chapel’ and ‘NW-chapel’)</td>
<td>1–4 (in and around ‘urban basilica’ (with area), several intra-urban plots</td>
<td>’Urban basilica’</td>
<td>mosaic epitaphs, flat stone covers, sarcophagi, <em>cupae</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hippo Regius (P)</td>
<td><em>formae</em>, cist tombs (stone+tile), tile-roofed tombs?, amphorae, sarcophagi, relief sarcophagi, lead coffins, plastered tombs</td>
<td>1 or 2 continued (SW: Borgœud-basilica; SE: near theatre)</td>
<td>SW (Borgeaud-basilica, 6th–7th c., M?)</td>
<td>4th–7th? c.: Chevillot-basilica; 5th–7th? c.: several insulae, plazas, baths</td>
<td>Chevillot-basilica (4th–7th c.?)</td>
<td>mosaic epitaphs, flat stone covers, stone mensae?, sarcophagi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulla Regia (P)</td>
<td><em>formae</em>, sarcophagi, cist tombs (stone&amp;tile), mausolea, lead coffins, tile-roofed tombs?</td>
<td>1 continued (W)</td>
<td>SW (basilica III); W (basilica IV)</td>
<td>3 (insula de la chasse, sanctuary of Apollo; both Byzantine?; one N of nymphaeum 5th c.?)</td>
<td>basilica I possible church N of nymphaeum</td>
<td><em>cupae</em>, caissons, <em>mensae</em>, mosaic epitaphs, flat stone covers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site</td>
<td>Late Antique tomb type</td>
<td>continued/new extra-urban necropoleis</td>
<td>extra-urban coemeterial churches</td>
<td>new intra-urban burial fields</td>
<td>burials in intra-urban churches</td>
<td>(epigraphic) tomb signaling</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thugga (P)</td>
<td>formae, sarcophagi, crypts, hypogaeae, relief sarcophagi</td>
<td>1 or 2 continued (NE and W?)</td>
<td>NE (St. Victoria)</td>
<td>perhaps 1 or 2 (theatre) Trifolium-house (5th–7th c. burials)</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>sarcophagi, mosaic epitaphs, flat stone covers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidi Jdidi (P)</td>
<td>formae, cist tombs, sarcophagi, amphorae</td>
<td>not recorded</td>
<td>not recorded</td>
<td>not recorded</td>
<td>basilicae I (5th–6th c., M), II (M), III (both late 4th–6th c.)</td>
<td>mosaic epitaphs, caissons, flat stone covers, mensae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupput (P)</td>
<td>masonry tombs, reoccupied mausolea, amphorae, formae</td>
<td>1 or 2 continued (NE: ‘Christian’ cem. near Oued Temad; NW: Roman cem.)</td>
<td>burial church ‘hotel Paradise’; intra-urban?</td>
<td>not recorded</td>
<td>burial church ‘hotel Paradise’; extra-urban?</td>
<td>mosaic epitaphs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karthago (P)</td>
<td>pit tombs, formae, sarcophagi, reused/new built mausolea, funerary chapels, cist tombs (stone&amp;tiles), tile-roofed tombs, hypogaeae, catacombs, amphorae, masonry tombs, vaulted tombs, relief sarcophagi, lead/wooden coffins, plastered tombs</td>
<td>7 continued: N: S. Bou Said, a-round St. Monique, D. Karita, Mcidfa, S: Le Kram; Bir Kniss-ia; W: B-Zitoun, 2 abandoned &amp; reoccupied: W: Bir Jebbana (4th-late 6th c.), Yasmina (5th–7th c.)</td>
<td>NE (St. Monique, M?, late 4th-late 6th. c., Damous el Karita, late 4th–6th. c., M?); NW (Mcidfa, late 4th-late 6th c., M), W (La Malga, Bir Ftouha, early 6th–7th c., M?); S (Bir el-Knissia, later M)</td>
<td>several insulae (5th–7th c.), circus (late 6th–7th c.), Sayda-cemetery (6th–7th c.), theatre, odeum, harbor (5th–7th c.)</td>
<td>basilicae II (‘Bigua’); IV (= Dermech I, 1 tomb); VII (= Dermech III; 1 Byz. tomb); XVIII (=rotunda); Sayda-church?</td>
<td>caissons, mensae, mosaic epitaphs, flat stone covers, slabs for mausolea, small tituli for loculi? sarcophagi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site</td>
<td>Late Antique tomb type</td>
<td>continued/new extra-urban necropoleis</td>
<td>extra-urban coemeterial churches</td>
<td>new intra-urban burial fields</td>
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<td>Ammaedara (P)</td>
<td><em>formae</em>, cist tombs, <em>areae</em>, tile-roofed tombs</td>
<td>5 or 6 continued? (N; E, SE, S; NW; W)</td>
<td>N (basilica IV, M), E (basilica II, M) SE (basilica VI)</td>
<td>around basilica I (4th–6th); around basilica II+VII, M (byz), around VIII, M, with new houses &amp; workshops</td>
<td>basilica I (4th–6th, M), basilica III (byz.)</td>
<td>mosaic epitaphs, flat stone covers, <em>cupae</em>, *loculus-*epitaphs on columns, <em>mensae</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mactaris (B)</td>
<td><em>formae</em>, cist tombs (stone&amp;tile), sarcophagi, wooden coffins</td>
<td>1, 2 continued (N: necropolis A= Aïn-el-Bab; S: necropolis B; NE: necropolis C)</td>
<td>N: ‘Rutilius-basilica’ I</td>
<td>S: around schola-basilica II; E: around basilica III?, NE: around basilica? V; in/ around great baths</td>
<td>,Hildeguns-basilica’ III; S: schola-basilica II basilica IV ‘thermes nord-Ouest’, basilica? V</td>
<td>mosaic epitaphs, flat stone covers, inscribed stone <em>mensae</em>, <em>cupae</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hadrumetum (B)</td>
<td>catacombs, <em>formae</em>, hypogaea, amphorae, <em>areae</em>, relief sarcophagi</td>
<td>3 continued (N, W: lycée technique, W &amp; S: catacombs 2nd–5th c.)</td>
<td>W: burial church, urban post-ion not sure; S:burial basilica IV</td>
<td>SW (maison des masques), W (maison de Vergile et des muses)</td>
<td>basilica I near casbah?, II near arsenal</td>
<td><em>loculi tituli</em> (mo-saic&amp;stone), flat stone covers, painted &amp; mosaic epitaphs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site</td>
<td>Late Antique tomb type</td>
<td>continued/new extra-urban necropoleis</td>
<td>extra-urban coemeterial churches</td>
<td>new intra-urban burial fields</td>
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<td>Leptiminus (B)</td>
<td><em>formae</em>, cist tombs (stone&amp;tile&amp;plastered), tile-roofed tombs, amphorae, jugs, relief sarcophagi, vaulted ‘cat-acombs’ with <em>cubicula</em>, wooden coffins, reused hypogaea &amp; <em>areae</em></td>
<td>several burial spots continued at Dharet Slama (SE: Sites 250, 10, 200, 304=catacomb complex, 4th–6th c.)</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>2 (NW: Christian <em>area</em> or cemetery at Dar el Kaid; church with cemetery near bath)</td>
<td>1 or 2? (basilica II at Dar el Kaid; cemeterial basilica I near bath?)</td>
<td>mosaic epitaphs, sarcophagi, <em>cupae</em>, painted epitaphs? (hypogaeum 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taparura (B)</td>
<td><em>formae</em>, cist tombs (stone &amp; tile), <em>areae</em>, amphorae, tile-roofed tombs, amphorae</td>
<td>1–2 continued (N: ‘Buttes Meghzani; NE: St. Henri)</td>
<td>not recorded</td>
<td>not recorded</td>
<td>not recorded</td>
<td>mosaic epitaphs, <em>cupae</em>, flat stone covers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thaenae (B)</td>
<td><em>formae</em>, cist tombs (tiles &amp; stone), amphorae, vaulted (painted) funerary chambers, reoccupied mausolea</td>
<td>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</td>
<td>not recorded</td>
<td>NE: spot T10 just inside the wall</td>
<td>1 (50m S of lighthouse, early 5th–6th c.)</td>
<td>mosaic epitaphs, caissons, flat marble covers, lintels for funerary chambers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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