

**Funerary Landscapes of the Late Antique Oecumene. Contextualizing Epigraphic and Archaeological Evidence of Mortuary Practices**

**Veranstalter:** Stefan Ardeleanu und Jon C. Cubas Díaz, SFB 933 „Materiale Textkulturen“ der Universität Heidelberg

**Datum, Ort:** 30.05.2019–01.06.2019, Heidelberg

**Bericht von:** Stefan Ardeleanu, SFB 933 „Materiale Textkulturen“ der Universität Heidelberg / Jon C. Cubas Díaz, Institut für Christliche Archäologie und Byzantinische Kunstgeschichte Göttingen und SFB 933 „Materiale Textkulturen“ der Universität Heidelberg

Although funerary contexts represent a major proportion of the entire material evidence from Late Antiquity, until today no comparative pan-Mediterranean panorama exists on this central topic of Late Antique everyday life. Therefore this international conference united 30 specialists for Late Antique funerary habits. The first focus was given to questions on how funerary inscriptions were incorporated in mortuary practices, how they were perceived and in which ways they were treated in Late Antique societies. The conference's second pillar stressed the many regional differences of burial practices that emerged across the Mediterranean in Late Antiquity and which can be understood notably better today based on an amazing amount of multidisciplinary approaches.

After the introduction by the organizers, Session 1 *North Africa* began with CORISANDE FENWICK's (London) and MOHEDDINE CHAOUALI's (Tunis) paper on a recent project that works on a Late Antique cemetery with an adjacent cemetery church in Bulla Regia from an explicitly interdisciplinary perspective. The project does not only concentrate on the well-preserved epitaphs (4th–6th c.), but also on aDNA, osteological and archaeobotanical analysis of the tombs. STEFAN ARDELEANU (Heidelberg) provided an updated overview on regional diversities of Late Antique epitaphs from North Africa. This region has an extremely rich record of 'ritualized epitaphs' on tomb types such as *mensae* and *cupae*, which attest

a complex system of commemorative rites intensively practiced until the late 6th c. In some well-preserved churches with burials, the orientation and the layout of mosaic epitaphs can help to reconstruct liturgies in such funerary spaces. DAVID MATTINGLY (Leicester) and YOUSSEF BOKBOT (Rabat) examined Late Antique burial mounds in the Northern Sahara with a spectacular set of wall paintings at Torf Jorba and Fom Larjam. The paintings appear in chapels attached to the tombs that are considered to be used for ritual incubation in close proximity to the buried ancestors. Their iconography shows some Mediterranean trends, such as orantes, but even more striking are several Saharan topics, such as family groups with particular clothing styles, horses, camels and breeding scenes.

Session 2 *Egypt* started with a paper by INA EICHNER (Vienna) on a necropolis excavation at the Paulos-monastery in Thebes. Eichner convincingly pointed out the social hierarchies of monastic burial patterns which also included burials for females and children, probably donated to monasteries. Of course, the climatic conditions in Egypt reveal much of otherwise unknown funerary habits (well-preserved lungs, epitaphs on wooden crosses). LAURA WILLER's (Heidelberg) paper was dedicated to protection of the body and of tombs from Late Antique Egypt. She showed the variability of functions that amulets and personal grave goods (in some cases tokens inscribed with apotropaic phrases) could take in funerary practices. In most cases, their presence was more important than their mere visibility.

In Session 3 *Near East*, LIDEWIJDE DE JONG (Groningen) focused on the Al Bass-cemetery in Tyre and its development from Roman to Late Antique times. In Late Antiquity, burials dramatically increased, as did the re-use of tombs. Older enclosures were enlarged, prompting the extension of burial activity towards the street. Late epitaphs present an interesting variety of professions, perhaps pointing to nucleated burial spots for associations. DAVIDE BIANCHI (Vienna) explored burials in churches in Arabia and Palaestina. Out of a variety of well-documented tombs, two main burial groups

---

were determined: monastic and diocesan ones. Single burials appear mostly at privileged spots of churches, while ossuaries with multiple burials seem to have been reserved for ordinary people, i. a. for women and children. Apparently, they are to be seen as donations for monasteries and as a symbol of care of the poor (perhaps in hospices). PIERRE-LOUIS GATIER (Lyon) discussed two classes of epitaphs from Late Antique Arabia: epitaphs with the name of the deceased on stelae/sarcophagi and property inscriptions on lintels of mausoleums, giving the names of the tomb's founder or its occupants. Some formulae might hint at Christian burials from the late 4th c. onwards, but the overall picture is very inconsistent. There are entire regions and cities with no more than a handful of Christian inscriptions, but other sites with more than 800 stelae with crosses.

Session 4 *Asia Minor* was opened by EVELIEN ROELS (Heidelberg) who discussed an epigraphic habit very peculiar to Southwestern Asia Minor: a group of text-loaded tombs for elite members. Although her latest examples stem from the early 3rd c., this interesting habit shows what kinds of rich epigraphic habits got lost during Late Antiquity. On the other hand, the intra-urban tombs are clear forerunners of a well-known Late Antique practice. Some of these tombs were also discussed by MARTIN STESKAL (Vienna) who presented the development of burial activity at Ephesos. He showed how burials were constantly „on the move“ in this town. Early Byzantine tombs seem to have been concentrated around churches but were then moved to the harbor and other places around Ephesos' equally „moving cityscape“. There are spectacular communal monuments, such as the Seven-sleeper's-coemeterion, and richly-painted early Byzantine tombs for individuals/families.

JON C. CUBAS DÍAZ (Heidelberg/Göttingen) took on Rough Cilicia's Late Antique necropoleis and funerary epigraphic habits. In Korykos, burials were placed at highly visible locations. The many epitaphs mentioning professions allow a unique insight into the city's economic structures and show clear local patterns for self-depiction there. In some cases, a clustering of certain so-

cial groups in the necropoleis can be detected. In contrast to that, tombs in Karakabaklı were not inscribed at all – and positioned off the road. SYLVAIN DESTEPHEN (Paris) closed the session with an overview on Late Antique funerary epigraphic cultures in the most important cities along Asia Minor's Western and Southern coasts. The general trend of decreasing epitaph numbers throughout the 3rd and 4th c. is also obvious in this region. Again, a high regional epigraphic diversity is clearly detectable in the vast numbers of non-funerary Late Antique inscriptions in the records of Aphrodisias and Side, while Late Antique epitaphs make up the majority in Laodicea Combusta or Kyzikos.

JEREMY OTT (Berkeley) introduced Session 5 *Southeastern Europe* with a case study on Late Antique burials in Corinth. The Asklepieion-cemetery revealed an astonishingly rich dataset of grave goods from many non-elite tombs that seem to attest drinking and libation rites. With regard to the forum's burial clusters, Ott interprets the presence of belts as signs for non-local origins and thus for immigrated groups. JULIA VAL-EVA (Sofia) took the audience on a tour to Late Antique painted tombs from Thrace and the Northern Provinces of Eastern Illyricum. The wall paintings show iconographic and thematical similarities with the Roman catacombs (biblical scenes, *coena funebris*). However, the painting styles doubtlessly originate in long regional traditions. In Philippopolis and Brestovik, rooms and installations for ritual dining at and over the tombs were found, making contextual analysis of painting and of archaeological traces of funerary dining possible. Salona's Late Antique funerary inscriptions were the topic of EMILIO MARIN's (Zagreb) paper, who focused on epitaphs excavated in their archaeological contexts. A very particular class of epitaphs, known only from the Northern Adria region, consists of funerary inscriptions on tomb covers describing themselves *piscinae*. Marin suggests an interpretation of the term as equivalent for 'tomb'.

FULVIA MAINARDIS' (Trieste) presentation on Eastern Venetia et Histria opened Session 6 *Italy and Rome*. At Aquileia, Concordia, Tergeste, Forum Iulium and Iulium Carnicum, rich evidence for the elsewhere often

invisible 4th c. funerary contexts exists. Cremation and burial in mausolea next to *villae* were maintained, whereas also typically Late Antique fashions such as massive re-use of building material for funerary monuments and intra-basilical burials can be detected in the very same centers. WOLF ZÖLLER (Heidelberg) examined Early Medieval papal epitaphs from Rome. He demonstrated that many papal epitaphs in St. Peter's tended to cluster in the narthex, thus at an important point of the liturgy (in proximity to the *secretarium*) and also of pilgrim and visitor movement. The topology of papal inscriptions in these two churches can be studied well adhering to detailed reports of visitors throughout the centuries.

NORBERT ZIMMERMANN (Rome) discussed questions of tomb ownership in Roman catacombs. His main hypothesis is that Rome's bishop owned the catacombs and that he was also responsible (and paid!) for the interment of the poor. There are *regiones* (Marcellino e Pietro) with extremely rare and poor tomb marking, supporting the idea of burials for the poor organized ecclesiastically. Different ownership patterns were at work in the Jewish catacombs (Randanini), where wealthy families marked their *kokhim* by elaborate marble inscriptions. ANTONIO FELLE (Bari) shed light on the epigraphic diversity within Rome's catacombs. He illustrated the way in which new mapping techniques of inscriptions can considerably contribute to the understanding of very particular funerary spaces. Felle showed not only that the richest epitaphs clustered around the central martyr's complex at the Domitilla catacomb, but also recalled the *epigrafe povere*, for which several examples with very characteristic handwriting patterns exist.

Session 7 *Germaniae* started with ROLAND PRIEN (Heidelberg) presenting Late Antique tombs from the Palatine region and the neighboring areas. After giving a concise historiographic survey on the problems of archaeological research by connecting grave goods to various ethnicities or militaries, Prien directed attention to often neglected small and rural Late Antique cemeteries. In this area, epitaphs are extremely rare, while cremation was still widely

practiced. Grave goods show an increasing complexity, in some cases culminating in very rich elite burials with sophisticated weaponry furnishings. JONAS ÖSNABRÜGGE (Heidelberg) discussed local diversities in the epigraphic and typological record of funerary markers in Late Antique *Germania Superior*. A few military stelae from Berbetomagus and Augusta Raurica still followed established iconographic and epigraphic norms into the 4th c. The first Christian epitaphs show a change of the texts' supporter to cover plaques of tombs, transporting several decorative elements from the vertical stelae to this new horizontal marker type.

Session 8 *Galliae* was inaugurated by HILTRUD MERTEN's (Trier) paper on some contextualized examples of epitaphs within the rich Late Antique record of epitaphs in Trier. Building on multidisciplinary excavations in St. Maximin. Merten focused on the most current tomb type – a plastered caisson with an integrated marble epitaph. The caissons were probably used for commemorative rites, while their placement above circulation level must have severely impeded movement during masses celebrated in the church. Accessibility and readability of epitaphs were also central topics in MORGANE UBERTI's (Madrid) contribution on Late Antique tombs in Aquitania. The cemetery at Neuvicq-Monguyon yielded several epitaphs on sarcophagi still in situ with clear evidence for „moving while reading“. Although not detected archaeologically, a path along which all tombs were oriented can be reconstructed. This orientation seems to have been maintained even into medieval times, when the tombs were apparently reopened and reused for secondary burials.

JORGE LÓPEZ QUIROGA's (Madrid) paper was the first contribution of Session 9 *Hispaniae*. Thanks to decades of systematic and high-leveled excavations on the Iberian Peninsula, he was able to present several „anomalous“ inhumation habits, such as burials with traces of violence as well as opposite or intermingled body positioning, perhaps indicating original familial funerary habits. ACHIM ARBEITER (Göttingen) took the audience on an impressive tour on *Hispaniae*'s Late Antique funerary varieties. He pre-

---

sented divergent local shapes of decorations on sarcophagi and epitaphs before turning to distinct workshops of funerary mosaics and differentiated intra-basilical burial patterns. Some churches with dense burials above circulation level raise the question how common liturgies would have been practiced with high amounts of funerary monuments rather obliterating than supporting communal masses.

The conference was closed by a conclusion given by KATE COOPER (London), who reminded the audience to concentrate also on unexpected evidence which does not necessarily show up in our archaeological record. From this stimulating keynote speech, a final discussion emerged that touched the ubiquitously present question of Christian vs. non-Christian epitaphs/burials. The announced proceedings will in fact be a first overview on Late Antique burial cultures of the entire Mediterranean. Further, with its many papers combining new natural sciences and changing archaeological and epigraphic methods, this conference stresses the high potential of contextual approaches to the analysis of a central aspect of Late Antique life.

#### **Conference Overview:**

Stephan Westphalen and Christian Witschel (Heidelberg): Welcome

Stefan Ardeleanu and Jon C. Cubas Díaz (Heidelberg): Introduction

#### *Session 1: North Africa*

Moheddine Chaouali (Tunis) and Corisande Fenwick (London): Identity, Community and the Funerary Landscape at Bulla Regia in Late Antiquity

Stefan Ardeleanu (Heidelberg): Materializing Death in Late Antique North Africa: Microregional Epitaphic Habits and Funerary Rituals Contextualized

David Mattingly (Leicester) and Youssef Bokbot (Rabat): From Jorf Torba to Foum Larjam: Late Antique Painted Tombs of the North-Western Sahara

#### *Session 2: Egypt*

Ina Eichner (Vienna): Hierarchien und soziale Phänomene in der Nekropole des

Paulosklosters in Theben-West/Oberägypten

Laura Willer (Heidelberg): Protection for Eternity – Graves in Late Antique and Byzantine Egypt

#### *Session 3: Near East*

Lidewijde de Jong (Groningen): Appropriation, Invention, and Continuity: an Overview of Burial Practices from Roman to Late Roman Syria

Davide Bianchi (Vienna): Funerary Customs in Sacred Spaces. The Archaeological Evidence in the Provinces of Palaestina and Arabia

Pierre-Louis Gatier (Lyon): Christian Burials and Cemeteries in Proto-Byzantine Provincia Arabia (4th-7th cent. AD)

#### *Session 4: Asia Minor*

Evelien Roels (Heidelberg): Funerary Monuments as Textual Monuments. A Peculiar Mortuary Practice in Imperial Asia Minor reconsidered

Martin Steskal (Vienna): Burials on the Move. The Mortuary Landscape of Ephesos in Late Antiquity

Jon C. Cubas Díaz (Göttingen/Heidelberg): Depicting the Self – Fulfilling Common Expectations. The Individual and the Collective in the Funerary Landscapes of Rough Cilicia

Sylvain Destephen (Paris): Christianity and Funerary Traditions in Asia Minor

#### *Session 5: Southeastern Europe*

Jeremy Ott (Berkeley): Late Antique Burials in Corinth

Julia Valeva (Sofia): Late Antique Rich Burials in the Balkan Provinces (in the Diocese of Thrace, and the Northern Provinces of Eastern Illyricum)

Emilio Marin (Zagreb): Late Roman, Early Christian and Early Medieval Graves at Salona

#### *Session 6: Italy and Rome*

Fulvia Mainardis (Triest): Spazi, monumenti, epigraphic habit: considerazioni sulle necropoli tardoantiche della parte orientale della

Venetia et Histria

Norbert Zimmermann (Rome): The Roman Catacombs: Reflections on Ownership, Spatial Use, and the Typology of Tombs. The Cases of Domitilla, Randanini and Marcellino e Pietro

Antonio Felle (Bari): Paesaggi epigrafici nelle necropoli della Roma tardoantica: alcuni casi esemplari per una epigrafia archeologica

Wolf Zöllner (Heidelberg): Papal Epitaphs and Burial Places in Medieval Rome – St. Peter's and St. John Lateran as Funerary Landscapes

*Session 7: Germaniae*

Roland Prien (Heidelberg): Changing Burial Rites – Changing Identities? Late Antique Burial Practices on the Rhine Frontier

Jonas Osnabrügge (Heidelberg): Transformation and Disappearance. Inscriptions in the Funerary Culture of Germania Superior in Late Antiquity

*Session 8: Galliae*

Morgane Uberti (Madrid): Inscriptions funéraires en contextes: de la nécropole à la tombe. Quelques exemples de l'Aquitaine tardo-antique

Hiltrud Merten (Trier): *Levis aesto terra* – Christliche Bestattungskultur im spätantiken Trier

*Session 9: Hispaniae*

Jorge López Quiroga (Madrid): Framing the Funeral World in Late Antique Hispania. Permanence and changes in funeral rites and practices

Achim Arbeiter (Göttingen): Bestattung und Kommemoration im frühchristlichen Hispanien. Inschriftliche, ikonographische und materielle Aspekte

Kate Cooper (London): Conclusions

Tagungsbericht *Funerary Landscapes of the Late Antique Oecumene. Contextualizing Epigraphic and Archaeological Evidence of Mortuary Practices*. 30.05.2019–01.06.2019, Heidelberg, in: H-Soz-Kult 26.07.2019.