

Funerary Painting and Architecture in Daunia between the 4th and 3rd Century BC. Models and Cultural Influences

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During the 4th century BC, Daunian aristocracies reach their apex established by the large funerary assemblages but, above all, by the large funerary structures, which arise in this period. These were exemplary expressions of the need of ruling families to emphasize their prestige by constructing monumental houses of the dead: the semi-chamber and the chamber tombs. Their type changed over time and in different centers as a result of various architectural models and the geological nature of the site itself. At Canosa, *Herdonia* and Ascoli Satriano, the structures were excavated out of the natural rocky or tuff bank; those at Salapia, Arpi and *Tiati* were constructed with square blocks of limestone. In these tombs we can see a particular use of decorative, pictorial and sculptural elements: their use was principally ornamental, but also functional in terms of a more complex language that the whole composition was intended to express. With respect to the entire architectural project, the figured scenes always are painted outside the depositional compartment. These figured subjects can be painted or sculpted upon the entrance, both the primary or the secondary facade, as well as the vestibule. The first adoption of narrative themes or symbolic subjects are inside the funerary chamber, intended exclusively for the deceased, and these continue outside or in places accessible and visible to everyone during the funerary ceremonies.¹

An important spatial conquest in the articulation of the chamber tombs in Canosa is the adoption of the covered vestibule, with a clear definition of distinct spaces: the room-vestibulum and the real burial chamber. To this type belongs the most ancient complexes, among which the “Ipogeo Monterisi” (second half of the 4th century BC) stands out. The main chamber is covered by a double-sloping roof with a central beam, while the walls are marked by pillars resting on plinths and surmounted by capitals.² The “Ipogeo Barbarossa” has a Greek cross plan with a rectangular central room, from which one could access to two smaller lateral rooms and to a wider rectangular room. The central room has a flat and painted roof with red and blue bands, and two painted windows flank the entrance door to the end room. The latter had concave walls and a double-sloping roof decorated with two painted blue and red bands. The architecture reflects two different types: on one side, the main compartment with the concave walls has a type of plan already known in the most ancient tombs of Canosa; on the other hand, the complex organization of spaces and the existence of two rooms excavated outside the dromos lead back to long-used types of hypogea.³

The most recent tombs (e.g. at Varrese, Lagrasta, Scocchera) show a more complex plan: the later rooms progressively enlarge the original structure and are placed on the sides of the dromos, and the plastered facades are characterized by elevations with

semi-columns decorated with Ionic capitals. As regards the “Ipogeo Varrese”, the attention paid to the axial chamber (intended for a highly prestigious individual) is clear in the structure of the façade, which was realized with squared blocks. At a later time, the need arose to organize the funerary space differently, by adding new rooms for the other members of the *gens*. In addition to having architectural features inside, a monumental façade emphatically frames the outside of these rooms. The tomb is the perfect characterization of a behavioural *exemplum*: the connection between the hypogeum’s plan and the representative areas around the monument demonstrate the relationship between its functional aspects and the monumentalization of the external spaces. The functional connection is given by the pillar that rises from the vestibulum and connects to the porticoed space after it rises above the hypogeum. This highlights the sacredness of the place and the sense of the ceremonies linked to the cult of the ancestors. This feature is very prominent in the history of Canosa’s funerary architecture, and is clearly Hellenic in style. It illustrates the style and ambition of an architectural status focused on the pillar-sema and on the porticoed space (fig. 1).⁴

On the basis of these sacred-institutional examples, one also can re-evaluate the double order of the prospect of the Ipogeo Lagrasta II. Such an approach could bring to light elements that are perfectly homogeneous to what was described in Varrese.

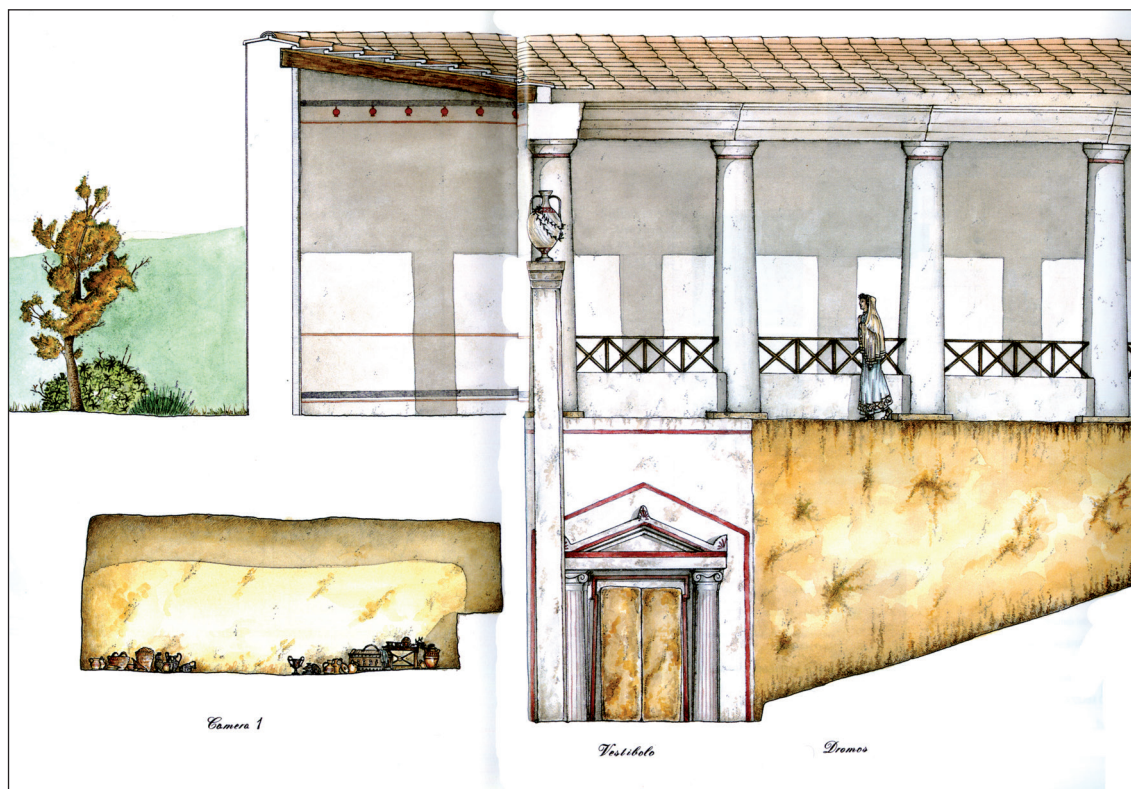


Fig. 1: Canosa di Puglia. The Ipogeo Varrese: reconstruction of the east side.

The double order in the facade of the hypogeum consists of a lower Doric element and an upper Ionic element. This combination leads us to consider the external architectural alignment to the tomb, which was articulated like an Ionic colonnade, as a reality linked to use of the monumentalized external floors. There are strong analogies with the funerary monuments from Taranto, namely with the adoption of a naiskos with a tetrastyle prospectus like a *sema*.⁵ In fact, similar discoveries were made at the “Tomba degli Ori” and in the “contrada San Paolo”, which contained the architectural elements of a naiskos.⁶

The Ipogeo Lagrasta I (late 4th–1st century BC) is one of the most important tombs for its monumental architecture, which comprises nine burial rooms. Pillars, semi-columns and a Doric-type architrave frame the entrance door to the main chamber; the frame itself preserves traces of red and white plaster. The interior rooms are characterized by painted architectural decoration, and the ceilings simulated a roof of wooden beams. The main chamber showed an articulated pictorial wall partition on the end wall with four Ionic half-columns plastered with the toothed trabeation; two false windows were painted with closed shutters and studs that were filled with fantastic animals, sirens or harpies. This complex partition recalls decorative schemes more used in the Macedonian and Alexandrian world of the last 4th–3rd century BC (fig. 2). Very interesting is the frieze with figured scenes of historical type, with combat, duels, and funerary games painted on a blue background no longer visible. These elements reveal a deep Campanian-Roman influence. Macedonian influence is very clear in the monumental facades (Lagrasta II), which imitate the great royal tombs, such as the tomb of Leucadià, with its architectural scheme dated to 300 BC.⁷

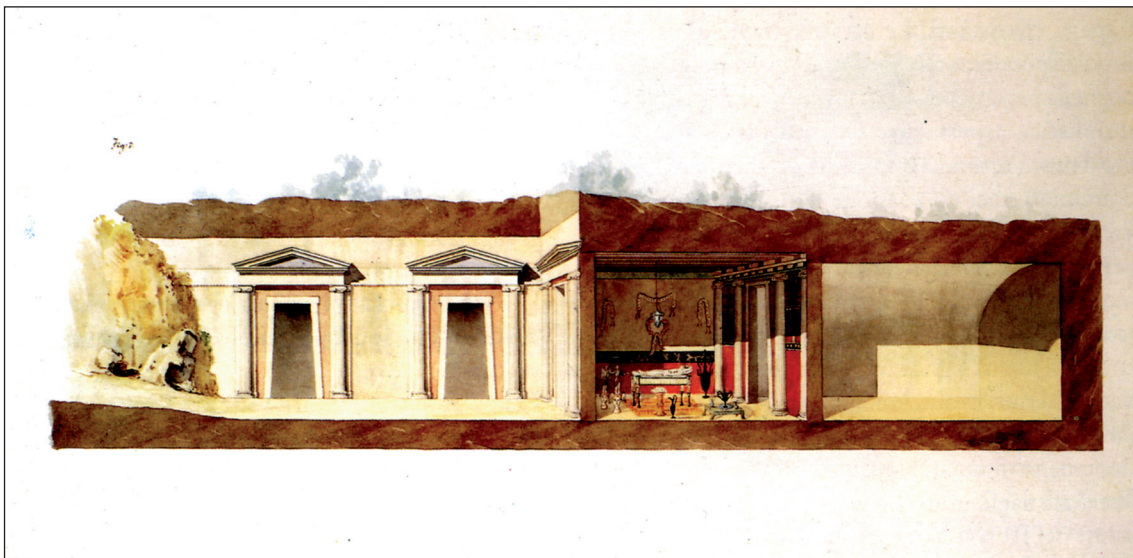


Fig. 2: Canosa di Puglia. The Ipogeo Lagrasta I. Reconstruction of the external and internal perspective from a watercolour.

The burial chambers were a territory of unclear boundaries: the figured representations, the psychopompic abilities of Hermes, the high visibility of the women in procession, as well as the participants in the funerary rituals, all were intentionally positioned in the antechamber, highlighting the cross-cultural association with death and the Underworld. In the “Ipogeo del Cerbero”, the vestibulum space is the ideal setting for praising the deceased, by exalting their fame and public *virtus*, and in this sense we must consider the frieze depicting a “*deductio ad Inferos*”. In the centre, the figures of *Hermes Psychopompos* and *Cerberus* dominate the scene. To the left of Hermes is the deceased wearing a cloak and followed by a warrior armed with spear and shield holding a horse by the bridle. Another horse closes the composition on the right, while two draped female figures are part of the iconographic repertoire of the lamenters (fig. 3).⁸ The emphasis on the guiding motifs comes from the depiction of infernal figures, such as *Cerberus*, as well as deities who historicize the event of death, like *Hermes Psycho-*



Fig. 3: Canosa di Puglia. The Ipogeo del Cerbero: painted frieze representing a “*deductio ad Inferos*”.

pompos. The painted friezes of the “Ipogeo del Cerbero” and the “Ipogeo Scocchera B” (dating to the first half of the 3rd century BC) are deeply intertwined in terms of their iconographic schemes, the narrative dialectics of the solemn procession, and for sharing the “institutional” components of the procession. The paintings have a central position, as they are located in a passage way in the outer space of the vestibulum: this position promoted the observation of the paintings. The will to convey messages to those among the living is very clear, that they should be guardians over the houses and property of the dead. The scenes have the function of ferrying the dead and at the same time reflect the social unit of the family group and the civic group, not dissolved by the event of death. The deceased is exalted to the status of a hero, who had reached the milestone of full youth. This was a necessary requirement for his participation in war and the culmination of vitality, but also for the genealogical link between the living and the deceased. Such a genealogical chain was destined not to be interrupted, in the mythological-ideal frame that marked the passage from one level of life to another. The characters of the painted scenes, therefore, are proto-typical heroes; the paradigmatic nature of the figures depict the destiny of death reserved to heroes (fig. 4).⁹



Fig. 4: Canosa di Puglia. The Ipogeo Scocchera B: painted frieze representing a “deductio ad Inferos”.

The “Ipogeo Sant’Aloia” (late 3rd century BC) has a Latin cross plan with a dromos and a vestibulum, onto which two rooms with double sloping roof opened. A little pediment carried a scene of an anguiform subject, and the acroteria had a painted scene that represented a funerary procession accompanying the deceased in the Underworld: a horse and a cavalryman came in front of two women. The female figures, obtained with the use of brown contour lines on the light background, are very similar to those depicted on the painted tomb from Isernia. The pictorial scheme follows the same compositional rhythm of the Ipogeo del Cerbero: a cavalryman, a horse, and two female figures closing the scene. The placement of the figures at the extreme border of the scene would seem necessary: the intrinsic polarity of women gives physicality to this limit, indicating the threshold between life and death.¹⁰

In the other cities of Daunia, the documentation offered by funerary architecture is different from that of Canosa, and often varies within the same locality. The first funerary monument is the “Tomba dei Cavalieri” at Arpi. This semi-chamber tomb was built in tuff blocks and has yielded the oldest example of figured wall-painting in Daunia (early 4th century BC). It also reveals a great deal about the artistic influences of the period. The pictorial scheme shows the theme of a funerary procession, which offers some ideas for reconstructing the customs of the emerging classes on the occasion of funerary ceremonies. They are articulated ceremonies that provided, together with the presence of lamenters, offers to the deceased, music, dances and games to celebrate him, as well as political and economic power of his family. Horsemen and chariots drawn by pack animals also took part in the procession (fig. 5). The adoption of narrative subjects in the funerary scenes (e.g. two warriors on horseback, a racing chariot), makes this tomb rare in comparison with other known examples from Apulia. Additionally, the choice of subjects and pictorial scheme is very similar to the repertoire of Campanian and Paestan paintings. The figure of the female deceased supports this. She is accompanied by a young girl, is upon a chariot led by an attendant, and is dressed with tall headgear, ringed earrings, fibulae on the chest, and long embroidered gloves. This detail immediately recalls the basic scheme of the female figure on the most ancient Daunian stelai.¹¹

Similar painted fragments for architecture and subjects come from other burials of Arpi, found near looted chamber-tombs. These belong to two different complexes or to different parts of the same one.¹² Some chamber tombs from Arpi also recall plans and constructions to Campanian examples, such as the “Tomba del vaso dei Niobidi” (built in limestone blocks). This tomb comprised a rectangular room preceded by a dromos with a little pediment on the door and had a double-sloping roof.¹³ Similar examples are found in recent excavations (2005 and 2008): the first is the “Tomba del Finanziere”, built in limestone blocks and with a pseudo-vaulted roof, dated to the first decades of the 4th century BC, that has yielded also a chariot, whose architectonic structure reveals close comparisons with Campanian examples. The second is the “Tomba delle Onde marine” with a painted frieze in the vestibulum representing running waves as in tombs



Fig. 5: Foggia. Museo Civico Archeologico. Painted friezes from the “Tomba dei Cavalieri” of Arpi: pair of cavalrymen.

from Etruria (Blera, Cerveteri, Populonia) and Campania (Cuma, Nola, Capua, Sarno), dated around to 340-300 BC.¹⁴ To the same typology of Tomba del vaso dei Niobidi belong “Tomba del Trono” and “Tomba dei Vetri”, composed of a double-sloping roof with a little pediment and decoration in the tympanum. The first has a painted offering scene of a female figure seated on a richly decorated throne flanked by two standing women: the one on the left wears a blue chiton. In the right corner there is a high tronco-conical cist with golden-yellow decorations, a subject reminiscent of the female domestic world. The second has a painted scene in the tympanum representing a great female head with blue wings, probably a Gorgon’s head.¹⁵

The “Tomba degli Ori” from *Teanum Apulum* (3rd century BC) is in close relationship with the funerary monuments of Arpi and Salapia. The architectonic structure consists of a chamber with a rectangular plan that was built against the surrounding walls, and has converging walls built in regular stone blocks with connecting “diatones” between the two walls. The ownership of the funerary structure by a rich family of the local aristocracy is supported by the monumentality of the tomb itself, as well as by the presence of prestigious objects, such as the pair of gold crowns of Tarentine production.¹⁶ The recent discovery (2012) of a new monumental tomb of the same typology (the “Tomba dei Capitelli ionici”), dated to the 2nd half of the 4th century BC, sheds new light on the deep cultural relationships existing between this area and Campania. The access consists of a long dromos (about 11 m) composed of tuff steps, while the monumental façade is painted with a red band along the sides and above the door. The tomb is entirely made of tuff blocks and has a rectangular plan of great dimensions (ca. 5,00 × 2,55 m). The burial room has two central pillars with Ionic-Tuscan capitals topped by transversal “diatones” that supported the weight of the converging side walls. At the top of the room (ca. 3,00 m) is a central *columen* composed of tuff blocks placed longitudinally (fig. 6). For the architecture and paintings, this funerary structure strongly recalls the burials of Cumae and Capua. The tomb has also yielded a fine figural painted decoration, among which the remains of the front door’s decoration of the deceased in profile stands out. In terms of the iconographic scheme, the subject and some particulars of the figure, such as the colour of the complexion, the short hair (of cap type), the engraving of the eyes, and the white tunic are all very close in style to the figures represented in tombs of Cumae and Capua. Traces of painted decoration are also inside the room: on the wall of the room’s long side there are red and blue bands underneath a cloaked figure and a wounded landed figure. Notable among the objects of the funerary assemblage is a chalcedony scaraboid with the engraving of a prancing griffin, probably imported from Taranto.¹⁷

From an architectural point of view, the “Ipogeo della Nike” shows an association between the barrel covering of the room and the double-sloping entrance, while the facade consists of an Italic-indigenous tympanum. The tomb includes: a dromos, a small vestibule, a façade in a votive shrine shape with a steep pediment and two low semi-columns, a Doric door closed with long blocks, and a rectangular funeral chamber carefully

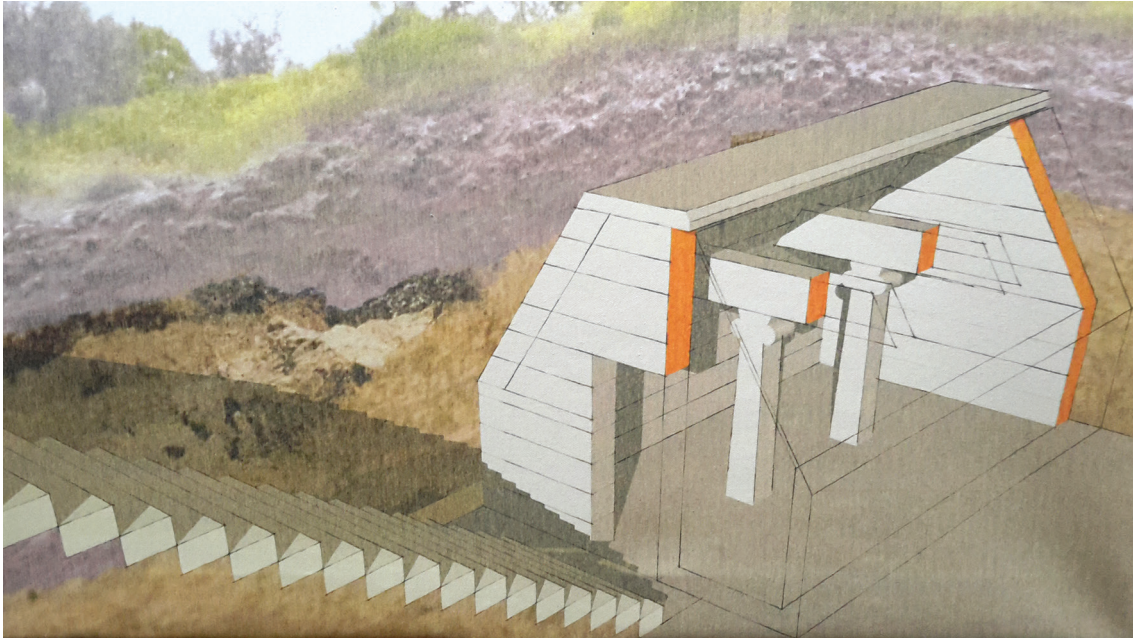


Fig. 6: Tiatì – Teanum Apulum (San Paolo di Civitate). The Tomba dei Capitelli ionici: reconstruction of the structure.

built of tuff blocks and covered by a barrel vault. This last feature associates this with the group of tombs of “Macedonian type”, already represented by the “Ipogeo della Medusa” and the “Ipogeo delle Anfore” and by other minor examples.¹⁸ The slopings are decorated with floral motifs; the “tempera” technique of the tympanum’s painting shows a figured scene placed on a pink background. The scene depicts a victorious eques (a warrior on horseback), armed with long spear, circular shield, and a cap-helmet of Italic type, who is crowned by a flying Nike. Below, his adversary has a helmet and shield and has fallen in front of his horse (fig. 7). Themes like eques and victorious warriors are in other funerary paintings in Apulia (Arpi, Egnazia), Campania (Capua, Nola), and Lucania (Paestum) where the theme of the “return of the warrior” prevails in male tombs. The victorious eques crowned and made a hero by Nike can be interpreted as the founder of the tomb who had fought in one of the great battles of the period and conquered the *virtus*. These figures find close iconographic and technical-pictorial comparisons with the polychrome vases of the first Hellenism – the volute kraters with tempera paintings – produced at Canosa and Arpi. The battle scenes painted “raw” onto a pink background reflect historical events and are to be interpreted as an expression of evident historicizing tendencies in wall and vase painting since the age of Alexander the Great.¹⁹

Among the tombs with barrel vaults, the “Ipogeo della Medusa” (mid-3rd–2nd century BC) stands out because it includes examples of different pictorial and architectural experiences: the architectonic approach reveals close affinities with northern Greek



Fig. 7: Arpi: The Ipogeo della Nike. Painted frieze depicting a flying Nike crowning a victorious eques.

solutions. The painted and architectural decoration refers to the southern Russian and Thracian world, culturally influenced by the Macedonian area. The Thracian influence is very clear in the architectural decoration of the façade that recalls the tomb of Sveshtari, which has a carved frieze of *bucrani* and *paterae* in the vestibulum. A painted version of this is known in an aristocratic tomb from Monte Sannace in central Apulia. The structural and decorative parts are combined in a language that, with an evident Greek matrix (the barrel vault), combines typical elements of Hellenized Italic cultures (the figured capitals). In its design the tomb reflects a definite model: the architecture as well as the architectural and painted decorations show a remarkable coherence in their entirety. The Greek model, even in the variant with chambers arranged along its width, is fairly faithfully kept within the rooms themselves.²⁰

On the contrary, the façade, visible at the time of the funerary ceremony, constitutes a real break with the Greek tradition with its free-standing tetrastyle colonnade and the architectural elements used (pediment with Medusa, figured capitals) (fig. 8). There was a rectangular vestibule with a flat beamed roof, while the painted decoration of the walls is characterized by areas with large bands (light, red, light, white stucco frame with Doric kyma), above which ran a painted frieze. A fragment of architrave on the



Fig. 8: Arpi. The Ipogeo della Medusa: facade of the tomb.

right wall of the vestibulum kept the lower edge of a scene depicting a “*deductio ad Inferos*”: it is possible to see the legs of two characters (one figure is nude, the other wears fringes and can be identified with *Hermes Psychopompos*) and panther legs. This is surely just the remnant of a more complex scene that, as in the tomb of Philip II in Vergina, spread on the entire architrave above the entrance. The infernal scene can be connected to the same painted friezes in the “Ipogeo del Cerbero” and the “Ipogeo Sant’Aloia” at Canosa. These offer ideas for reflecting on the commonality of the subjects and for the pictorial rendering with an evident attempt to create spatial depth by placing the figures on different planes. The hypothesis about the large diffusion of one or more similar cartons not only in Daunia but also in Lucania (Paestum) and Samnium (Isernia) is very probable.²¹

On the opposite wall of the vestibulum is a fine painted *pinax* limited with black lines on the red background. A togate character (whose scheme recalls the magistrate of the eponymous Paestan tomb), is preceded by a groom with a Phrygian cap and a large circular shield. A Greek inscription above the main figure gives the signature of *Artos*, probably the painter of the picture. The arrangement of the painted frieze on the door follows a design that evokes examples from northern Greece (the tomb of Philip II). Its position outside of the rooms is explained by the reason that these funerary structures

were visible and could only be visited inside at the time of the funerary ceremony. The most relevant data is represented by the signature affixed by the painter: “*Artos pinave*”. This is a unique case in the Apulian world, in which the artist distinguishes himself from other Italiote painters (such as *Asteas* and *Python*), by adding the verb explaining the activity to his name. The pinax dates to the 2nd century BC, which is the phase of the reutilization of the hypogeum in the post-Hannibalic age. This date allows us to understand more about the complex organization of craftsmen, some of which were so famous at that time that they felt it necessary to sign their own signature.²²

The central room inside the tomb shows a highly refined decorative program. On the architrave is a vegetal frieze with motifs of yellow sunflowers and flowers placed on a blue background; this method reveals a mature experience in the use of colour and an understanding of chiaroscuro effects. In a true symphony of blue and red, the stucco-notched frame beneath the frieze marked, through its imitation of marble, the richness and fineness of the room, which shows itself as the form of the banquet hall. The vegetal frieze finds comparisons with the similar one on the upper fascia of the façade in Leukadia’s tomb, with that painted in the vestibulum of the Kazanlak’s tomb, dated between the end of the 4th and the beginning of the 3rd century BC, but also with those from the great tombs of Monte Sannace and Egnazia.²³

Notes

¹ For Daunian aristocracies: De Juliis 1992a; De Juliis 1992b, 136–141; Mazzei 1995; Steingräber 2000; Mazzei 2000, 172–177; Corrente 2004; Steingräber 2008; Corrente 2012; Mazzei 2015a.

² For the chamber tombs in Canosa: Mazzei 1992a, 163–175; Corrente 2006, 280–283; Mazzei 2015a, 58–62. 65 f. with references.

³ For the Ipogeo Barbarossa: Mazzei 1992b, 197–202; Mazzei 2015a, 69 f.

⁴ For the Ipogeo Varrese: Andreassi 1992, 238–239; Corrente 2004, 53 f. 100 f.; Corrente 2006, 283 f.; Mazzei 2015a, 58 f. with bibliography.

⁵ For the Ipogeo Lagrasta II: Cassano 1992, 219 f.; Corrente 2006, 284 f.; Mazzei 2015a, 58–62. 66 f.

⁶ For the other naiskoi in Canosa: Corrente 2006, 285 f.

⁷ For the Ipogeo Lagrasta I: Cassano 1992, 210–212. 221–224; Cassano 1996, 156 f.; Mazzei 2015a, 58–62. 66 f.

⁸ For the “Ipogeo del Cerbero”: De Juliis 1984, 25–27; De Juliis 1992e, 348 f.; Mazzei 1995, 205 f.; Steingräber 2008, 206; Corrente 2015, 459 f.

⁹ For the “Ipogeo Scocchera B” and the painted friezes representing the “*Deductio ad Inferos*”: De Juliis 1992c, 231–237; Mazzei 1995, 205 f.; Corrente 2015a, 459 f.

¹⁰ For the Ipogeo Sant’Aloia: De Juliis 1992d, 346 f.; Mazzei 1995, 205–207; Steingräber 2008, 206 f.; Mazzei 2015a, 67 f. 111 with bibliography. For the meaning of the women, see Corrente 2015a, 459–462.

¹¹ For the Tomba dei Cavalieri: De Juliis 1984, 27–30; De Juliis 1988, 623 f.; De Juliis 1996, 294–296; Mazzei 2015a, 62. 112; Russo 2015, 69–72.

- ¹² For the other paintings from chamber tombs: Mazzei 1996, 151–154; Mazzei 2015a, 112.
- ¹³ For the “Tomba del Vaso dei Niobidi”: De Juliis 1992a; Mazzei 2015a, 62.
- ¹⁴ For the chamber tombs with pseudo-vaulted roof at Arpi: Corrente 2010, 40–42; Pacilio – Montanaro 2013, 187–189; Corrente 2015c, 160–161.
- ¹⁵ For del Trono: Mazzei 1992d, 237 f.; Mazzei 2015a, 112. For “Tomba dei Vetri”: Munzi et al. 2020, 400–401. For tombs with a double-sloping roof in Daunia: Mazzei 1995, 174 f.; Munzi et al. 2020, 399–401.
- ¹⁶ For the Tomba degli Ori: Mazzei – Lippolis 1984, 189–196; Lippolis 2000, 35–45; Mazzei 2006, 89 f.; Pacilio – Montanaro 2013, 186–189; Mazzei 2015a, 62 f.
- ¹⁷ For the Tomba dei Capitelli ionici: Pacilio – Montanaro 2013, 169–221; Montanaro – Pacilio 2014, 73–124.
- ¹⁸ About the chamber tombs with barrel vault: Mazzei 1995, 171–173; Mazzei 2015a, 64 f. with bibliography.
- ¹⁹ For the Ipogeo della Nike: Mazzei 2005, 153–158; Pontrandolfo 2008, 177 f.; Steingraber 2008, 184–189; Corrente 2015b, 61. For Campanian influence: Benassai 2001.
- ²⁰ For the Ipogeo della Medusa: Mazzei 1995, 94–106. 171–173; Mazzei 2004, 243–262; Mazzei 2015a, 22–26. 34–36. 106 f.; Mazzei 2015b, 63–68.
- ²¹ For the scene of “*Deductio ad Inferos*”: Mazzei 1995, 112, 205–208; Lippolis 1995, 315–332; Mazzei 2015a, 29 f. 111.
- ²² For the pinax: De Simone 1995, 211 f.; Mazzei 1995, 112. 208–210; Mazzei 2015a, 30 f. 107. 111.
- ²³ For the vegetal frieze: Mazzei 1995, 197–204; Mazzei 1998, 69–94; Mazzei 2000, 172–177; Steingraber 2000; Brekoulaki 2001; Mazzei 2002, 67–77; Pontrandolfo 2008, 171–178; Steingraber 2008, 188 f. 191 f.; Mazzei 2015a, 26–33. 106–110.

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Fig. 1: after Corrente 2004, 108 f. – Fig. 2: after Cassano 1996, 130. – Fig. 3: after De Juliis 1988 fig. 612. – Fig. 4: photo by the author. – Fig. 5: after De Juliis 1988 figs. 604. 608. – Fig. 6: after Montanaro et al. 2015. – Fig. 7: after Mazzei 2015a, 6. – Fig. 8: after Mazzei 1995, figs. 46. 65. 66. 130.

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