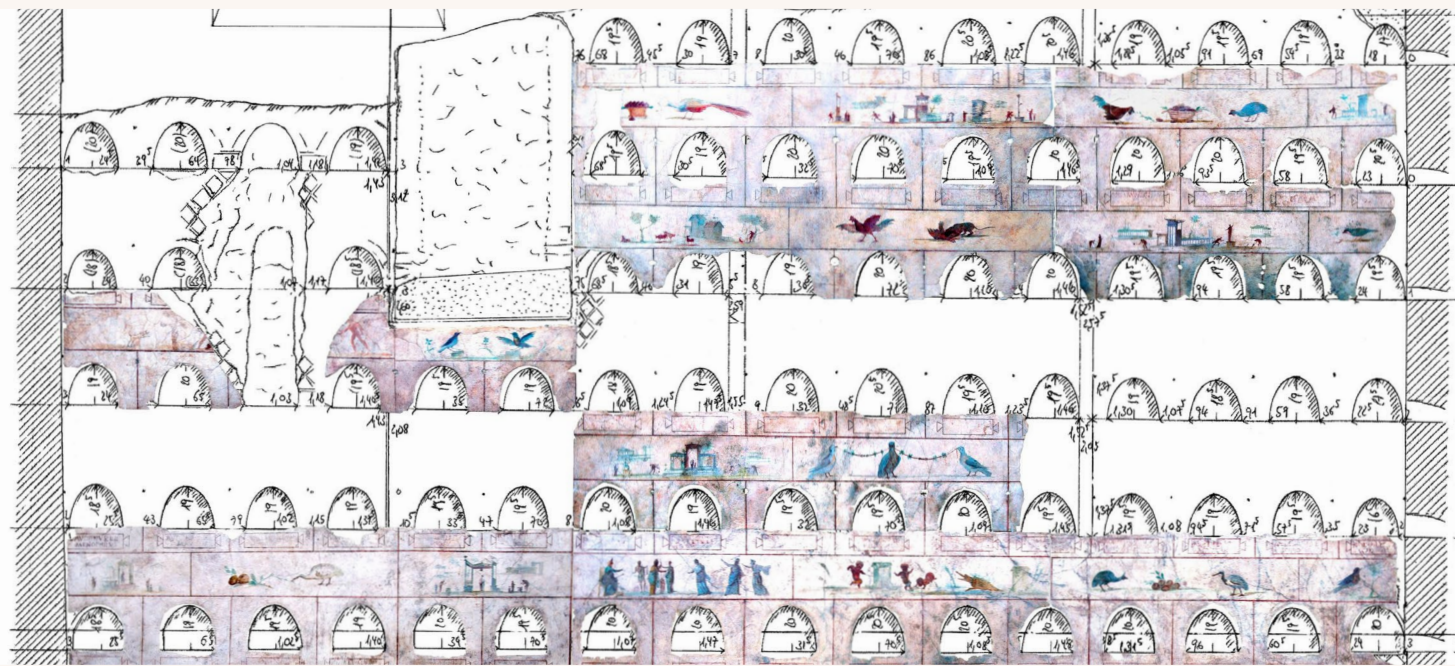


Archaeology and Economy in the Ancient World



38

**The Economy of Death: New Research on Collective Burial Spaces
in Rome from the Late Republic to the Late Roman Time**

Panel 7.2

Norbert Zimmermann
Thomas Fröhlich (Eds.)

**Proceedings of the
19th International Congress of Classical Archaeology**

Volume 38: The Economy of Death

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Edited by

Martin Bentz and Michael Heinzelmann

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PREFACE

On behalf of the 'Associazione Internazionale di Archeologia Classica (AIAC)' the 19th International Congress for Classical Archaeology took place in Cologne and Bonn from 22 to 26 May 2018. It was jointly organized by the two Archaeological Institutes of the Universities of Cologne and Bonn, and the primary theme of the congress was 'Archaeology and Economy in the Ancient World'. In fact, economic aspects permeate all areas of public and private life in ancient societies, whether in urban development, religion, art, housing, or in death.

Research on ancient economies has long played a significant role in ancient history. Increasingly in the last decades, awareness has grown in archaeology that the material culture of ancient societies offers excellent opportunities for studying the structure, performance, and dynamics of ancient economic systems and economic processes. Therefore, the main objective of this congress was to understand economy as a central element of classical societies and to analyze its interaction with ecological, political, social, religious, and cultural factors. The theme of the congress was addressed to all disciplines that deal with the Greco-Roman civilization and their neighbouring cultures from the Aegean Bronze Age to the end of Late Antiquity.

The participation of more than 1.200 scholars from more than 40 countries demonstrates the great response to the topic of the congress. Altogether, more than 900 papers in 128 panels were presented, as were more than 110 posters. The publication of the congress is in two stages: larger panels are initially presented as independent volumes, such as this publication. Finally, at the end of the editing process, all contributions will be published in a joint conference volume.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all participants and helpers of the congress who made it such a great success. Its realization would not have been possible without the generous support of many institutions, whom we would like to thank once again: the Universities of Bonn and Cologne, the Archaeological Society of Cologne, the Archaeology Foundation of Cologne, the Gerda Henkel Foundation, the Fritz Thyssen Foundation, the Sal. Oppenheim Foundation, the German Research Foundation (DFG), the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the Romano-Germanic Museum Cologne and the LVR-LandesMuseum Bonn. Finally, our thanks go to all colleagues and panel organizers who were involved in the editing and printing process.

Bonn/Cologne, in August 2019

Martin Bentz & Michael Heinzelmann

The Economy of Death: New Research on Collective Burial Spaces in Rome from the Late Republic to the Late Roman Time: Introduction

Norbert Zimmermann – Thomas Fröhlich

The panel aimed to discuss economic aspects of Roman burial architectures for extended numbers of burials, such as columbaria, large hypogea, or catacombs, and all questions about their owners and users. We wanted to discuss how far economic reasons played a leading role in the invention, the development and the use of the big burial monuments in Rome and how these buildings, on the other hand, fulfilled the religious and social needs of their recipients.

Eventually, we find originally reserved or prepared spaces for family groups or any kind of associations, which in following generations may be still occupied by the same group or changes in propriety may occur, and the traces of related funeral art and inscriptions.

New studies in Roman funeral monuments document interesting evidence for the dynamic process of preparation and use of burial space, and especially in larger architecture for much more than a single family; the aspect of economy in ownership and use is promising. Who was the planner of the project, how and why was a special place and a specific architecture applied? How and where in the original project provided the owner and their families their own burials, and where and in which manner of distribution or acquisition were further tombs sold or given to others? How or why were various places or ornaments differentiated and how homogeneous was a projected and what was the real use? Do we find explanations for the changes? Was there a standardization of workmanship in building techniques and decoration to respond to economic necessity? Where and why did certain spaces remain out of use? And, after a first generation of users, how was the propriety of a funeral space used by the following generations? Do we see forms of new unions, or of smaller unities and fractions or scissions of former unified entities? And, in which way does architecture and artistic furnishing attest the evidence? How is epigraphy related to all architectural and artistic evidence?

We wanted to discuss these questions especially because during last decades a series of general studies on Roman burials and burial customs were necessarily based on older documentations, while new and more detailed analysis of single monuments often provided new and different insights to interpretation. Therefore, we propose to reopen the custom of funeral art, architecture and epigraphy in Rome under the general theme of economy.

Economic Strategies in the Collective Tombs of Imperial Rome

Dorian Borbonus

In a congress that focuses on the Economy in the Ancient World, burial and commemoration may not be the first topics to come to mind. After all, these activities are not primarily economic in nature but pragmatic and symbolic, aiming most immediately to dispose a corpse and address feelings of bereavement in the survivor community. Burial and commemoration may even represent an economic net loss because they require an investment, on which normally no monetary return can be expected. However, in the Roman world, there were attempts to generate a profit in the funerary realm. For example, funerary gardens (cepotaphia) were used as productive land and also furnished an appropriate environment for burial. Similarly, funerary bequests were set up to generate an annual return that was, in turn, used to host recurring commemorative gatherings.¹ These examples show that there clearly is an economic dimension to burial: the question is how to define it and how to identify economic strategies from material remains. The economic dimension of burial may be somewhat akin that that of sacrifice. Sacrifice also does not yield an immediate economic return but, as Jörg Rüpke has pointed out, the regular mass consumption of animals “presupposes an entire industry.”² Likewise, the continuous burial of urban residents in the periphery of Rome must have created a steady demand on burial services that was filled by a burial industry, even though we are only in a position to reconstruct the character and dynamics of this industry within limits.³

The focus in this volume is on collective burial, however, and it may be opportune to begin with a definition of what that means. I have advocated in the past for the narrower term organized collective burial, that is burial in communities beyond biological families or households that exhibit some level of formality. This definition emphasizes two characteristics: the community that is united in a burial space and the formality of its organizational framework.⁴ It is important to note that the definition makes no demands on these characteristics and the organizational model can range between established organizations, such as domestic *collegia*, to more unofficial interest groups, in which the buried individuals had little more in common than their burial in the same tomb monuments.⁵ Such a flexible definition is necessary, because it recognizes collective burial as a phenomenon. The monuments associated with this practice have recurring features that allow us to recognize different typological categories like columbarium tombs, catacombs, or circiform funerary basilicas. Taken as a group, they represent the practice of collective burial, which thus extends to different monuments and moments in Roman history.

The principal historical question about this practice is which conditions led to the construction of collective burial monuments. The most prevalent interpretation in the

existing literature connects them with demographic pressure in the growing imperial city and the consequent shortage of burial ground in its periphery. Burial in a columbarium tomb or catacomb would then present a cost-effective alternative to the construction of a complete funerary monument.⁶ This scenario is plausible, but it is also immediately clear that demographic pressure alone is not sufficient to singlehandedly explain the practice of collective burial. Such a pressure would seem to rise in a linear fashion whereas the burial capacities of funerary monuments oscillate between high capacity underground tombs in the 1st and 3rd centuries CE and much smaller aboveground mausolea in the late 1st and 2nd centuries CE. In other words, while the functionalist correlation between land pressure and tomb capacity is compelling, it is also too one-dimensional to describe a more complex historical reality. There must be other reasons why organized collective burial became an appealing and economically viable form of burial in Rome at various historical junctures.

One of the ways to add nuance to the picture may be to focus less on exterior contingencies like land pressure and the economic capacity of the tomb occupants, and to explore the social and economic benefits of burial communities instead. The question then becomes: can we point to strategies that facilitated the economic viability of organized collective burial to the extent that it became an enduring phenomenon in various historical contexts in the Roman Empire? This is not a purely economic question, because commercial transactions are always embedded in governing institutions and regulatory systems – whether or not it is possible to reconstruct these from the available evidence.⁷ Answering this question is necessarily based on two methodological strategies to approach the available evidence: on the one hand, detailed monument studies are needed to furnish reliable information and to enhance the sometimes poorly documented fieldwork of the 19th and 20th centuries. On the other hand, collective burial is a practice that took many different forms and an exclusive focus on individual cases, therefore, risks losing the insight that can be gained from a more comparative perspective. My approach in this first chapter is to highlight a few common characteristics of collective funerary monuments. The subsequent chapters illustrate the variability that this practice could take in particular cases.

One of the most noticeable attributes of collective tombs is their substantial capacity. Columbarium Tombs can often accommodate several hundred burials, which obviously exceeds the needs of biological families and even most households in Rome. The capacity cannot have been random, however, but must have been planned to match the projected needs of burial communities. The planning process of collective tombs is poorly known, but a set of inscriptions pertaining to a tomb built by 36 investors (*socii*) strongly suggests that the capacity was calculated to offer an equal share for each depositor.⁸ The capacity of catacombs is theoretically open-ended, since they were progressively extended upon demand.⁹ Both approaches secured the crucial resource of burial space and the magnitude of the operation arguably introduced cost-saving measures, such as favorable economies of scale and possibilities to reuse



Fig. 1: Rome, Via Appia, Columbarium near the Tomb of the Scipios.

existing structures like cisterns and quarries.¹⁰ Moreover, the unmodified repetition of the same constructional element (fig. 1) must have resulted in a repetitive sequence of operations in the workflow of the building project. The very nature of the building process thus facilitated rapid construction on a large scale and reduced the need for technical expertise and training.¹¹

The resulting architectural layout of both columbarium chambers and catacomb corridors is characterized by a high level of homogeneity, since the burial spots in any given structure were for the most part standardized (cf. fig. 1). There is some variety between different monuments but the burial niche or loculus as constructional elements are uniform templates that could be reproduced as needed to match the required capacity.¹² If the architectural character of the funerary monument provides a “snapshot” of the tomb community, the visual impression suggests a general equivalence of all of its members. This is, of course, not to say that burial communities did not have internal social hierarchies; rather, the uniformity of the architectural layout suggests that burial communities centered on what all members had in common – the ritual of cremation, a career in one of the aristocratic households of Rome, a comparable social experience – to a greater extent than individual distinction. The intensity of such an association must have varied to a great extent, but it does match a concern with an equitable distribution of resources: in columbarium tombs, urns were commonly distributed by lot and the provision of burial for the poor in catacombs suggests the ideal of inclusivity.¹³

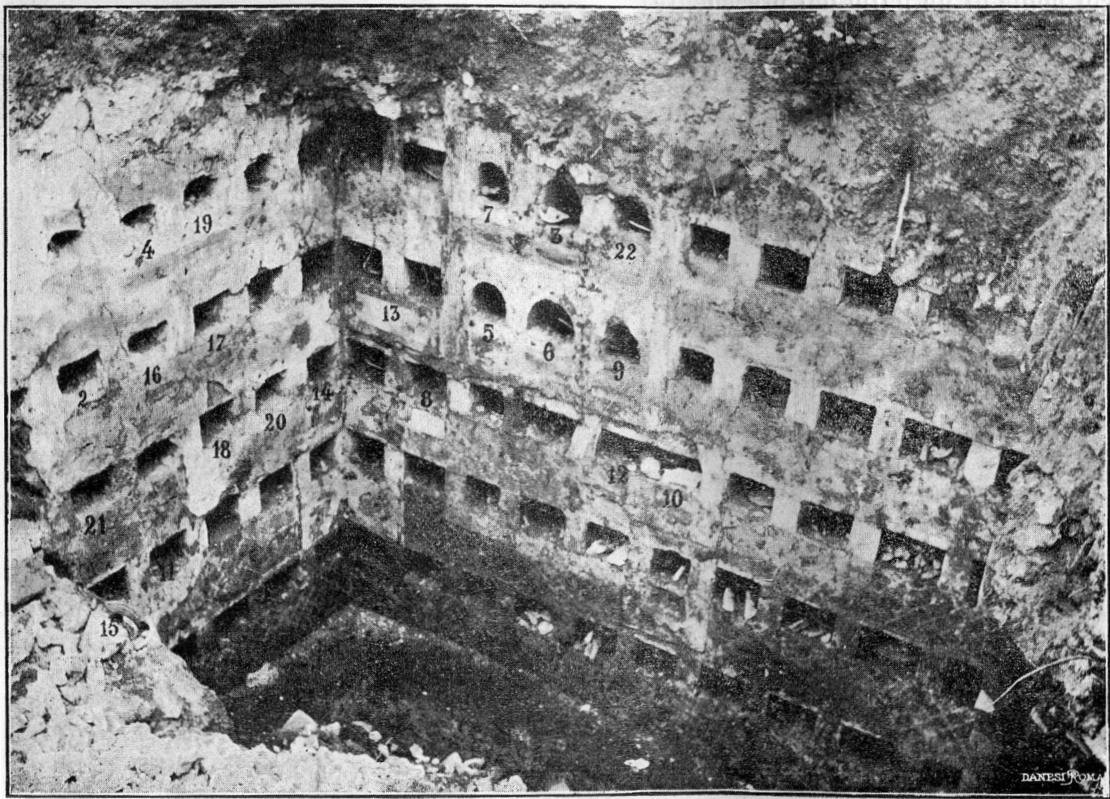


Fig. 2: Rome, Via Labicana, Columbarium of the gens Stertina.

In the practical operation of collective funerary monuments, things were not always this equitable, however, as subgroups and individuals secured burial space and special privileges. The numerous *tabulae* inscriptions in columbarium tombs reveal a need to commemorate individuals and to personalize individual burial spots. This personalization still adhered to a narrow range of shapes, decoration, materials and vocabulary, but more extraordinary examples celebrated individual privileges and showcase individual achievements.¹⁴ Individuals also acquired “plots” within existing monuments, either to unite relatives or to sell to future occupants, and safeguarded their investment through inscriptions or physical modifications.¹⁵ The latter is the case in the columbarium of the *gens Stertina* where a group of six niches belonging to the president of a collegium and his relatives stands out from the homogeneity of other burial niches through their difference in shape (fig. 2).¹⁶ In this case, it is not clear if this personalization happened during construction or at a later stage, but in the Columbarium 1 of the Vigna Codini, the enlargement of niches to accommodate cinerary marble urns postdates the construction date.¹⁷ Individual scenarios display a considerable variability, but generally it can be said that the visual character diversified over time and inequality increased throughout the operation of collective funerary monuments.

The burial community was not only a social one, but also an economic union that invested in, organized, and shared a common resource. In some cases, economic collaboration arguably outweighed any group feeling, or at least there are cases in which no overt connection between the buried individuals can be established.¹⁸ No matter how tight-knit burial communities were, their viability depended on a sound financial strategy, which would have secured expected services for individuals and the burial collective's ability to engage the funerary industry.¹⁹ It appears that two models were available to accumulate capital reserves. One method required shareholders to deposit investments in order to raise the funds for the construction of the monument.²⁰ In other cases, it is clear that support came through patronage. For example, the location of the columbarium belonging to the *gens Statilia* on the edge of the family's gardens on the Esquiline suggests some sort of assistance from the aristocratic patrons of the tomb occupants with the acquisition of the land.²¹ The correlation between some of the early imperial columbarium tombs of Rome and imperial and aristocratic households of the city, has led Nicolas Purcell to conclude that the "magnanimity of the rich" is ultimately the economic force behind the construction of collective tombs.²² Hellström makes a similar point for the circiform basilicas, structures on an imperial scale that communicated a message of dynastic benefaction through their extroverted architecture and the juxtaposition of humble burials with those of the imperial patrons.²³ It is probably impossible to quantify the ratio between crowdfunding and patronage even for individual cases. Both sources of capital are documented and the most intuitive funding strategy may have been to exploit patronage where possible and seek internal investment where necessary.

Economic strategies permeated many aspects of collective burial, but they may not simply aim at maximum efficiency in a simple cost-benefit equation that solely maximizes the body count. Instead, it seems like burial communities of all kinds devised strategies to ensure their financial viability and to distribute funerary benefits to their members. Whether they were organized as *collegia* or simply consisted of otherwise unrelated stakeholders, sufficient trust must have existed among the members to invest capital and time in exchange for an expectation of future services.²⁴ At the same time, individuals also pursued their own interests within the framework of larger collectives by securing privileges or uniting their families. The ultimate answer about why collective burial became a successful model may still be elusive, but from an economic point of view, it appears sufficiently clear that this form of burial helped individuals to limit the insecurity that was typically associated with burial in the periphery of Rome.

Notes

¹ On *cepotaphia*: Gregori 1987–1988, Verzár-Bass 1998, Campbell 2008, Bodel 2018; on funerary bequests: Schrumpf 2006, 107–119.

²Rüpke 2007, 152.

³On the funerary industry in general see Schrumpf 2006 and, for Puteoli, Bodel 2000 and 2004.

⁴Borbonus 2014, 18–24.

⁵The literature on collegia is vast: the historiographical overview by Jonathan S. Perry (2011) provides a useful orientation about the major trends and protagonists in the relevant scholarship. Examples of collective tombs, in which the occupants did not have any obvious ties to each other are discussed by Thomas Fröhlich and Silke Haps (in this volume).

⁶For columbaria, esp. Hopkins – Letts 1983 and Purcell 1987 and for catacombs Brandenburg 1984, esp. 217–227, Reekmans 1986, esp. 35–38, Pergola 1986, 339–342 and a different explanation by Zimmermann 2001, esp. 118 f. A similar case has been made for the switch to the burial custom of cremation as a space saving measure during the 1st century BCE (Hellström 2017).

⁷This is the central notion of New Institutional Economics that emphasizes the political, social or religious contexts in which economic systems operate (Ruffing 2016; Korn 2016; Bresson 2015 with review by Erickson 2018).

⁸CIL 6, 11034.

⁹Pergola has emphasized this “open” design (1998, 60–62).

¹⁰An example is the reused pozzolana quarry under the Basilica of S. Sebastiano, which is treated by Borg (in this volume).

¹¹See the contribution of Fröhlich – Haps (in this volume) for a reconstruction of the total construction outlay for several monuments.

¹²The Basilica di Pianabella in Ostia is an intriguing parallel: here a recinto funerario was installed beneath the basilica floor to provide for one hundred burials (see Ruotolo, in this volume).

¹³Aside from the already mentioned monument of 36 socii (above in n. 8), references to lots and distributions by lot are also evidence in other inscriptions from Rome (e. g. CIL 6, 5242. 5290. 5353. 10329. 10332. 33263). For this practice in detail, see Schrumpf 2006, 215–218.

¹⁴Privileges include immunity from collegium dues (e. g. CIL 6, 10332 that celebrates the perpetual exemption of the curator Lucius Licinius Alexa) and individual achievements could involve a position in a collegium (e. g. CIL 6, 5183b that celebrates the career of Gaius Iulius Chrysantus). On the individualization of niches within columbarium tombs, see the contribution of Blume-Jung in this volume.

¹⁵One method to indicate ownership was to add a painted inscription in the genitive outside the proper tabula ansata (e. g. CIL 6, 4959). Several inscriptions that have been attributed to a monument of the gens Abuccia describe the precise location of various lots of niches (CIL 6, 8122–8138).

¹⁶The monument is briefly described by Ghislanzoni 1912.

¹⁷Borbonus 2014, 75–84. Manacorda has questioned the proposed date and suggested a lower chronology (2017, 60 f.). Even in this case, however, there remains a gap between construction of the tomb and the modification of its niches. A similar distinction between two levels of embellishment developed in catacombs, where lockable cubicula contrast with the often undecorated and anonymous loculi (see the contribution of Zimmermann in this volume).

¹⁸For example, no evidence points to family connections or the organization as a collegium in the Colombario Maggiore in the Villa Pamphili (see the contribution of Fröhlich – Haps in this volume).

¹⁹ It is noteworthy, for example, that the inscriptions in collective tombs often show iconographic and paleographic similarities that point to specific workshops (Manacorda 1979 and Felle in this volume), which may reflect common purchasing choices or bulk orders.

²⁰ Such a process is documented in the already mentioned tomb of the 36 *socii* (CIL 6, 11034) and was probably also used in a monument of 13 *socii* on the Esquiline (CIL 6, 6150). Other inscriptions simply refer to collective funds (CIL 1, 2519. 10409. 11034. 11035. 12058; CIL 9, 5076), which are clearly distinguished from each shareholder's own capital in the inscriptions: for example, CIL 6, 10332 specifies that Lucius Licinius Alexa "built this monument using gathered funds (*pecunia collata*)" but "completed the roof and furnished this triclinium of the associates with murals using his own money (*ex sua pecunia*)."

²¹ On the columbarium in general: Caldelli – Ricci 1999 and more recently Mouritsen 2013. A case that suggests a donation of burial space by a patron in the catacomb of Domitilla is described by Nobert Zimmermann (in this volume).

²² Purcell 1987, 38 f.

²³ Hellström 2015, esp. 303–307.

²⁴ The notion of trust as a precondition for successful collaboration was developed by Vicent Gabrielsen in a recent paper, in which he argued that *collegia* of various types facilitated economic growth through their ability to foster generalized trust. The sources of this trust were an ethic of friendship that is concomitant with economic interest and a public display of religious piety which certified the "trustworthy habitus of their members" (Gabrielsen 2016, 103).

Image Credits

Fig. 1: by the author. – Fig. 2: Ghislanzoni 1912, fig. 1.

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Große Gemeinschaftsgräber im frühkaiserzeitlichen Rom

Thomas Fröhlich – Silke Haps

Die großen Gemeinschaftsgräber im Suburbium Roms mit jeweils mehreren Hundert Bestattungen, die in den letzten Jahren der Republik zu entstehen und bereits seit dem mittleren 1. Jh. n. Chr. wieder aus der Mode zu kommen scheinen, sind in der jüngeren Forschung wiederholt zum Gegenstand breit angelegter Untersuchungen gemacht worden. Zwei Monographien beschäftigen sich ausschließlich mit diesem Grabtypus,¹ da aus der Zusammenschau der bekannten Befunde neue Ergebnisse zu den politischen, sozialen und religiösen Zuständen der frühen Kaiserzeit gewonnen werden können. Darüber hinaus bieten die Gräber vor allem auf Grund ihrer epigraphischen Zeugnisse einen unmittelbaren Einblick in die Vorstellungswelt der nicht-elitären Mittel- bis Unterschicht der antiken Großstadtbevölkerung,² der verlockend erscheint. Aus der Zusammenschau des gesamten Materials ergeben sich zweifellos interessante Ergebnisse und Hypothesen, die zu einer angeregten wissenschaftlichen Diskussion geführt haben, der aber letztendlich eine relativ schlechte Detailkenntnis der Monumente selbst gegenübersteht. Die zumeist alten Grabungen sind schlecht dokumentiert, Fundzusammenhänge lassen sich oft nur hypothetisch rekonstruieren und detaillierte Untersuchungen konzentrieren sich nur auf einzelne Materialgruppen. Hier setzt unser Projekt an, das sich um die möglichst umfassende Dokumentation einiger weniger, relativ gut erhaltener Gräber bemüht und diese beispielhaft miteinander vergleicht.³ Der vorliegende Beitrag konzentriert sich auf nur drei Grabbauten und stellt deren wirtschaftliche und soziale Aspekte in den Mittelpunkt.

In dem teilweise freigelegten Grabbezirk vor der Villa Doria Pamphilj an der via Aurelia antica befinden sich in einem Abstand von rund 100 m zwei größere Columbaria, das 1838 freigelegte *Grande Colombario* oder *Colombario maggiore*⁴ und das 1984 entdeckte *Columbario di C. Scribonius Menophilus*,⁵ die eine Reihe von Gemeinsamkeiten aufweisen. Die erhaltenen drei unterirdischen Grabkammern mit der vorgelagerten Zugangstreppe des Columbariums des Scribonius (Abb. 1) haben insgesamt eine begehbare Fläche von etwa 26 m², ähnlich wie die L-förmige Kammer des *Grande Colombario* (Abb. 2). Beide Gräber beherbergten jeweils über 500 Graburnen.

Für die Hypogäen hob man rechteckige Gruben aus, die im Falle des *Grande Colombario* über 3,10 m tief in den anstehenden Felsen hineingetrieben wurden⁶. Der hierbei ausgehobene Tuff konnte dann für die Retikulatverkleidung der Mauern benutzt werden, die man vor den ausgearbeiteten Fels setzte. Derselbe Tuff wurde auch für die an Ecken und Pfeilern notwendigen rechteckigen Steine sowie als Zuschlag in der *opus caementitium*-Masse verwendet. Die vorgesetzten Wände dienten vor allem der Aufnahme der einfachen *ollae* aus Terrakotta, deren Einmauerung während des Bauvorgangs erfolgte und die über die charakteristischen Nischen zugänglich blieben. In den beiden Columbaria Pamphilj enthalten die meisten Nischen nur eine Urne, daneben treten einige Doppelnischen auf.



Abb. 1: Columbarium des C. Scribonius Menophilus, Raum A, Wände 1 und 2.

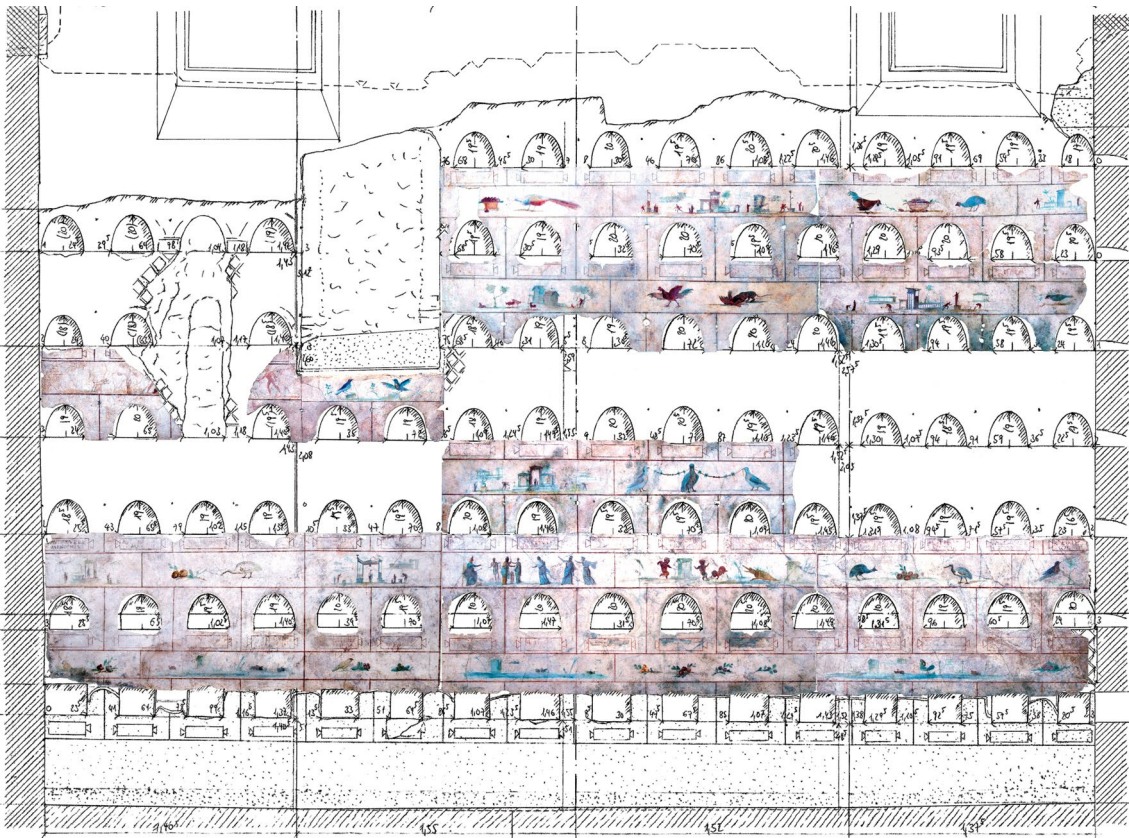


Abb. 2: Großes Columbarium Pamphilj, Wand C.

Die Verwendung des Aushubs für den Bau stellte eine naheliegende und kostengünstige Lösung dar. Für die Anlage des *Grande Colombario* mussten etwa 140 m^3 Erde und Tuff ausgehoben werden. Die ungefähre Menge des an den Wandoberflächen innen verbauten Materials betrug hingegen bei einer nachweisbaren Höhe bis zu $4,30 \text{ m}$ und einer Gesamtwandfläche von ca. 130 m^2 einschließlich Wandpfeilern sowie einer angenommenen durchschnittlichen Tiefe der Tuffsteine von $0,15 \text{ m}$ etwa $19,5 \text{ m}^3$, was ungefähr $1/7$ des Aushubs entspräche. Hinzu kamen noch die kaum zu beziffernden Zuschläge im *opus caementitium*, doch hat der Tuffstein aus dem Aushub sicherlich auch noch für die oberirdischen Aufbauten der Grabes gereicht. Der L-förmige Raum war kein reines Hypogäum, sondern ragte mindestens zwei Meter über den Erdboden hinaus, wie der Zugang belegt.

Das Columbarium des Scribonius (Abb. 1; 3) weist ebenfalls ein Tuffmauerwerk aus *opus reticulatum* auf und das Verhältnis von Aushub und Materialnutzung ist ähnlich wie beim *Colombario maggiore*. Die beiden kleinen Räume B und C, deren im Scheitel etwa $4,00 \text{ m}$ hohen Tonnendecken erhalten sind, lagen allerdings vollständig unter der Erdoberfläche, über die nur der große Raum A hervorragte. Seine Wände sind über $4,50 \text{ m}$ hoch erhalten, ohne dass ein Deckenansatz erkennbar wäre. Eine Schwelle,



Abb. 3: Columbarium des C. Scribonius Menophilus, Raum A, Wand 2.

die am Beginn des Treppenabgangs D in südlicher Richtung zu einem Raum über der Kammer B geführt haben muss, belegt eine Nutzung des Erdgeschosses. Es liegt nahe, über den Räumen B und C eine Treppe anzunehmen, die auf das Dach von Raum A führte. Wie über dem L-förmigen Raum des *Columbario maggiore* könnte sich hier ein weiterer Raum oder aber eine Terrasse befunden haben, wie sie u.a. in Ostia belegt ist.⁷

Beide Columbaria Pamphilj haben unmittelbar nach der Erbauung eine weißgrundige Wanddekoration erhalten, in der die zwischen den Nischenreihen verbleibenden Flächen für längsrechteckige Bildszenen genutzt wurden, die friesartig aneinandergereiht sind.⁸ Hinzu kommen gemalte *tabulae ansatae*, die zumeist unterhalb der zugehörigen Nischen platziert sind. Im *Colombario maggiore* basiert die gemalte Dekoration auf einem Grundschema, in welchem sich sakral-idyllische Landschaften mit Blumen-Vogelbildern abwechseln (Abb. 2). Dieses Schema wird an mehreren Stellen durch andere Themen unterbrochen, wie etwa Pygmäen, wilde Tänzer, Theaterszenen, Gelage- und Jagdszenen sowie mythologische Bilder.⁹ Im Grabbau des Scribonius begegnen ebenfalls sakral-idyllische Landschaften sowie Stilleben und Vogelbilder, doch sind die Frieze hier monothematisch organisiert (Abb. 1; 3).¹⁰ Auffällig ist die größere Präsenz dionysischer

Symbole wie Masken und Kultgeräte sowie das Vorhandensein eines Figurenfrieses, der eine vereinfachte Variante des Bokchoris-Zyklus¹¹ des schwarzen Trikliniums der Villa sotto la Farnesina darstellt. Es scheint, als habe man hier bewusst anspruchsvolle Themen gewählt, um ein reiches und luxuriöses Ambiente zu schaffen. Hierfür sprechen auch die aufwendigen Tesselatmosaiken,¹² vor allem der von C. Scribonius Menophilus gestiftete Scutulatum-Boden des Hauptraumes A (Abb. 1), der mit seiner Anhäufung von Buntmarmorfragmenten kaum in der zeitgenössischen, spätrepublikanischen und frühkaiserzeitlichen Hausarchitektur seinesgleichen findet. Das *Colombario maggiore* besitzt hingegen nur einen einfach verzierten Cocciopestoboden.

Trotz dieser Unterschiede an Raffinesse und Aufwand stehen sich die Malereien beider Gräber aber ikonographisch und stilistisch so nahe, dass man geneigt ist, dieselbe Werkstatt anzunehmen. Sie finden ihre Parallelen in Wanddekorationen wie denen des Augustushauses auf dem Palatin¹³ und der Villa sotto la Farnesina¹⁴ und können auf dieser Grundlage in die Zeit um 30 v.Chr. datiert werden.¹⁵

An der Grundausrüstung hat es im *Colombario maggiore* praktisch keine Veränderungen gegeben und die Kennzeichnung der Nischen ist fast ausschließlich durch *dipinti* in den gemalten *tabulae ansatae* erfolgt (Abb. 2). Einige Namen, die wiederholt auftreten, bezeichnen offenbar die Besitzer der Nischen, während andere die hier Bestatteten nennen. Es fanden sich nur vier Marmortafeln, die vielleicht eine zweite Generation von Bestattungen bezeugen und etwas wortreicher als die *dipinti* sind, die sich meist auf die schlichte Namensnennung beschränken.¹⁶ Auch im Columbarium des Scribonius sind die Grabbesitzer und Bestatteten vermerkt, doch werden die Nischen hier bereits bei den ersten Belegungen stärker individualisiert und ausgeschmückt, etwa durch Stuckdekorationen oder angebaute Opferbänke. Vor allem aber beeindruckt die reiche Palette an Inschriften aus unterschiedlichen Materialien, die in vielen Fällen, wenn auch nicht immer, die gemalten *tabulae* ersetzen (Abb. 1; 3). Besonders originell und bislang ohne Parallele sind die halbrunden Verschlussplatten, die den Nischenöffnungen angepasst sind und aus Dachziegeln oder Marmor bestehen. Hinzu kommen rund 35 Marmortafeln unterschiedlicher Sorten und Größen, die ohne große Rücksichtnahme auf die Malereien oder den Umriss der Nischen in die Wände eingesetzt worden sind, wohl weil sie auf Grund ihres Materialwertes eine höhere Wertschätzung genossen.¹⁷ Das Grab des Scribonius erweist sich als der anspruchsvollere und teurere der beiden Bauten, wobei die Organisationsform und die soziale Zugehörigkeit der Bestatteten wiederum in beiden Fällen sehr ähnlich sind. Es handelt sich zumeist um *liberti*, wobei die Vielzahl der Gentilnamen belegt, dass es sich hier nicht um die Gräber von Freigelassenen einer wichtigen Familie handelt, sondern um unternehmerisch organisierte Bauten, die von einem einzelnen Bauherrn oder einer Bauherrengemeinschaft errichtet worden sind. Das Fehlen kaiserlicher Freigelassener zumindest in der ersten Generation und das schlichte Formular der Inschriften passen gut zur oben vorgeschlagenen Chronologie der Dekorationen und bestätigen eine Entstehung um 30 v.Chr.

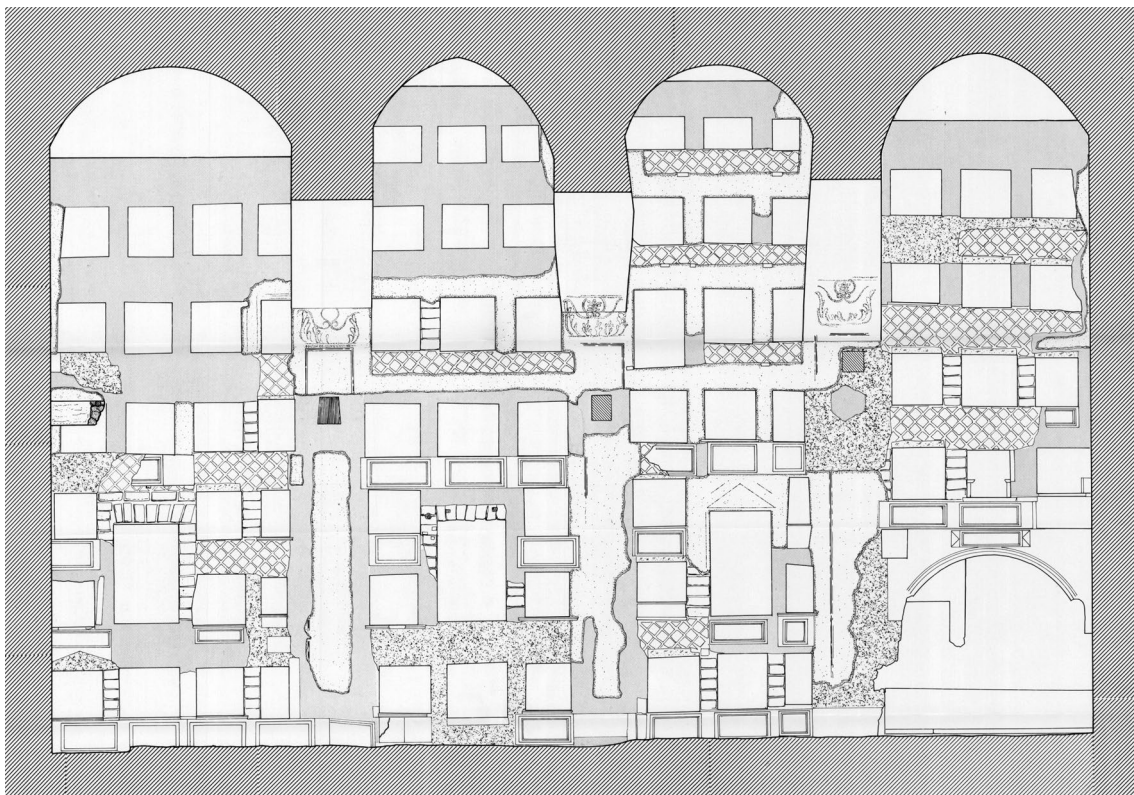


Abb. 4: Columbarium Vigna Codini III, Wand D.

Das Columbarium Codini III,¹⁸ das an der via Appia in der Nähe der Porta San Sebastiano innerhalb der Aurelianischen Mauer liegt, besteht aus drei unterirdischen Korridoren von 12 bzw. 10 m Länge, die zu einem eckigen U angeordnet sind, und ist mit einer Fläche von etwa 60 m² und einer Ausschachtungstiefe von mehr als 5,20 m deutlich größer als die Columbaria Pamphilj. Das ausgehobene Tuffgestein wurde auch hier für die *opus reticulatum*-Verkleidung der Innenwände benutzt, wozu von den rund 670 m³ Aushub allerdings nur 1/11 erforderlich war. Die tonnenüberdeckten Korridore haben eine Raumhöhe von etwa 6,50 m und ragen somit ein gutes Stück über die Erdoberfläche hinaus. Sie umschließen so auf drei Seiten einen rechteckigen Platz von 8 × über 6 m Größe, der vielleicht für Feierlichkeiten am Grab genutzt werden konnte und von dem aus der Grabraum über halbrunde Oberlichter erhellt wurde.

Die Innenwände weisen sechs bis sieben Nischenreihen auf und werden durch weitgehend geschlossene Wandbereiche, auf denen die Entlastungsbögen der Decke aufsetzen, in hochrechteckige Abschnitte untergliedert (Abb. 4). Insgesamt sind rund 1.200 Urnen nachweisbar. Außer im Bereich des Treppenhauses am Anfang des ersten Korridors sind die Nischen fast immer rechteckig und werden meist durch eine kleine Stufe in einen vorderen und einen hinteren Teil untergliedert, in denen sich jeweils zwei Urnen



Abb. 5: Columbarium Vigna Codini III, Wand D, Bogen des Ti. Iulius Donatus.



Abb. 6: Columbarium Vigna Codini III, Wand F, Nischen mit Grundausstattung.

nebeneinander befinden (Abb. 6. 7). Wie bei den Columbaria Pamphilj sind auch hier die einfachen Terrakottavasen während des Bauvorgangs in die Wand eingebracht worden.

Soweit nachweisbar, erfolgte die Kennzeichnung der Gräber nun immer auf Marmortafeln oder anderen Marmorelementen, deren Inschriften einen guten Überblick zu den Belegungsphasen des Columbariums erlauben, da viele von ihnen von Sklaven und Freigelassenen des Kaiserhauses stammten¹⁹. Die Belegung von Codini III hat demnach in spätaugusteisch-tiberischer Zeit begonnen, was seit langem gesehen worden ist, und erreichte unter den julisch-claudischen Kaisern auch ihren Höhepunkt. Von insgesamt 220 Personen tragen 86 die Gentilnamen Iulius/Iulia oder Claudia/Claudius und in 28 weiteren Fällen handelt es sich um Sklavinnen und Sklaven von Mitgliedern dieses Kaiserhauses. Dieses Ergebnis lässt praktisch keinen Zweifel daran aufkommen, dass der Bau als Gemeinschaftsgrab für kaiserliche Sklaven und Freigelassene entstanden ist. Wie und von wem der Bau errichtet und anschließend verwaltet wurde, geht aus den epigraphischen Zeugnissen nicht eindeutig hervor. Es gibt einen nicht ganz sicheren Beleg für einen *decurio* einer Grabgemeinschaft²⁰ und einige Male werden *sortes*, also Lose oder Anteile erwähnt.²¹ Darüber hinaus finden sich einzelne Hinweise auf den Besitz und die Übergabe von *ollae*.²² Eine direkte, fürsorgliche Einflussnahme der kaiserlichen Familie ist hier wie auch in allen anderen vergleichbaren Fällen nicht nachweisbar,²³ sondern es ist vielmehr wahrscheinlich, dass die Sklaven und Freigelassenen selbst den Bau organisiert haben.



Abb. 7: Columbarium Vigna Codini III, Wand B, links Nische der Laelia und des Libralis, rechts Nische des Africanus.

Anders als in den Columbaria Pamphilj war in Codini III von Beginn an eine Hierarchisierung der Bestattungsplätze vorgegeben. So ist in den Wandabschnitten der nach außen gewandten Mauern jeweils die mittlere Nische der 2. Reihe wesentlich größer als die übrigen, wodurch ihre Bedeutung hervorgehoben wird (Abb. 4). Es ist interessant, dass dieses Schema im letzten Abschnitt der Wand D, ganz am Ende des dritten Korridors, aufgegeben worden ist, wo stattdessen der gesamte untere Teil von dem Bogen des Ti. Iulius Donatus, *acceptor a subscriptionibus*,²⁴ eingenommen wird, was sich auch auf die Position der darüber anschließenden Nischen ausgewirkt hat (Abb. 4. 5). Die Errichtung der Anlage muss schon beim Bau der Wand geplant gewesen sein und macht die Grabstätte zum bedeutendsten Bestattungsplatz des Columbariums. Der Marmorbogen vereinte sechs rechteckige Nischen des üblichen Typus zu einem Ensemble und in seiner Inschrift teilt Donatus mit, dass ihm hier insgesamt 36 *ollae* gehörten. Für die Datierung des Bogens liefert die oben links in die Marmorplatte eingesetzte Bestattung des Faustus Frontonianus²⁵ einen *terminus ante quem*, denn dieser ist als Sklave des Tiberius und der Iulia Augusta gestorben, also vermutlich vor 29 n.Chr., sicher aber vor 37 n.Chr.

Zum Zeitpunkt seiner Fertigstellung besaß das Columbarium Codini III eine relativ einfache Grundausrüstung. Der Fußboden, von dem sich nur wenige Reste erhalten haben, war wahrscheinlich ein schlichter Cocciopesto und die Wände trugen eine weißgrundige Malerei.²⁶ Die für Nischen nicht nutzbaren Wandflächen, vor allem die Pfeiler der Stützbögen und die Decken, sind mit geometrischen und floralen Motiven im Dritten Stil dekoriert, in denen vereinzelt Tiere und Figuren eingebaut sind. Auch die Flächen zwischen den Nischen trugen offenbar einfache Rankendekorationen, die jetzt bis auf wenige Reste zerstört sind. Lediglich im Treppenhaus gibt es einige Garten- und Vogeldarstellungen²⁷ und einen besonderen Akzent setzen die gefälligen, bunt bemalten Stuckkapitelle der Pfeiler zwischen den einzelnen Wandabschnitten. Der Wandsockel zwischen dem Fußboden und der ersten Nischenreihe scheint von Beginn an durchgängig mit marmornen *tabulae* verkleidet gewesen zu sein, die allerdings nur gelegentlich später auch beschriftet worden sind. Die Nischen waren anfangs alle im Innern nur mit einem weißen Rauhputz ausgekleidet und enthielten die einfachen, in der Wand integrierten Terrakottaurnen. In vielen Fällen, besonders in den oberen, weniger attraktiven Wandabschnitten, ist diese einfache Erstausrüstung auch nie verändert worden (Abb. 6).

Während in den Columbaria Pamphilj der Gemeinschaftsraum mit erzählfreudigen Malereien und z.T. aufwendigen Mosaikfußböden ausgestattet wurde, bevorzugte man in Codini III anscheinend eine schlichtere Grundausrüstung, die mehr Raum für die individuelle Ausgestaltung der einzelnen Nische bot. Besonders in den großen und gut einsehbaren Grablagen des unteren Wandabschnitts ist diese dann auch oft erfolgt, wobei die Nischen gelegentlich mit Malereien oder Mosaiken verziert wurden. Die bei Weitem beliebteste Ausstattungsvariante war aber die Marmorverkleidung und die Anbringung individueller Marmorinschriften für die Verstorbenen, wobei der Materialwert für die Wertschätzung ausschlaggebend gewesen sein dürfte. Ein anschauliches Beispiel für die Selbstdarstellung mittels teurer Materialien ist das Grab des kaiserlichen Sklaven Africanus (Abb. 7),²⁸ der in der Inschrift angibt, seine Grablage mit bronzenen Schranken und Ornamenten verziert zu haben sowie mit einer Hydria aus Onyx, die hier auch gefunden wurde. Die Nische selbst hat eine der üblichen Marmorausstattungen erhalten. Die eingebauten Terrakottaurnen sind zwar noch vorhanden und zugänglich, werden aber von Marmorplatten bedeckt, in denen entsprechende runde, verschließbare Öffnungen angebracht sind. Mörtel und Marmorreste belegen, dass die Nische einst im Innern vollständig verkleidet gewesen ist.

In der Grabanlage der kaiserlichen Freigelassenen ging es also nicht so sehr darum, die Gruppenzugehörigkeit zu betonen und in einer egalitären Gestaltung der Grabplätze das Gemeinsame herauszustellen, wie gelegentlich vermutet worden ist,²⁹ sondern wie bei Einzelgräbern stand auch hier die Selbstdarstellung des Individuums und der Familie im Mittelpunkt des Interesses. Das Bemühen um Individualisierung, das oben bereits an dem anspruchsvollen, unternehmerisch organisierten Columbarium



Abb. 8: Columbarium Vigna Codini III, Wand H, Bogen des C. Iulius Chrysantus.

des Scribonius beobachtet werden konnte, wird hier noch weiter gesteigert und von Beginn an in Rechnung gestellt. Maßnahmen wie die *lex Aelia Sentia* und die stärkere Kontrolle der *collegia* führten in augusteischer Zeit zu einer engeren Bindung von Freigelassenen an ihre *patroni* und dürften dazu beigetragen haben, dass die großen Kollektivgräber jetzt in stärkerer Abhängigkeit von den großen Familien errichtet wurden.³⁰ In diesem vorgegebenen Rahmen blieb aber viel Raum für die persönliche Ausgestaltung der einzelnen Grablegen.

Auf die erste, intensive Nutzungsphase folgten ab claudischer Zeit in geringerer Zahl weitere Bestattungen, die zum Teil in Marmorurnen stattfanden, die man in die Nischen einstellte. Den Datierungen von F. Sinn folgend, gehören neun dieser Urnen in die flavisch-traianische Zeit.³¹ Im mittleren bis späten 1. Jh. n.Chr. entstand auch die auffällige Anlage des Vorstehers der Zeltmacher C. Iulius Chrysantus³² (Abb. 8) in der Nähe des Treppenhauses, die wie das ältere Donatus-Grab eine Gruppe von Nischen unter einem Bogen vereint, auch wenn es hier nur zwei sind und die älteren Nischen den neuen Bedürfnissen angepasst wurden. Diese Grablege wird von einer dicken, roten Putzschicht eingefasst, welche die Dekoration Dritten Stils ebenso überdeckt wie einige der angrenzenden Marmorplatten anderer Nischen. Unter diesen befindet sich die Inschrift des Sklaven Crescentus, der *cubicularius* eines nicht näher bestimmbaren Caesar war.³³ Sie kann auf Grund der Eingangsformel DM kaum vor 50 n.Chr. entstanden sein³⁴ und liefert so einen *terminus post quem* für das Familiengrab des Chrysantus, welches dieser für sich, seine Frau und seine Kinder errichtet hat.

Unter den wenigen Bestattungen, welche sicher in die traianisch-antoninische Zeit gehören, erfolgten sieben wiederum in beweglichen Marmorurnen.³⁵ Besonders auffällig ist aber der große Sarkophag der Aelia Veneria (Abb. 5),³⁶ den ihr Ehemann, ein Freigelassener des Antoninus Pius, unter dem alt-ehrwürdigen Donatus-Bogen hat einbauen lassen. Hierbei nahm man die Zerstörung der Nischen der Donatus-Anlage in Kauf, womit die Grenze zwischen der Weiter- und der Nachnutzung deutlich überschritten wurde.

Anmerkungen

¹ Kaenel 2006; Borbonus 2014.

² Caldelli – Ricci 1999; Granino Cecere – Ricci 2008.

³ Seit 2016 läuft am DAI Abt. Rom das Projekt „Kollektive Bestattungen in Rom zwischen später Republik und Spätantike“ unter der Leitung von Th. Fröhlich und N. Zimmermann.

⁴ Hülsen 1893; Bendinelli 1941; Kaenel 2006, 269–271; Caruso et al. 2008; Borbonus 2014, 203–205.

⁵ Catalli 1987; Benocci et al. 1996, 38–47; Kaenel 2006, 272 f.; Fröhlich 2009; Borbonus 2014, 205–207; Fröhlich – Haps 2014.

- ⁶ Zum Bauvorgang: Haps 2012.
- ⁷ Heinzelmann 2000, 64 f.
- ⁸ Feraudi-Gruénais 2001, 40–45.
- ⁹ Bendinelli 1941; Caruso et al. 2008, 22–49.
- ¹⁰ Fröhlich 2009.
- ¹¹ Bragantini – de Vos 1982, 234–283; Bragantini – Pirelli 2006–2007; De Weck 2010; Stramaglia 2012.
- ¹² Calci – Catalli 2001.
- ¹³ Iacopi 2007.
- ¹⁴ Bragantini – de Vos 1982; Sanzi Di Mino 1998.
- ¹⁵ Zur Zeitstellung des Übergangs von Zweiten zum Dritten Stil: La Rocca 2008.
- ¹⁶ Hülsen 1893; Caruso et al. 2008, 16–21.
- ¹⁷ Granino Cecere 2012.
- ¹⁸ Kaenel 2006, 207–208; Borbonus 2014, 167 f.
- ¹⁹ Henzen 1856, 18–24; CIL 6.5179–5338.
- ²⁰ CIL 6.5208.
- ²¹ CIL 6.5242; 5293.
- ²² CIL 6.5184; 5187; 5290.
- ²³ Galvao-Sobrinho 2012, 142 f.
- ²⁴ Henzen 1856, 19; CIL 6.5181.
- ²⁵ CIL 6.5181.
- ²⁶ Feraudi-Gruénais 2001, 94–96.
- ²⁷ Feraudi-Gruénais 2001, 96 Abb. 94.
- ²⁸ CIL 6.5306.
- ²⁹ Borbonus 2014, 3. 8. 63.
- ³⁰ Galvao-Sobrinho 2012, 144–146.
- ³¹ Sinn 1987, Kat.-Nr. 249. 268. 295. 318. 330. 382. 385. 452. 470.
- ³² CIL 6.5183.
- ³³ CIL 6.5195.
- ³⁴ Caldelli – Ricci 1999, 50.
- ³⁵ Sinn 1987, Kat.-Nr. 569. 593. 613. 650. 654. 658. 682.
- ³⁶ CIL 6.5310.

Bildnachweis

Abb. 1, 5–8: Foto Th. Fröhlich. – Abb. 2: Zeichnung und Fotomontage der Fresken S. Haps. – Abb. 3: Foto H. Behrens. – Abb. 4: Bauaufnahme M. Medri – R. Meneghini, Soprintendenza speciale archeologia, belle arti e paesaggio di Roma, Archiv.

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Tomb and Identity.

On the Individualisation of Burials in Collective Burial Spaces in the City of Rome in the 1st and 2nd Century AD

Clarissa Blume-Jung

Rome in 2nd century AD, Euphemus and Nice participated in a large columbarium by buying a couple of niches for themselves and their daughter Cyrilla, someone called Lesbius as well as their freedmen and -women and their descendants. We know neither their reasons for choosing this kind of burial nor what their burial niches looked like. Nevertheless, an inscription slab installed to indicate, which niches belonged to them, has survived. It is a good example of the custom of participating in a large columbarium (fig. 1):¹

A(ulus) Fabius Euphemus et Antonia / Nice emerunt sibi et Fabiae Cy= / rillae, filiae, et C(aio) Oppio Lesbio ol= / las n(umer) XI ab titulo usque ad ostium; / in introitu parte sinisteriori / ab pa(v)imento hordini secundo co= / lumbaris n(umero) V libertis, libertab(us) q(ue) / posterisque eorum. Hae ollae / h(eredem) n(on) s(equetur)

Aulus Fabius Euphemus and Antonia / Nice have bought it for themselves, Fabia Cy- / rilla, their daughter, and Gaius Oppius Lesbius 11 ol- / lae, from this inscription up to the door; / to the left of the entrance, / in the second row up 5 ni- / ches, for their freed men and women and / their descendants; these ollae / no heir will follow.

The type of grave Euphemus and Nice chose was one of many options at that time. In fact, in the city of Rome in the 1st and 2nd century AD, grave types and burial contexts were manifold and heterogeneous. In general, burials could occur in graveyards, used mainly for simple inhumations in the earth, in city-like necropoleis, characterised by smaller and larger grave monuments or grave buildings scattered around or aligned like the houses of grown or planned villages, or in tombs placed along the large arterial roads leading from the city.² Moreover the type of burial varied, as well as the type of tomb regarding shape, size, materials, cost, privacy and visibility. They range from depositions of mortal remains (inhumations or incarnations) in the earth – either directly, wrapped in fabric or inside containers of varying material, type and quality (such as wood, wicker, stone or metal, and sometimes decorated to various extent) – over depositions in small and large grave monuments up to grave buildings of differing size (some only ca. 1 m²; others were monumental houses or extravagant architectural structures several storeys high).

As an ongoing comprehensive research project it is the author's aim to analyse the enormous heterogeneity of the burial sites and types in the city of Rome in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD.³ As evident in the study, obviously neither the choice of burial area



Fig. 1: Inscription CIL 06, 17524; from Rome; today: Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Cividale del Friuli, IN 2289.

nor type of tomb were dependant on hierarchal position within society. Instead, there seems to have been a broader set of individual motives and reasons for the specific choices made.

This article examines the inhabitants of Rome who chose burials in collective spaces, thus grave monuments shared with non-family members. The intention is to contribute to the discussion on Roman burial practices by offering insights into the decision-making spectrum regarding tomb choice and the herewith connected expenditures and possible individualisations.

When burial in a large monument was intended but no own grave architecture was built, there were three options of collective burial spaces: Accommodation in a mausoleum owned by someone else, participation in a large columbarium or enclosure, or sharing the mausoleum or enclosure costs. These variants are presented and discussed in the following sections.

Accommodation in Mausolea Owned by Someone Else

Being of monumental size and in various cases well preserved along streets of tombs and in necropoleis of Rome, they are probably the most popular examples of Roman burial customs, large house-like tomb buildings often referred to as mausolea. For instance a couple of mausolea of the necropolis under Saint Peter in Rome, under St. Sebastian or at the Via Latina are well preserved.⁴ Grave buildings like these were enormous and featured serene façades but with manifold decorative details or figurative emblemata. The interiors were usually built as columbaria with burial niches spread all over. The most important burials within the tomb were usually clearly recognisable, not only from their inscriptions but also their central position, decorative style or the use of a specific burial container, such as an urn in the form of a cist or grave altar. For instance, the two children of the grave owner of mausoleum C in the necropolis under Saint Peter, Lucius Tullius Zethus, were meant to be buried in two grave altars at the front end of the grave. Even though, in the end, only the son was buried there, with the daughter and her husband placed in a neighbouring tomb (mausoleum F).⁵ The parents were probably buried in a cist being part of the wall between the two altars.

Also in mausoleum C, the burial places of Zethus' core family were surrounded by at least 56 ollae in niches, possibly burials under the mosaic pavement (there are libation holes in marble slabs included in the floor) as well as burials in two arcosols. The titulus crowning the door to the mausoleum reads:

L(ucius) Tullius Zethus fecit / sibi et / Tulliae Athenaidi, coniugi bene / merenti et Tulliae Secundae et / Tullio Athenaeo filis et libe[[r]] = / ris eorum libertis liberta= / busque, quos hì, qui supra scrìpti / sunt, manumìsissent. / In front(e) ped(es) XII, in agr(o) ped(es) XVIII.

Lucius Tullius Zethus has made it / for himself and / Tullia Athenaidis, [his] well- / merited wife and Tullia Secunda and / Tullius Athenaius, [his] children, and their free- / borns, freedmen and freed- / women, who had those, named above / let free. / Front 12 feet, depth 18 feet.

It is reasonable to assume that most people buried in Zethus' tomb were, in addition to Zethus and his closest relatives, their freeborns, freedmen and freedwomen mentioned in this main grave inscription at the building façade. A connection to the master and his family gave them the advantage of an assured burial place in a high-quality monument. What they lack, however, is an individual mention in the titulus and thus being visible to passers-by. Moreover, usually they were unable to adapt the niche according to individual wishes.

In fact, masses of freed slaves and possibly also slaves were buried in this way. However, many of them had the possibility, permission and also money for their own tombs and chose this option for their burials. Mostly, they had inhumations or cremations placed with or without a wrapping or container in the earth, small grave monuments or relatively small grave buildings. Furthermore, there were large and extravagant tombs designed to attract attention. Most of the latter, from simple burials in earth to ostentatious grave buildings, have something in common: their inscriptions here addressed to the passers-by indicated their own names since they themselves were the grave-owners.

For example, there are several cremations of freedmen and -women crowned by simple marble slabs with inscriptions – such as for Epigone, liberta of Cocceia L. – or more elaborate slabs – such as for Nunnius, his wife Ma and their son Crescens showing portraits of mother and son framed by an aedicula. Both examples were set up in the “Autoparco” section of a necropolis near the Via Triumphalis in the Vatican.⁶ However, the tombs owned by slaves and freed slaves could also be larger, such as the one for Alcimus and his family built by his wife Fabia Philtate. It has a square plan of 1.5 × 1.5 m and was built like a small family columbarium.⁷ This, however, was fake for passers-by. No niches with ollae were embedded in the walls. Instead, the burials were placed solely under the floor. Nevertheless, the slave, his wife and family had their own tomb. Moreover, their names and thus their family was visible to the public even beyond death.

With regard to the extent of visibility and independence, there was another tomb type in between the variant of having an urn inside a master's tomb and a separate burial in a graveyard or necropolis. It was a burial within larger columbaria shared by various people as discussed in the following section.

Participating in a Larger Columbarium or Grave Enclosure

Columbaria were tomb buildings, which, as their name suggests, were reminiscent of dovecots. This is based on burial niches with each one to three ollae embedded in the walls during construction. Tombs of that type ranged from small ca. one square meter with one niche per wall (or perhaps a second above), to medium with 50 niches and ca. 100 ollae, up to large with more than 500 niches and 1000 ollae.⁸ The smallest

were used by single small families; the largest were built by the emperor or other members of the imperial family to be used by their slaves and freed slaves. Medium-sized columbaria were often built and used by one individual family. Regularly, however, we find medium-sized columbaria shared by different families. Euphemus and Nice, whose inscription has survived and had been mentioned above, must have used some niches in one of these columbaria. That is why they installed the inscription so that it clearly marked their burial niches as a unit and identified the interred to visitors.

In the case of Euphemus and Nice, 16 niches were bought in advance to secure burial places for the family and their freed men and women. Since the original context of their inscription is lost, we do not know what their niches looked like. The grade of individualisation of the niches in jointly used columbaria varied.

A columbarium next to the grave of the Scipiones, for instance, followed a homogenous design of the niches and surroundings. The tomb chamber was probably once characterised by five rows of niches (the upper end of the building is in ruin and only four rows of niches are well preserved; a fifth row is recognisable in one of the corners). The walls were painted white and each niche was framed with a stucco border. The rows of niches were separated by two lines, with a different colour for each row. Above each niche a tabula ansata in polished paint was placed, the colour of which was consistent along a row. The paint of the lowest and the uppermost row is not preserved. The tabulae of the second row were green, of the third yellow, and the fourth red. Of importance for the overall layout of the tomb chamber is light decoration of the space between the niches. In the second row painted slim, tall abstract herms were placed between the niches; in the third and fourth row tender plants were painted growing from the decorative lines as if from flower pots. We do not know who was buried in this columbarium. However, we can recognise that it was prepared for use by a large group of people not necessarily being related. The niches were readily prepared and the tabulae were waiting for the names to be incised or painted on.⁹ It is of significance that in this case, the users of columbarium did not decide to individualise their niches.

In contrast to the columbarium near the tomb of the Scipiones are those shared columbaria, the niches of which were slightly or heavily adapted to mark out the property and meet personal needs. A first example are niches in the so-called tomb of Pomponius Hylas at the Via Latina. As can be taken from the names in the various grave inscriptions, the here buried shared the columbarium without any clear relationship. It is likely that they individually bought the niches for their burials.¹⁰ The underground chamber was approximately square shaped and ended on its southeastern side in an apse with a central aedicula keeping two ollae. The two rows of niches along the walls were embedded in a two-storey architectural front including pillars between the lower niches, columns between the upper ones and pediments completing the structure from above. The lower row of niches was crowned by tabulae in red and



Fig. 2: Columbarium of Pomponias Hylas. Niche with nail-holes in the corners above.
Picture taken by C. Blume-Jung.

yellow serving the names of the deceased. The upper niches were crowned by box-like shelves. Despite the prepared layout of the tomb, some of the burial places were altered according to personal wishes. Simple rearrangements of the settings include, for instance, the attachment of nails above the niches, which might have served for the hanging of garlands (fig. 2) or the placing of marble tabulae for the inscriptions showing the deceased's names. In addition to the users who took the niches more or less as they were, there were obviously users who intended to have a more impressive



Fig. 3: Columbarium XII at the necropolis at the Via Ostiense near S. Paolo fuori le mura.
Picture taken by C. Blume-Jung.

place of burial. Their wish resulted in two further aediculae, set up later in front of the northeastern wall of the chamber altering sections with niches, which might have already been used.¹¹ The most individually organised burial place in the columbarium was that of Pomponius Hylas and Pomponia Vitalinis. Their niche was opposite the stairwell, visible at eye level when descending the stairs. It was shaped like a large cubic hole with a vaulted ceiling. The latter was covered with stalactites in stucco to make the niche resemble a cave and framed with murex shells on a red-painted band. The hole itself had a marble-slab floor with a painted incrustation pattern on its walls. Beneath the niche was a mosaic depicting the names of Hylas and Vialinis, and a lyre flanked by two griffins.

The individualisation of single niches in shared columbaria can be found on a regular basis. In tomb XII in the necropolis at the Via Ostiense¹², for example, the first niche to the left of the door was at some point supplied with a large table-like marble slab, protruding far beyond the niche itself and restricting access to a neighbouring niche (fig. 3). The slab was possibly used as a table for setting up an urn instead of the provided ollae. Its size, however, makes it reasonable to assume that preparations were carried out on it for ritual activities as well as depositions placed on it for



Fig. 4: Columbarium of Scribonius Menophilus, Room B. Picture taken by C. Blume-Jung.

the deceased, such as lamps, flowers or bowls with libations or food. Similarly, a table-like slab was attached to at least three niches in the so-called columbarium of Scribonius Menophilus at the Via Aurelia (fig. 4).¹³ In one case the niche was even framed with a stucco pediment. The same columbarium serves as an example for the unification of two niches placed side by side in the corner of the chamber. By removing part of the wall between the two niches at right angles, their top surfaces now merged and clearly belonged together. Apart from architectural changes to the niches themselves, others were made in regard to the tabulae. In fact, some of the niches in this columbarium were equipped with marble slabs covering the opening



Fig. 5: Columbarium of Scribonius Menophilus, Room A. Picture taken by C. Blume-Jung.

of the niche or placed beneath it to show the name of the deceased buried in the related olla (figs. 4. 5). These marble slabs vary in type of stone and size and the names inscribed on them were more striking than those written in the tabulae that were painted beneath each niche as part of the original layout of the burial chamber.¹⁴ In the columbarium of Scribonius Menophilus, the adaptations of the niches, however, went beyond architectural changes. Even the artificial painting of the columbarium was covered in several cases to clearly individualise the appearance and sometimes to visualise the connection of some niches. One niche, for example, had a thick red outline and a new garland dominated by other elements and colours (red, brown

and yellow) than the green garlands originally painted above all of the niches in this row. Two other niches, one directly above the other, were surrounded by a red framing line, decorated in between with a bust-like image (possibly a portrait of one of the deceased) looking out of a painted window and applied with two newly painted tabulae (fig. 5).¹⁵ In fact, by choosing red for the frame and outlines of the tabulae, it was intended for the new decoration to match the main decoration of the chamber. However, the new paint overlapped the old and the skill of the previous painter was not matched. Obviously, the owners of the repainted areas accepted the lower quality of the painted result in order to have their preferred iconography.

The adaption of niches in shared columbaria as seen in the previous examples could go even further to encompass major changes in architecture and decoration so that the original homogenous layout of the columbarium was heavily altered to a heterogeneous differentiation between the sections belonging to the various users. One of the most striking examples is columbarium 8 in the “autoparco” section of the necropolis near the ancient Via Triumphalis in today’s Vatican. Here for instance, some of the niches were surrounded with a red frame. At the left hand wall (the southern wall) two niches were framed together and decorated with a classicising ornamental band consisting of opposing S-shaped lines and heart-like volute-pairs. Opposite to these two jointly framed and decorated burial places were three niches left without a frame but grouped by another homogenous decoration.¹⁶ It is composed of pairs of Uraei crowned, seed heads of lotus flowers above the Uraeis’ tails and further single Egyptianising motives. Moreover, in the same columbarium two niches were enlarged at some later point. In one case, two niches lying side by side were united; in the other case, two niches laying one on top of the other were connected to a tall one. The vault above the broadened niche was coated with a mosaic and framed with seashells, while the now-taller niche was painted with plants, the middle of which depicted in a plant pot.

Even though columbaria were the most common type of shared tomb, participation within a burial space also existed for grave enclosures. In contrast to the pre-prepared grave chambers of the columbaria, here solely the enclosing wall was built whilst the tomb itself was inserted by the participator. In contrast to erecting the tomb individually somewhere within a necropolis, the advantage of a shared grave enclosure probably lay in logistics and possibly shared costs for the plot. One example survived in the necropolis at the Via Ostiense (grave precinct IV, fig. 6).¹⁷ Its enclosing wall dates back to Augustan times, but frames tombs from the following two centuries. It comprised of at least five grave aediculas holding ollae, one grave altar for holding ashes, one olla placed in the earth and a burial within a clay sarcophagus. Here however, not only was the enclosure shared, the preserved grave altar served as an example that even the smallest grave types could be used for shared burials. Even though it is not clear how many individuals were buried there, the inscription suggests that it



Fig. 6: Burial enclosure IV at the necropolis at the Via Ostiense near S. Paolo fuori le mura. Picture taken by C. Blume-Jung.

was more than three. In fact, there were three holes in the altar, which might have served for father, mother and daughter mentioned in the inscription at the front of the monument. However, the text seems to open the grave altar also for burials for their freed ones. It reads¹⁸:

Dis Manibus / Iuliae Fortunatae / vix(it) ann(is) XIV m(ensibus) XI / et matri eius / Ti(berius) Iulius Arsaces / filiae piissimae / fecit et sibi et / Pontiae Euhodiae / coniugi suae et / libertis libertabus / posterisque eorum.

Dis Manibus. For Iulia Fortunata. / She lived 14 years and 11 months. / And for her mother. / Tiberius Iulius Arsaces / has made it for [the] most pious daughter / and for himself and / Pontia Euhodia / his wife and / for their freedmen and freedwomen and their descendants.

Shared grave precincts do regularly though not often appear in Roman burial contexts. Since the cost for the individual grave itself must have been the same as in the open space of a burial ground, there must have been special advantages of shared precincts. If the users joining the plot of a grave precinct were not directly related, it can be imagined that there was another financial or logistical benefit of choosing this solution.

Conclusions

As this article could only touch on the variety of burial types and locations in the city of Rome, which were very heterogeneous in the 1st and 2nd century AD, a broader and more comprehensive approach is part of a large research project of the author. However, the focus here was on questions of how tomb architectures for a large number of burials were used, what the alternatives were and what the advantages and disadvantages of the decision for the larger shared architectures might have been.

Focusing on who was buried where in Rome in the 1st and 2nd century AD, it is of significance that the choice of tomb, location, size and layout was not related to the individual's position in the social hierarchy. Instead, the reasons a certain type of tomb and location was chosen were manifold and included, for instance, financial aspects, the desire for visibility after death, a possible wish for self-presentation, or the wish to remain together as a family beyond death.

Looking at the various examples in this article it becomes clear that the decision for a burial within a grave building meant to serve many burials could have been made to save money. However, firstly, there were other cheap burial options for individual graves and, secondly in contrast, there were many grave settings in large funerary structures, such as columbaria, which have been expensively re-arranged to meet personal needs.

Often freed individuals and possibly slaves could have been easily buried within their master's tomb. This naturally had the advantage of everything being organised, a low-budget or even free solution, and a nicely constructed tomb or grave monument as the interment site. However, as we have seen in all of these examples, choosing this option meant no longer being visible to passers-by. Since solely the grave owners were mentioned in the titulus of the mausoleum, such as in the example from the necropolis under Saint Peter, or even at the front of the grave altar mentioned at the end of the article, the names of all freed ones and maybe slaves were, if at all, visible solely at the burial niches within the mausoleum.

In contrast to having a family mausoleum, buying a niche in a shared columbarium offered greater visibility. Moreover, there is clear evidence that families, regardless of social or financial level, wished to remain together after interment. Looking at shared columbaria or grave enclosures, in contrast to family mausolea, it becomes clear that only in the less private, shared columbaria and enclosures did participants have the chance to decide for themselves whether and how they wanted to adapt their purchased niches. As a result, they had the possibility to clearly mark the family's property, make architectural changes – for instance for the deposition of gifts for the deceased – and decorate the grave as they pleased.

Furthermore, considering the bereaved's desire to visit the tomb and follow various rites on different days throughout the year, it must be considered that the desired contact with the individual burial site might have been easier in a shared columbarium than in a family mausoleum.

Nevertheless, looking at the number of shared columbaria and burials within shared columbaria, it has to be realised that all in all most niches were differentiated solely by the addition of the names of the deceased on the provided tabulae or, at most, inscribed in or painted on added marble slabs. Otherwise, the overall layout of shared columbaria often remained as initially planned. However, in the examples, where niches were differentiated, the changes made varied from attaching garlands, adding marble shelves and re-painting the area to re-shaping the architecture. Consequently, we have to differentiate the observation on how consistent the anticipated use was with the actual use. While the planned layout and use of family mausolea remained by and large as planned.

The role economics played in the use of large funerary buildings in the city of Rome was the main focus of the conference section, to which this article belongs. Returning to this overall question, it can be concluded that economics did generate a strong interest in sharing grave buildings. However, the strong desire to keep the family together beyond death, to have an own tomb to the tastes, intentions and needs of the deceased and bereaved, to have a tomb visible to passers-by and easily accessible for grave visits made shared tombs one significant option in the heterogeneous spectrum of Roman burial types.

Notes

¹ CIL VI, 17524, EDR 144317.

² See the following examples (with exemplary references) of the city of Rome for a simple graveyard (at Via Serenissima / Via Collatina), a necropolis (at Via Ostiense) or a street of tombs (at Via Appia): Buccellato et al. 2008; Lugli 1919; Zocchi 2009.

³ It is the "Habilitation" project of the author.

⁴ For an image see: Liverani et al. 2010, 44 f. fig. 24 – see, for instance: Mielsch 1986; Tacalite 2009; Rea – Egidi 2001.

⁵ Eck 1989, 62 f.

⁶ Väänänen 1973, 29 f. no. 7. pl. 7, 2; 43–45 no. 32. pl. 20; Steinby 2003, 70 f.; Liverani et al. 2010, 176 f. fig. 133 f.

⁷ Liverani et al. 2010, 232 f. fig. 192, 193; 235–240; Duday et al. 2013.

⁸ For small and medium columbaria see examples in the necropoles "autoparco" and "Santa Rosa" near the Via Triumphalis. See for instance columbaria 8 and 9 in the area "autoparco": Steinby 2003, 94–96. – For large columbaria see the following publication: Borbonus 2014.

⁹ At least one inscribed name could be recognised by the author. When entering the columbarium it is on the long wall to the right on the middle of the three preserved green tabulae.

¹⁰ Newton – Ashby 1910, 465.

¹¹ Newton – Ashby 1910, 466.

¹² For more information on this necropolis see, for instance: Lugli 1919.

¹³ The columbarium has recently been carefully studied by Silke Haps and Thomas Fröhlich and will be published by them in detail. See for instance these previous publications: Fröhlich 2009; Catalli 1999; Fröhlich 2009. – The marble slab can be seen in: Fröhlich 2009, 384 fig. 5.

¹⁴ The various tabulae and stone slabs can be seen in the following images of the columbarium: Fröhlich 2009, 382–384 fig. 2–5.

¹⁵ For an image of the wall see: Fröhlich 2009, 382 fig. 2.

¹⁶ For an image see: Liverani et al. 2010, 174 f. fig. 132.

¹⁷ For the necropolis at the via Ostiense see for instance: Lugli 1919.

¹⁸ Lugli 1919, 306 no. 29.

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Peter and Paul *ad catacumbas*: a Pozzolana Mine Reconsidered

Barbara E. Borg

The site and excavations of S. Sebastiano at the third mile of the via Appia has been discussed in literally hundreds of publications due to its importance for our understanding of the cult of the martyr saints Peter and Paul. It is a major focus of my larger project, which examines the relationship between early Christians and their non-Christian surroundings through the study of the interaction between different social groups in a small but intensively used part of the Roman suburbium, generously funded by the Leverhulme foundation.¹ The present paper can only outline one element of the larger argument. I shall start with a brief overview of the history of the site, then discuss the most popular interpretation offered for the cult of the apostles Peter and Paul at this location, and finally present some of my own readings of the remains in their wider context.

History of the Site

The area known in antiquity as *ad* (or *in*) *catacumbas*, near the hollows, was occupied initially by a pozzolana mine on the right side of the via Appia between the second and third milestone.² From the mid-first century onwards, along secondary roads, both perpendicular and parallel to the Appia, a vast, fairly regularly laid out necropolis started to develop (fig. 1). In the first half of the second century, a building with several rooms around a courtyard, the so-called Villa Grande, which may have been the seat of a voluntary association and/or a place to celebrate the festivals of the dead, was erected on one such secondary road that ran parallel to the Appia. A smaller structure consisting of an open courtyard and three semi-interred rooms underneath, the so-called Villa Piccola, was added in the Severan period just to the north of this building, and may have served a similar purpose.

While tombs started to be built aboveground, and after mining activities had ceased, the first loculi were cut into the tuff walls of the mine's galleries. In the Hadrianic period, part of the cavities collapsed and, following some levelling and smoothing of surfaces, a sunken piazza, the so-called *piazzola* with its floor level some 5.5 m beneath the surface, was created, and three mausolea, X, Y, and Z, built into cavities of the former mine (figs. 2. 7). In the Antonine period, the so-called building β of uncertain designation was erected above the attic of Mausoleum Z.

After c. 240, the entire cavity was filled in to create a slightly sloping piazza above ground (figs. 2. 3). A simple portico, the so-called *triglia*, was erected at

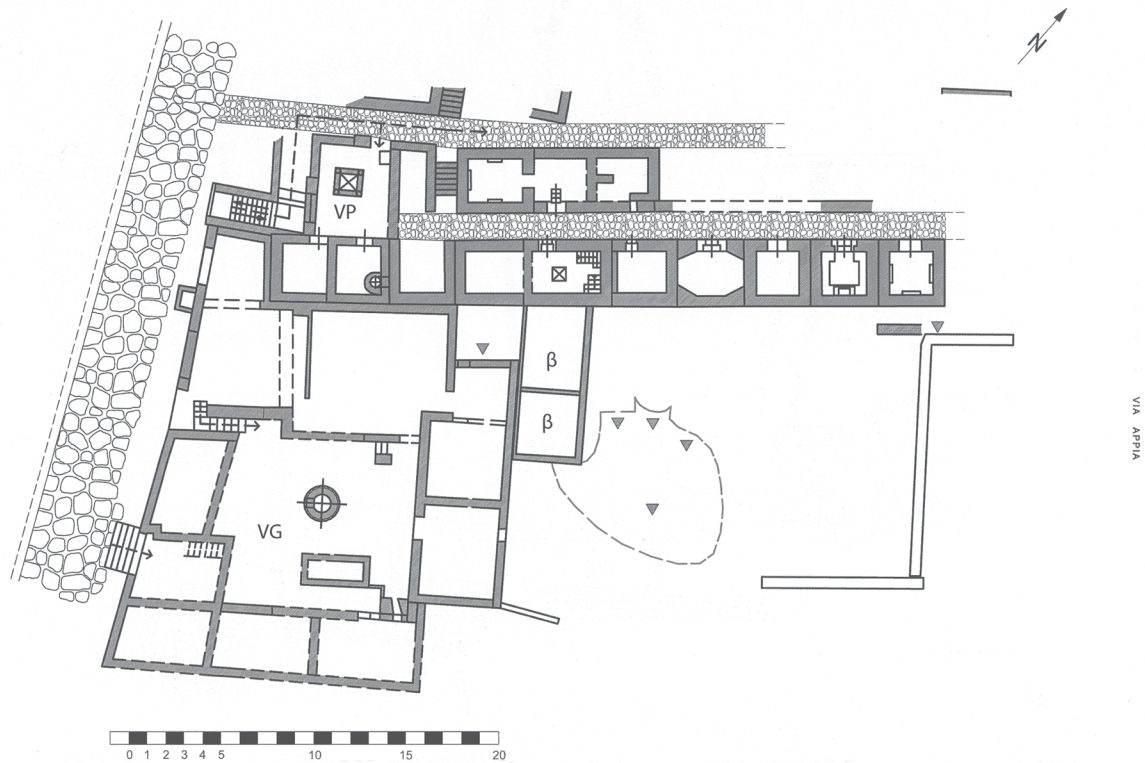


Fig. 1: Buildings underneath S. Sebastiano, early third century.

the eastern edge of the piazza with a bench running along its rear wall, which in turn was decorated with painted stucco. Some 600 graffiti were engraved into this stucco, which invoke the apostle martyrs Peter and Paul, ask for their support, and commemorate *refrigeria* in their honour. This memorial for the apostles has given the entire piazza the name *memoria apostolorum*. Finally, building β was partly demolished, and a small semi-circular niche was set into a wall that now closed off the rear, filled-in part of the building (fig. 4).

These changes have an undisputed *terminus post quem* of 238/44³ and a *terminus ante quem* is given by the circiform cemeterial basilica that was eventually erected over the entire complex in the early fourth century (fig. 5). Robert Marichal's reading, in one of the *trichia* graffiti, of the names of the consuls of 260 has found much approval but unfortunately is all but certain.⁴ The basilica continued the existing cult and was aptly named Basilica Apostolorum. Due to the sloping terrain, the tombs originally standing east of the *trichia* had to be completely razed to the ground, and their former existence is now indicated by their underground hypogea only. The western tombs and the "villas" were partly razed and partly filled with earth, and integrated into the foundations of the basilica.

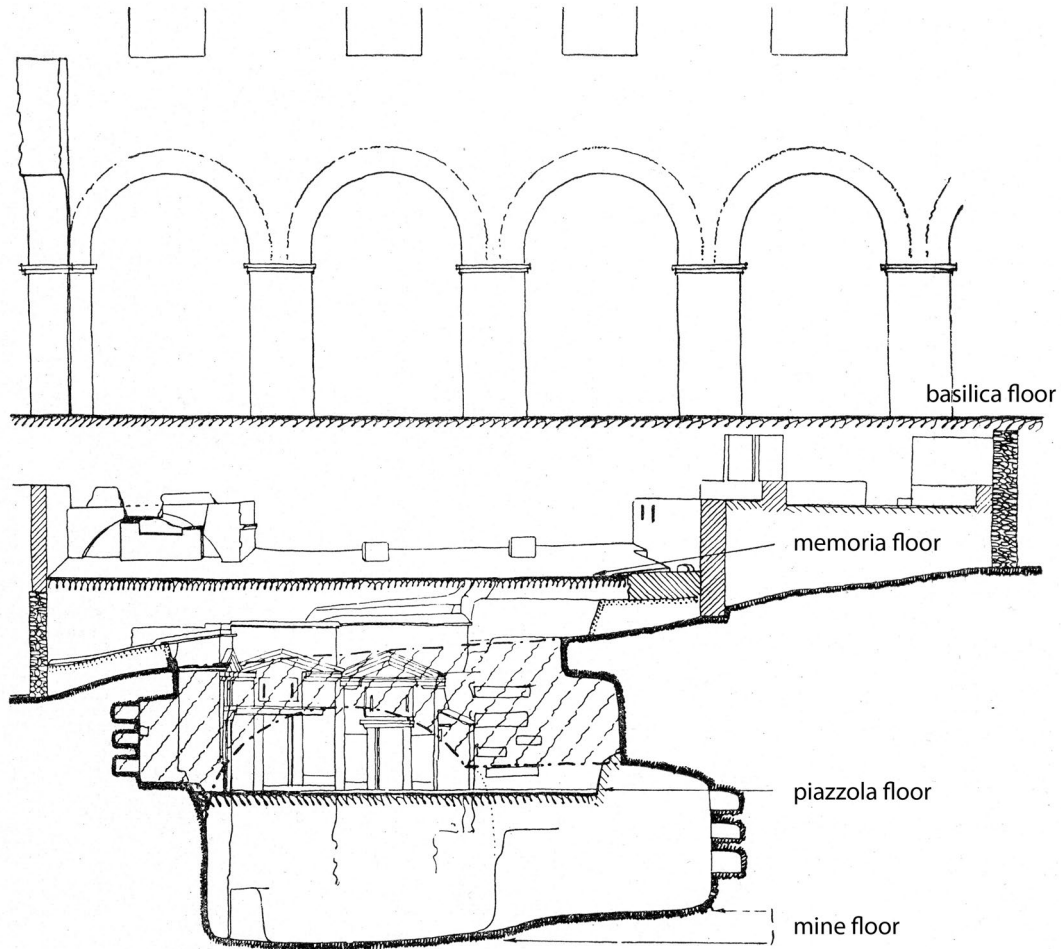


Fig. 2: Cross-section through the excavation underneath S. Sebastiano.

Key Questions

Most scholars agree on the history of the site as outlined so far, but the most significant questions around the origins and character of the apostles' cult are still unsolved. The majority now agrees that the graffiti are typical of burial sites,⁵ and some later sources equally attest to the belief that the apostles were once buried there. Yet, this flies in the face of the other tradition that has become an orthodoxy among modern Christians, according to which the apostles' graves were in the Vatican and on the via Ostiense respectively, where basilicas were erected to them in the early fourth century and their cult is still celebrated today.

That there was an official cult at all three sites is confirmed by the *Chronography of the Year 354* and the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*, which report the introduction of this cult in 258. Scholars have tried to solve the conundrum in various ways, two

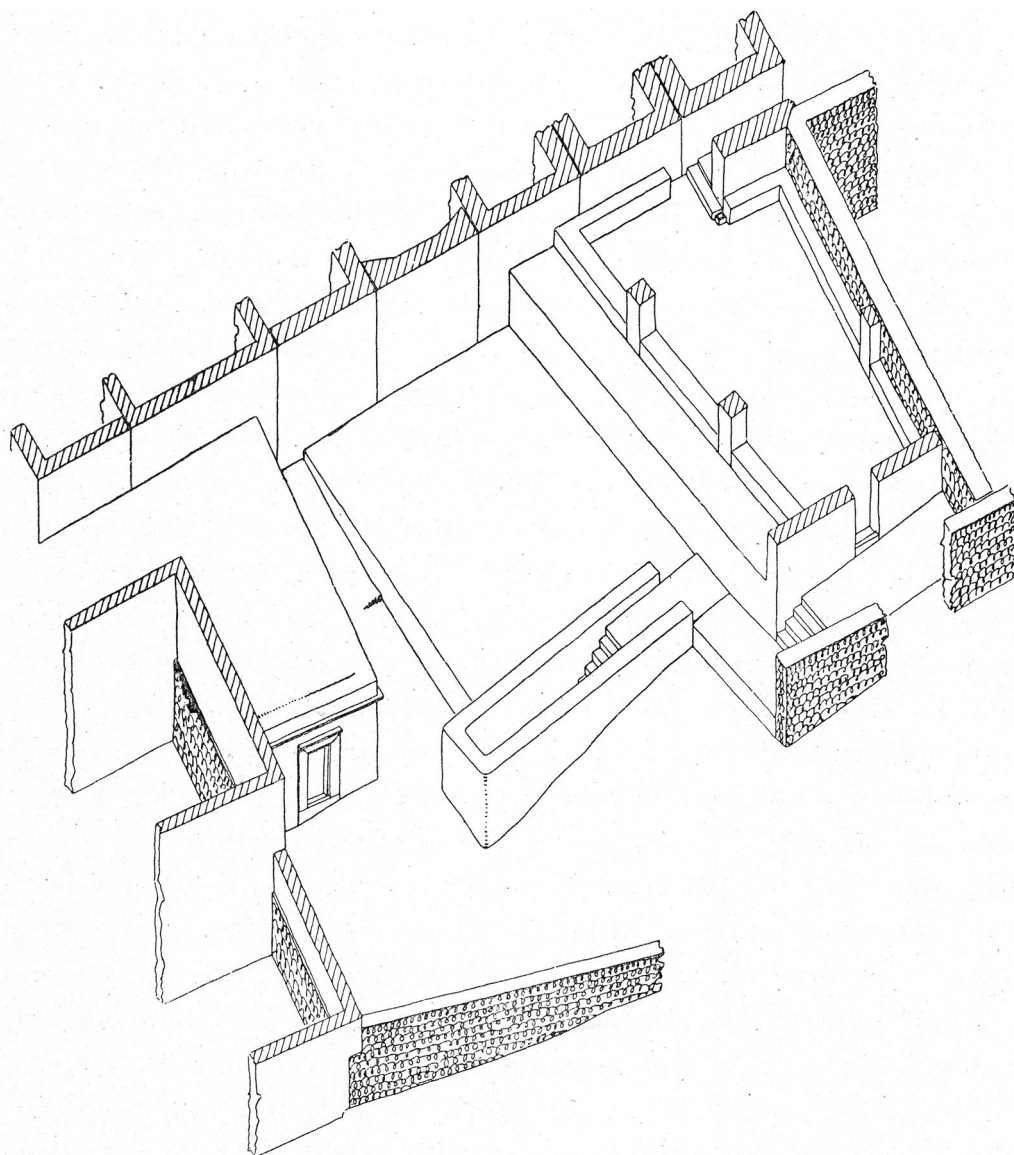


Fig. 3: Buildings around the memoria underneath S. Sebastiano, third quarter third century.

of which are currently the most popular. One simply suggests that there were two rival traditions about where the apostles were buried, none of which could be established as more historically 'correct' than the other.⁶ The other suggestion, still supported by a majority today, starts from the observation that 258 is the second year of the Valerianic persecutions. In order to protect the remains of the apostles from the authorities, so the claim goes, they were temporarily translated to *ad catacumbas*.⁷ This paper aims to explore the likelihood of this second hypothesis, and the possibility to proceed beyond the somewhat frustrating conclusions of the former.

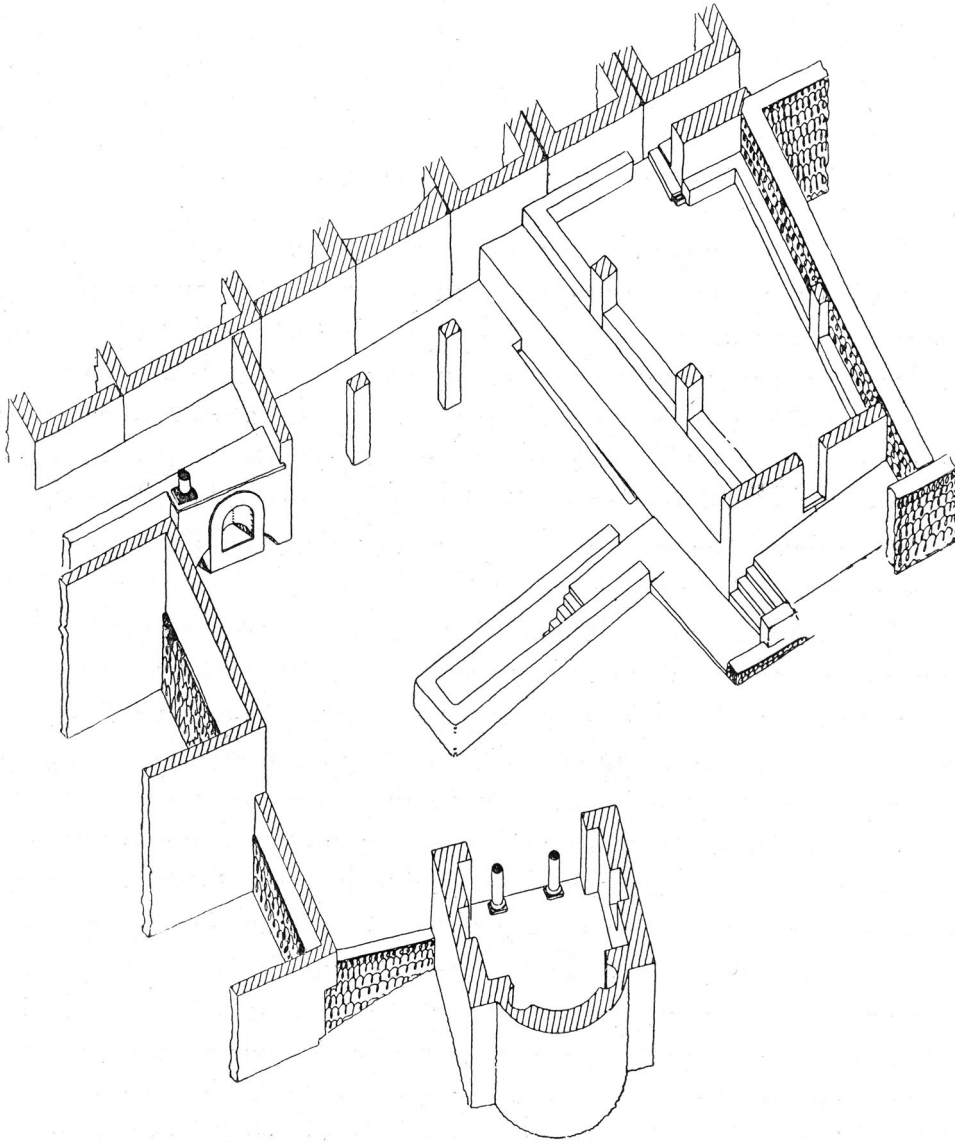


Fig. 4: Buildings around the memoria underneath S. Sebastiano, end of third century.

Difficulties with the latter scenario have been noticed early on. Not only would it have been illegal and highly dangerous to relocate the apostles' bones, but it also was unnecessary since they would have been protected from violation by law in their original place, a law that does not seem to have been violated by the authorities in any persecution. Kurt Lampe therefore suggests that not the apostles' bones but only the commemorative meetings on their behalf were moved, and that it was precisely the pagan nature of the necropolis, which, together with the remoteness of the location, made the place ideal for inconspicuous and unsuspecting Christian meetings.⁸

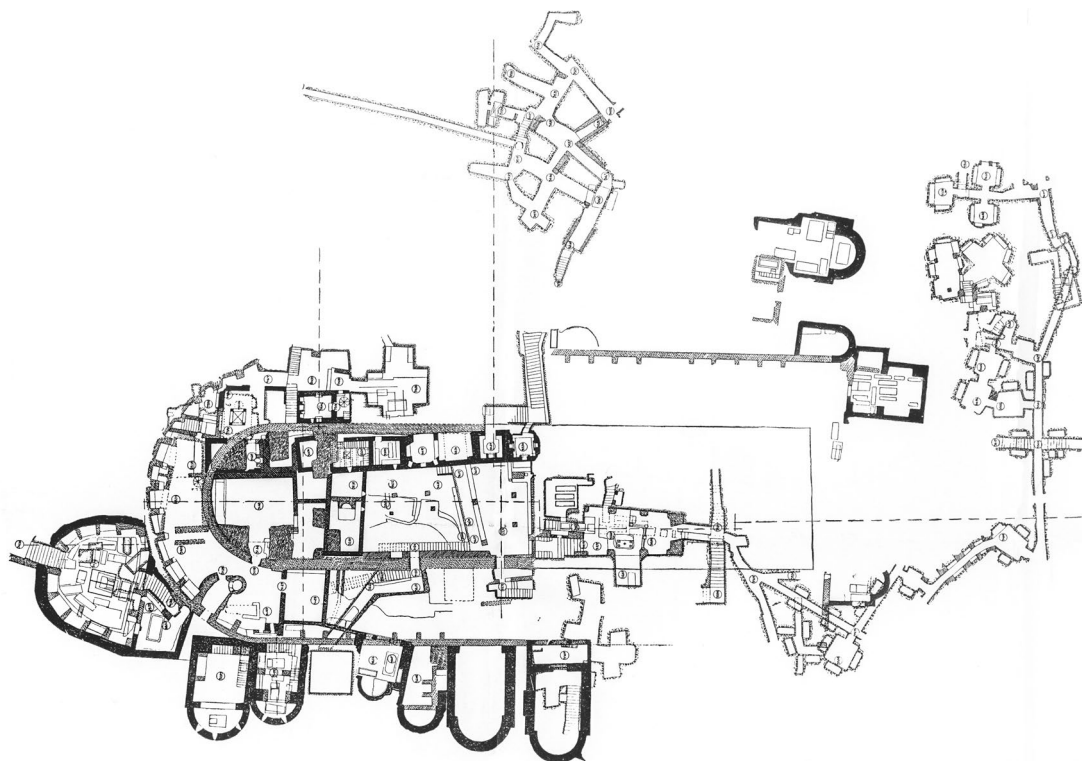


Fig. 5: Outline of the Basilica Apostolorum and some late antique mausolea over the remains of the necropolis and memoria.

Yet this characterisation of the area, which also underlies the translation theory, is seriously flawed. The area was situated close to the most prominent consular road, and right opposite a villa that may have been imperial already in the later second century, but definitively by the time the apostles' cult was founded.⁹ Moreover, a *statio* of praetorians was situated somewhere between the mausoleum of Caecilia Metella and S. Sebastiano, and there is a high percentage of burials around *ad catacumbas* of imperial slaves and freedmen, and of members of various elite military corps.¹⁰ They suggest that the area may have been imperial or public property, and demonstrate in any case its regular frequentation by members of the imperial household and security forces. The site is therefore anything but inconspicuous, and arguably one of the busiest and well-watched areas of the entire suburbium.

The most serious obstacle to the theory, however, conspicuous as it is, has never been taken into account as far as I am aware: the implications of the filling of the sunken piazzola prior to the establishment of the triclia. This measure put an active cemetery out of use, which not only needed permission from the pontifex maximus (i.e. the emperor). It also afforded a considerable effort. The volume of the hole in the ground can be estimated at a minimum of some 340 m³, which, to be filled,

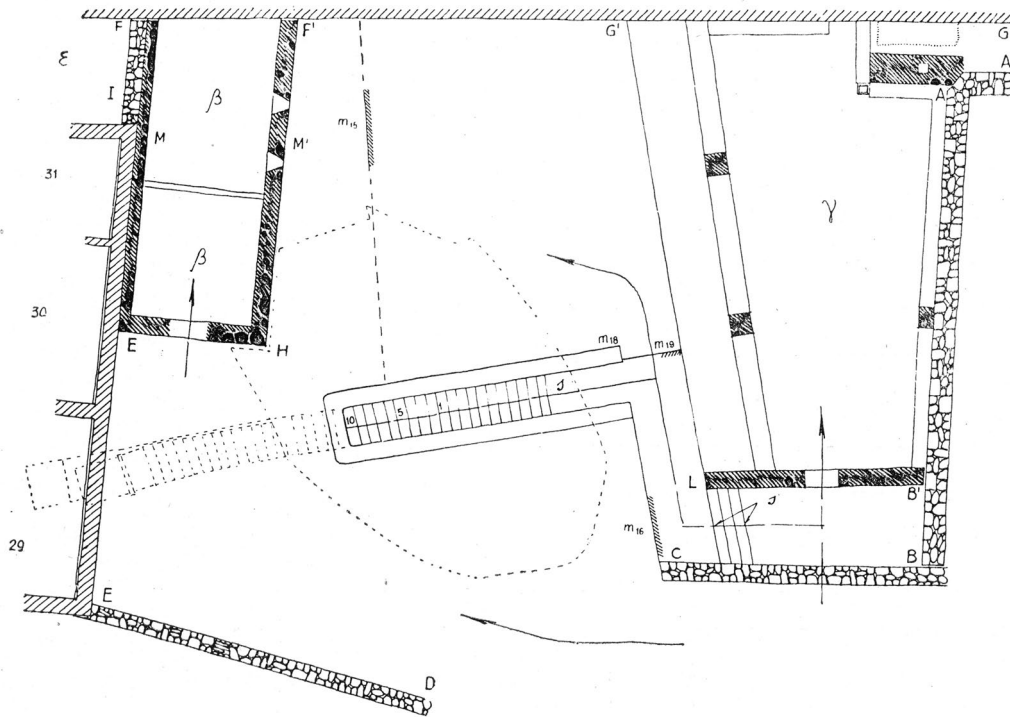


Fig. 6: 'Scala del pozzo' and its extension onto the memoria underneath S. Sebastiano, third quarter third century.

needed about 680 tons of earth, or the load of at least 1700 ox carts. We do not know where the material came from, and it may not have needed long distance transport. Yet this volume would have filled over 10,000 panier baskets each carrying over 66kg of weight. Assuming that the fill arrived over the via Appia, just offloading the material into smaller containers for transport to the site would have required between 22.5 (basket) and 12.7 (wheelbarrow) man days of work. To get the material over the 70m distance from the Appia to the site would have afforded between 32 (wheelbarrow) and 40 (basket) additional man days.¹¹ The fill would also have to be emptied into the void, the layers compacted at regular intervals, and the staircase extended from the piazzola floor level to the new surface. Even allowing for a high margin of inaccuracy in my figures, which have been calculated assuming an unrealistic minimum volume of fill, the building work was clearly not done in a day, nor without attracting major attention. Whoever initiated these building works would clearly have needed the consent of the imperial administration as well as access to some resources.

These observations rule out the story behind the translation theory and raise the question with new urgency: When exactly was this work carried out? And by whom?

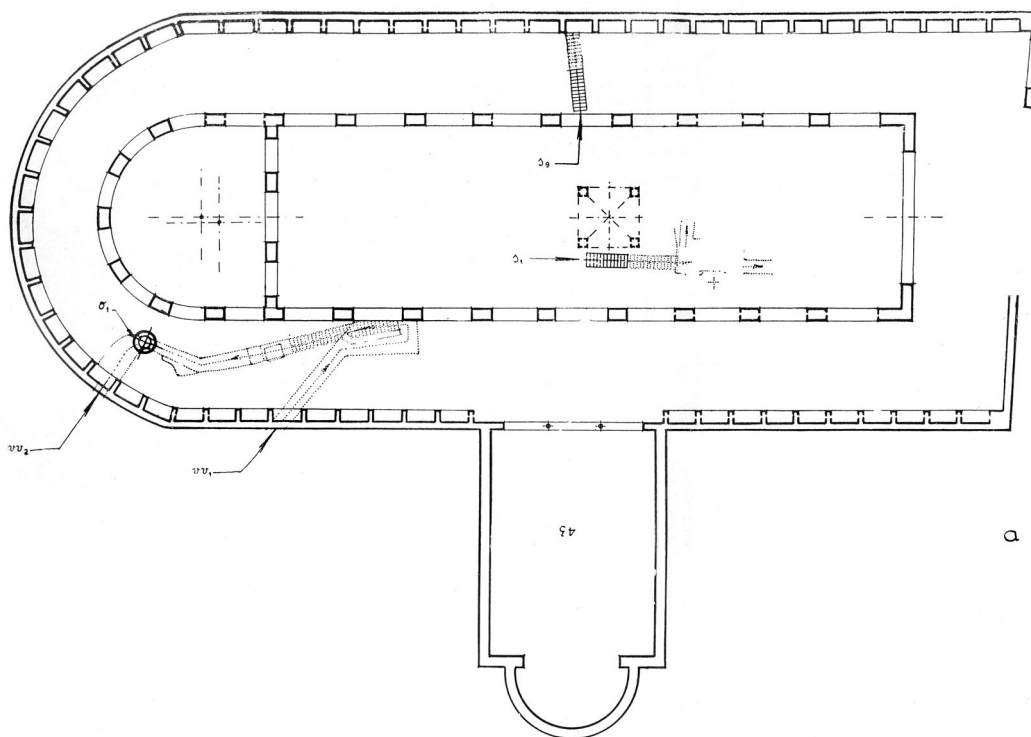


Fig. 7: Basilica Apostolorum with new access to the 'scala del pozzo'; early fourth century.

New Observations

The easiest explanation would assume that these works had already been completed when the Christian community established their cult site. But this is unlikely given a feature that I have not mentioned so far, a long staircase that ended in a shallow basin in front of a niche, conventionally called *scala del pozzo* (fig. 6).¹² It is clear that the basin and niche – or rather the space, in which they are now featured – existed already before the piazzola was established, and access was maintained for over 300 centuries, first, when the piazzola was created at a level of 3m above the mine's floor, later, when the piazzola was filled in, and even when the Basilica Apostolorum was erected above the entire site (fig. 7).

Significant skills and effort had therefore been expended to maintain this access at each step, which is particularly striking since the basin and niche have not served any practical purpose. Following F. Tolotti, the basin is normally declared to be a well for fetching water. However, already its excavator O. Marucchi had observed that it was utterly unsuitable for the purpose.¹³ The water normally stood less than 60 cm deep, less than half the depth of another water basin of the mine that had been given up when the piazzola was established.¹⁴ It would have been simple to cut a bit deeper into the tuff, but this was not done despite the effort to maintain access. Moreover, water could not

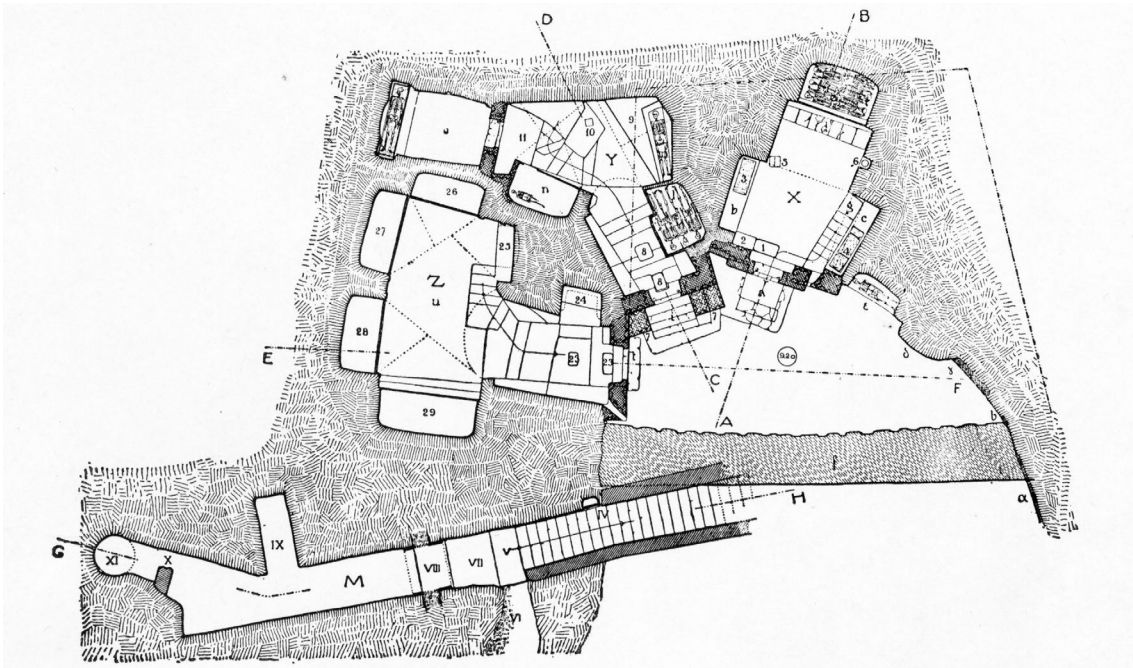


Fig. 8: Mausolea around the piazzola, lower level, and 'scala del pozzo' with its late antique extension M.

be drawn through a shaft from above. Rather, from the floor of the *memoria*, one had to climb down – and up again – some 10 m over 40 steps – the equivalent of four floors in a modern house, just to catch water from the smallish, shallow basin that was left as it was. None of this scenario makes any sense, and the explanation can only be some symbolic or ideological significance of the location.

Considering that the Basilica Apostolorum destroyed everything in its way, the preservation of access to the stairs still at this stage suggests that this significance was related to Christian faith and/or cult – an assumption that is confirmed by graffiti that were scratched into the white plaster covering the end of the tunnel which are similar to the *triclia* ones but of later date.¹⁵ This in turn suggests that also those constructing the *memoria* piazza in the third century preserved the useless basin for religious reasons, raising the distinct possibility that already in the second century the architects of the piazzola attached the same significance to it.

Here, we cannot discuss the possibility of the apostles' actual burial in this tunnel, but suffice it to say that those preserving access to it against all odds must have believed they were there. If this is so, some unusual epitaphs also appear in a new light, which, viewed in isolation, would not necessarily have been conclusive as to their patronage. The only undisputed Christian inscription that dates to the time of the piazzola is a graffito scratched into the still-wet plaster of a lower chamber of Mausoleum Y (fig. 8) reading ITXΘΥΣ, 'Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour'.¹⁶ Whether this graffito indicates that the entire tomb was under Christian patronage is debated. The only other inscriptions in

this tomb feature in the adjacent chambers. Those in the lowest chamber commemorate some youngsters who are all called Innocentius and also bear the names of the emperors of 238–244.¹⁷ The imperial names suggest a close connection to the imperial house, and the association's name of Innocentii would not normally have raised any suspicion. However, in the light of the evidence for Christian presence, including in the same tomb, this name looks less likely to be accidental. The same is true for graffiti scratched into a loculus cover in another room of the hypogeum reading ΕΝΘΑ ΚΕΙΤΑΙ ΠΑΡΘΕΝΟΣ, 'here lies Parthenos' or 'here lies the virgin'.¹⁸ Like Innocentius, Parthenos is used as a name, and one that does not have to be Christian. Equally, like innocence, virginity was a virtue worth praising especially of the young among pagans and Christians alike. Then again, the accumulation of 'speaking' names related to the morals of the deceased in this tomb is striking, as is the number of graffiti on the girl's loculus and the fact that they were written by several different hands. While this may not be unique among either ordinary Christians or non-Christians (although I am not aware of any further example), it is definitively rare and reminiscent of graffiti on and around martyrs' graves. Moreover, *entha keitai* is a rarer form of *enthade keitai*, a formula that is particularly frequent in Jewish epitaphs from Rome.¹⁹

Outside of Mausoleum Y and in the walls of the former mine, there are further inscriptions of suggestive form and content. Another epitaph starting with a variant of *enthade keithai* commemorates Theonoë, who is described as pious, mild, chaste and wise. On its own, the epitaph would again not necessarily have to be identified as Christian, but in the given context, Jewish or Christian patronage is not unlikely.²⁰

In an epitaph in the wall next to Mausoleum X, one C. Ankotius Epaphroditus and his two sons praise their wife and mother Ankotia Irene for her love of god, of widows, of her husband and of her children – in this rather surprising order.²¹ While love of god (even in the singular) and certainly love of family are not in themselves suspicious, Dölger has shown that the unusual epithet *philochera*, 'lover of widows', like *philoptochos*, lover of the poor, was a Christian neologism, probably meaning 'charitable' more generally rather than an affection just to widows.²² While fish and anchors can be found in non-Christian contexts, here the context speaks for their Christian significance.²³ If this is accepted, fish and anchor on the epitaph that Epaphroditus and Irene had previously dedicated to their deceased daughter Ankotia Auxesis, and which is otherwise entirely conventional, may be regarded as Christian symbols as well.²⁴

This whole context further supports Christian readings for two early third-century sets of highly unusual wall paintings, one on the plaster covering the loculus of an eight-year old imperial slave called Atimetus that was recently discussed by Stefano Tortorella, and the other even more prominently displayed on the attic of Mausoleum X, for which Alistair Logan has proposed an intriguing reading as illustrations of three parables after the gospels of John.²⁵ The picture emerging here is therefore one of a cemeterial area favoured specifically by Christians, although not used exclusively by them, already from the second century onwards.

Conclusions

It is obvious that the really exciting questions only begin at this point. The aim of the present paper was twofold: first, to demonstrate that not only literary sources but also archaeology and context, including practical and economic aspects, are worth taking into account when trying to reconstruct the activities of early Christians and the development of their cult practices. Secondly, in the particular case of *ad catacumbas*, I hope to have shown that a detailed re-assessment of the archaeological and material evidence of the site results in new insights into the history of cult of the apostles Peter and Paul, the beginnings of which can now be traced back at least to the Hadrianic periods.²⁶ I hope to discuss the implications of these results at greater length elsewhere, where I am not primarily interested in the apostles themselves and the notorious question of where they were buried, or indeed whether they ever came to Rome in the first place (which I find hard to deny). Primarily, I use this history as a route into a better understanding of the relationship between the earliest Christians and their non-Christian surroundings. That early Christians were not quite as segregated from the rest of society as some authors (ancient as well as modern) want us to believe, has long been argued, and becomes a more widely accepted view by the day. However, how this relationship may have panned out in actual practice has largely been a matter of more or less educated guesswork for the pre-Constantinian period. By tracing Christian activities, including the lead up to the foundation of an early Christian martyr cult in a specific context of other activities, and more specifically within a context significantly shaped by the presence of imperial staff and elite military forces, will hopefully give a bit more substance to our guesswork.

Notes

¹Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship (2015-18): Mapping the Social History of Rome: a topographical approach to action and interaction in an ancient mega-city.

²Due to word count limitations, bibliography is kept to a minimum. On the site in general see esp. Tolotti 1953; Tacalite 2009; Nieddu 2009.

³See below at n. 17.

⁴Marichal 1953; cf. A. Ferrua in ICUR 5.12935.

⁵Carletti 2008, on ICUR 5.12907–13096.

⁶Gerkan 1927, 297–299, appears to be the first to suggest this; for recent supporters see e.g. Hall 2014, 187–206.

⁷Duchesne 1886, CIV–CVII; Lietzmann 1915; Chadwick 1957, 41; and many later scholars.

⁸Lampe 2015, 287–289.

⁹CIL VI, 1107; VI,1215 with 4336.

¹⁰Latteri 2002.

¹¹Based on Pegoretti 1869, vol. 1, 156 f.; Rea 1902, 50.

¹²Tolotti 1953, 79–80. 132 f. 138–141.

¹³Marucchi 1923, 95. 103.

¹⁴Tolotti 1953, 77–80 on v1.

¹⁵Marucchi 1923.

¹⁶ICUR 5.12889.

¹⁷Mancini 1923, 67–69 figs. 22. 23.

¹⁸Mancini 1923, 69.

¹⁹Noy 1995.

²⁰ICUR 5.12902; cf. Mancini 1923, 49; Marucchi 1923, 96; Finney 1994, 238.

²¹ICUR 5.12900; Marucchi 1923, 97 fig. 2; Dölger 1927, 220.1; Dölger 1943, 697–704, esp. 699 f.

²²Dölger 1943, 699 f.; Finney 1994, 237, who also cites for *philoteknos*, child-loving, three Jewish epitaphs (CIJ 321. 363. 541).

²³Ditto Dölger 1927, 702; for examples of fish and anchor in non-Christian epitaphs see *ibid.* *passim*, and Kraemer 1991.

²⁴ICUR 5.12891: ditto Dölger 1943, 697–704 pl. 322.1

²⁵Tortorella 2011; Logan 2007, with further conclusions which I do not share.

²⁶It must be stressed here that, initially, this cult must have been traditional and commemorative, and developed only with time into the more formal martyr cult that was founded in 258 and continued to develop.

Image Credits

Fig. 1: Re-elaborated after Taccalite 2009, 6. – Fig. 2: Re-elaborated after Tolotti 1953 fig. 21. – Fig. 3: Tolotti 1953, fig. 40. – Fig. 4: Tolotti 1953, fig. 43. – Fig. 5: Fornari 1932, pl. 2. – Fig. 6: Tolotti 1953, fig. 38 – Fig. 7: Tolotti 1953, pl. 7. – Fig. 8: Mancini 1923, pl. 3.

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The Large Collective Burial Monuments of the Tomb of the Scipios in Rome

Michela Stefani

The Tomb of the Scipios, one of the most well known monuments of ancient Rome, was finally reopened on December 15, 2011 following 19 years of important restoration works conducted by the Superintendency of Cultural Heritage of Rome. These respected the arrangement of the area designed by A. M. Colini in 1929, when the site was intensely excavated.¹

This important archaeological area, located on the Appian Way, outside the Porta Capena, is a combination of multiple historical phases.

The site includes not only the Scipios's well-known tomb, but also Republican tombs, funerary enclosures, two columbaria, a big foundation in flint, two roman houses, a funerary building with a small catacomb, a big lime kiln and two productive medieval structures.

In this contribution I will focus on the large collective burials built on the site: the two columbaria, dating back to the 1st century AD and a late antique chamber tomb with a small catacomb, in order to provide some reflections about this type of funerary monuments, their uses and owners (fig. 1).

The Columbarium A

This building is a semi-underground columbarium situated in the western part of the archaeological area with a north-south orientation (fig. 2).

Whereas the underground burial chamber in brick was dug into the tufa bench and has a rectangular plan, probably vaulted, the above-ground part of the building was made in *opus reticolatum*. Access to the columbarium was enabled by the presence of a staircase, made in *opus mixtum* of *cubilia* and tufa blocks. The floor is made in *opus signinum*, much restored in the modern age.

The walls are characterised by the presence of 180 semi-circular niches, arranged in five rows. Each niche hosted two funerary urns. In the centre of the building there are two cylindrical pillars characterised by other semi-circular niches alternating with single niches. The eastern pillar is preserved only at the level of the base. Generally, the columbarium could contain at least 480 urns.

The Decoration

The walls of the columbarium are characterised by elegant decorations, that follow a rigid chromatic and thematic subdivision that was not preserved in the lower part of the building where there is now modern cement (fig. 3).

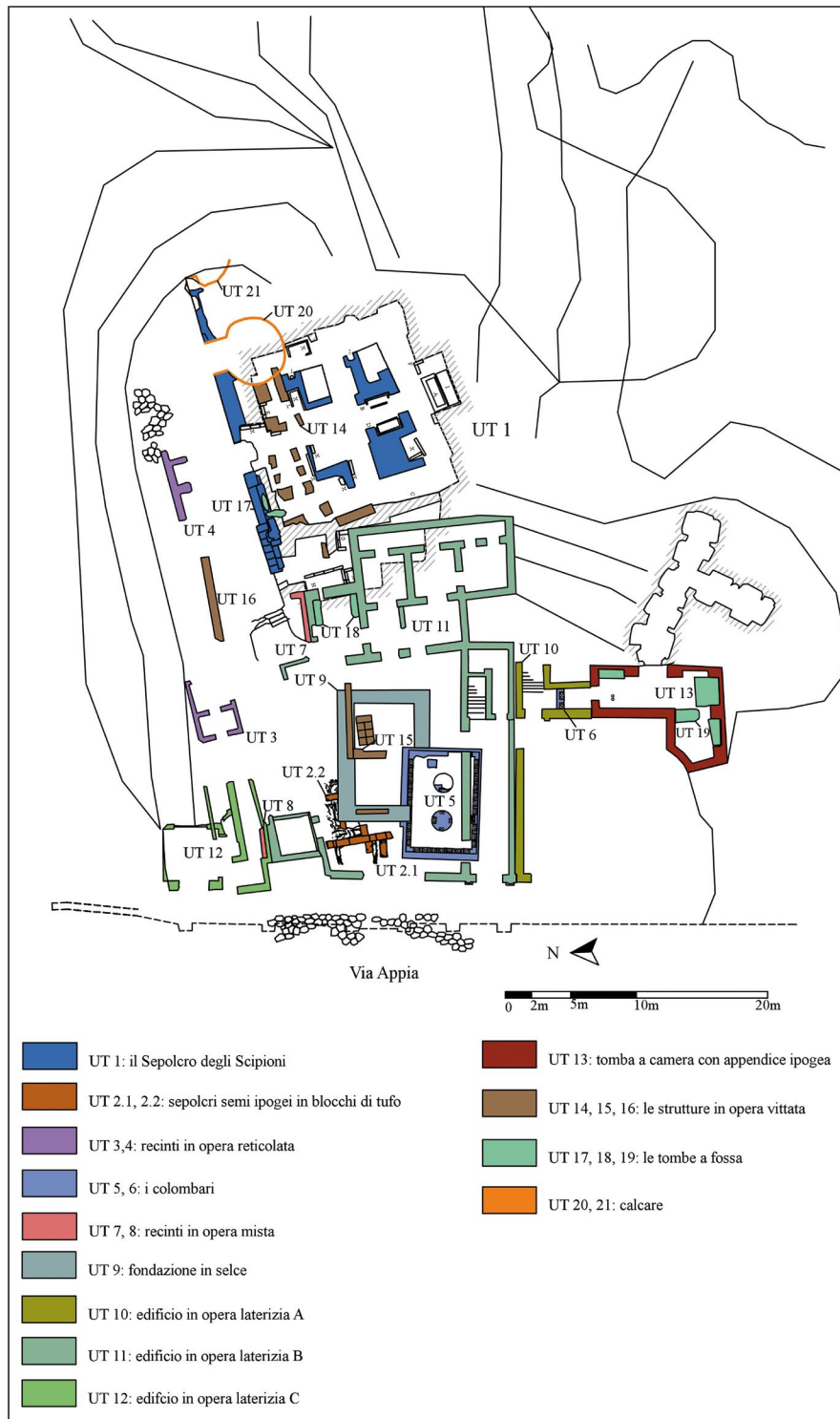


Fig. 1: The archaeological area of the Tomb of the Scipios. The UT 5, 6 are the two columbaria, the UT 13 is the chamber tomb with the catacomb.

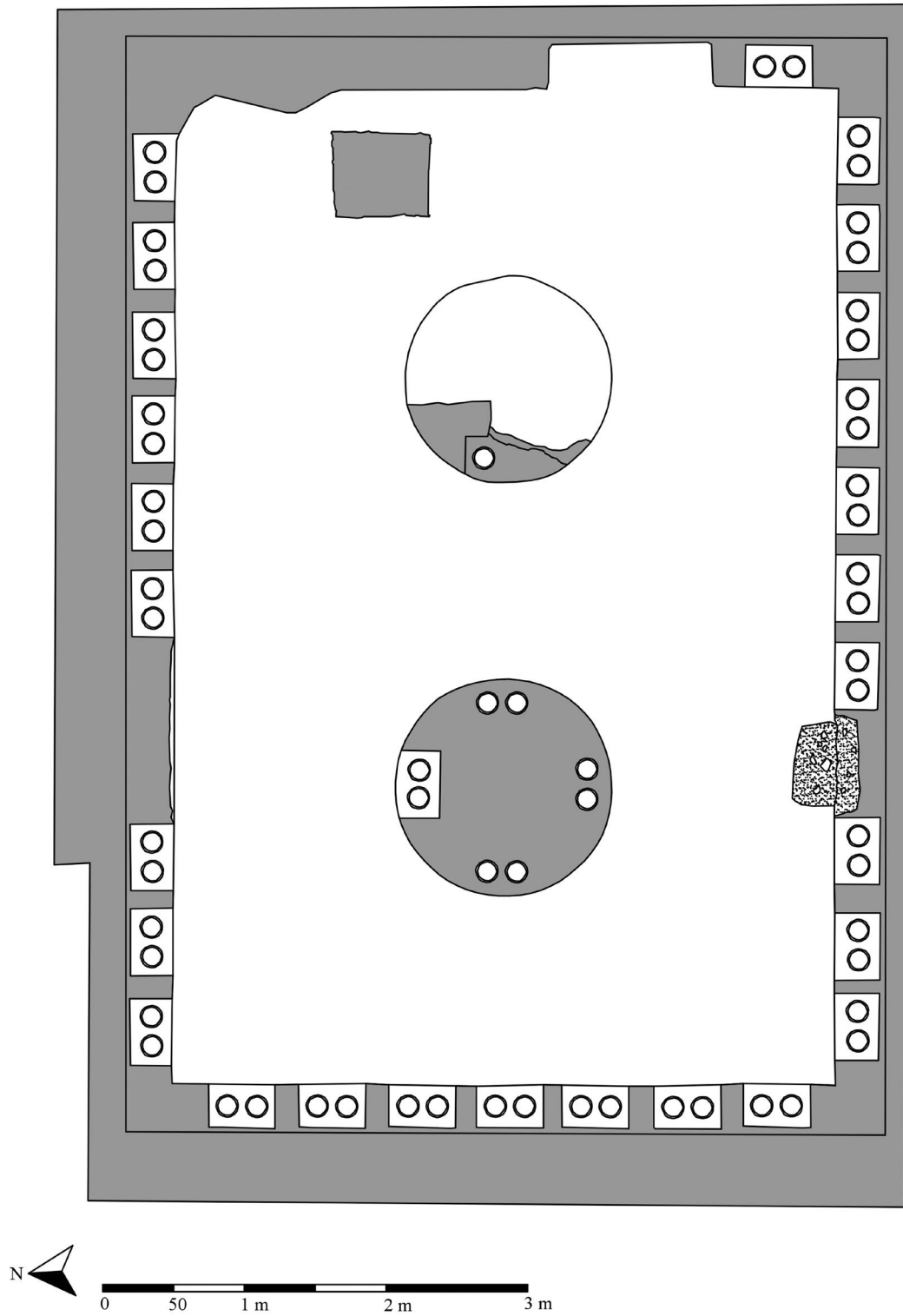


Fig. 2: The plan of the columbarium A. The white part is the reconstructed portion.



Fig. 3: General view of the South wall of the columbarium A. AF-MonAS – MSCD 145-434.

The walls and the interior of the niches are covered with white plaster painted with fresco and tempera.

The niches, underlined by simple plasters frames, are surmounted by a *tabula ansata*, made in tempera, designed to host the inscription painted with the names of the dead, in this case missing, probably because it has never been painted.

These *tabulae ansatae* are made in green for the second row, in yellow for the third row and in red for the fourth row. At the corners and in the lower part of the *tabulae* there are decorative ovoid and vegetal elements, and some triangles.

The fresco decoration located in the space between the niches represents in the second row herms alternating with theatrical masks, in the third and fourth rows representations of plants. There are two exceptions to this rigid division; in the second register of the western wall is a garland, instead of the usual masks, and in the fourth register of the same wall, there is a column with a red festoon, instead of the vegetal shoot.

The herms are represented with quadrangular section pillars, placed on brown bases, with slight perspective, surmounted by the representation of a human head. All the herms represent frontal female characters, with loose long hair and a vegetable crown.

Only one, in the south wall, is a herm of a male figure, represented in profile and distinguished by the presence of a short beard and hair arranged behind the neck (fig. 4).

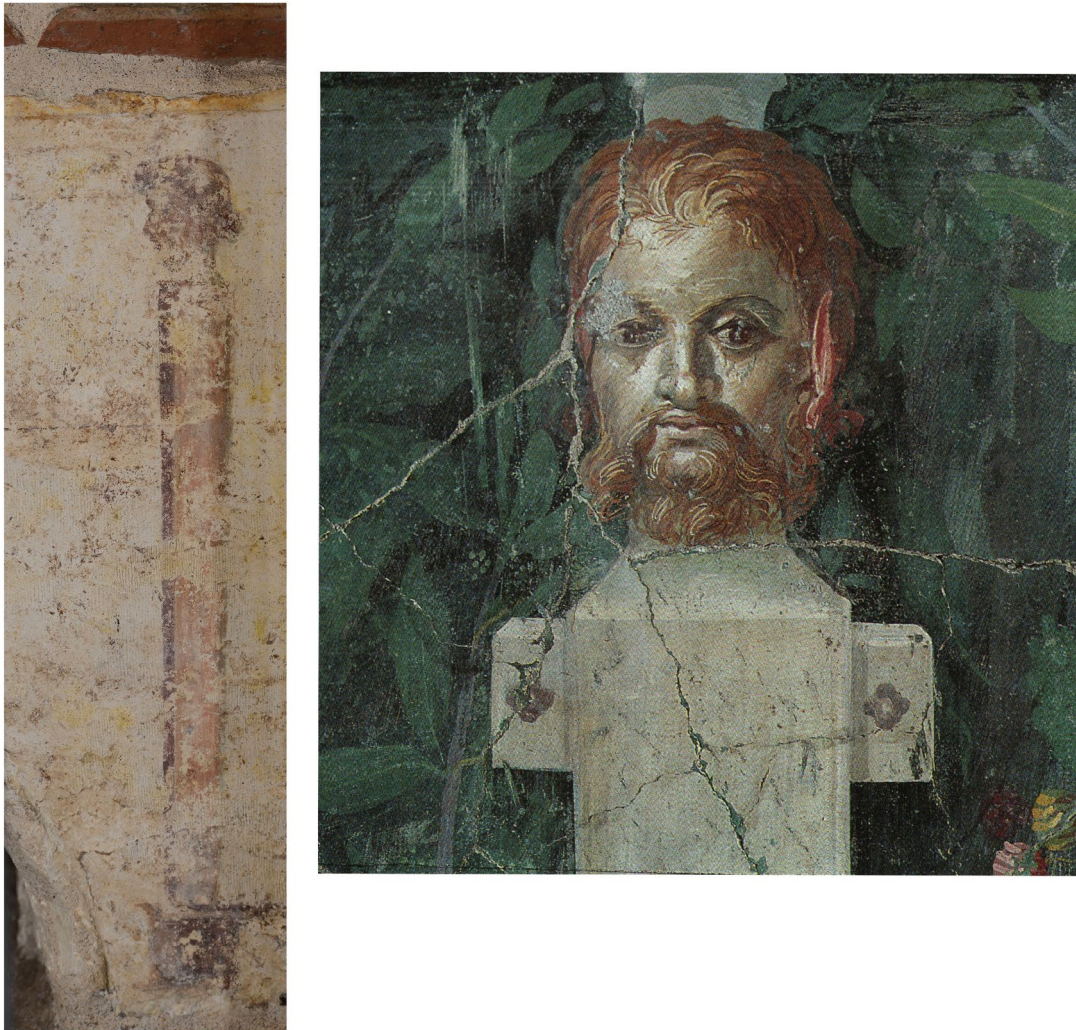


Fig. 4: The male herm of the columbarium A on the left (AF-MonAS – MSCD 145-1387), and one herm of the Casa del Bracciale d’oro in Pompeii on the right.

The female hermes can be identified by the maenads painted in some Pompeian pictorial cycles, such as the Casa del Bracciale d’oro, of the 1st century AD, that show the same characteristics.

The same Pompeian house also provides a comparison for the male herm. The figure, with a short beard and hair gathered behind the neck, presents, in fact, some similarities with the representation of the face of one herm of the painted garden, distinguished by reddish hair, beard and the presence of feral ears, that make it possible to identify the character as a *silenus*², also linked to the Dionysian sphere (fig. 4).

The masks, in shades of green and brown, are represented as *oscilla*. Some are characterised by a vegetable diadem and others by the presence of animal ears (fig. 5). Presumably, such as for the herms, the masks with the vegetable headgear can be



Fig. 5: Two masks of the columbarium A characterised by a vegetable diadem (on the left) and animal ears (on the right). AF-MonsAS- MSCD 145-1385, 1388.

identified as maenads, while those with animal ears as satyrs. Also, for the masks a good comparison is with the masks of the painted garden of the Casa del Bracciale d'oro in Pompeii.³

The plant decor, which decorates the spaces between the niches of the third and fourth rows, are painted with the representation of a central plant element, from which branches grow.

In the third row the decor represent *Hedera Helix* (ivy), with rhomboidal leaves and sometimes blackberry fruits.⁴ By contrast, in the fourth row fruit trees are represented, such as the *Punica Granatum* (pomegranate) the *Cydonia Oblunga* (apple quince), identifiable through the accurate yield of the fruits, and a plant characterised by flowers with a yellow corolla, perhaps always identifiable with *Hedera Helix* (ivy), which can sometimes also be characterised by flowers with 5 yellow-greenish petals.⁵

In the second row of the western wall there is, in place of the herm, a vegetable wreath, from which two apples hang, and in the same wall, at the fourth row, there is a green column with a red festoon.

The decorative system can be traced back to the so-called III Pompeian style: a pictorial system started in the last twenty years of the 1st century BC and characterised by a progressive disintegration of all the typical architectural elements of the "II style". The walls in neutral tones host elegant floral motifs, garlands, candelabras, herms, or figurative motifs, both animal and vegetable, which appear as "hanging" on the walls and which seem to lose their plastic consistency.⁶

The decorative elements present in the columbarium are part of the figurative repertoire linked to Dionysus, frequently used in the decorations of burial monuments,

being a divinity closely connected to the underworld, and to the concept of rebirth and survival in the aftermath.

In fact, not only the maenads and satyrs, symbolised by the herms and masks, refer to the Dionysus, but also the plant decoration. The ivy and the pomegranate have a clear symbolic value referring to the divinity,⁷ and the apple tree assumes an auspicious and protective value compliant to the funerary context.⁸

In the burial context, the combinations of all these figurative elements, in addition to the evocation of the concept of death and rebirth, could also recall the true rites celebrated in honour of the dead and to the garden paintings, which are very widespread, both in the domestic and funerary areas, starting from the 1st century AD. In the burial context, they probably recalled the idea of the tomb like a sort of *locus amoenus*.⁹

The decorative system of the columbarium finds a direct comparison with the nearby columbarium of Pomponius Hylas, whose vault is entirely decorated with vine decor and pomegranate¹⁰. In addition, two more precise comparisons consist of the I Vigna Codini columbarium, especially for the decoration of the central pillar with doves on pomegranate branches and, also, of the II Vigna Codini columbarium, founded around 10 AD, whose wall decoration is made up of vegetable scenes, from which, in this case, various objects hang, such as syringes, cymbals and masks.¹¹

Since we have no inscriptions or data from stratigraphic excavations, the dating of the columbarium is based on the analysis of the building technique and decoration, previously described, and based on the architectural typology.

Among the architectural features that suggest a dating limited to the first decade of the 1st century AD we must consider the fact that it is a semi-underground structure. In fact, the underground or semi-underground columbaria spreads from the early Augustan age up to the first quarter of the 1st century AD. The columbarium of the slaves and freedmen of Livia, the three columbaria of the Vigna Codini, the columbarium of the Statilii and the Caecilii, are all semi-underground and all dating back from the 1st century BC to the first years of the 1st century AD.

Moreover, the most ancient columbaria are characterised by a great uniformity regarding to the treatment of the dead. They are made of homogeneous niches, as happens in this columbarium, where there are no architectural and decorative innovations, made for remark a certain category of dead. This practice starts generally from the Tiberian age.

The Columbarium B

The other columbarium is located in the south side of the area and presents a south-north orientation. Only a small portion of the north and south walls is still visible and a portion of a counter, without burials (fig. 6).



Fig. 6: The North wall of the columbarium B. AF-MonAS – MSCD 145-2671.

The Decoration

The walls and the internal part of the niches are covered by fresco white plaster.

Below the niches are the *tabulae ansatae*, painted in tempera, designed to host the inscriptions painted with the names of the dead, unfortunately absent, as previously. The short sides of the *tabulae* are characterised by the presence of triangular wings.

The fresco decoration consists of a vertical green coloured plant element located in the space between the niches, from which brown branches develop in the space above them.

It is possible to identify the vegetal decor with a branch of *Hedera Helix* (ivy), because of the presence of rhomboidal leaves and blackberry fruits.¹²

This decoration is comparable with the decoration of the II Vigna Codini columbarium, dating back to the beginnings of the 1st century AD,¹³ and with the columbarium N. 5 located in the necropolis under the Basilica of San Sebastiano, dating back to the Neronian age.¹⁴



Fig. 7: The plan of the chamber tomb with the small catacomb (on the left) and the entrance to the catacomb (on the right). AF-Mons MSID 146-6186.

Interpretation

The columbaria are one of the most typical burial forms of Roman society, characterised by a number of architectural and decorative variations. Generally, these buildings can be underground and above-ground, characterised by the presence of niches on the walls containing the cinerary urns and covered by a barrel vault.¹⁵ These funeral buildings spread from the Augustan period and continued to be used until the 2nd century AD, when the ritual of cremation was progressively supplanted by the ritual of inhumation.

As regards the owners, the columbaria were usually used by a community of people, in fact, they were commissioned by a family, trade associations, or by slaves or free slaves¹⁶.

In this case, the columbarium A, because of the size and the large number of urns, can be compared with the great columbaria from the Augustan period and the early Imperial age, such as the columbarium of slaves and freedmen of Livia and of Augustus and the three large Codini columbaria.

However, the columbarium B, given its small size, can perhaps be compared to the smaller columbaria, usually consisting of a single square or rectangular room, such as the columbaria found at the necropolis under the Basilica of San Sebastiano.¹⁷

So, in the first Imperial age, the destination of the archaeological area of the Tomb of the Scipios remains the same as in the Republican age: a funerary area. But, there is a substantial change in the type of burial structures that reflects the political transformation of Roman society.

In fact, the centralisation of political power in the figure of the *princeps* limited the competition between the members of the upper-classes and consequently the expression of luxury within their funerary monuments, which began to be expressed

in the internal space. Therefore, the simplicity of the outside part of the tomb contrasts with the splendour of the interior, as we have seen in the two columbaria, which since the Augustan age became the typical form of collective burial of slaves, freedmen and people of average social background, spreading capillary throughout the suburb of Rome, in relation also to the demographic increase that characterises this period. That probably involved the necessity of exploiting more and more the underground spaces, for which we see a wide diffusion of semi-underground or underground structures.

The Chamber Tomb with a Small Catacomb

The other collective burial monument in the site is a chamber tomb with a catacomb (fig. 7). This building is located in the south side of the area, which has an unusual “L” shape, consisting of two orthogonal arms, probably vaulted. The arm B has a convex wall, perhaps because of the presence of other structures.

The access to the building was located on the north wall of the first arm, but only one element in moulded travertine is visible, perhaps part of the architrave, and at the lower part a travertine block, possibly belonging to the threshold.

The east and south walls of the two arms present a series of niches covered by arches in bipedals and separated by semi-pillars in brick.

The lower niches are divided into four parts by some bricks that come out from the wall about 5 cm, and where above them other bricks were placed, used as a floor for depositions (fig. 8). The upper niches are smaller but present the same construction technique.

The western wall of the arm B is irregularly constructed, with a rectilinear and convex section and does not have niches, unlike the western wall of the arm A. The masonry is characterised by the presence of numerous holes that were probably related to furnishings or decorative elements.

On the eastern wall of the arm A, instead of the niche, there is a small catacomb, with a rectangular entrance, that was extant or planned in the construction.

The *hypogeum* consists of two tunnels, excavated in the tufa bench, one with an east-west orientation, and another, smaller, with north-south orientation. The floor consists mostly of tufa bench. The walls of the catacomb are characterised by the presence of single graves, for adults and infants, with a parallelepiped shape, an almost rectangular front and a flat bottom. In total there are 56 graves, some with traces of slabs or mortar used to seal the burials. Unfortunately, almost the slabs were all removed. The entire building, like all the other structures in the archaeological area, was restored between 1926–1929.



Fig. 8: Detail of a single niche and its deposition floors. AF-Mons MSCD 146-1174.

Interpretation

The structure can be interpreted as a chamber tomb with a small catacomb.

The funeral typology of the simple chamber tomb is very widespread in the Roman necropolis from the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD. Numerous examples of chamber tombs of this period are situated in the necropolis of the Isola Sacra at Portus.

Generally, they are burial chambers in *opus mixtum* or brickwork, covered by a vault and with a façade in brickwork, usually without decoration. The access to the tomb consisted of two jambs surmounted by a travertine lintel, where the funerary inscription was.¹⁸ We have all these features in this building, except for the funeral inscription. The internal part of the tomb was usually made up of a single room, generally decorated, which had marked, walls, first by niches for the cinerary urns, then during the 3rd century AD, from arcosolia to accommodate sarcophagi.¹⁹

In addition to the building technique, the burial system used in this structure suggests a rather late date. The practice of laying the dead on top of each other in spaces of about 30 cm, delimited by bricks, can be found in some burials dating back to the 3rd and 4th centuries AD, in the necropolis near the Basilica of San Paolo.²⁰

The building has also a small *hypogeum* on the eastern side, pre-existent or planned in the construction phase, which is not characterised by any kind of decoration that could indicate a Christian or pagan nature (fig. 8).

Between the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD, probably because of the exclusive use of inhumation and the high employment rate of the necropolises, the frequency of digging small catacombs became widespread, very often in the form of an appendix to main monuments.

These small structures were probably related to small family groups, while the larger ones were connected to religious communities.²¹

Some of these are simple underground chambers, originating from monuments on the surface, like some *hypogea* present in the western side of the II mile of the Appian Way.²²

The most common type consists of very short galleries with niches on the walls, which usually have an “L” or “U” planimetry.²³

Therefore, the building can be compared to the burials found in the north side of the Basilica of San Sebastiano, dating back to 3rd and 4th centuries AD. The structure, which originates from an overlying mausoleum, consists of a small gallery and two rooms with niches on the walls.²⁴

A further comparison can be proposed with the group of tombs predating to the catacomb of Vibia, which have the same planimetric conformation, characterised by the arrangement of three “U” galleries that originate from an open air monument,²⁵ and with the three hypogeal chambers found in the necropolis near the catacomb of Callisto.²⁶

The large number of depositions that this building hosted suggests that it may be connected to a funeral college or large community, which could all afford to support the expense of building this type of tomb.

Furthermore, the absence of decorations inside the monument indicates clearly that in Late Antiquity, the desire to exhibit luxury inside the funeral monuments suffered of a general reduction. Besides, the tomb documents the return, between the 3rd and

4th centuries AD, to the use of inhumation that resulted in the increased exploitation of underground areas.

Conclusion

In closing, these two types of collective burial monuments belong to two very different periods of the Roman history, but both, in my opinion, are the expression of the middle social class and the bearer of the same message: the importance of the communal identity that lead to the same form of collective burial and commemoration.

Unlike the Republican tombs, whose purpose was to exhibit the social status of the owner, these monuments did not share that aim. In fact, this type of structure appeared in two great periods of transformation of Roman society, characterised both by the reinforcement of the Emperor's power, that necessitated an introspective use of the burial space, and by the population increase that provoked the exploitation of underground areas.

Therefore, we are in presence of two different, but in the same time, very similar funerary buildings; both are underground structures, have a great capacity, the same equal treatments of the dead and, beyond these affinities, they are the expression of particular social conditions that brought a groups of common people to find a similar manifestation in the realization and use of their funeral spaces.

Notes

¹ Canina 1853; Hülsen 1885; Colini 1927; Platner – Ashby 1929; Colini 1929; Lugli 1930; Castagnoli 1969; Lugli 1970; Castagnoli et al. 1972; Quilici – Quilici 2004.

² Conticello 1991, 20.

³ Conticello 1991, 20.

⁴ Caneva 2010, 80.

⁵ Caneva 2010, 80.

⁶ Borda 1958, 58–63; Moorman 1988, 25.

⁷ Caneva 1999, 72 f.

⁸ Caneva 2010, 64–66.

⁹ Tacalite 2009, 173.

¹⁰ Pavia 1996, 9 f.

¹¹ Astolfi 1998, 20–22.

¹² Caneva 2010, 80.

¹³ Astolfi 1998, 20 f.

¹⁴ Tacalite 2009, 64–76.

¹⁵ Borbonus 2014, 20.

¹⁶ von Hesberg 1994, 95 f.

¹⁷ Taccalite 2009.

¹⁸ Calza 1958, 63–67.

¹⁹ Calza 1958, 68.

²⁰ Lugli 1919, 297.

²¹ Spera 1999, 375 f.

²² Spera 1999, 153 f.

²³ Spera 1999, 376.

²⁴ Spera 1999, 223 UT 376.

²⁵ Spera 1999, 174 UT 294–296.

²⁶ Spera 1999, 103 UT 155.

Image Credits

Figs 1,2: M. Stefani. – Figs 3,5,6,7: Sovrintendenza Capitolina ai Beni Culturali. – Fig. 4: Sovrintendenza Capitolina ai Beni Culturali, Conticello 1991.

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Beobachtungen zu wirtschaftlichen Aspekten der römischen Katakomben: Grundbesitz, Graberwerb, Grabnutzung und Grabausstattung im Spiegel archäologischer Quellen

Norbert Zimmermann

Zu den wirtschaftlichen Aspekten der Anlage und Nutzung der römischen Katakomben gibt es kaum schriftliche Quellen, aber in den Zömeterien selbst ist eine Fülle von archäologischen Hinweisen erhalten, die Beobachtungen zulassen zur Organisation der Katakomben und zur Dynamik ihrer Nutzung. Diese wurden bislang selten unter wirtschaftlichen Kriterien untersucht: wie groß sind die Grundstücke, wie tief die Anlagen, welches Volumen hat der Aushub? Sind Belegungszyklen nachzuvollziehen, lassen sich Graberwerb und Ausstattung rekonstruieren? Die folgenden Überlegungen konzentrieren sich vor allem auf Erhebungen in der größten christlichen Katakombe, Domitilla, und in der jüdischen Katakombe der vigna Randanini, deren Daten vergleichsweise gut erschlossen sind.¹

Die rund 60 Katakomben Roms gelten mit wenigen Ausnahmen als Zömeterien der frühchristlichen Gemeinde, die sie für etwa 200 Jahre, vom späten 2. bis zum frühen 5. Jh., intensiv für die unterirdische Bestattung ihrer Mitglieder nutzen.² Auch fünf jüdische Katakomben sind bekannt.³ Die Frage nach wirtschaftlichen Aspekten dieser großen kollektiven Bestattungsanlagen wurde bislang selten gestellt. Die Ausgangslage ist dazu eigentlich gut, da geschätzte 170 km unterirdischer Gänge mit hunderttausenden Gräbern erhalten sind, von denen jedoch nur Teilbereiche systematisch erfasst wurden. Nach einigen einleitenden Beobachtungen seien zwei statistisch erschlossene Katakomben betrachtet.

Allgemeine Beobachtungen

Aus Grabinschriften des 4. Jhs. kennen wir regelrechte Kaufkontrakte, bei denen ein Grabherr zu Lebzeiten für sich und/oder seine Angehörige bei einem Fossor ein Grab erwarb.⁴ So ist klar, dass man in den Katakomben Gräber kaufen konnte, und dass die Fossoren dafür zuständig waren. Doch die Zahl solcher Belege ist klein, und es scheint sich um ein relativ spätes Phänomen zu handeln, das speziell den stark nachgefragten Grabplatz in der Nähe von Märtyrergräbern betraf. Zu dieser Zeit (2. H. 4. Jh.) wurden die Fossoren, die Ausgräber und Bestatter, in den untersten kirchlichen Stand erhoben, so dass sie alle Aufgaben vom Grabverkauf bis zur Einsegnung des Leichnams bei der Bestattung alleine abwickeln konnten; sie hatten damit eine ziemlich bedeutende Position inne. In der Tat finden sich Gräber von Fossoren in allen Nutzungsphasen in privilegierten Bereichen, mit besonderer Grabarchitektur und oft mit Malerei.

Doch wie begann das Phänomen der Anlage von Katakomben? Eine Reihe von Beispielen des frühen 3. Jh. zeigt, dass es sich beim ältesten Kern zunächst oft um kleine, rechteckige Grundstücke handelte, die unterirdisch systematisch für Galerien mit Loculi erschlossen wurden. Solche Bereiche kennt man etwa aus S. Callisto (area I), Pretestato, SS. Marcellino e Pietro (Region X), aber auch Calepodio.⁵ Alle diese Gangnetzwerke nutzen den zur Verfügung stehenden Raum möglichst rational. Die Gräberzahlen, die in einzelnen Kernregionen erreicht werden, sind mit 300–600 Plätzen deutlich über dem Bedarf eines Familienverbandes, aber im Vergleich mit den großen Columbarien (etwa Codini III: 1200 Urnen) nicht auffällig hoch.

Archäologisch ist meist nur der unterirdische Teil der Zömeterien erschlossen, aber zweifelsohne lagen oberirdisch Grabgärten mit Mausoleen oder anderen Formen von kollektiven Grabarchitekturen, die auch zum Besitz gehörten. Dabei ist rechtlich unklar, wer konkret der Besitzer der Katakomben war, denn es ist fraglich, ob es die Kirche als nicht anerkannte Gemeinschaft gewesen sein konnte, oder ob nicht eher an den Bischof oder einen Verwalter im Namen der Gemeinde zu denken ist. Die Frage wäre nochmals durch Rechtshistoriker zu prüfen. Mehrfach nutzen die frühchristlichen Zömeterien auch Areale, die zuvor wasserwirtschaftlich, zum Abbau von Pozzolana-Erde oder als Massengräber wohl von Epidemie-Toten genutzt waren. Ihr Preis bzw. Prestige dürfte nicht allzu hoch gewesen sein.

Es ist ein typisches Phänomen des 3. Jhs., dass die ursprünglichen Kernregionen zunächst nur moderat wachsen, und neuer Grabraum hauptsächlich durch Vertiefungen der Gänge geschaffen wird. Im 4. Jh. hatte die Kirche wohl kein Besitzproblem mehr, denn die Systeme wachsen nun sozusagen in alle Richtungen, wie in Domitilla, wo die Ausdehnung 12 km Galerien erreicht. In Regionen des 4. Jhs. haben die Gänge selten über 2 m Höhe, während sie in den Kernregionen des 3. Jhs. öfters Tiefen von 5–8 m erreichen.

Es zeichnet eine kurze Zeitspanne im frühen 3. Jh. aus, dass in den Katakomben alle gleich einfach bestattet wurden. So hatten etwa die Kernregionen von S. Callisto (Area I) und SS. Marcellino e Pietro (Region X) zunächst keine Kammern für Privilegierte.⁶ Man darf vermuten, dass hier der römische Bischof seiner Pflicht der Bestattung der Armen nachkam, wie es die christliche Caritas verlangte. Der Aspekt der Armenbestattung dürfte überhaupt die zentrale Motivation für die Anlage der Katakomben gewesen sein, und ihre enorme Wichtigkeit für den Erfolg des Christentums wird rückblickend von Julian Apostata genannt. Soweit wir wissen, sind die Christen, wohl gemeinsam mit den Juden, die einzigen, die eine solche kostenlose Bestattung gewährten. Es scheint folgerichtig, einen bedeutenden Teil der Katakomben für diese Aufgabe in Anspruch zu nehmen. Dem entspricht, dass bei allen Varianten zur Bestattung über alle Nutzungsphasen das einfache Wandnischengrab (loculus) den weitaus häufigsten Grabtyp darstellt.⁷ Die anfangs bescheidene Phase hat jedenfalls schon bald, nach kaum einer Generation, ein Ende gefunden, denn wie in S. Callisto oder SS. Marcellino e Pietro entstehen dann auch eine Reihe von Kammern, wobei sich die Fossoren offensichtlich selbst mit privilegierten Grabräumen bedachten.⁸ In S. Callisto fanden im 3. Jh. auch

die Bischöfe Roms die letzte Ruhe, und zwar in der im Herzen der Anlage eingefügten sog. Papstgruft. Diese war noch recht bescheiden, aber es setzt ein Trend zu größerem Aufwand ein, und vergleichbar bescheiden wurde in Rom nie wieder ein Bischof beigesetzt.⁹

Generell kann man wohl zwei Arten unterscheiden, wie man in einer Katakombe an einen Grabplatz gelangte: entweder gegen Bezahlung, dann beeinflusste man wohl Lage, Größe, Typ der Bestattung und die Ausstattung etwa mit Malerei, Marmor und Grabinschrift, oder man erhielt ein kostenloses Grab, ein ‚Armengrab‘, dann hatte man vermutlich keinen Einfluss auf die Lage und Art der Bestattung, und auch nur begrenzt Möglichkeit, für Grabdekor zu sorgen.

Widmen wir uns zunächst den Armengräbern. Ausgedehnte Regionen in allen Katakomben sind völlig frei von Cuicula oder Arkosolen, den wohl privat erworbenen, privilegierten Grabplätzen. Dies müssen folglich solche Regionen sein, die Armengräber aufnehmen. Sie liegen entfernt von Treppen und Lichtschächten und zeigen meist eine ganz serielle, rationale Nutzung. Diese Bereiche wachsen oft über mehrere Generationen, und ein oder zwei Leichname pro Grabplatz (*loculus*) scheint die Regel zu sein. Eine Bewirtschaftung in dem Sinne, dass es Laufzeiten und Neuvergabe gab etwa wenn keine Angehörigen mehr zum Grab kamen, war wohl im Normalfall nicht vorgesehen.¹⁰ Die Grabruhe wurde also in der Regel respektiert. Auch wenn in weiten Bereichen der Katakomben die Gräber heute nicht mehr unberührt sind, kann man doch erschließen, dass viele, besonders die *Loculi* in Gängen, vollkommen anonym waren, selbst ohne Graffito oder eine Tonlampe. Anonyme Gräber sind nicht nur ein Phänomen in Katakomben, aber der Prozentsatz scheint hier besonders hoch zu sein. Daneben gibt es auch Gräber, die ähnlich arm wirken, aber zumindest eine Lampe oder ein Graffito im Verschlussputz wie ein Christogramm, oder zur Wiedererkennung Objekte wie *Tesserae* oder Muscheln erhielten.¹¹ Dies belegt, dass bei der Bestattung Angehörige anwesend waren, die das Grab wiederfinden wollten und einen zukünftigen Besuch mit Grabkult wie einer Lichtspende planten. Ein Armengrab muss also, wenn dieser Schluss stimmt, nicht unbedingt anonym sein, aber anonyme Gräber dürfen als Armengräber angesprochen werden. Es gibt jedenfalls kein einziges Grab in den Katakomben, das etwa durch eine Inschrift direkt als vom Bischof bereitgestelltes Armengrab gekennzeichnet ist.

Damit zu erworbenem Grabplatz in den Katakomben. Denn wer konnte, dürfte sich sein Grab selbst gekauft haben, denn Grabfürsorge war eine Aufgabe der *familia*. Aktiven Graberwerb und privaten Besitz belegen Anzeichen wie Verschlussmechanismen von Grabkammern mit Türstürzen und Rahmenbalken, oder ein *Titulus* über dem Eingang. Vor allem sind es immer wieder Inschriften auch auf *Loculus*verschlüssen, die einen Graberwerb noch zu Lebzeiten belegen. Alle aufwendigeren Grabtypen als der *Loculus*, also etwa *Arkosole*, brauchten mehr Platz und waren daher teurer. Dies ist als klare Differenzierung zu werten zu anonymen Gräbern, die auf eine Schenkung angewiesen waren. Für einen gewissen Teil der Gräber ist also eine private Investition anzunehmen, die einfache *Loculi*, aber natürlich auch aufwendigere Grabtypen wie *Arkosole* oder

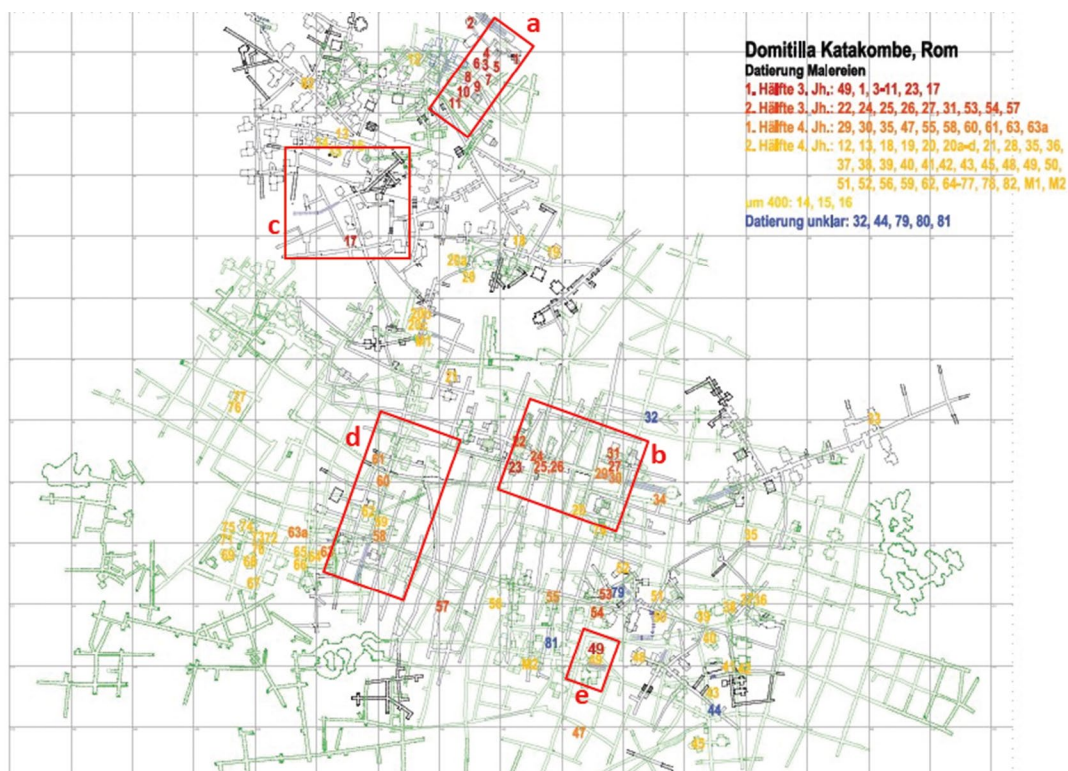


Abb. 1: Domitilla-Katakombe, Gesamtplan mit Verteilung der Malereien nach Datierung.

als Familiengräber zu verstehende Cubicula betreffen konnte. Oft wurden solche privat erworbenen Bereiche durch weißen Putz markiert, so dass in den Gängen einzelne Loculi, ganze Loculuswände, Arkosole mit ihrem Wandabschnitt oder auch ganze Kammern durch weißen Verputz markiert sein konnten. Nur in Ausnahmefällen wurden diese Bereiche dann zusätzlich auch noch bemalt, und man vermeint den Malereien anzusehen, ob sie von den Fossoren selbst oder von externen Spezialisten stammen. Kaum 400 Mal in etwa 200 Jahren der Nutzung wurden in Katakomben Malereien bestellt – statistisch nur 2 Mal im Jahr. Es charakterisiert solche verputzten Bereiche, dass sie regelmäßig durch Nachbestattungen überbelegt erscheinen, zumeist durch nachträglich eingefügte Loculi. Die folgende Generation benutzte den Besitz weiter, bestimmt auch, da man nah bei den Ahnen bestattet sein wollte. Schließlich konnte die Nähe zu einem Treppenzugang oder zu einem Lichtschacht mit direktem Lichteinfall den Grabplatz weiter nobilitierten. Es gab auch Fossoren, die in mehr als einer Katakombe tätig sein konnten wie im Falle der Arkosole in S. Callisto 48 und Domitilla 77.¹² In verschiedenen Katakomben arbeiten Fossoren z.T. nach verschiedenen Parametern: während sich etwa in Domitilla in Cubicula die konkrete Anzahl der Individuen, für die geplant wurde, auszählen lässt, ist dies in SS. Marcellino e Pietro anders: hier sehen Cubicula Platz für mehrere Generationen vor, in systematisch vorbereiteten Wänden, die oft nie ganz belegt wurden.¹³ Ästhetische Ansprüche sind oft ökonomischen Zwängen untergeordnet,

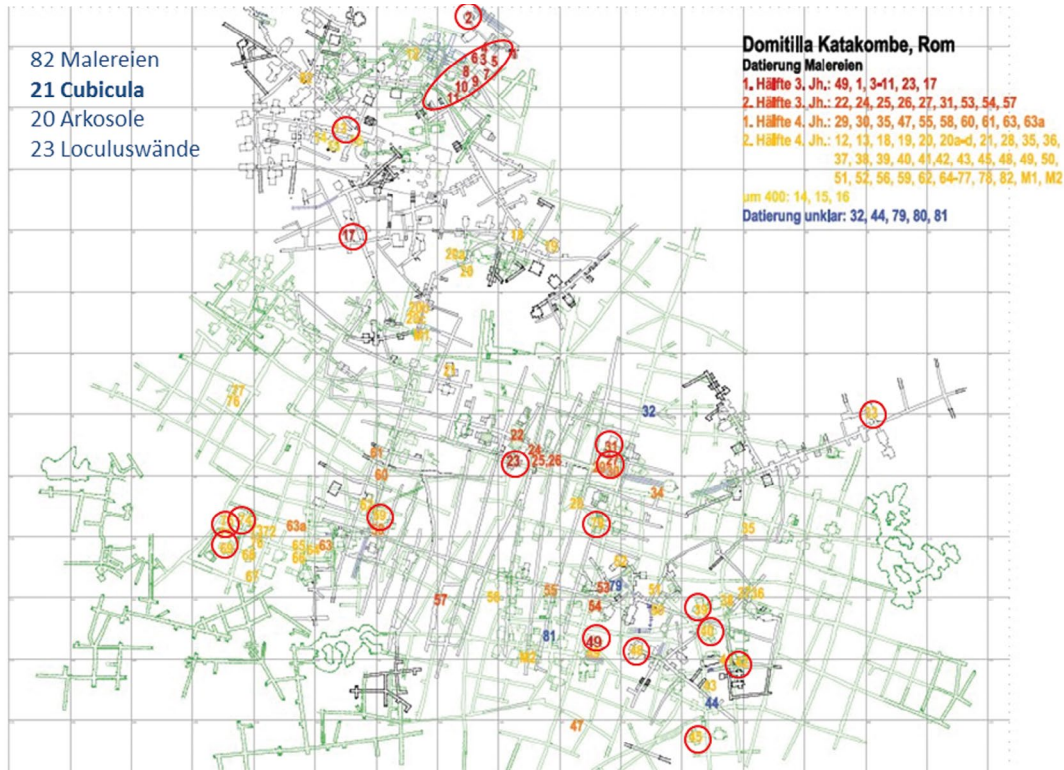


Abb. 2: Domitilla-Katakombe, Gesamtplan mit Verteilung der Malereien in Cubicula.

selten wird Malerei repariert, und selten wird die ursprüngliche Investition ‚erweitert‘. Damit aber zur Analyse zwei konkreter Katakomben.

Zur Struktur der Domitilla-Katakombe

Die größte römische Katakombe (Abb. 1) wuchs aus zumindest fünf einzelnen Kernregionen der ersten Hälfte des 3. Jhs. zusammen, die alle unterschiedliche Besitzverhältnisse spiegeln.¹⁴ Während die Flavier-Galerie (a) ein vollständig bemaltes privates Hypogäum mit zwei Sarkophagnischen und weiteren Nischen für Loculi vermutlich für eine einzige Familie war, bestand die Region des Guten Hirten (b) zunächst aus einem einzigen bemalten Cubiculum wohl für die Familie des Besitzers und einem kleinen Gangnetz ausschließlich für Loculi in der Art von Armenbestattung. Die bald ineinander verschmolzenen Regionen der Flavi Aureli A und B (c) hatten ein kleines Netz von Gängen für Loculi, daneben aber auch eine Gruppe von Cubicula mit Familiennamen als Titulus über dem Eingang. Die Region des ‚Scalone del 1898‘ (d) sah nur Loculi vor, im Gegensatz zur Ampliatus-Gruft (e), deren Treppe zu nur zwei Doppelcubicula führte, von denen eines zudem bemalt war. Diese verstreuten Grabbereiche wuchsen seit dem frühen 4. Jh. zum mit etwas mehr als 12 km Ausdehnung

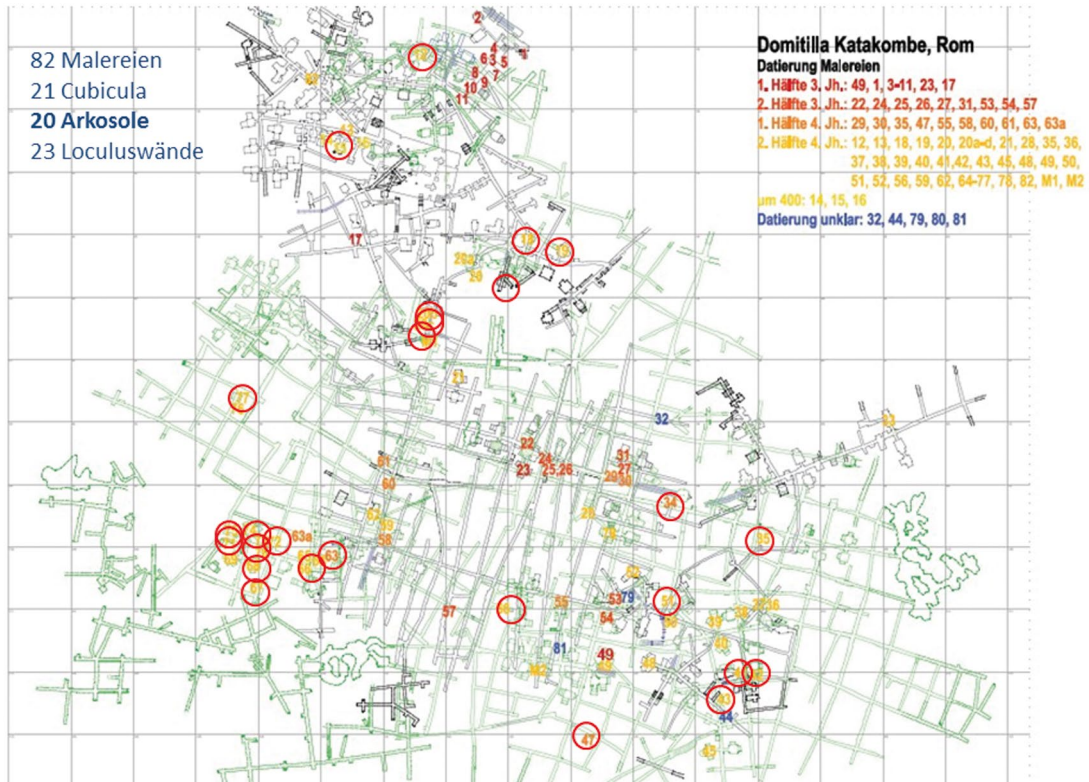


Abb. 3: Domitilla-Katakombe, Gesamtplan mit Verteilung der Malereien in Arkosolen.

längsten Katakombensystem zusammen, wobei die Gänge unter einer Fläche von 350 × 300 m in bis zu vier Stockwerken gegraben wurden. Die Bereiche für Bestattung sind in der Struktur klar zu unterscheiden von älteren Arenaren, deren unregelmäßige Gänge so breit wie möglich gearbeitet sind, um den Aushub zu maximieren. Katakombengänge hingegen sind schmal und man versuchte, den Aushub und damit den Aufwand zu reduzieren.

Der Blick auf den nach 200 Jahren Nutzung unübersichtlichen Gesamtplan der Katakombe offenbart bei genauerem Hinsehen ein nach ökonomischen Gesichtspunkten angelegtes und gewachsenes Zömeterium von beeindruckender Struktur, wie schon die einfachen Zahlen belegen. Das gesamte Gangnetz folgt auf zwei Stockwerken mehr oder weniger parallel einem Masterplan: z. T. liegen die Gänge und Cubicula von erstem und zweitem Stock direkt übereinander, was auch durch durchlaufende Treppenanlagen und Lichtschächte bedingt ist. Insgesamt gab es rund 26 Treppenanlagen, von denen 15 von der Oberfläche hinabführten, während die übrigen zusätzlich die tieferen Stockwerken verbinden. Ein relativ regelmäßiges Netz von 39 senkrechten Schächten diente der Beleuchtung, zur Belüftung und zum Abtransport des Aushubs. Auf allen Stockwerken verteilen sich 228 Grabkammern, davon 86 im ersten und 132 im zweiten Stock. Insgesamt gibt es 650 Arkosole, davon 306 in Cubicula, die übrigen 344 an

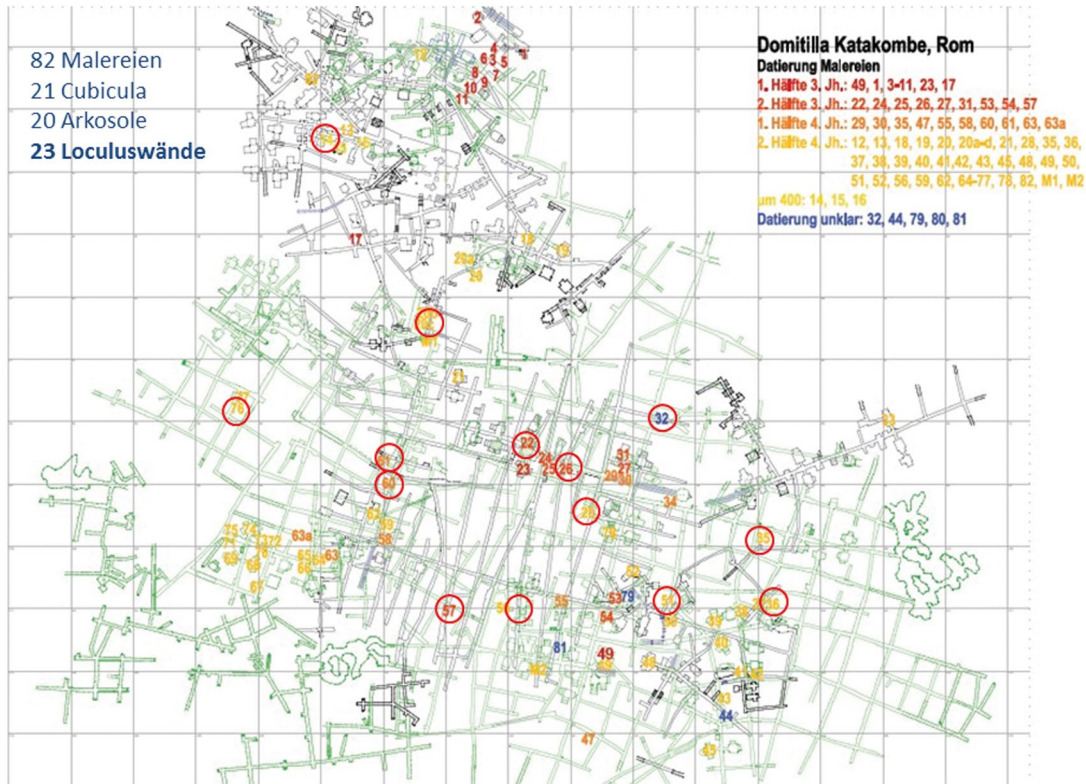


Abb. 4: Domitilla-Katakombe, Gesamtplan mit Verteilung der Malereien an Loculuswänden.

Wänden entlang der Gänge, und man kann sie sich gut als Grabplatz eines Ehepaares vorstellen. Die Gesamtzahl der derzeit sichtbaren Gräber liegt bei rund 26.250, und die weitaus meisten davon sind wie gesagt Loculi.

Verschiedene Analysen geben Zugriff auf die komplexen Daten, die nicht alle hier vorgestellt werden können. Exemplarisch seien die Bereiche mit Malerei betrachtet. Rund 82 Mal beauftragten Grabbesitzer einen Fossor oder spezialisierte Handwerker mit der Anlage von Wandmalerei (Abb. 2). Darunter haben sich 21 bemalte Cubicula erhalten. Ihre Position ist stets treppennah, oftmals imitieren sie oberirdische Architekturen oder zeigen auffällige polygonale Formen mit Apsiden oder Kuppeln. Außerhalb der Cubicula finden sich zudem 20 Arkosole mit Wandmalerei (Abb. 3), wiederum in denselben privilegierten Bereichen nahe bei Treppen. Schließlich kommen noch 23 Loculus-Wände in etwas weiterer Streuung hinzu (Abb. 4). Loculus-Wände sind in Domitilla ein spezieller Grabtyp: die Hervorhebung einfacher Loculi mit Malerei ist in keiner anderen Katakombe so häufig. Anscheinend war dies eine lokale Eigenheit der Fossoren. Jedenfalls investieren alle Grabbesitzer nicht nur einfach ökonomisch durch das Bezahlen von Malern, Putz und Farben in den individuellen Grabschmuck, sondern sie wählen in jedem Fall auch Bilder mit einer inhaltlichen Aussage, die auf eine persönliche Jenseitshoffnung abzielt.

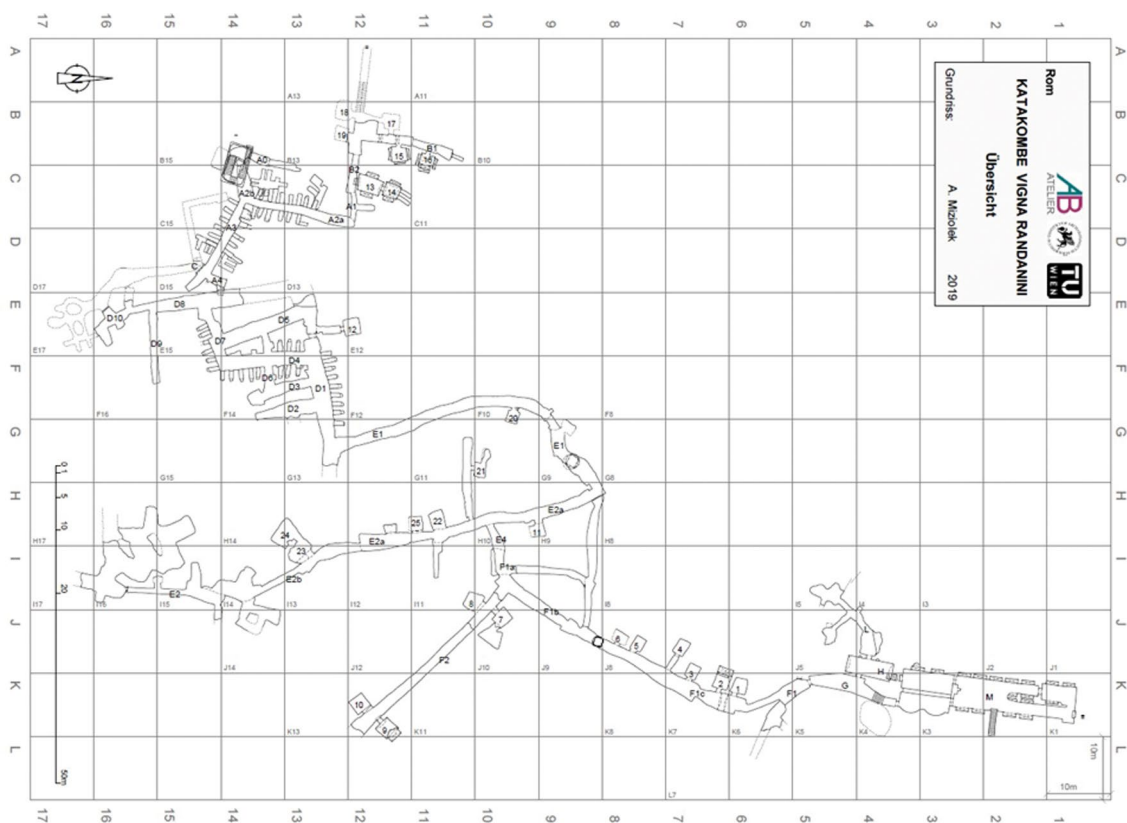


Abb. 5: Randanini-Katakombe, Gesamtplan.

Insgesamt betrachtet belegt der Charakter der zur Bestattung angelegten Gänge und Räume durch die auf geringen Aushub und schnelles Ausschachten konzentrierte Technik der möglichst schmalen Hohlräume, dass die Gewinnung der Pozzolana-Erde hier sekundär war. Wo große Räume angelegt wurden, ging es den Grabherren sichtlich um den repräsentativen Charakter etwa polygonaler Kammern, die oberirdische Grabformen nachahmten. Und überall zeigen die feinen Hackspuren der Fossoren, dass der Tuff beim Graben weitgehend zerkleinert wurde und man nicht versuchte, Tuffquader als Baumaterial zu gewinnen.

Zur Struktur der Randanini-Katakombe

Die Eigenheiten treten im Vergleich besser hervor, und besonders hilfreich ist ein Vergleich mit der jüdischen Katakombe der vigna Randanini, zwischen via Appia und via Appia Pignatelli, da sie z.T. einen anderen Ursprung sowie andere Grabtypen und Belegungssitten zeigt. Die 1859 entdeckte und bis 1863 ergrabene Katakombe wurde ungefähr gleichzeitig über das 3. und 4. Jh. genutzt und ist gut publiziert.¹⁵ Zahlreiche Inschriften, Graffiti, Malereien und Gräber im Typ der im Orient verbreiteten

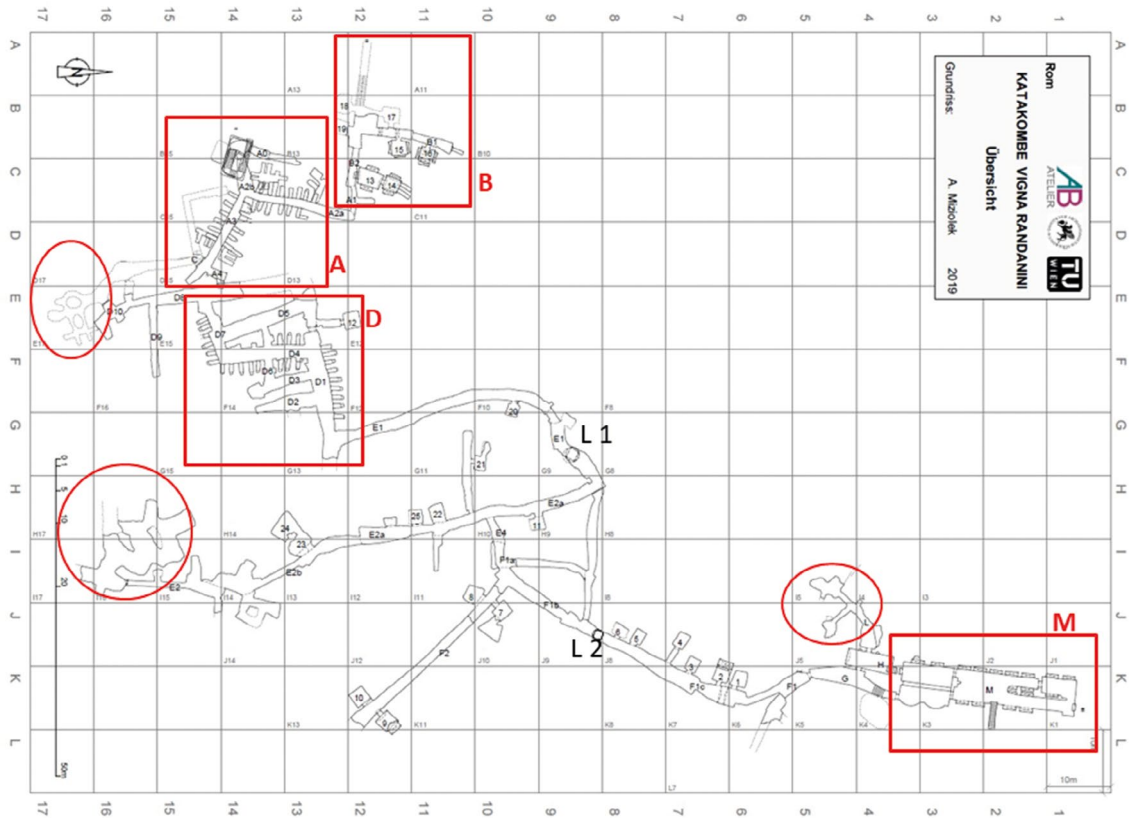


Abb. 6: Randanini-Katakombe, Regionen.

Kokhim (Schachtgräber) belegen die jüdische Nutzung. Eine Strukturanalyse unter wirtschaftlichen Aspekten fehlt bislang jedoch.¹⁶ Die relativ kleine Katakombe hat eine Ausdehnung von etwa 700 m Gängen (Abb. 5). Im Norden ist dem Zugang ein großes Mausoleum für ca. 70 Arkosolbestattungen vorgelagert (Abb. 6, Bereich M), im Westen an der via Appia lag ein ursprünglich privates Hypogäum (Region B) mit eigenem Treppenzugang. Der Hügel dazwischen wurde in einer Fläche von etwa 160 × 110 m für die Katakombe erschlossen. Sie nutzt Bereiche, die vorher einerseits für Arenare (Abb. 6, durch Kreise markiert), andererseits als Zisterne genutzt wurde (Regionen E und F). Daraus erklärt sich die unstrukturierte Form des Planes und die ungewöhnliche Breite der Gänge. Zudem waren die nur zwei Lichtschächte (Abb. 6, L1 und L2) ursprünglich nicht zur Beleuchtung sondern ihrer runden Form nach als Öffnungen für Wasser gemacht. Der gesamte Aushub konnte auf 2500 m³ berechnet werden, wobei rund 2170 m³ auf die Galerien und rund 330 m³ auf die Cubicula entfallen.

Die ungewöhnlichsten Bereiche sind die zentralen Regionen A und D (Abb. 6, in Quadraten), denn sie erschließen in sehr breiten, rechtwinklig angelegten Raumgruppen die Wände für die charakteristischen Kokhim; Region A hatte auch einen eigenen Treppenabgang. In beiden Regionen waren es zunächst je 26 Kokhim, in Region A wurden sie auf 35 Kokhim erweitert. An allen Wänden wurden frei gebliebenen Bereiche

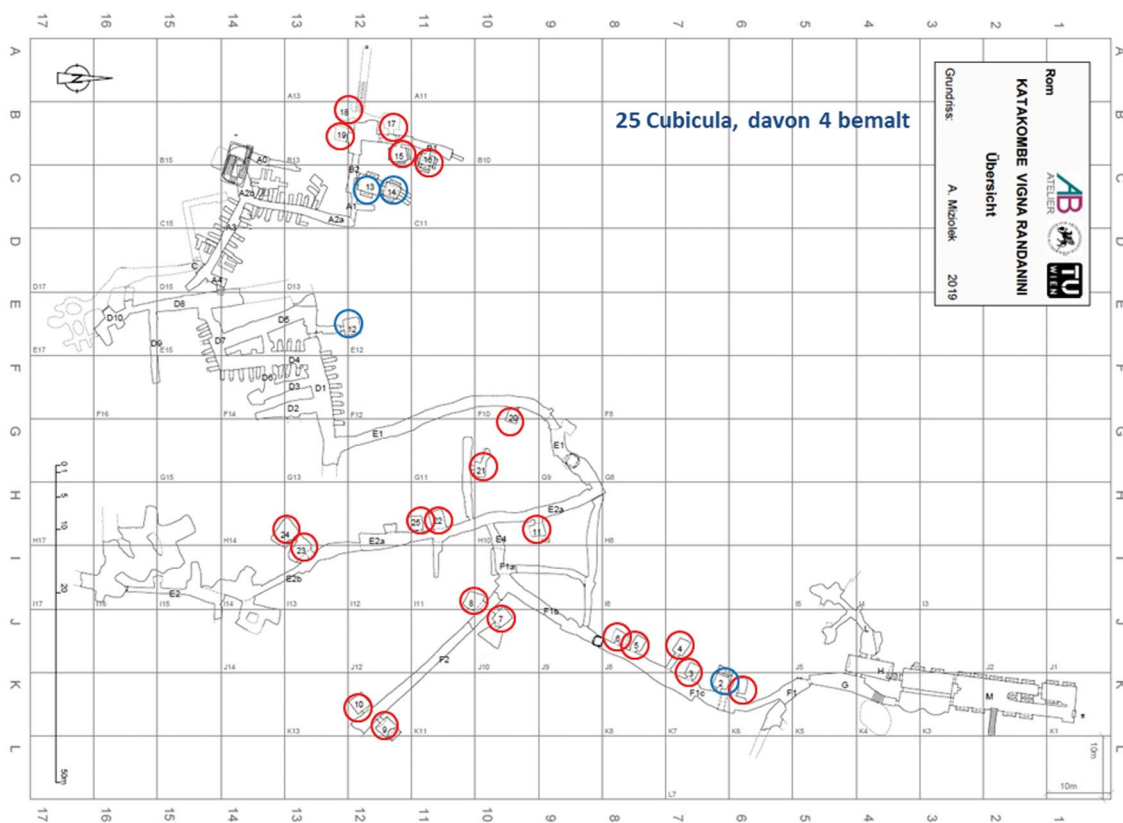


Abb. 7: Randanini-Katakomba, Verteilung der Cubicula.

sekundär mit Loculi gefüllt. Überhaupt ist auch hier der Loculus der mit Abstand häufigste Grabtyp. Insgesamt verteilen sich in Randanini rund 1200 Erwachsenen- und weitere 400 Kinderloculi. Es gibt 25 Cubicula (Abb. 7), die sich relativ gleichmäßig in den Regionen ohne Kokhim (also außer A und D) verteilen. Sie nehmen rund 100 Erwachsenen- und 50 Kinderloculi auf, so dass etwa 1100 Erwachsenen- und 350 Kinderloculi die Gänge belegen. Es gibt nur 13 Arkosole, fast ausschließlich in den Cubicula. In zwei Cubicula (2 und 9) sind Sarkophage *in situ* erhalten, die unter dem Boden bestattet waren, einmal wurde ein Kastengrab aufgemauert. Es gibt weitere Besonderheiten: die Loculi sind in der Regel statt mit Ziegel oder Marmorplatten mit groben Tuffsteinen verschlossen und dann verputzt. Inschriften als Verschlüsse sind selten, aber sie wurden bisweilen wie ein Titulus auf den Verschluss geklebt. Ihre Anbringung zeigt überhaupt ein anderes Raumverhältnis: häufig waren sie neben, über oder zwischen den Loculi angebracht, dabei oft im Tuff in kleine rechteckige Öffnungen eingelassen. So scheinen Inschriften in der Mitte der Wand titulusartig die Zugehörigkeit der Loculi in unmittelbarer Nähe zu einem Familienverband zu signalisieren. Es dürften, mit den Loculuswänden in Domitilla vergleichbar, einzelne Wandabschnitte zusammenhängend belegt gewesen sein. Ob damit ebenfalls Besitzverhältnisse markiert wurden, sei dahin gestellt. Alternativ gab es die Möglichkeit, Cubicula als geschlossene räumliche Einheit

zu wählen, und vier der 25 Kammern zeigen mit Malereien (Abb. 7: blaue Kreise) die Bereitschaft zu besonderen Investitionen für ein hervorgehobenes Grab. In den Malereien spiegelt sich das jüdische Bilderverbot, sie sind auf jüdische Symbole wie die Menora und Darstellungen von Palmen beschränkt. Am ungewöhnlichsten sind in Hinsicht auf die Grabverteilung die großen Räume der Regionen A und D mit Kokhim, da sie viele gleichwertige Gräber in einem größeren Verband erschließen.

Fazit

Der Blick auf die Katakomben aus wirtschaftlicher Sicht öffnet einen konkreten Zugang zu diesen Monumenten, der noch lohnenswerte neue Ergebnisse bereithält. Oft sind aber Grabstatistiken und Detailstudien erst noch zu erstellen, um vergleichbare Daten zu erhalten.

Anmerkungen

¹ Die hier vorgestellten Überlegungen basieren auf Daten, die im Rahmen des FWF-START-Projektes Y282 zur Domitilla-Katakombe und dem zusammen mit Th. Fröhlich am DAI Rom durchgeführten Projekt „Kollektive Bestattungen in Rom von der späten Republik bis in die Spätantike“ erhoben werden konnten; vgl. Zimmermann – Tsamakda 2007; Zimmermann 2016; Zimmermann et al. 2019. Dem DAI, den Projektpartnern von ÖAW und TU Wien sowie den Behörden, die alle Arbeiten ermöglicht haben – der PCAS (F. Bisconti, M. Iaacobone), dem Parco Archeologico dell’Appia Antica (R. Paris) sowie dem Besitzer der vigna Randanini A. Del Gallo, gilt herzlicher Dank. Erst nach dieser AIAC-Tagung erschien Rutgers 2019, mit ähnlicher Thematik aber unterschiedlicher Herangehensweise, worauf an anderer Stelle eingegangen sei. Vgl. zudem Zimmermann i. Dr.

² Fiocchi et al. 1998.

³ Vismara 1986; Rutgers 1995.

⁴ Guyon 1974.

⁵ Vgl. die Beiträge in Fiocchi Nicolai – Guyon 2006, Zimmermann i. Dr.

⁶ Fiocchi Nicolai – Guyon 2006, 127–131; Guyon 1987, 62–66; vgl. Zimmermann i. Dr.

⁷ Nuzzo 2000; vgl. Zimmermann 2021.

⁸ Sowohl in S. Callisto wie in SS. Marcellino e Pietro erscheinen in diesen frühen Kammern Berufsbilder von Fossoren, vgl. Zimmermann 2002, 208 f.; Bisconti 2009, 24.

⁹ Fiocchi Nicolai – Guyon 2006, 133–143.

¹⁰ Eine Ausnahme sind Bereiche in der Nähe von Märtyrerbestattungen, die später intensive Nutzung als *retrosanctos* erfuhren.

¹¹ Etwa in Commodilla: De Sanctis 1994.

¹² Zimmermann 2002, 155–162. Die Maler in der Region der mensores in Domitilla sind nur hier nachweisbar, die Maler in SS. Marcellino e Pietro in der ganzen Katakombe, vgl. Zimmermann 2002, 129–154. 169–241.

¹³ Vgl. Zimmermann 2001.

¹⁴ Pergola 2004.

¹⁵ Vgl. Laurenzi 2013; Dello Russo 2011.

¹⁶ Zimmermann et al. 2019.

Bildnachweis

Abb. 1–4: © Domitilla-Projekt (DAI Rom – ÖAW – TU Wien), N. Zimmermann – I. Mayer. Abb. 5–7: © DAI Rom – TU Wien, N. Zimmermann – I. Mayer – A. Miziolek.

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The ‘Written Death’ in Late Roman Collective Funerary Settlements. Some Case Studies from Rome (3rd–4th Century CE)

Antonio E. Felle

In order to achieve the aims of the panel “*New research on collective burial spaces in Rome from the late Republic to the late Roman time*”, the consideration of the epigraphic documents related to the Christian catacombs of Rome – the main collective burial areas of the late Antiquity – could be actually very useful.

I present here some notes based on the data resulting from a research started more than ten years ago in the largest Roman catacomb: the cemetery of Domitilla along the via Ardeatina.¹ The data of the about 2000 records in the third volume of the corpus of the *Inscriptiones Christianae Urbis Romae nova series* related to the almost 5000 epigraphs pertaining to the entire catacomb² are available since 2008 in the on-line database of the inscriptions by Christians of Rome, the *Epigraphic Database Bari* (EDB).³

The very exceptional situation we have about the epigraphic documents from the catacombs of Rome – where the inscriptions, in large majority, still exist in their own original contexts – allow us to consider, in addition to the texts, also other features of the “written monuments”, as for example their materials or execution techniques.

Some years ago I proposed a detailed analysis of the archaeological features of the inscriptions from Domitilla catacomb, by relating them to their positioning into the two main levels of the underground cemetery.⁴ This quantitative approach to the data reported from the past ICVR edition into the EDB allows to consider this Christian catacomb no more as a monolithic and uniform community cemetery – as we are used to think; rather, as a collective burial area where it is possible to recognise, inside the common frame (managed as a whole by the ecclesiastical hierarchy), different ‘neighbourhoods’ of the subterranean spaces, where we can recognise different social levels and different patrons.⁵

Even if very precious, the ICVR edition – as other past epigraphic corpora – has a very serious gap: with only very few exceptions, it displays no photos or drawings of the inscriptions. So, about the Domitilla epigraphs we had no data about their lettering, their palaeography, their actual graphic features. A systematic survey of all accessible places of the catacomb started in 2009, in order to photograph every inscribed fragment still existing there; the aim was to have a complete and actual view of all the inscriptions and to achieve a really complete analysis of the epigraphic dossier of the cemetery.⁶

During the survey, I photographed all the epigraphic finds still existing in the cemetery – including also some inscriptions not included in the past ICVR edition by



Fig. 1: Rome, catacomb of Domitilla, general plan with the considered regions highlighted.

Angelo Silvagni and Antonio Ferrua. The association of the new photos with the EDB records has led in some cases to the amendment of the reading proposals as reported in the ICVR;⁷ to the ascertainment of the disappearance of some pieces (also of someone of those registered seen still as *in situ* in 1956), and also to the discovery of unknown inscriptions.⁸

But the really new outcome of the photographic survey is the effective chance to consider the inscriptions not according only to their texts, but also to their physical appearance, their lettering, their graphic and technical features.

We are used to think that the inscriptions of the Christians in the catacombs are ugly and badly realised: this is actually true for the most part of the cases, but it is *not always* true. Again, we are also used to think that the inscriptions in the catacombs were



Fig. 2: Rome, catacomb of Domitilla, region M (*Flavi Aurelii*).

roughly realised by the same diggers who excavated the galleries, as improvised and non-professional stonecutters. Right: but it is *not always* true.

The photographic systematic survey, here for the first time applied to an entire catacomb, has demonstrated that on the contrary there are also inscriptions from Christian underground cemeteries that very probably were made by teams of professional stonecutters, still operating in organised workshops.

I propose some examples pertaining to a single zone, the region *M* in the second level of the cemetery (so-called of the *Flavi Aurelii*: see the general plan of the catacomb in fig. 1) in use from the end of 2nd century AD – as a private independent funerary settlement until 4th, when it is completely included in the large Christian catacomb.

It is possible to identify there, in some inscriptions, a recurring outline in the images of the anchor, defined by strongly curved endings;⁹ in this same region, some images of birds show similarities, as in two inscriptions still closing the tombs in the same gallery *M4*,¹⁰ pertaining to the 3rd-century phase of the hypogaeum.

Even more convincing are the similarities among another kind of images of birds, simpler and rougher than the previous ones (see some examples in fig. 2): they are all realised in the same way, with necks defined by two collars, bodies with no plumage, bipartite tails and lightly incised paws.

These stylized images of birds appear in some epitaphs pertaining to a higher floor of the region *M* that, because of topographical and archaeological reasons, is datable not before the end of 3rd century and the beginnings of 4th century:¹¹ so, they are later than the early lowest galleries of the same region *M*. A marble slab still *in situ* to close a *loculus* in the cubiculum *M1* – surely excavated in the first phase of the hypogaeum – displays both



Fig. 3: Rome, catacomb of Domitilla, region M (*Flavi Aurelii*).

the types of bird images;¹² the displacement in the right half of the slab of the rougher image shows that it was added later, evidently because of the reuse of the grave.¹³

But the most significant evidence of the real existence of a defined stonecutters' team (or also an organised workshop, actually) operating in the region of the *Flavi Aurelii* is a group of eleven inscriptions¹⁴ that systematically show the same lettering model recurring in all of them (examples in figs. 2. 3). The letters "F" and "E" have the horizontal strokes extending beyond the point of contact with the left vertical line; the letter "A" has the crosspiece in an about semicircular shape, often overstepping the right and left strokes. The letter "A" is also defined at the top by a 'hooking' ending; we could see it, identical, also on the left in the letter "N", whose angle width at the top on the left is always the same of the letter "A" (fig. 2): these same features are evident also in the Greek epitaph of Εὐγηνία Νήα,¹⁵ probably realised by the same stonecutters' team (fig. 3). Most of these inscriptions are generically pertaining to the galleries M5 and M6, but the epitaph of *Severina* (fig. 3) is still in its original position, closing a loculus at the end of the staircases that join the two levels of the region M.¹⁶

So, we could be sure that a stonecutters' workshop realised all these inscriptions for some of the users of the region of the *Flavi Aurelii*, between the end of 3rd century and the beginnings of 4th century. Just in these decades, the hypogaeum – originally created as a private funerary settlement – seems to be in use by an organised group of Christian patrons; maybe the same patrons in the same decades realise – not too far from the *Flavi Aurelii* – another subterranean burial area, known as the "regione dello scalone del 1897" (regions H-I, see fig. 1).¹⁷

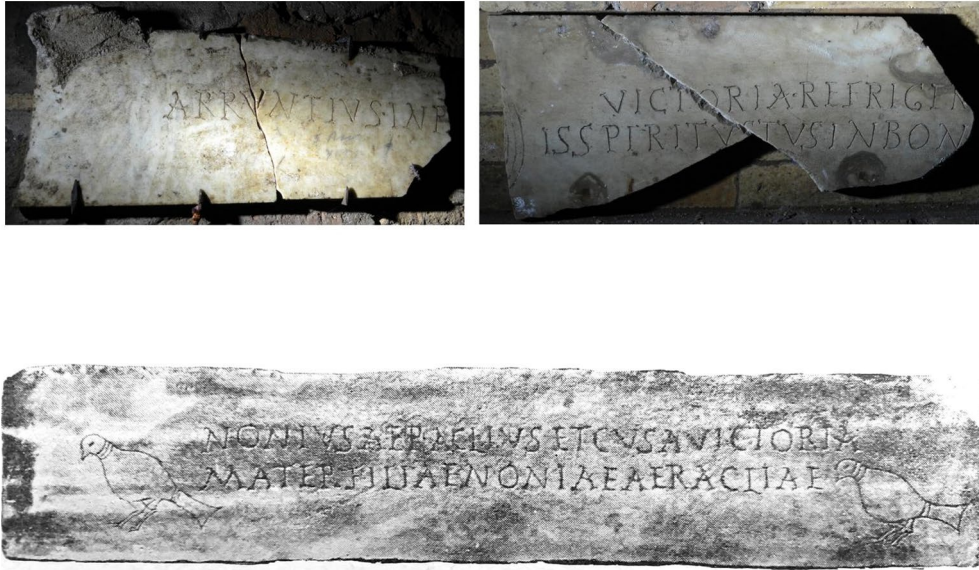


Fig. 4: Rome, catacomb of Domitilla. Some examples of very similar inscriptions from other regions in the second level.

It is remarkable that in this same zone of the cemetery there are more than twenty inscriptions produced very probably by the same stonecutters' workshop operating at the same time in the region of the *Flavi Aurelii*.¹⁸ But this is not the only case (fig. 4): the survey identified other about twenty inscriptions of the same kind also in the region "of the Good-Shepherd" (today identified as region *D*) as like to its first expansion (region *E*) in order to connect it to the other community burial areas (as the region *F*), during the merging process of the originally private and independent *hypogaea* existing in the *praedium Domitillae* into the largest Christian community catacomb in Rome suburb.¹⁹

In other zones of the second level (regions *A*, *B*, *Q*, *R*, and *T*: see fig. 1) we have only sporadic examples of these particular kind of inscriptions,²⁰ but all the spots where the survey identified samples of the activity of this specific stonecutters' workshop are all datable to the same period: between the end of 3rd century and the first decades of 4th century. For example, it is not by chance that all the three finds attested in the region *T* are all pertaining to places pertaining to its very first phase.²¹

About forty inscriptions displaying the same specific features of our stonecutters' team are also in the first level of the catacomb (some examples in fig. 5). But it is relevant that the very most part of them (exactly thirty, someone still *in situ*) come from a specific zone only: the region *A* with its first expansion towards east, the region *D* (see fig. 1).²² These inscriptions could be a very reliable clue to resolve the issue about the dating of this so important and large zone: consequently, it could be assigned between the last decades of 3rd century and the beginnings of 4th century.²³

So, in total we count from different areas of the cemetery a little more than one hundred inscriptions,²⁴ produced very probably by the same stonecutters' workshop.



Fig. 5: Rome, catacomb of Domitilla. Some examples of very similar inscriptions from other regions in the first level.

The presence of the same kind of inscriptions in different and not contiguous zones of the catacomb of Domitilla (from the *Flavi Aurelii* region *M* to the region *A* in the first level; from the ‘Good Shepherd’ galleries to the region of the ‘scalone del 1897’ – or in the third level too, in the region *Q*²⁵), is not a simple coincidence in my opinion.

I already remarked that, because of different reasons, all the regions in which these inscriptions were found, are unanimously considered as datable at the end of 3rd century or – maybe better – to the first decades of 4th century. As we know, just this period is a very important phase of the history of the Christian cemeteries in Rome, more and more enlarged and systematically organised by the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

The occurrence of the same kind of inscriptions in different, separate and previously private zones of the cemetery is a reliable clue of their transformation process into the large community cemetery we today know as the ‘Domitilla catacomb’.

Rather than usual outcomes of requests by single patrons to a single workshop operating along the *via Ardeatina*, these so similar inscriptions could be considered also as a reliable clue of a centralised management of a new ‘community’ burial settlements, ruled by the members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

Maybe, the responsables of the new, largest, collective burial areas, could have relied on some specific teams of craftsmen (from the diggers to the stonecutters, from the



Fig. 6: Some examples of the presence of same stone-cutters in different cemeteries.

architects to the painters) in order to guarantee 'standard services' to the members of the community, proposing – and not imposing – them to the *fratres*.

In addition, probably the same workshops operated for more than one collective and community cemetery: a very clear example are the well-known 'ostrian' inscriptions, pertaining to the catacomb of St. Agnes and to the near *coemeterium Maius*, along via Nomentana.²⁶ But we could recall other cases closest to the Domitilla catacomb. There are samples of strong similarities between the earliest inscriptions from the catacombs of Domitilla and Praetextatus: for example, the three slabs with an identical stylised image of a bird picking a bunch of grapes (fig. 6).²⁷ I propose also to compare an epitaph found in the cubiculum *Lc* in the first level of Domitilla' cemetery with an inscription found in the catacomb of Praetextatus²⁸: both of them show a lightly inclined anchor and a bird outlined just in the same way (fig. 7).

Among the 'standard services' previewed by the management of the community cemeteries, there is surely the chance to request epitaphs for the deceased.

Evidently this choice was not mandatory, as demonstrated by the fact that only few tombs in the catacombs have inscriptions. In the case of the underground cemetery of Domitilla (fig. 8), comparing the total amount of the inscriptions with the quantity of the graves,²⁹ the general percentage of the 'written tombs' is about 13%, but with a remarkable difference between the two main underground levels. In the first one – for the most part datable between the middle and the second half of 4th century – the percentage is about 10% (exactly 10,4%); in the second level, where there are regions



Fig. 7: Some examples of the presence of same stone-cutters in different cemeteries.

datable in pre-Constantinian age, the percentage of the “written death” is higher, about 14% (exactly 14,3%).

The percentage of tombs provided with inscriptions in the second level of the Domitilla catacomb is exactly the same (14,5%) registered also in an important sample of the Imperial Roman collective funerary settlements, the ‘columbarium III’ in the Vigna Codini on the via Appia, in use during 1st and 2nd centuries. There, the previewed tombs are about 1200 and the inscriptions pertaining to the columbarium are exactly 167 (still existing: 109).³⁰

The equivalence of the percentage about the “written death” between the late antique catacomb of Domitilla and the third columbarium of Vigna Codini is very interesting, first of all because we are used to think to a much greater use of inscriptions in Imperial age in respect to the Late Antiquity.

Also in Vigna Codini III, some inscriptions seem made by the same stonecutters’ teams, but – as in the early phases of the community cemetery of Domitilla – this does not mean absolute uniformity. There are epigraphs surely created by different hands (some of them appear fastly made in the *columbarium* itself), but also no epigraph at all, although they were more or less systematically planned: we can deduce it by considering the framed spaces left blank on the long marble slabs expressly prepared to receive the epitaphs.

Also in an imperial age *columbarium*, as like into the earliest Christian community catacombs between 3rd century and the beginnings of 4th century, the users of a collective funerary settlement keep the chance to request different levels of burial services, according to their different wishes and resources.

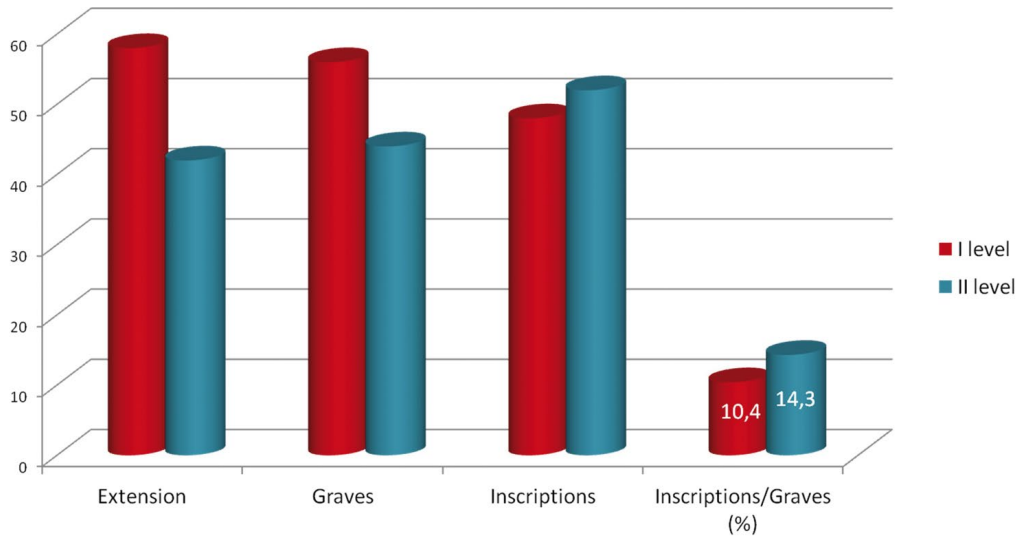


Fig. 8: Rome, catacomb of Domitilla. Comparison between the amount of the tombs and of the epitaphs pertaining to the underground cemetery (percentage values).

This habit, still adopted in the earliest first phases of the Christian community cemeteries, changes within the 4th century, when we note a general trend in the Roman catacombs. The more and more lowest percentage of ‘written tombs’ corresponds to a very fast declining of the quality of the inscriptions. Starting from the 4th century, into the catacombs it is very hard to identify epigraphs made by organised workshops, chosen – as previously – by a centralised and organised management. On the contrary, the inscriptions appear more and more made by improvised and non-professional individual craftsmen that, from the middle decades of 4th century onwards, become actually the only real managers of the Christian community funerary settlements, instead of the hierarchy – as in the previous decades.

Notes

¹ At its very beginnings, the research was of course based on the edition of the inscriptions published in the 3rd volume of the corpus of the Christian inscriptions from ancient Rome, the *Inscriptiones Christianae Urbis Romae nova series*: the volume was published more than sixty years ago, exactly in 1956: Cf. *Inscriptiones Christianae Urbis Romae septimo saeculo antiquiores, nova series* (= ICVR), III, edd. A. Silvagni – A. Ferrua, in ciuitate Vaticana 1956, 4–315. 328–404.

² Including the *inscriptiones quae in coem. Callisti repertae traduntur* (cfr. ICVR, III, 8716–9338): “probabilius nobis Domitillae vindicari posse viderentur” (these are the words by A. Silvagni and A. Ferrua in ICVR, III, pp. 328 f.).

³ Cf. <www.edb.uniba.it> (EDB). Since 2013 EDB is one of the main partners of the *Europeana network of Ancient Greek and Latin Epigraphy* [EAGLE: see <www.eagle-network.eu> (20.08.2020)].

⁴I presented some results at 13th International Congress of Greek and Latin Epigraphy, held in Oxford in 2007 (Felle 2007) and, more extensively, in 15th International Congress of Christian Archaeology, held in 2008 in Toledo (Felle 2013).

⁵Cf. Felle 2013, 1643.

⁶Cf. Felle – Zimmermann 2014. Between 2006 and 2011, the staff of the Domitilla-Projekt leaded by Norbert Zimmermann (DAI – Abt. Rom) was then operating in the galleries to build a complete laser-scanning 3-D model of the entire catacomb. So, the idea of a strong collaboration between the two projects was absolutely natural: today one can appreciate a concrete interaction between the EDB and the Domitilla-Projekt. Starting from EDB or Domitilla Project web-pages it is possible to reach interactive maps of the single regions of the different levels of the catacomb: a dedicated layer on the now updated plans displays the position of the inscriptions still in their original places (in situ) by single markers. These markers directly point to the corresponding records in EDB, permitting an easy and quick access to their detailed description, with data related to the bibliography, transcription of the text, images and so on.

⁷A good example is the sure complete re-reading of the fragmentary ICVR, III 7693 (EDB 23287), based on the draft inscription scratched on the marble slab itself, never seen until the photographic survey. Here the edition by Ferrua (ICVR, III 7693): *Marcellina qu[ae vixi]t / an(nos) VII dies XX[I dormit in] pace*; but the original text, as reported in the scratched draft, was a bit different: *Marcellina que vixit / an(nos) VII d(ies) XXVIII te cum pace* (EDB 23287). The slab is in the first level of the catacomb, precisely in the gallery A5. Cf. Felle 2017, 191 f.

⁸An example in Felle 2017, 192–194.

⁹See exempli gratia the epitaph of *Decim---* (ICVR, III 6645; EDB 22568), as like the still in situ ICVR, III 7314 (EDB 23383) and 7315 (EDB 23384). Inspired to this same design is the anchor in the epigraph of *Pulberius* (ICVR, III 6875; EDB 23091) as like as the one in ICVR, III 7230 (EDB 23805), where we can see also a monogram. Also the idea of the monograms is recurring in the same region, but everyone of them is realised differently: cf. ICVR, III 7060 (EDB 22121) in the gallery *M4*, 7061 (EDB 22122) and 7229 (EDB 23804) in the cubiculum *Mb*; ICVR, III 7230 (EDB 23805) in the cubiculum *Mi*. But we see monograms also in other regions of the catacomb.

¹⁰ICVR, III 7328a (EDB18540); ICVR, III 7060 (EDB 22121).

¹¹ICVR, III 6572, 6857, 6909d (respectively: EDB 18564; EDB 23062; EDB 18164), are all pertaining to the gallery *M5*; ICVR, III 6804 (EDB 22873) was found in gallery *M6*.

¹²ICVR, III 7195 (EDB 23766). The slab shows in its middle the name of the deceased – in genitive case – Ε{ν}ξουπερα<ν>τία: under the name, in the centre, there is a bird outlined as in the previous examples before reminded: see ICVR, III 7328a (EDB 18540); ICVR, III 7060 (EDB 22121).

¹³Also the slab displaying the epitaph of *Pankratius* and *Isidora* (ICVR, III 6764; EDB 22820), still in situ in the gallery *M1*, very probably is another case of re-use. The first epitaph consists of the only image of the bird (as it is the epigraph still in situ in the gallery *M04* [ICVR, III 7328a; EDB 18540]), well centred on the slab, differently from the later dedication to *Isidora* by *Pankratius*, that foremost it was realised considering an already existing break of the marble. The lettering in this last text is similar to the writing of other documents as like the epitaphs of *Q(uintus) Domitius Peregrinus* [ICVR, III 6654; EDB 20698] and *Balerius Bales* (ICVR, III 6961; EDB 23159): both of them were found in the gallery *M2*.

¹⁴ ICVR, III 6505 (EDB 22063), 6572 (EDB 18564), 6612 (EDB 22524), 6670 (EDB 22589), 6692 (EDB 20747), 6804 (EDB 22873), 6857 (EDB 23062), 6909d (EDB 18164), 6917 (EDB 23104), 7028b (EDB 23246), 7245 (EDB 23379). Four out of these epigraphs display the same simplified kind of bird images we reminded before: ICVR, III 6572 (EDB 18564), 6804 (EDB 22873), 6857 (EDB 23062), 6909d (EDB 18164).

¹⁵ ICVR, III 7245 (EDB 23379)

¹⁶ ICVR, III 6917 (EDB 23104).

¹⁷ Only this early region of the Domitilla catacomb shows the same excavation schemas we see in other early Christian community funerary settlements in Rome suburb: for example, in the not far catacombs of Callixtus and of Praetextatus, along the via Appia.

¹⁸ ICVR, III 6539; 6563; 6585; 6608; 6641; 6731; 6749d; 6757; 6758; 6778; 6779a; 6826; 6835; 6946; 6970; 6973a; 7028c; 7056c; 7158; 7318c; 7332m; 7332g; 7333a.

¹⁹ ICVR, III 6545cd; 6559; 6597; 6686; 6701c; 6772; 6812c; 6871; 6915; 6916g; 6922cd; 6924; 6951; 6981; 6984; 6996; 7019b; 7123b; 7157b; 7552; in addition to these ones, two fragments unpublished in ICVR.

²⁰ Region A: ICVR, III 6628, 7156d; Region B: ICVR, III 6756, 6943; Region Q: ICVR III 6791, 6807 and one unpublished; Region R: ICVR, III 6530; Region T: ICVR, III 6593, 6962 and the unpublished text on the backside of ICVR, III 8394b (see the following footnote).

²¹ More precisely, in the gallery *T1* (ICVR, III 6962 [EDB 23160] of Varronia) as like as in the cubicula *Tc* and *Tn* (see respectively ICVR, III 6595, and the other side – still unpublished – of ICVR, III 8394b [EDB 25609]).

²² First level, Region A: ICVR, III 7249, 7389, 7441, 7470, 7476, 7500, 7503, 7505, 7526, 7556, 7637a, 7648, 7651, 7694, 7750, 7793, 7798, 7839, 7842, 7874b, 7918e and seven inscriptions unpublished in the corpus; first level, Region D: ICVR, III 7590, 7641, 7667, 7797a, 7895c.

²³ It is also interesting that this same Region A has the highest number of Greek inscriptions in the first level of the cemetery (Felle 2015, p. 1640). About the issue, see Pergola 1975, 70–72. 90.

²⁴ Exactly 108: forty-two related to the first level and sixty-six to the second one.

²⁵ See ICVR III, 6807 (EDB 22876), found in the gallery *Q4*.

²⁶ Cf. Carletti 2018.

²⁷ ICVR, III 7196 (EDB 23767) from *M12*, 2nd level; ICVR, III 8114c (EDB 25364) from cubiculum *Ae*, 1st level; ICVR, V 14984 (EDB 805), *incertae originis* from the catacomb of Praetextatus.

²⁸ Respectively, ICVR, III 7223 (EDB 23797) and ICVR, V 14845 (EDB 1066).

²⁹ Calculated by dr. Verena Fugger (ÖAW) in the frame of the Domitilla-Projekt leded by Norbert Zimmermann. All my thanks to both of them.

³⁰ I thank for this data dr. arch. Silke Haps (tombs) and to dr. Antonello Vilella (inscriptions), both involved in the team of the DAI (Abt. Rom) for studying the columbarium Vigna Codini III (project leded by Thomas Fröhlich and Norbert Zimmermann).

Image Credits

Photos of the inscriptions reprised from EDB (by courtesy of the Pontifical Commission of Sacred Archaeology).

Fig. 1: by courtesy of Norbert Zimmermann, Domitilla-Projekt; with the considered regions highlighted by the author. – Fig. 2: ICVR, III 6572 and 6804 (second line). – Fig. 3: ICVR, III 6505 (on the left); ICVR, III 7245 and

6917 (on the right). – Fig. 4: In the first line: ICVR, III 6531 (from gallery *I*); ICVR, III 6981 (from vestibule of cubiculum *Dc*). In the second line: ICVR, III 7721 (from cubiculum *Ea*). – Fig. 5: ICVR, III 7590 (from gallery *D*, first level); ICVR, III 7441 (from gallery *A*, first level). In the second line: ICVR, III 7798 (from gallery *A2*, first level). – Fig. 6: In the first line: ICVR, III 7196 (catacomb of Domitilla, second level, gallery *M12*); ICVR, V 14984 (catacomb of Praetextatus, *incertae originis*: from O. Marucchi, I monumenti del Museo cristiano Pio-Lateranense (Milano 1910), tab. LXII n. 12). In the second line: ICVR, III 8114c (catacomb of Domitilla, first level, cubiculum *Ae*). – Fig. 7: In the first line: ICVR, III 7223 (catacomb of Domitilla, second level, cubiculum *Lc*); in the second line: ICVR, V 14845 (catacomb of Praetextatus, *incertae originis*). – Fig. 8: Data: Domitilla-Projekt and EDB; graph by A.E. Felle.

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Il porto di Roma: caratteri di continuità e di discontinuità con i cimiteri dell'Urbe. Il riutilizzo degli spazi funerari di età classica come modello economico o fenomeno di parassitismo architettonico?

Roberta Ruotolo

Il presente contributo si pone come obiettivo, da un lato, di ricostruire le modalità attraverso cui ad Ostia le aree funerarie di età classica furono riutilizzate per l'impianto degli edifici di culto cristiani, come dimostra ad esempio il ritrovamento di tessellati musivi, circostanza che suggerisce il recupero degli schemi decorativi precedenti nonché dei medesimi spazi sepolcrali, dall'altro, di rilevare l'allestimento di dispositivi funerari predisposti per pochi illustri personaggi della comunità all'interno degli stessi cimiteri cristiani.¹

A partire dal III secolo a. C. le fonti attestano le funzioni annonarie e militari di Ostia, in cui dall'anno 267 risiede il *quaestor ostiensis*.² Uno dei fattori che meglio evidenzia lo stretto rapporto tra le due città è costituito dalla centralità del culto di Vulcano, che richiama la dipendenza della comunità ostiense dall'Urbe anche a livello sacrale.³ Connessioni più stringenti sono ravvisabili sul piano funerario: ciò è particolarmente chiaro nei modelli costruttivi adottati per la realizzazione dei luoghi di culto del suburbio, che richiamano soluzioni architettoniche sperimentate ad esempio nel cantiere dell'antica basilica di S. Pietro di epoca costantiniana.⁴

Le testimonianze sull'utilizzo funerario del suburbio, numerose in età classica,⁵ si presentano più esigue nel tardo antico (fig. 1).⁶ Tuttavia, è ugualmente riscontrabile una continuità nello sfruttamento delle necropoli di epoca romana presso cui si installarono le chiese.⁷

Tra i cantieri che meglio si conoscono, sebbene l'edizione del monumento non sia stata completata, vi è quello legato all'impianto della basilica di Pianabella (fig. 2). L'edificio, eretto in un'area sepolcrale ancora in funzione, è stato ben presto interessato dall'inserimento di un recinto funerario che insiste presso l'abside della chiesa. Nella struttura (12,15 × 4,70 m), appena affiorante dal piano pavimentale, si realizzarono venticinque poliandri in muratura (1,50 × 0,80 m) ciascuno dei quali caratterizzato da quattro ordini, per un totale di cento sepolcri monosomi; il numero delle sepolture rievoca lo sfruttamento sepolcrale intensivo tipico dei santuari martiriali del suburbio romano.⁸ Il dispositivo, ascrivibile al periodo di costruzione della chiesa, fu adoperato tra il V ed il VI secolo d.C., ovvero contemporaneamente al maggior numero delle inumazioni della basilica.⁹

È interessante notare come la struttura sia architettonicamente collegata ad un vano (1,70 × 0,90 m) posizionato ortogonalmente al recinto di cento *formae*, ossia sulla corda dell'abside, scandito da due blocchi in muratura ai lati, intonacato all'interno e contraddistinto da un unico livello.¹⁰ La collocazione e le caratteristiche – nonché

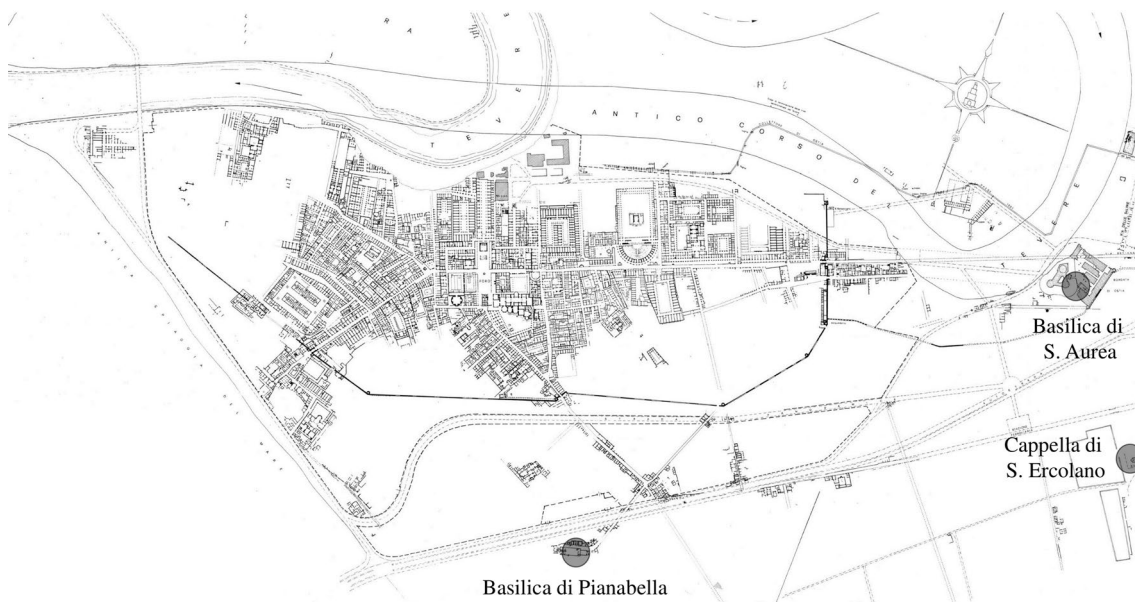


Fig. 1: Ostia. Planimetria generale.

il legame con l'impianto a poliandri – indicano manifestamente come tale fossa, definita vano reliquiario,¹¹ costituisca il luogo più importante della chiesa.¹² A favore di un'interpretazione del dispositivo presso l'abside come struttura riservata ad un gruppo specifico di inumati parlano due elementi: da un lato, il ritrovamento nel *repositorium* di una mensa riposta volutamente in frammenti, dall'altro, l'identificazione della lastra di copertura del reliquiario.¹³

Alla luce di tali ritrovamenti appare poco fondata l'ipotesi di chi attribuisce ai committenti una disponibilità finanziaria assai limitata: la teoria troverebbe giustificazione nella mancanza di una scansione interna in navate della basilica.¹⁴ Al contrario, le dimensioni dell'edificio (43,30 × 16, 20 m), di poco inferiori a quelle della presunta cattedrale costantiniana (51,45 × 23,30) ed il recinto posizionato nell'area del presbiterio,¹⁵ che prosegue anche al di sotto dell'abside, delineano un quadro diverso. Non da ultimo, l'epistilio celebrativo di un intervento attribuibile al vescovo *Bellator* indica il coinvolgimento dell'entourage ecclesiastico nella gestione del complesso.¹⁶

È possibile, invece, che dal momento che la grande struttura sepolcrale emergeva dal piano di calpestio – sebbene si definisca “appena” sporgente – la presenza aggiuntiva di un ipotetico colonnato avrebbe reso difficoltosa la circolazione. Impianti funerari simili sono quelli individuati presso la basiliche di S. Agapito sulla via Prenestina e di S. Agnese sulla via Nomentana. Nel primo caso, in particolare, è evidente l'analogia con l'edificio ostiense, anche qui, infatti, l'insieme di sepolture in muratura è stato realizzato presso la tomba martiriale, in corrispondenza dell'altare. Nel secondo caso, la struttura intercettata al centro della navata risulta ancora poco nota. Un confronto più puntuale è costituito dalla chiesa di S. Lorenzo ad Aosta, con la quale la basilica ostiense condivide



Fig. 2: Ostia. Basilica di Pianabella.

cronologia e morfologia del recinto funerario. Nell'edificio di Aosta l'installazione del dispositivo è stata predisposta anche in questo caso durante la costruzione del complesso, le sepolture poste all'interno sono state distribuite in due aree, l'una rettangolare, l'altra terminante in un presbiterio semicircolare.¹⁷ Le 4 tombe poste nel settore rettangolare sono state realizzate in prossimità di un reliquiario: le dimensioni delle fosse sono quasi identiche ($1,77 \times 0,87$) a quelle intercettate nella basilica ostiense. I vani interni sono stati allestiti anche qui in modo da accogliere più inumati, inoltre, i poliandri si presentano intonacati all'interno, contrariamente a Pianabella dove appare decorato il solo repositorio. A S. Lorenzo è stato supposto che le *formae* della zona centrale fossero destinate all'inumazione dei primi vescovi della diocesi, dunque riservate a personalità eminenti.¹⁸

Nel 1993 Lidia Paroli, riferendosi alle indagini da lei dirette sul sito di Pianabella, descrive la diffusione del cristianesimo all'interno delle maglie insediative di età classica come un fenomeno di parassitismo a danno dell'esistente.¹⁹

Per quel che ne sappiamo, al momento dell'impianto della chiesa di Pianabella, Ostia annovera tra gli edifici di culto la sola cattedrale costantiniana che assolve mansioni battesimali e funerarie.²⁰

Le numerose notizie riguardanti l'arredo liturgico della fabbrica, caratterizzata dalla presenza di tre recinti e da una ristrutturazione complessiva dell'area presbiteriale attraverso l'inserimento di pilastri affrescati decorati da croce gemmate, suggeriscono l'esistenza di una comunità numerosa, non del tutto priva di mezzi finanziari, in cui non mancarono personalità di alto rango.²¹

Qui, in precedenza, gli spazi sepolcrali originariamente pensati per isolati gruppi familiari, come conferma il rinvenimento di diverse epigrafi di membri della famiglia degli Egrili, «illustri vittime» del cristianesimo, non furono acquistati con singoli atti di compravendita, ma il passaggio di proprietà avvenne presumibilmente attraverso la loro acquisizione a livello comunitario.²²

Gli schemi decorativi rintracciati all'interno dei mausolei di età classica su cui si andò ad installare la basilica sono piuttosto simili: le murature in *opus reticolatum* sono caratterizzate da un intonaco di colore rosso mentre i pavimenti sono interessati da rivestimenti musivi in tessere bianche e nere.²³

All'interno di uno dei mausolei posti lungo il lato settentrionale della chiesa, sul piano pavimentale in mosaico, sono stati appoggiati muri in doppia tecnica (laterizio e listato) e un sarcofago. I nuovi fruitori si avvalgono, almeno in un primo momento, di modelli ornamentali noti e siti già in uso.²⁴

La coerenza del progetto, del riutilizzo dei mausolei precedenti, è evidente nella realizzazione di un edificio solido che sfrutta le strutture del periodo anteriore non solo come fondazione per il nuovo impianto ma isola dei settori per ospitarvi nuovi vani sepolcrali.²⁵

È chiaro, a mio avviso, come nel caso di Pianabella l'appropriazione degli spazi da parte della comunità cristiana risponda ad un'esigenza economica: la standardizzazione delle tecniche costruttive associate al reimpiego di frammenti architettonici prelevati da altre fabbriche in disuso, come testimoniano le lastre pavimentali rinvenute al centro dell'aula, descrivono una realtà nella quale il materiale edilizio è stato assemblato all'occorrenza, secondo le contingenze.²⁶

Il fenomeno è inquadrabile, a mio parere, in una visione del reimpiego come vera e propria tecnica costruttiva la cui messa in opera non richiede ingenti investimenti. Ciò non esclude, tuttavia, che successivamente la comunità cristiana abbia sviluppato modelli decorativi e aree proprie, come accadde per le catacombe.²⁷

Un caso piuttosto singolare è rappresentato dall'area funeraria di S. Ercolano (fig. 3), la cui documentazione di scavo non è stata ancora rintracciata e le poche notizie a nostra disposizione sono il frutto della combinazione di appunti e foto dell'epoca.²⁸

Alcuni particolari, però, ci permettono di formulare ipotesi di lavoro preliminari. Sappiamo che nel corso dell'Ottocento numerosi furono i ritrovamenti di epigrafi e sarcofagi definiti "cristiani", di cui si sono perse per lo più le tracce.²⁹ Lo studio da me avviato dei reperti recuperati durante i saggi del 1988-1989 è ancora in una fase iniziale ma l'individuazione di alcune classi di contesti si è già rivelata promettente: mi riferisco ai resti musivi analizzati e presentati in occasione del XXIII Colloquio AISCUM,³⁰ che permettono di comparare il



Fig. 3: Ostia. S. Ercolano.

complesso anonimo di Pianabella con la cappella dedicata a S. Ercolano quanto all'ornato che caratterizza i mausolei di età classica sui quali si fondò l'edificio attuale.³¹

Non possiamo sapere se i tessellati musivi fossero caratterizzati da emblemata quali ad esempio la colomba che si abbeverava al *cantharos*, come è stato rilevato nei sepolcri di Pianabella,³² ma il loro ritrovamento induce a credere che fossero stati utilizzati anche qui come rivestimento pavimentale, replicando dunque i medesimi moduli ornamentali, convinzione avvalorata dai numerosi frammenti d'intonaco rosso raccolti in fase di scavo.³³

Anche le murature pertinenti ai sepolcri di epoca imperiale sono realizzate in quell'*opus reticolatum* già tornato alla luce a Pianabella e sul quale le pareti della chiesa di S. Ercolano si innestano direttamente.³⁴

Il progetto edilizio presenta le medesime peculiarità riscontrate a Pianabella: i mausolei si configurano come un piano funzionale al livellamento della zona prima della costruzione dell'edificio di culto e agiscono da fondamenta.³⁵

Analogamente al sito di Pianabella, l'acquisizione deve essere avvenuta anche per S. Ercolano attraverso l'intervento della comunità alla ricerca di nuovi spazi per assecondare le proprie necessità, in primis funerarie. La distribuzione delle sepolture in fossa terragna, in *formae* e alla cappuccina – in base a ciò che emerge dalle fotografie e dalle relazioni di scavo degli anni Ottanta – sembra aver interessato tutti i vani precedenti, in modo intensivo. Nel tentativo di differenziare le fasi di utilizzo del cimitero l'équipe dell'epoca è riuscita ad isolare singoli interventi di omogeneizzazione dei piani di frequentazione. In particolare, si nota la successione di due fasi cimiteriali in forma caratterizzate da un diverso orientamento delle sepolture, una volta disposte in senso EW una volta NS. Tuttavia, è stata registrata anche la presenza di sepolture a cassone e a cappuccina, il che suggerisce un forte sfruttamento dell'intero comparto, che impedì una ricostruzione lineare dello sviluppo della necropoli cristiana.³⁶ Un tale affollamento trova verosimilmente spiegazione nella presenza di un martire o almeno di reliquie, ma sulle vicende agiografiche riguardanti S. Ercolano si rimanda ad altra sede.³⁷

Quanto alle tecniche costruttive, i singoli diaframmi che dividono i gruppi di *formae* indagati lungo i perimetrali della chiesa sono realizzati in un'opera listata piuttosto uniforme, fattore che denota un discreto livello di standardizzazione delle opere murarie impiegate. Alla base del programma architettonico vi è la necessità di assecondare un bisogno funerario: non è stata riscontrata traccia di decorazione³⁸ come di corredo, il che sembra corroborare l'ipotesi che lo scopo fosse esclusivamente quello di soddisfare la richiesta di un numero maggiore di sepolture; la coerenza della pianificazione è assicurata dalla stratificazione dei diversi livelli funerari, che si susseguono alternando anche l'orientamento delle inumazioni.

Quanto all'utilizzo da parte delle generazioni successive, è stata riscontrata una fase di deposizioni rinascimentali e ottocentesche che segnalano la continuità funeraria dell'area.³⁹ Infine, un breve accenno su un'osservazione emersa in fase di scavo, che purtroppo non è possibile verificare: è stata registrata la presenza di una grande quantità di calce nelle *formae* aperte nel corso dei sondaggi degli anni Ottanta, fatto

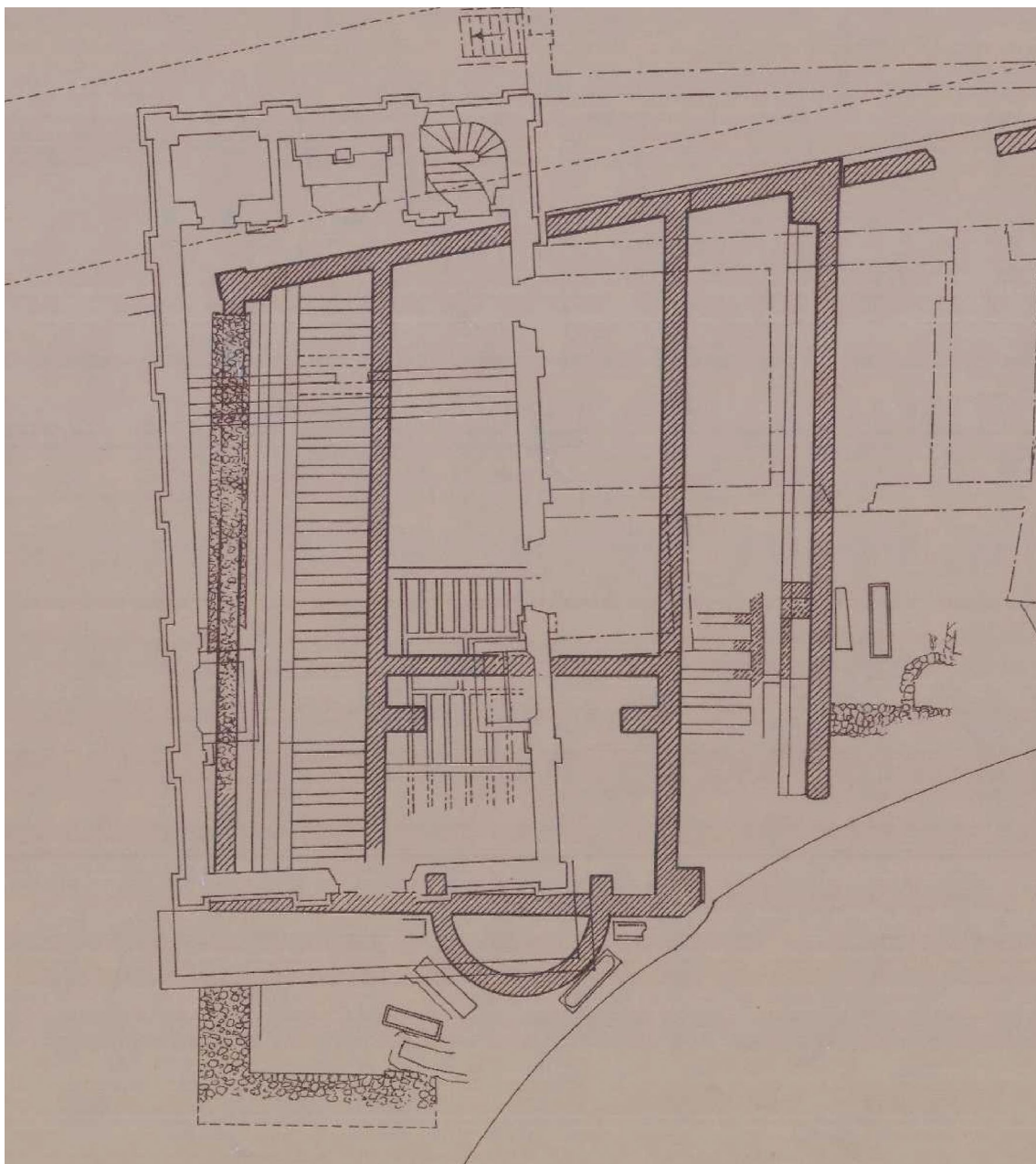


Fig. 4: Ostia. Basilica di S. Aurea.

che ha suggerito la possibilità che gli inumati fossero deceduti a causa di un'epidemia e che quindi la comunità di S. Ercolano fosse costituita da un gruppo di individui a sé.⁴⁰ Tuttavia, se questo fosse stato il caso, si sarebbe forse provveduto alla realizzazione di una fossa comune.

Il terzo edificio di culto ubicato nel suburbio ostiense è la chiesa di S. Aurea (fig. 4), nella quale è ricostruibile un complesso di tombe "privilegiato". L'esistenza di un settore

destinato ad una cerchia ristretta è desumibile da due planimetrie inedite conservate presso il NADIS.⁴¹ È immediatamente riconoscibile un gruppo di sepolture orientate EW, che insiste sull'area del presbiterio; anche le navate sono interessate da nicchie disposte in senso NS, che testimoniano la funzione funeraria della basilica.⁴² La documentazione grafica, inedita e non, ha determinato finora una lettura architettonica multiforme, ma appare indubbia l'esistenza di setti divisorii attribuibili a sepolture pavimentali. In particolare, è evidente la volontà di creare un impianto sepolcrale separato al centro del presbiterio della chiesa primitiva, destinato verosimilmente ad accogliere specifici personaggi.⁴³

In attesa degli studi antropologici sugli individui prelevati nel 1989 presso il cimitero di S. Ercolano e che di recente hanno trovato nuova linfa, mi limito a segnalare come dai dati in nostro possesso si possa ricostruire per i cimiteri ostiensi qui analizzati il quadro di un'economia della morte piuttosto sobrio, ispirato a principi di continuità ma soprattutto a bisogni utilitaristici che rispondono ad un'unica richiesta: ottenere nuovo spazio per inumazioni riservando, nei casi accertabili, settori per defunti "eccellenti".

Note

¹ «Il fenomeno del reimpiego investì ovviamente anche la nuova architettura cristiana che già dal periodo costantiniano è testimoniata dalle fonti e ora anche dai ritrovamenti archeologici» (Pensabene 2007, 458).

² Pensabene 2007, 5.

³ Meiggs 1973, 24. 298; Coarelli 1994, 36; Rieger 2004, 215.

⁴ Zander 2007, 21 s.; Liverani 2010.

⁵ Heinzelmann 1998.

⁶ Pannuzi 2007.

⁷ Per un inquadramento d'insieme sulle tre aree funerarie cfr. Loreti 1990; Pergola 1990 per il territorio in cui sorge S. Ercolano; Pannuzi 2006a; Pannuzi 2006c per la zona in cui si installò l'attuale cattedrale di S. Aurea; Paroli 1999 per il suburbio meridionale dove si impiantò la basilica anonima di Pianabella.

⁸ Nuzzo 2016.

⁹ Nuzzo 2016, 373.

¹⁰ Giordani 1982, 83.

¹¹ Paroli 1999, 32.

¹² Giordani 1982, 83; Paroli 1999, 26.

¹³ D. Nuzzo (2016, 375) parla di una fenestella per reliquie da contatto, ma è opportuno ricordare come L. Paroli si esprima in termini di «fessura», circostanza che impone una certa cautela in assenza di un esame autoptico o di una documentazione grafica del pezzo, che ad oggi risulta ancora inedito.

¹⁴ Pensabene 2007, 461.

¹⁵Nel corso degli scavi si individuarono complessivamente tre recinti: se si esclude quello posto nella zona del presbiterio i restanti sarebbero stati installati al centro dell'aula e uno di questi sarebbe stato provvisto di transenne (Coccia, Paroli 1990a, 179).

¹⁶Paroli 1999, 80, A184. Bellator aveva partecipato al concilio romano convocato da papa Simmaco nel 499.

¹⁷Perinetti 1979, 302; Bonnet 1979, 280 s.; Bonnet 1981, 21 s.; Perinetti 1981, 48 s.

¹⁸Perinetti 1979, 302; Perinetti 1981, 49.

¹⁹Paroli 1993, 157–159.

²⁰Bauer et al. 1999.

²¹Coccia, Paroli 1990.

²²Morandi 1982.

²³Giordani 1982, 77.

²⁴Giordani 1982, 76–82.

²⁵Paroli 1999, 17–32.

²⁶Di una committenza comunitaria parla anche P. Pensabene (2007, 461).

²⁷Paroli 1999, 17–32.

²⁸Le uniche indagini ad aver interessato l'area della cappella sono state quelle intraprese alla fine degli anni Ottanta (Loreti 1990; Pergola 1990) in occasione di lavori di restauro del tetto della chiesa e, più di recente, gli scavi archeologici per la costruzione della linea elettrica Lido Vecchio-Casal Palocco (Pannuzi 2007).

²⁹Lettera di P. E. Visconti del 12.2.1856, 61; Visconti 1859, 1–14; Paschetto 1912.

³⁰Ruotolo 2017.

³¹Analogie stringenti sono evidenti anche con le necropoli di porta Romana e della via Laurentina. Vd. Heinzelmann 2000.

³²Giordani 1979, 81.

³³Il materiale al quale si fa riferimento è conservato nei cosiddetti Nuovi Depositi del Parco Archeologico di Ostia Antica.

³⁴Lungo il perimetrale meridionale della chiesa è visibile una cornice di mattoni sesquipedali che separa una parete in opera reticolata da una in listato.

³⁵Le modalità costruttive adoperate a Pianabella sembrano essere state adottate anche qui, sebbene su scala minore.

³⁶Pergola 1990.

³⁷Ruotolo c.s., S. Ercolano. Il recupero moderno.

³⁸I frammenti di intonaco rosso rinvenuti potrebbero essere pertinenti alle pareti interne dei mausolei ma il loro numero sembra esiguo. Tuttavia, poiché questo comparto del suburbio è stato oggetto di numerose esplorazioni già a partire dall'Ottocento è anche possibile che gran parte della decorazione architettonica sia andata distrutta.

³⁹Pannuzi 2009.

⁴⁰Tra le "particolarità" delle sepolture fu annoverata, inoltre, la modalità di deposizione degli inumati riportati in luce nella campagna del 1988, che presentavano gli arti superiori incrociati posteriormente.

⁴¹Nuovo Archivio Disegni del Parco Archeologico di Ostia Antica, PAOA inv. n. 1314 e n. 1324. Le strutture sono visibili in una planimetria pubblicata in Pannuzi 2006a (fig. 4, 374).

⁴²Pannuzi 2006a, 374.

⁴³La mancanza di un'adeguata documentazione di scavo non permette di stabilire in che misura le planimetrie riproducano lo stato di fatto al di sotto del pavimento della chiesa attuale. Non è chiaro, nello specifico, perché in talune piante manchi la caratterizzazione delle navate o parte delle sepolture poste in prossimità dell'abside.

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Discussione

Irene Bragantini

Vorrei prima di tutto ringraziare gli organizzatori del panel, Thomas Fröhlich e Norbert Zimmermann, per avermi proposto di tirare le fila degli interventi di questa mattinata, e congratularmi con loro per aver individuato nel fenomeno delle sepolture collettive¹ una chiave per trattare i contesti funerari nei termini economici scelti per questo Congresso. Una serie di significativi ‘Einzelfälle’ ha così messo in rilievo come ogni tentativo di generalizzazione rischi di darci una illusoria impressione di sistemazione di una evidenza per la quale molto resta invece ancora da fare per l’edizione di monumenti anche molto noti, ma insufficientemente conosciuti. Non intendo naturalmente fare qui un riassunto dei singoli interventi, che hanno portato tutti elementi di novità e di interesse: vorrei piuttosto evidenziare come nel concreto di questi approfondimenti e nella discussione che essi hanno suscitato siano emerse nuove domande di portata più generale.

Seguendo lo sviluppo cronologico degli interventi, risalta subito un fatto fondamentale: lungo tutto il corso del I secolo a.C. assistiamo a un trend che potremmo definire di ‘accesso alla persona’. Il fenomeno riguarda sia l’ambito domestico che quello funerario,² ma si manifesta dapprima in questo campo, nelle tombe che esibiscono in facciata i Grabreliefs.³ Sul modello delle tombe di via Statilia, dobbiamo immaginare questi rilievi apposti su monumenti funerari relativi a gruppi ristretti di persone. Si tratta come è noto di una produzione sviluppatasi specificamente a Roma, per una committenza di gruppi familiari di origine libertina, alle cui necessità di autorappresentazione è finalizzato il linguaggio figurativo. La produzione ha inizio nei primi decenni del I sec. a.C. ed è più fiorente e più coerente nelle tematiche rappresentate (più direttamente capace – si direbbe – di intercettare la forte domanda di rappresentazione dei committenti) tra tarda età repubblicana e prima età augustea. Queste tombe aprono la strada al fenomeno sociale e architettonico delle tombe collettive e alla tipologia edilizia dei colombari:⁴ la soluzione ipogea non ha naturalmente la visibilità di un monumento sopra terra, ma – come ben dimostra l’evidenza archeologica – rappresenta una risposta efficace alla crescente esigenza di rappresentazione da parte di persone e gruppi sociali che si associano in varie forme per garantirsi un diritto alla sepoltura e un luogo su cui si possa esercitare la loro memoria.

Il fenomeno che abbiamo definito di accesso alla persona caratterizza i contesti funerari di I secolo a.C., trovando particolare espressione nel racconto abbreviato di sé proposto dall’apparato epigrafico, mentre troverà evidenza nei contesti domestici solo nel secolo successivo. In ambedue i casi, gruppi che finora non avevano avuto la possibilità economica e la necessità sociale di raccontarsi e di rappresentarsi, accedono a una forma di comunicazione che lascia una traccia monumentale e figurata. Si tratta di un cambiamento epocale, che segna gli anni tra la tarda repubblica e l’inizio del principato:⁵ esso è indice di una nuova consapevolezza del valore di sé come persona e del riconoscimento dell’appartenenza a quello che si va configurando come un gruppo

sociale, esigenze che – adeguandosi ai canoni comunicativi della società romana – trovano espressione soprattutto attraverso la decorazione figurata.

Nei contesti funerari, il processo è rafforzato dai legami creati dallo svolgimento dei riti funebri, mentre nei contesti domestici esso è connesso alla funzione sociale della residenzialità. E' dunque ormai chiaro che ogni spiegazione economicistica, che vede nell'aumentato costo del terreno per sepolture conseguente alla chiusura della necropoli dell'Esquilino la causa della nascita dei colombari, riduce a un solo fattore un fenomeno che ha ben altre radici nella società romana dell'epoca.⁶

Grazie anche all'approfondimento degli aspetti epigrafici, spiccano nella nostra documentazione i due colombari di Villa Panfilii, che si sono rivelati come risultato di un'operazione speculativa.⁷ La natura 'imprenditoriale' dell'operazione spiega la sostanziale uniformità di soluzioni che essi propongono nel loro impianto iniziale. Ben diversa la situazione del colombario III di Vigna Codini,⁸ ulteriore esempio della necessità – a questo stadio della ricerca – di condurre in maniera esaustiva lo studio degli 'Einzelfälle' per poterne trarre indicazioni quanto più corrette possibile: una circostanza più volte messa in rilievo negli interventi presentati e vivacemente emersa anche nel corso della discussione.⁹

Pur nell'omogeneità sociale degli occupanti, il colombario di Scribonio attesta un maggior impegno decorativo:¹⁰ considerando gli aspetti imprenditoriali dell'operazione, viene da chiedersi come avrà funzionato l'allestimento della decorazione nei due colombari. La possibilità di conoscere in maniera approfondita la natura di queste committenze assegna ai colombari Panfilii un ruolo significativo nella comprensione del modo in cui si viene ora sviluppando – a questi livelli – un repertorio di decorazione figurata. In mancanza di un consolidato panorama al quale attingere, questo processo si è realizzato 'per tentativi': i colombari Panfilii ci dimostrano che una soluzione è stata quella di fare appello al repertorio della decorazione domestica contemporanea, riducendo da contesti di ben più alto livello formule facilmente adattabili ai ristretti campi offerti dalle pareti dei colombari.¹¹

Ho già proposto che le nature morte con maschere del colombario di Scribonius e le cosiddette scene di giudizio (a mio avviso piuttosto relative a narrazioni novellistiche) 'dipendano' in qualche modo dalle pitture con gli stessi soggetti della Villa della Farnesina e possano rimandare a una forma di relazione sociale tra i committenti della Villa e quelli del colombario.¹²

Queste considerazioni possono trovare spazio e approfondimenti all'interno di una formula interpretativa come quella dell'aristocratic patronage', richiamata negli interventi di Borbonus e Zimmermann: nei diversi contesti da loro esaminati, questa formula trova realizzazione nei colombari – esprimendo un aristocratic patronage esercitato dai *domini* nei confronti della loro *familia* – e nelle catacombe – dove i vescovi offrono lo spazio per la sepoltura ai membri più poveri della comunità.¹³ Ma questo tema si presta anche a un'altra serie di approfondimenti, che consentono di ampliare l'osservazione all'ambito decorativo: è possibile infatti trovarne traccia in alcuni contesti

che – come i colombari Panfili – consentono di ipotizzare legami sociali e/o produttivi tra committenze di livello diverso.¹⁴ Un altro caso potrebbe essere rappresentato dal fregio dipinto con le origini di Roma, rinvenuto in un colombario dell'Esquilino:¹⁵ una composizione complessa e di alto livello qualitativo, che non può essere confrontata con le brevi composizioni 'ritagliate' dei colombari Pamphili.¹⁶ Considerando la tipologia del monumento e di quelli rinvenuti nelle vicinanze, non trovo altra spiegazione per la presenza di un fregio di questa complessità e qualità – del quale sono ben note le consonanze con il fregio scolpito della basilica 'Emilia' –¹⁷ che ipotizzare che esso tragga ispirazione da una composizione creata per una ben diversa committenza.¹⁸ Mi sembra infatti altamente improbabile che nella tarda età repubblicana alla quale si datano le pitture,¹⁹ esse possano essere state commissionate da un insieme di persone – associate o meno – del livello sociale di quelle sepolte in questi colombari. E questo tanto più in considerazione della tematica rappresentata, che richiama alla mente l'esaltazione gentilizia delle *familiae troianae*,²⁰ 'reduplicando' gli stessi temi, tra contesti pubblici e contesti privati di alto livello.²¹ La questione è purtroppo complicata dallo stato degli studi, ulteriore dimostrazione della necessità di approfondire l'esame dei singoli contesti prima di passare a tentativi di più generale comprensione del fenomeno.

Altri problemi nascono dalla vicinanza della tomba dipinta a quella della *familia Statiliorum*, con la quale talvolta la tomba dipinta è stata confusa, e proprio un vistoso caso di 'aristocratic patronage', come è stato proposto sin dalla sua scoperta, è costituito dal sepolcro di questa *familia*.²² L'apparato epigrafico chiarisce la natura eminentemente sociale del fenomeno del colombario, nel quale non a caso sono cospicuamente rappresentati schiavi e liberti appartenenti alle grandi famiglie dell'epoca.²³ Spicca nei testi l'orgogliosa dichiarazione del lavoro svolto in vita, che trova un riconoscimento sociale nella possibilità di identificare con un termine specifico la funzione svolta dal defunto all'interno di una grande *familia*, segno di una vita vissuta secondo i canoni della società e del gruppo sociale di appartenenza, e testimonianza per noi della valenza sociale del lavoro.²⁴

Diversi interventi hanno proposto il problema della individuazione delle singole sepolture all'interno di tombe collettive.²⁵ Alcuni casi attestano la volontà di evidenziare in vario modo gruppi di sepolture 'vicine', spia del desiderio di riflettere nell'organizzazione della tomba un legame esistente in vita, desiderio che troverà ben altro sviluppo nella tomba familiare a cella che caratterizza le necropoli urbane e suburbane del II secolo d.C. Per affrontare correttamente questo problema dobbiamo però disporre delle iscrizioni che qualifichino la natura e lo statuto del monumento: in mancanza di questi dati, non possiamo capire se fosse avvertita la necessità di individuare o collegare tra loro singole sepolture. Numerose tombe dell'Isola Sacra dimostrano come nelle sepolture familiari, definite e individuate dal *titulus* sulla facciata, i singoli defunti siano molto raramente individuati.²⁶ In numerose tomba a cella di questa necropoli gli apprestamenti per le libagioni non sono collegati a singole sepolture – come è frequente per le sepolture individuali – ma sono collocati agli angoli del pavimento e appaiono dunque destinati

al monumento nel suo insieme, come sepoltura della famiglia, piuttosto che ai singoli defunti.²⁷ Nelle tombe familiari, diverse potevano essere necessità e desideri rispetto alle sepolture collettive: è dunque delicato considerare genericamente e in una stessa ottica il problema della individuazione delle singole sepolture nei colombari e nelle tombe familiari.

Nella discussione è tornato più volte anche il problema delle sepolture ‘povere’: la necropoli dell’Isola Sacra dimostra che non esistono luoghi riservati a queste sepolture, che affollano invece tutti gli spazi liberi, soprattutto nella forma più povera dell’inumazione in fossa semplice, che ricerca talvolta la ‘protezione’ di una tomba costruita.²⁸ Di fronte all’ altissimo numero di sepolture in fosse semplici attestato all’Isola Sacra,²⁹ mi chiedo come saranno stati assegnati questi ‘spazi economici’, e quale autorità sovrintendesse alla necessità di dare sepoltura a personaggi di modesta condizione e privi di legami sociali o familiari, che saranno stati particolarmente frequenti nel caso di una necropoli collocata nell’area di uno scalo portuale ‘su scala globale’.³⁰

Dalla stessa necropoli trarrei ancora qualche indicazione in direzione delle domande che Th. Fröhlich e N. Zimmermann hanno proposto nella formulazione del panel: ‘how consistent was the anticipated use with the actual use’? A questa domanda la necropoli dell’Isola Sacra permette di rispondere che la costante insufficienza dello spazio funerario rende sin dall’inizio l’uso della tomba ‘inconsistent’ rispetto alla costruzione originaria. Ne sono esempio le tombe con pavimenti a mosaico sui quali fasce di tessere nere segnalavano le *formae* sottostanti, il cui utilizzo comportava dunque la distruzione della pavimentazione originaria, caso così frequente nella necropoli da far pensare a una precisa soluzione costruttiva.³¹ Altro esempio dell’uso reale dello spazio funerario è quello delle tombe a cassone: nelle iscrizioni esse ripropongono spesso un modello di accoglimento nella tomba e una proiezione nel futuro dei legami del gruppo familiare, difficilmente realizzabile negli spazi che la sepoltura poteva offrire.³²

Ma l’esempio forse più evidente della proiezione nel tempo nel monumento funerario, e di come la sua vita possa alterarne la struttura originaria attraverso una serie di modificazioni che l’archeologia restituisce, è la tomba detta della mietitura.³³ Costruita in età antonina, essa presenta nell’area scoperta del recinto un mosaico con il ritorno di Alcesti dall’Ade e nell’area coperta un mosaico con scene relative alla panificazione, testimonianza straordinaria dell’importanza del lavoro svolto in vita come immagine dell’individuo nella società e della capacità degli artigiani di tradurre tutto questo in una inedita sequenza di immagini narrative, attingendo agli elementi del loro repertorio. In una fase successiva, che deve aver visto un cambio di proprietà della tomba, vengono coperte le scene relative alla panificazione – che evidentemente non avevano più significato per la nuova proprietà – mentre si mantiene in vista il mosaico con Alcesti, la cui tematica funeraria rispondeva evidentemente a un interesse più generale.

Questo esempio ci consente di toccare con mano come i monumenti funerari possano continuare a vivere trovando nuove realtà in contesti molto diversi da quelli che ne hanno visto la costruzione originaria.³⁴ È il tema delle relazioni che hanno trattato

l'inserimento di complessi di culto cristiani in contesti preesistenti, ponendoci ancora una volta il problema di come in concreto questi monumenti saranno 'transitati' tra le diverse situazioni e nelle diverse epoche, invitandoci a chiederci quali saranno stati i risvolti economici di queste operazioni.³⁵

Indicazioni e quesiti intorno a questi temi, ma con la possibilità di seguire su ben altra scala il modo in cui il fenomeno si viene configurando nella durata secolare del loro utilizzo, sono offerti dallo studio delle catacombe:³⁶ indagate con criteri archeologici e interpretate con attenzione allo sviluppo topografico e ai modi di occupazione dello spazio funerario, esse offrono una miniera di dati dei quali cominciamo appena a percepire la portata, e che potrà essere ulteriormente valorizzata in una osservazione comparativa del fenomeno delle sepolture collettive, osservazione che ci si augura possa essere stimolata anche dagli interventi e dalle problematiche proposte in questo panel.

Note

¹ Cfr. ora anche N. Zimmermann et al., Kollektive Bestattungen in Rom zwischen später Republik und Spätantike. Forschungsüberblick der Jahre 2016 bis 2018 <<https://www.academia.edu/38463379/>> (26.08.2019).

² Bragantini 1995, 186 s.

³ Kockel 1993.

⁴ Borbonus 2014.

⁵ A proposito dei colombari Granino Cecere – Ricci 2008, 329 s. parlano dello 'sviluppo quantitativo di una tipologia preesistente e risalente alla tarda epoca repubblicana'.

⁶ Borbonus 2014, 24–34, passa in rassegna le interpretazioni che nel corso degli anni sono state avanzate da studiosi di diverso orientamento per indagare le motivazioni che hanno dato luogo a un fenomeno così compatto nelle sue manifestazioni (committenza e soluzioni architettoniche in primo luogo) come quello dei colombari, per il quale si rimanda a Granino Cecere – Ricci 2008.

⁷ Cfr. Granino Cecere – Ricci 2008; Granino Cecere 2012; Fröhlich – Haps, supra. Come sottolinea Granino Cecere 2012, 306 s., i due colombari di Villa Pamphili sono tra i più antichi rinvenuti tra quelli a carattere imprenditoriale, destinati alla vendita di parecchie centinaia di urne, spia delle dimensioni e della rapidità di diffusione di un fenomeno che va consolidandosi con estrema rapidità.

⁸ Cfr. supra Fröhlich – Haps.

⁹ Cfr. supra Borbonus, che invita però anche a una 'comparative perspective'.

¹⁰ Cfr. supra Fröhlich – Haps.

¹¹ Bragantini 2003.

¹² Bragantini – Pirelli 2006–2007.

¹³ Cfr. supra: Borbonus; Zimmermann.

¹⁴ In generale su questi temi, spia della possibilità di legami di natura sociale riflessi nella produzione figurativa, cfr. Coarelli 1990b, 656–659. Sul tema del patronato artistico, ma in una diversa ottica, cfr. Harris 2015, in particolare 401–404.

¹⁵ Sulla tomba cfr. Brizio 1876, 8 s., tomba d; Borbonus 2014, 189 s., tomba L.

¹⁶ Per la qualità della pittura parlano sia la forma stessa del fregio che la presenza di iscrizioni dipinte: Brizio 1876, 14–22.

¹⁷ Cappelli 1998, 57 s., attribuisce la tomba a T. Statilio Tauro. Di una ‘appartenenza del sepolcro ai monumenta degli Statilii Tauri...assicurata dai dati di scavo e dai rinvenimenti epigrafici, purtroppo ancora in parte inediti’, parla ancora Cappelli 2000, 216.

¹⁸ Ponendosi il problema della provenienza di una pittura con questi temi da un ‘sepolcro privato’ e delle diverse dimensioni delle singole scene, Brizio ipotizza che essa, ‘eseguita in origine per un monumento di carattere pubblico, forse di un tempio, sia stata dall’artista trasportata e ridotta per il suo sepolcro’: Brizio 1876, 9–11. 22 s. Considerate le dimensioni delle parti conservate del fregio, che correva ‘come una sola fascia tutto in giro ai quattro lati della stanza’, e in attesa di osservazioni più sicure, derivate dalla pubblicazione degli elementi ancora inediti indicati a nota 20, o da possibili osservazioni tecniche eseguite in fasi di restauro, ritengo questa ipotesi altamente improbabile.

¹⁹ Anche se i pochi decenni di differenza non permettono di affermarlo con certezza, per motivi stilistici e iconografici seguo per il fregio la datazione a età tardorepubblicana proposta da Beyen 1960, 362 s.; 447, Di Mino 1983; Moormann 2001, 101–103, piuttosto che quella augustea, proposta tra gli altri da Cappelli 1998 e ora (ipoteticamente) da Borbonus 2014, 189 s.

²⁰ Non è questo il luogo per approfondire la cronologia del fregio, ma l’esaltazione familiare che esso sottende (presente nel monumento celebrativo di una gens dal quale ipotizzo che il fregio dipenda) mi pare difficilmente inquadrabile nel clima dell’età augustea. Il fatto che vi siano ancora importanti notizie inedite riguardo al monumento sconsiglia di procedere nella discussione, senza comunque dimenticare che – sebbene la casualità dei trovamenti sconsigli di affidarsi ad argomenti ex silentio – il fregio costituisce a tutt’oggi un *unicum*.

²¹ Sulla natura e il significato del fenomeno richiama l’attenzione Coarelli 1990a, 176.

²² Cfr. Brizio 1876, in particolare 97; Caldelli – Ricci 1999.

²³ Granino Cecere – Ricci 2008.

²⁴ Caldelli – Ricci 2009; Borbonus 2014, 126–128.

²⁵ Cfr. *supra*, Blume-Jung.

²⁶ Baldassarre 1987, 136 s.

²⁷ Cfr. Angelucci et al. 1990, 61 s. (I. Bragantini); Baldassarre et. al. 2018, 20.

²⁸ Angelucci et al. 1990, 52–61 (C. Morselli); Baldassarre et. al. 2018, 11 s.; 19.

²⁹ Angelucci et al. 1990, 70–75 (F. Taglietti).

³⁰ Taglietti 2001, 157 s.

³¹ Bragantini 1994, 57–59.

³² Baldassarre 1987, 137. Blume-Jung, *supra*, 29–44, ritiene invece fededegne le indicazioni delle iscrizioni.

³³ Angelucci et al. 1990, 90–106 (I. Baldassarre); Baldassarre 2012.

³⁴ Cfr. anche Baldassarre 1996.

³⁵ Cfr. *supra*, Ruotolo e Borg, quest’ultima con particolare attenzione alle implicazioni di una attenta ricostruzione archeologica di una complessa evidenza.

³⁶ Cfr. *supra*, Zimmermann.

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The contributions of this volume study economic aspects of Roman burial architectures for extended numbers of burials, such as columbaria, large hypogea, or catacombs, and try to form a picture of their owners and users. They discuss how far economic reasons played a leading role in the invention, the development and the use of these big burial monuments in Rome and how these buildings fulfilled the religious and social needs of their users, especially in the transitional period from the Roman to the Early Christian period. New studies in Roman funeral monuments could document interesting evidence for the dynamic process of the preparation and use of burial space. Especially in larger architectures for much more than a single family, the economic aspects of the ownership and use of these installations is fascinating. Who were the planners of the projects, why were certain places and specific architectures chosen? How and at what time in the project were the burials of the owners and their families provided for? In what manner were further tombs sold or given to others? And which locations within the installation were they able to get? During the last decades, a series of general studies on Roman burials and burial customs were based on older documentation out of necessity, while new and more detailed analysis of single monuments often provide new and different insights of interpretation.