Cities of the Dead?
A Study of the Roman Necropoleis at Ostia

School of History, Classics and Archaeology

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Supervisor: Candace Rice
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Chapter 1: Introduction

The cemeteries of Roman cities are called *necropoleis,* deriving from the Greek *necropolis,* meaning city of the dead (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2017). Fragment 10.1 of the *Twelve Tables*, the earliest Code of Law made by the Romans, states that burials were not to take place within the city walls, due to beliefs that dead bodies carried pollution. Thus, streets of tombs developed outside city gates, along the roads that lead into the cities. The spatial organisation of these cemeteries echoed the typical layout of a Roman city, leading to their interpretation as cities of the dead. These necropoleis reflect a long tradition in Italy of interring bodies in a way that reflected the cities of the living, echoing the Etruscan cemeteries which are also often referred to as cities of the dead (Steingraber, 2008).

A study of these cemeteries can reveal valuable information about the society that created them, since the epigraphy and iconography details much about the deceased's life. Furthermore, the development and changes in religious practices throughout the Republic and the Empire can be traced into the tomb architecture. Scott (2013) follows the advances from the early Republic period where discrete tombs were common, to the late Republic where there is an emphasis on visibility of the tombs and their placement within the necropoleis. Throughout the Empire there were further developments in tomb design, with an increase in monument types and forms. The emphasis on individuality was reduced, and the assertion of communality was stressed through the early Empire columbaria and the late Empire custom of underground catacombs, in both Rome and the Empire. While the changes in tomb architecture can be traced through the Republic and Empire, the vast amount of research on Roman necropoleis has focussed on the expression of status within tombs (Hackworth-Petersen, 2006; Mouritsen, 2011). Much research has looked into that of the tombs of freedmen, as the stylistic variations are most evident, as seen on the 'Tomb of the Baker' in Rome. Differences within the social ranking of the living society are echoed in the art and iconography that adorns the tombs.

This dissertation will consider to what extent the necropoleis of Ostia can be described as only cities of the dead, as their name suggests. When considering modern Western views on death, it is evident that there are significant differences with ancient practices. Many scholars, (Mellor and Schilling, 1993; Segal, 2010; Sayer and Sayer, 2016) note that there is a greater separation of the dead and the living in modern British society compared to past societies. When considering the reasons for this distinction, which has commonly been attributed to a taboo surrounding death, Sayer (2010) suggests that interactions with the dead have become private and personal, unlike the public displays of mourning that occurred

throughout ancient times and in some modern near-eastern societies. The necropoleis of the Roman world were created as cities of the dead in order for the deceased's memory to continue. Sayer (2010, 484) argues that although British graveyards are created for similar reasons, modern funerals do not allow the same interaction with the dead as other societies have, creating a separation between the living and the dead. As our interpretation of the past is influenced by modern concepts and societies, this dissertation aims to understand the extent to which the tombs were interacted with and examine the reasons for this interaction.

The term necropoleis, and their layout, has led to the interpretation by many scholars (Koortbojian, 1996; Wallace-Hadrill, 2008) that the cemeteries were only cities of the dead. This dissertation aims to regard the necropoleis in a different way, by studying the forms of interaction that the living had with this environment. Ostia has five associated necropoleis – Porta Romana, Porta Laurentina, Porta Marina, the Pianabella and the Isola Sacra. The necropoleis date largely from the second to fourth centuries AD and display a wide variation in design and decoration, with several phases of construction as displayed on figures 1, 2 and 3. Excavations have suggested that there were no tombs erected after mid-third century, leading to the reuse of earlier tombs (Meiggs, 1973). The largest necropolis is the Isola Sacra, which is situated on the sacred piece of land between Ostia and Portus and covers an expanse of approximately 40,000 square metres (Toynbee, 1971).

Both archaeological evidence and ancient sources will be examined to study how often the necropoleis were interacted with, firstly, by familial descendants and, secondly, the wider community. Examination of the furniture that survives at the tombs, categorised as dining furniture, demonstrates the consumption of meals at the graveside by family, in accordance with the funerary banquets that are detailed in ancient sources. By combining evidence from ancient sources, such as Ovid, Ulpian and Petronius, on Roman beliefs with the archaeological remains, it is possible to understand the occasions on which the family would visit the necropoleis. By examining the roads that the tombs were located on and the epigraphic evidence, it is possible to understand the forms of interaction the wider community would have had with the necropoleis. In studying the written and archaeological evidence, this dissertation will demonstrate that the necropoleis were dynamic environments. Whilst their initial purpose was for disposal of the dead outwith the city walls, the function of the necropoleis developed to the extent that they cannot be considered as only cities of the dead.

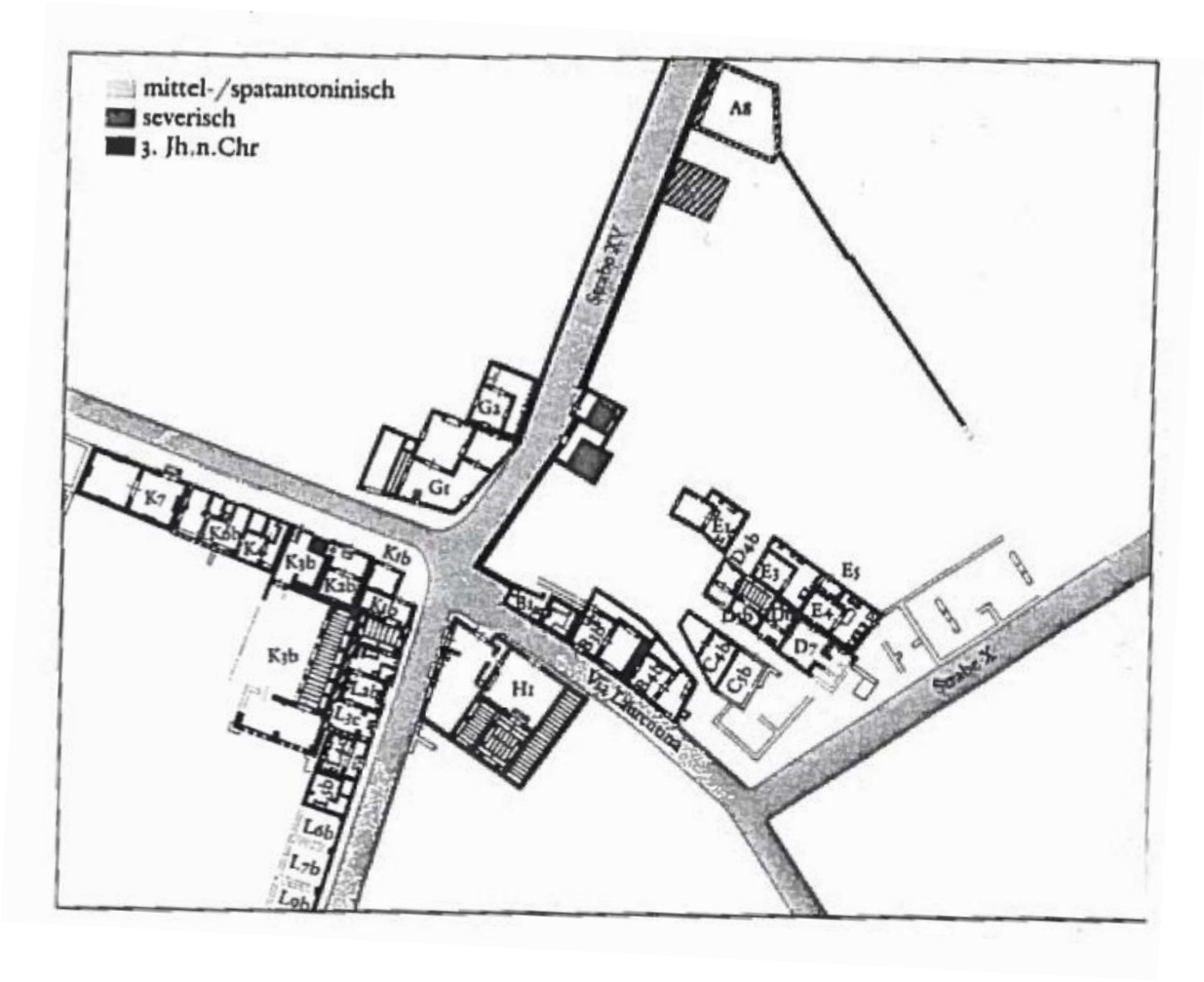

Figure 1: Plan of the Porta Laurentina Necropolis, showing the three main stages of construction

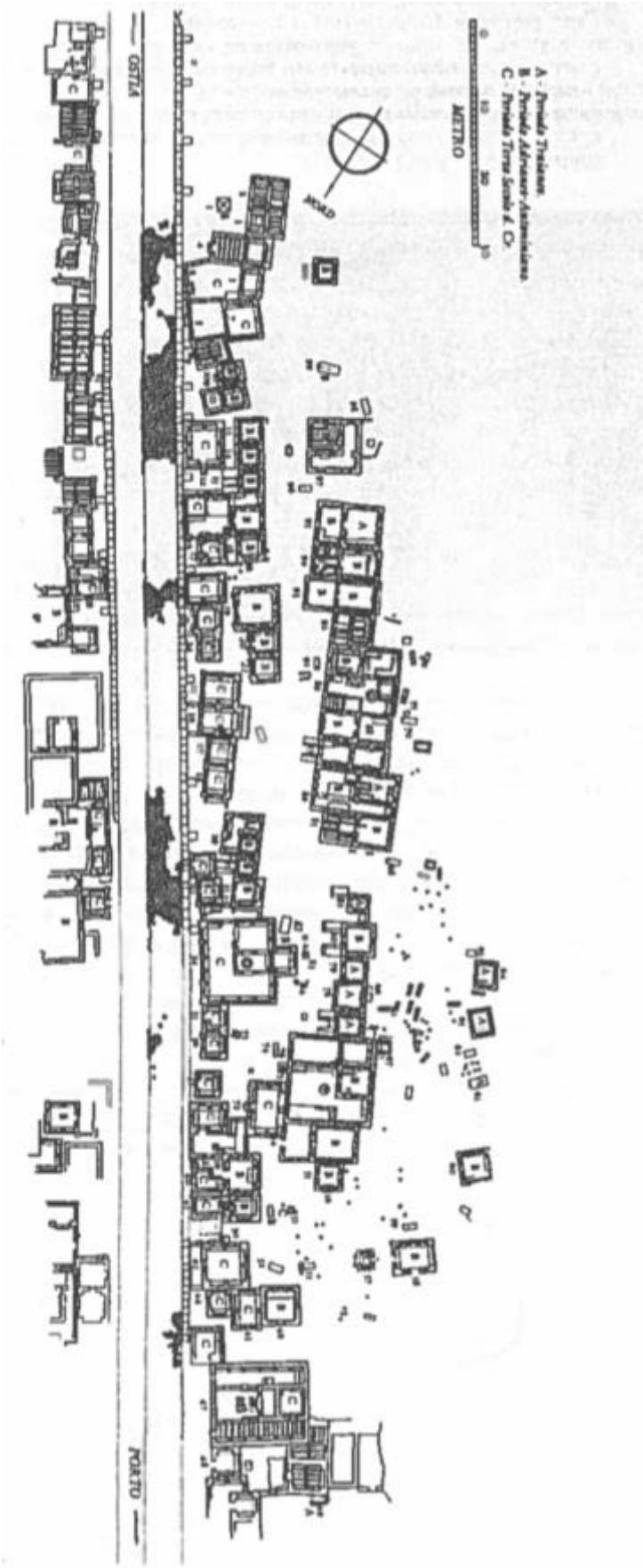

Figure 2: Plan of the Isola Sacra, showing the three main stages of construction

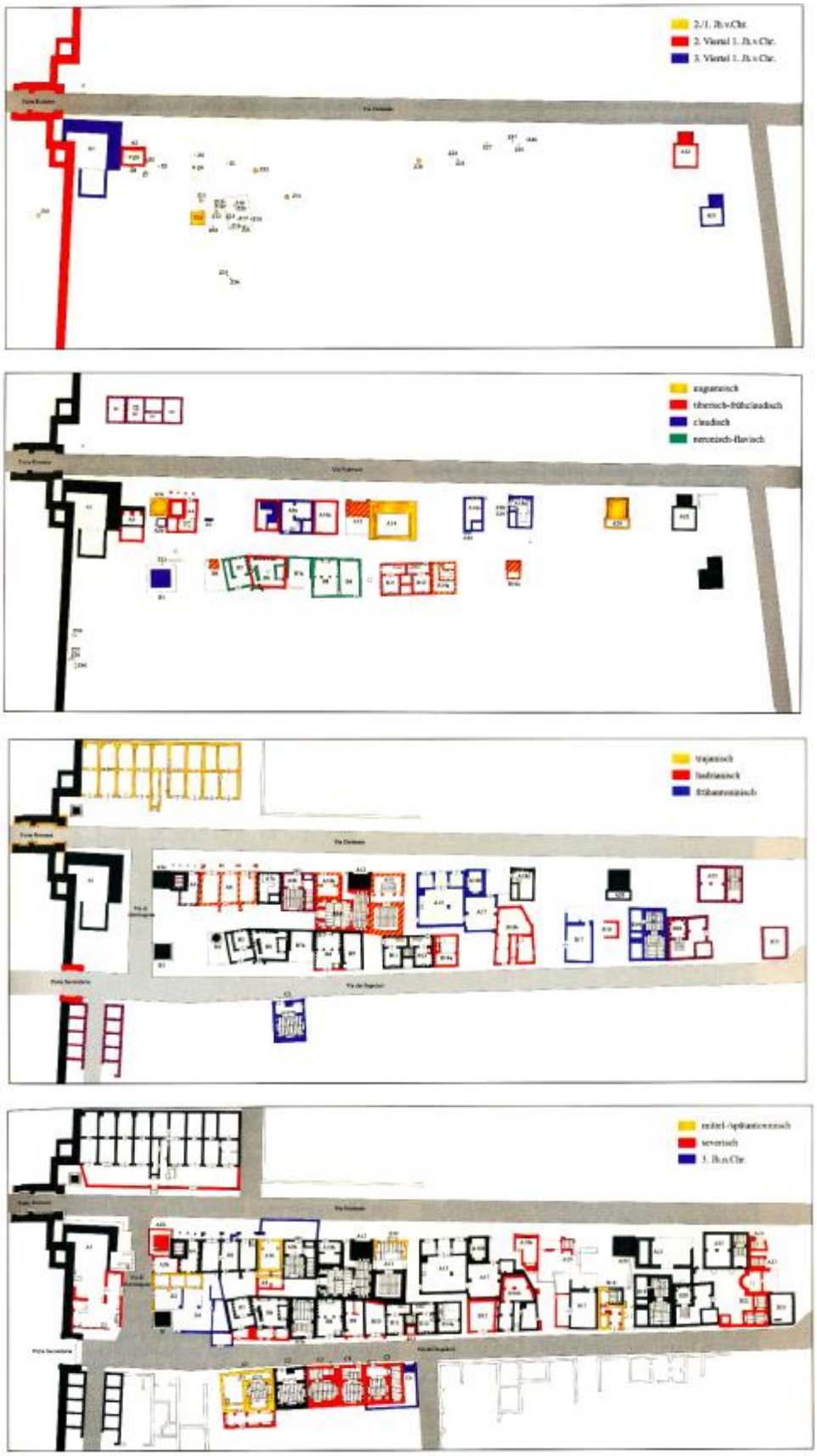

Figure 3: Plans of the Porta Romana Necropolis, showing the phases of construction: c. 200-25BC, Augustan - Flavian, Trajanic - early Antonine, and c. 150 - 300 AD

1.1 Methodology

This dissertation aims to consider the necropoleis of Ostia as more than the traditional view of cities of the dead, and study them as a living environment. In order to do so, several forms of primary and secondary research will be utilised to illustrate the occasions when the living would visit the necropoleis and the impact they had on the landscape.

Chapter Two explores the funerary architecture present at the Ostian cemeteries. This chapter is focussed primarily at the Isola Sacra necropolis, where the largest volume of archaeological evidence survives. In order to assess the tomb architecture for evidence of dining furniture and feasting activities, many sources of information were consulted. In lieu of being able to visit the remains myself, the website entitled 'Ostia-Antica' was of great benefit to this study. The website, created for public engagement with the archaeological record of Ostia, describes in detail the remains of the tombs on the three main necropoleis – Porta Romana, Porta Laurentina and the Isola Sacra. Firstly the form of the tombs were considered, which helped to demonstrate many of the beliefs explored in Chapter Three. Secondly, the dining furniture that survives from the Isola Sacra was studied. These architectural dining features are grouped into three main forms of evidence – the preparation of meals, dining furniture, and libations – allowing exploration of the different aspects involved in the funerary meals. By presenting this information in table and through use of Adobe Illustrator to create a map, it was possible to convey the location and frequency of the architecture type at the Isola Sacra.

Crucially, the period of study benefits from the written records of ancient historians. Ancient sources, such as Ovid's *Fasti*, were an invaluable source of information to create an understanding of the Roman cult of the dead. These accounts are primary sources of Roman beliefs surrounding death, and provide an insight into the funerals and festivals of the dead. They were beneficial in understanding ancient views on death, and the treatment of the dead, as they are written accounts of the beliefs and traditions from the period being studied. As the sources represent the beliefs of particular time periods, a wide variety of sources were consulted in order to understand the beliefs at different periods. Historical accounts, such as Ovid's *Fasti*, provided much primary evidence of people taking part in the festivals of the Parentalia, while works of fiction, such as Petronius' *Satyricon* where Trimalchio discuss his own death, provided insights into how death was perceived. Chapter Three combines this information to provide an understanding of the beliefs and traditions that were instrumental in the practices associated with the cult of the dead.

While the first two chapters study the means in which the family and living relatives were incorporated into the necropolis, Chapter Four considers the impact of passers-by. In this chapter, it was first proposed to use spatial analysis, in order to understand how much visibility the tombs had and how prominent they were in the landscape. However, this was not possible as the sizes and dimensions of the tombs are not recorded. Instead, this chapter firstly considers how often the necropoleis would have been visited by travellers, by studying the roads on which they are located. This allowed hypothesises to be proposed of whether travellers, traders or magistrates would pass through each necropolis, and what effect this had on the tomb architecture. While recognising the importance of the Porta Marina and the Porta Laurentina necropoleis, this section necessarily limits itself to the study of the Isola Sacra and the Porta Romana necropolis. The way in which the on-looker would have experienced the landscape is then considered by looking at the epigraphic evidence from Ostia. By utilising the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (CIL) and Cooley's 2012 'Cambridge Manual of Latin Epigraphy' it was possible to study the funerary inscriptions from Ostia. This evidence allowed me to hypothesise how the inscriptions would have been viewed, and how the spectator would have interacted with the tombs, as a result.

Throughout this dissertation, a phenomenological approach has been applied, which has allowed me to theorise how the living may have experienced the necropoleis, and what effect some of their practices may have had on the environment. Tilley (2004) explains that phenomenology is the contemplation of how the landscape was experienced by a conscious person, which allows the consideration of new interpretations. This is a thread of landscape archaeology, where the practices of the past society influenced and shaped, the landscape (Layton and Ucko, 2003: 11). By using phenomenology to examine the Roman necropoleis in association with the cult of the dead, it is possible to comprehend the necropoleis as dynamic places.

By studying these aspects of the necropoleis of Ostia in this way, it is possible to understand the different ways in which the living influenced the environment. Combining these elements allows a deeper understanding of the necropoleis, and their function as 'cities of the dead'.

1.2 Past Research and Literature on Ostia

The first professional excavations of Ostia were carried out by Dante Vaglieri, who excavated the North-East section of the city of Ostia Antica between 1907 – 1913, which included excavations at the Porta Laurentina Necropolis. These were the first excavations that were carried out to a good standard in Ostia; previous work encompassed illegal pitting, where most

of the material was looted for private collections, or the illicit antiquities market. With these first excavations came the first published work on Ostia, written by L Paschetto (1912) entitled 'Ostia, Colonia Romana: storia e monumenti'. In 1924, Guido Calza, who had been involved in the excavations under Vaglieri, became director of excavations. Under Calza, many of the larger public buildings, such as the Terme del Foro, were excavated, as well as excavation of the Isola Sacra (Calza, 1938). However, attention was not paid to the correct documentation of the finds or descriptions of the stratigraphy, leading to little documentation from these excavations.

Ostia Antica was subject to further poor excavations between 1938-1942 under the instruction of Mussolini to uncover as much of Ostia for presentation during the 1942 World Fair. This lead to a huge uncovering of many of the remains, but in the hurry these excavations were not completed to a good standard, nor were they documented fully (Boin, 2013: 9). Much of the documentation of these excavations were in the form of photographs, now available on the Ostia-Antica website.

The first volume in *Scavi di Ostia* was published as a result of these excavations (Calza et al, 1954) where a catalogue of the inscriptions, buildings and restoration work was complied. Boin (2013) argues that this series of publications created a new approach to research in Ostia, as the initial publications of the series acted as a reference for all the known recorded data for Ostia. This included Late Antique developments and Christian influences, which allowed academics to research the development of Ostia.

The first publication that provided an extensive overview of previous research at Ostia in English was created by Russell Meiggs, with the first edition of *Roman Ostia* published in 1960 and a second edition in 1973. In this publication, Meiggs (1973) created a synthesis of the previous knowledge of Ostia. It is a critical text for the understanding of Ostia's background, as Meiggs successful presented theories behind the development and decline of Ostia. However, this work is limited due to the lack of current research at the time of publication.

Following Meiggs impressive work on Ostia, there have been few publications that address Ostia as a single subject and instead have considered Ostia in relation to the nearby cities of Pompeii in the bay of Naples, or its relationship with Rome. After Meiggs, the next notable publication to address Ostia was by Gustav Hermansen, who produced a book on the Ostia's urban structure, in 1981. This publication addressed the economy of Ostia while looking at the city's domestic and commercial development.

A key text for this dissertation on the funerary remains of Ostia is Graham's 2005 article *The Quick and the Dead in the Extra-urban landscape: the Roman cemetery at Ostia/ Portus*

as a Lived Environment. This is one of few publications where Ostia's necropoleis are addressed as the focus of a paper, instead of as a case study within. Graham addresses the archaeological remains of the Isola Sacra necropoleis and considers them within the context of the cult of the dead. However, this paper is limited because it focusses upon the dining furniture, and how it can reflect social standing but does not address the effect people would have on the environment of the necropoleis.

Many publications use Ostia as a case study, or cite examples from Ostia, when discussing Roman funerary practices and the Roman cult of the dead. One such example is Toynbee (1973), whose publication *Death and Burial in the Roman World* is a vital text on the subject of Roman attitudes towards death. Toynbee provides an in-depth overview of the practices associated with death, such as the Roman funeral, and the religious beliefs that influence their rituals. Scullard (1981) produced a book on the *Festivals and Ceremonies of the Roman Republic*. This is a key publication to understand the wide variety of festivals that were celebrated throughout the Republic. By addressing the festivals throughout the year, Scullard makes note of those that celebrate the dead, providing a context for these events as part of the Roman calendar. These festivals are studied in more depth in the more recent article by Dolanksy (2011) where the Parentalia is discussed in detail. This article presents concisely the sources for the Parentalia and when studied in conjunction with publications such as Toynbee, provides a comprehensive overview of the Roman cult of the dead. Furthermore, Carroll (2006), produced a recent publication titled *Spirits of the Dead: Roman Funerary Commemoration in Western Europe* which specifically studies the ways in which the deceased are portrayed in funerary sculpture, art and epigraphy. This analysis of the different means of depiction demonstrates the ways in which the dead would have 'spoken' to their living descendants, thus establishing a context in which other academics can address the funerary record.

There have recently been a number of research projects in Ostia and the surrounding area. A project between the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut and the American Academy in Rome (DAI and AAR) researched the unexcavated areas of Ostia between 1996 and 2001. Non-destructive surveys were carried out (magnetometry and geophysical survey) before the creation of sondage trenches (Martin et al., 2002: 260). The results of these excavations, published in 2002, have allowed the continuation of research on Ostia, as they have helped to establish what remains are present in the unexcavated urban area of Ostia. Following on from this field work, Heinzelmann has since gone on to publish papers on Ostia using the geophysical data to estimate the reach that Ostia had as a harbour (Heinzelmann, 2002) by studying the depth of the river port, the ability for ships to navigate it, and the storage facilities

that remain unexcavated. This work has benefited the understanding of Ostia's role as a port town and its people.

The Portus Project has been a hugely influential research project on Portus, the site of the imperial harbours. The Portus Project, under Keay (2005; 2009; 2012) has carried out widespread geophysical surveys at Portus and the surrounding area. These studies have been crucial in understanding the relationship between Ostia and Portus. The Portus Project has created a plan of the area of Portus and highlighted the unexcavated areas to comprehend the landscape in which Portus is set (Keay et al, 2009: 156). In addition, excavations have been carried out in order to understand the remains more fully. This has included the Isola Scara, the area of land between Ostia and Portus. The work of the Portus Project has been crucial to understanding the relationship between Ostia and Portus, by fully exploring the imperial ports – the Porto di Claudio and the Porto di Traiano – in order to recognise how Ostia and Portus developed together.

1.3 Ostia Background

Ostia developed between the Tiber and the sea (figure 4) and was first settled in the fourth century BC, as a coastal defence (Meiggs, 1973: 13) then developed to become Rome's harbour. While Ostia encapsulates many of the traditions and architecture that can be found in other Roman cities and necropoleis, the town presents a unique vantage point due to its preservation. Ostia endured years of sedimentation from the Tiber that lead to its abandonment and eventual cover (Goiran et al, 2014).

As Meiggs (1973) argues, Ostia had an urban fabric combining the features of a harbour settlement with those typical of other Roman towns, such as religious and entertainment architecture. It is useful to consider the relationship between Ostia and Portus, in order to understand the development of Ostia and its population. Studying the population gives an insight into the people who were buried at the necropoleis and those who visited them, such as their likely professions and status in society.

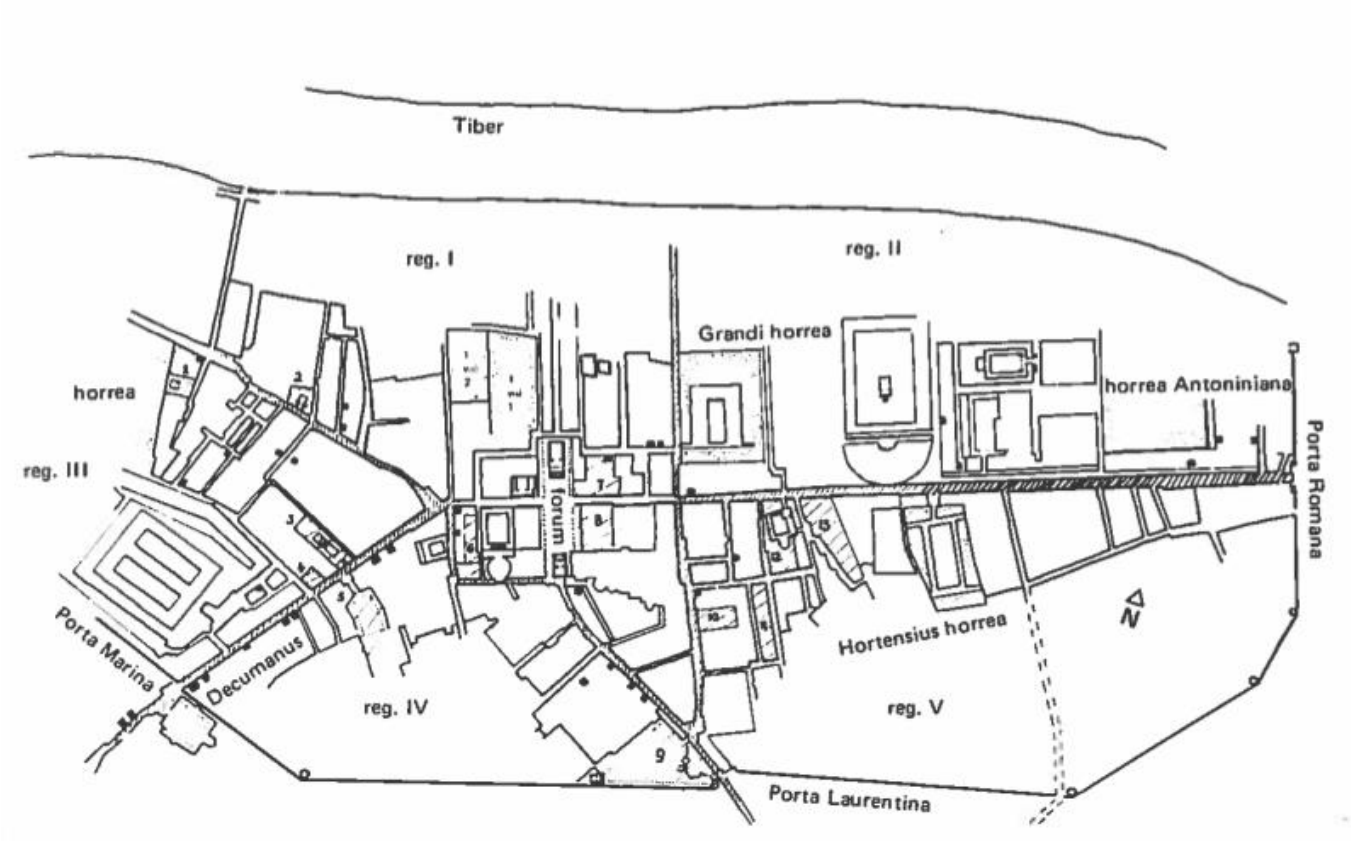

Figure 4: City plan of Ostia with the city regions and gates labelled

Portus developed out of the need for a larger harbour to fulfil the supply needs of Rome, which Ostia could not accommodate. Heinzelmann (2008) hypothesises that any ships docked at Ostia's river port had to be parallel to the edge, due to the current of the river, restricting the capacity of the river harbour to twenty ships. This would not have been adequate for Rome's supply requirements. While the associated infrastructure of the port, such as the dockyards, have not been excavated, it has been hypothesised that they were located at the river banks and encompassed an area of around 2 hectares (Goiran et al, 2014: 392; Keay, 2009: 41). Furthermore, research by Goiran et al (2014) has estimated that the harbour basin would have been fully silted by the start of the imperial period, with sediments building up beforehand, and a sequence of floods rendering the harbour unusable. This falls shortly before the start of construction on the new harbour at Portus, suggesting there was a great need for an accessible harbour.

Portus developed 3km north of Ostia, with imperial funding to create a large harbour that could sustain the commercial demands of Rome (Keay, 2012: 33). The three harbour basins that were created at Portus had a total area of around 2233.07 hectares (Keay, 2012: 44) which was sufficient for the high level of demand from Rome.

The development of Portus had a large impact on the character of Ostia. With the increasing importance of Portus, Ostia took on an administrative role, facilitating the trade with Rome, and becoming an important commercial centre for international trade. While Portus established harbours during the imperial period, Ostia's urban area was developed to include imperial storage buildings, such as the *Grandi Horrea*, and received huge private investments which boomed during the 2nd century AD (Heinzelmann, 2008: 6). Trade was deeply rooted in the way that Ostia's city plan developed, with a huge quantity of *horrea* found across the whole of the city and the urban plan developed to allow maximum storage space to hold the traded goods (Keay, 2009: 41). The expansion of Ostia was funded largely by private investors and did not follow an organised city plan. This can be contrasted with the organised development of Portus, established under the emperors (Heinzelmann, 2008:6).

Furthermore, the trading economy had a huge impact on the population of Ostia. Keay (2009) estimates that the population of Ostia was between 26,000 and 41,000, significantly higher than that of Portus. Keay notes a difference in the epigraphic remains as indication of the *collegia*; while Ostia has a large amount of evidence, Portus' records are scarce. This indicates that workers would commute to Portus during the high seasons for their work, but would reside in Ostia throughout the rest of the year, where the work focussed on the transportation of goods onto river boats to Rome. Connecting the cities of Ostia and Portus were a series of canals and the *Via Flavia*, so that traded goods and people could regularly travel between the two. Furthermore, it is likely that the majority of the population of Ostia would have been involved in the trade. Rice (2016) suggests that a class system may have been present where elites employed freedmen to handle the business deals. Rice (2016) argues that Ostia took on the role of a trading diaspora, where international traders would settle in order to sell their products. Sixty one *stationes* - offices - are located at the Piazzale delle Corporazioni, which would allow organisation of trade deals and business (Rice, 2016: 107). This gives an indication of the likely population of Ostia, with merchants from different countries residing and profiting from the business opportunities that Ostia offered.

By understanding the way in which Ostia developed in relation to Portus, it is possible to gain a good understanding of Ostia's likely population. This is significant to this dissertation, as these people and their burial practices will be studied. It is important to understand their social standing and wealth of the population, as well as the people who were likely to come to Ostia through trade. By gaining this insight into its make-up, a deeper understanding of the cemeteries can be created.

Chapter 2: The Tomb Architecture

By studying the archaeological evidence at the Ostian cemeteries, it is possible to understand the ways in which the living could interact with the dead. Much of the information that can be determined from examining ancient sources as evidence of the funerals and festivals is demonstrated physically in the remains present at the necropoleis. This chapter aims to examine the archaeological remains of Roman funerary practices, specifically at the Isola Sacra necropolis, before studying the written evidence in Chapter Three. In order to do so, firstly the forms of the tombs will be studied, then the furniture remains that would have been utilised for the festivities will be discussed.

2.1 The Form of Tombs

Tombs in the Roman world had many different shapes and forms, such as collective and individual monuments and the distinctive style of the freedmen monuments. Most crucial to this dissertation are the tombs referred to as 'house tombs' which reflect the form of houses. The Isola Sacra is characterised by the large number of tombs that were built in the dominant form of house tombs.

As the name suggests, these tombs echoed the houses of the living; they included the architectural elements of doors, windows and were usually square or rectangular in shape (Hope, 1997: 73). The size of the house tombs was standardised by the mid second century AD (Gee, 2008:61), usually measuring ten by ten, twenty by twenty or ten by twelve Roman feet. The interior space was utilised for both inhumations and cremations, providing enough burial space for many generations, and several family units. The outside of the tombs reflected the Roman *domus* as the exteriors were often built of red brick with pillars, and the interiors were decorated with mosaics on the floor, stucco around the ceilings, and frescoes on the walls (Gee, 2008: 59). Above the door of these tombs, a titular inscription was displayed - the purpose of these epitaphs will be discussed in Chapter Four. Hope (1997: 74) estimates that around seventy of the one hundred tombs, named by Calza, at the Isola Sacra were in the form of house tombs.

When studying the form of tombs as houses, two arguments can be developed. Firstly, that by creating tombs shaped like houses for their dead ancestors, the necropoleis were developed with the function of being cities of the dead. Similarities can be drawn from the Etruscan burial sites, which were created as a reflection of the cities (Steingraber, 2008: 1600). Sites such as the Necropoli della Banditaccia in Cerveteri and the Necropoli del Crocefisso del Tufo in Orvieto, were impressively large necropoleis which were laid out in a form similar

to the cities, with streets and roads (Steingraber, 2008: 1602). This demonstrates why some scholars have come to view the necropoleis as cities of the dead, as their name suggests.

However, from the literary evidence that exists, which will be discussed in Chapter Three, it is possible to argue that many Romans believed that the dead would live on in another form. The house tombs had a function of becoming a home for the dead, filled with belongings and grave goods for the dead that would aid them in their journey to the afterlife. As will be discussed in Chapter Three, it was believed that the *manes* resided in the ground or around the place of their burial. These house tombs were the site at which the family would visit to take part in the ritual celebrations of the dead. The provision of food offerings and libations during the festivals emphasises the belief that the dead were still present, and could dine alongside the family.

Therefore, the development of this form of tomb conveys the belief that death still allowed a relationship with the living. By creating cemeteries filled with houses for the dead, the living created a reflection their own society, where the dead were free to move and interact with the area. This demonstrates the belief that by building tombs outwith the city gates, the dead were given an area in which they could live, where the living could visit. By studying the evidence in this way, it can be argued that while the necropoleis were, in some respect, cities of the dead, the beliefs and practices of the Romans that surround them transformed them into more. While the person was physically dead, it was believed that they were spiritually alive. This belief provides a foundation for the practices that developed in which the cemeteries would become lively with visitors and family members taking part in the funerary cult.

2.2 The Dining Architecture

As detailed above, dining with the deceased was an important activity in the Roman world. While Chapter Three will highlight the occasions in which the living would participate in grave side meals and celebrations, this section aims to address the archaeological evidence of said meals. By studying the architecture of the tombs, much evidence exists that demonstrates the ritual practices, and corroborates that of the ancient historians. For the purpose of this chapter, this has been categorised into three groupings: Evidence for preparation of meals; Evidence of dining furniture; and Evidence for the pouring of libations.

Furniture	Number of structures in the Isola Sacra	Number of Tombs with Access to Furniture	Tomb Number
Ovens	5	8	16, 34, 80*, 81*, 86, 88*, 89*, 90*
Wells	4	6	16, 34, 75, 88*, 89*, 90*
Biclinium	13	13	13, 14, 15, 31, 54, 55, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 87, 90
Benches	7	7	23, 30, 69, 85, 88, 89, 90
Tables	7	7	23, 55, 69, 72a, 73, 80, 81
	Total: 36	Total: 41	

*Feature shared by one or more tombs, as described in text.

Table 1: Tombs on the Isola Sacra containing Dining Furniture

Information compiled from Ostia-Antica [online], Meiggs (1973), Hope (1997), Graham (2005), Borg (2013).

Table 1 represents the information collected from numerous sources, detailing what type of furniture was present at each of the graves. Figure 5 displays this information to indicate the dispersal of these features. Table 1 displays that 36 tombs in the Isola Sacra had access to dining furniture in the form of biclinium, oven, table, bench and well. However this number does not represent the number of tombs that had this as part of their individual architecture. It should be noted that some of the features would not have been solely used by the tomb to which they are attached. Between tombs 80 and 81, there is an oven, which would have been utilised by visitors of both tombs, and not exclusively by one. Furthermore, tomb 88 and 90 were created with a space between them where a well, benches and oven were built. Tomb 89 was built between 88 and 90 at a later point, thus incorporating the dining features into its own court, however these would have still been accessible for the other two tombs (Ostia-Antica, online). Therefore, while 41 tombs had access to the furniture, only 36 had such furniture attached to their tombs.

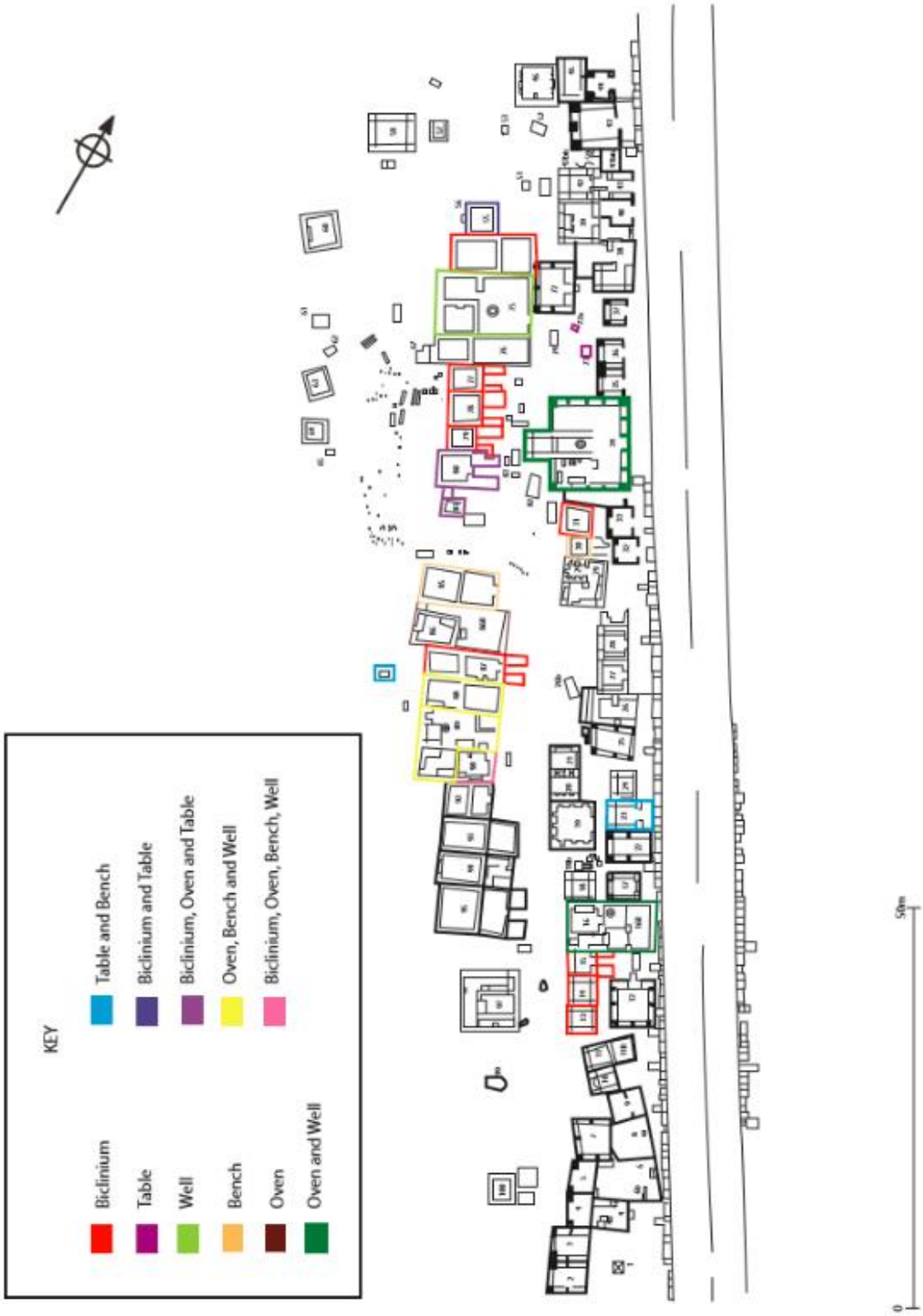

Figure 5:Plan of the Isola Sacra, highlighting tombs with furniture

2.2.1 Preparation of Meals

The Isola Sacra contains clear evidence for the preparation of feasts and funerary meals, most notably in the form of ovens and wells. Eight tombs (numbers 16, 34, 80, 81, 88, 89, 90) have had access to oven structures and six tombs have access to wells (16, 34, 75, 88, 89, 90). Having permanent structures for the preparation of meals (figure 6) at the tomb side is clear evidence that the families of the deceased were partaking in ritual banqueting with the dead. Graham (2005) argues that the ovens were not intended to be seen, as they are located towards the rear of the tombs and often hidden from sight. This implies that the provision of structures to prepare food was for a practical need rather than for display. Furthermore, because the ovens are moderately small in scale, it can be hypothesised that they were utilised for heating food for the meal rather than cooking (Graham, 2005: 138). Therefore, it is likely that the families would have prepared food to take with them to the grave, and those who had access to ovens could heat small portions or certain dishes of their meals. Wells would have held numerous different functions, such as for cleaning the tombs as well as in the preparation of funerary meals (Meiggs, 1973: 461; Graham, 2005: 138). With the provision of wells in the courts of the tombs, the visiting relatives would have easy access to water which would have been advantageous in the preparation of meals.

Figure 6: Oven, located between tombs 80 and 81, Isola Sacra

2.2.2 Dining Furniture

Further examples of the participation in grave side meals comes from the archaeological remains of *biclinium* – dining couches which were sloped in order for the diner to recline while eating (Graham, 2005: 138). Many tombs on the Isola Sacra have *biclinium* flanking the entrances, or benches attached to the walls on the inside; thirteen tombs have *biclinium*, while seven have benches (Table 1). A well preserved example of the *biclinium* is from tomb 15, where the sloped dining couches remain outside the entrance (figure 7). Furthermore, funerary art attests to the use *of kline,* with examples found in funerary sculpture from across Italy and in the provinces, (figure 8), and have been called *totenmahl*, 'the meal of the dead' (Jensen, 2008: 108; Stewart, 2009). This illustrates that the practice of reclining and dining at the graveside was common and widespread.

Figure 7: Tomb 15, with biclinium on exterior

Furthermore, seven tombs have tables, or the remains of the base of the table. Tomb number 55 has *biclinium* at the entrance with a pedestal, on which a table would have most likely been, in the centre (figure 9). The presence of these structures indicates that the living were seated and having meals at the graveside. The positioning of the couches outside the tomb illustrates the desire to be seen participating in the cult of the dead, especially at a time when Graham (2005: 139) notes that funerary practices were becoming more private. This

suggests that participation in the funerary meals was also a status symbol and a means to display wealth. It is important to note that while only twenty of the tombs had facilities to have a seated meal at, it is possible that the visitors would take portable furniture to the grave in order to sit while participating in the meals (Gee, 2008: 64).

Figure 8: Totenmahl from Ostia, portraying a man and woman feasting on a kline

Figure 9: Tomb 55, left. The Biclinium are no longer present, but a square pedestal remains where a table was present

In columbarium 31, at the Via Laurentina necropolis, there are remains of a *triclinium*, where many people could take part in the funerary meals. This occasion is further attested in a painting, located below a row of niches, depicting five men toasting their drinks (figure 10). This demonstrates the use of the dining furniture that adorns many of the tombs, and confirms its usage.

Figure 10: Painting of a funerary banquet, from Columbarium 31, Via Laurentina

2.2.3 Libations for the Dead

A ritual act that is associated with the funerary cult and is attested to in the written and pictorial sources, is the pouring of libations to the dead. Gee (2008: 64) notes that libations would have included wine, honey, milk and blood, which were poured into the vessel in which the deceased was buried. In order to do so, funnels were created, using pipes and the necks of amphora in order to have access to the dead. By doing so, the living were providing nutrients and nourishment for the dead (Toynbee, 1973: 37). This ritual practice demonstrates the belief that the deceased were not dead, and could still live on in another form which require sustenance to survive. Toynbee (1973: 37) notes that many believed that the spirits resided in the ground where they were united with the Earth Goddess, therefore, by pouring libations into the ground, they would reach the deceased. Such is the example of a painting from a tomb in Ostia of a man reclining on a *kline* and pouring libations into the ground. Therefore, while the living feasted and drank wine at the tomb side, offerings were given to the deceased in order to incorporate and involve them in the celebrations.

2.3 Discussion

This chapter has aimed to examine the archaeological evidence at the Ostian necropoleis, with a particular focus of the Isola Sacra, in order to understand the structures which promoted interaction with the graves. By doing so, it is clear that the necropoleis were created as both a city for the dead and the living. In looking at the structure of the most dominant form of

architecture at the Isola Sacra – the house tombs – it is possible to gain an insight into the beliefs about life after death. It can be argued that the house tombs were created with multiple purposes, the most notable as a house for the dead. This in itself would suggest that the necropoleis were created as a resting place for the dead, thus characterising a necropolis as a city of the dead. However, when looking at the beliefs that surround the purpose of the house form, it can be argued that necropoleis were also cities for the living. As previously discussed, the dead were not considered as having no interaction with the living, and instead lived on in a different form. In addition, the architecture that adorns the tombs was created as a means of interaction with the *manes.*

As can be seen, many tombs on the Isola Sacra were equipped with structures and furniture that allowed the preparation and consumption of meals at the grave side. By studying these structures in conjunction with the knowledge of when they would have been used, it can be understood that the necropoleis would have been regularly frequented by visitors and family members in order to participate in the funerary cult. Families dining outside the tomb entrances would have brought life to the necropoleis, as their enjoyment and consumption of foods would have created noise. Furthermore, the preparation of such foods on the ovens, as well as the other foods brought, would have filled the air with smells of bread being baked or food cooking. The necropoleis therefore would have been filled with smells and noises that reflected the towns of the living.

By structuring the necropoleis as streets of tombs, they are instinctively compared to the streets in the Roman towns and cities. When looking in more depth at the tomb form of the house tomb, as well as the dining structures that are present at many of the tombs, it can be argued that the necropoleis were deliberately echoing aspects of the living society. These features encourage interaction with the deceased and the tombs through cooking, eating and drinking, demonstrating that the necropoleis were a lived environment.

Chapter 3: Roman Funerary Beliefs and Practices

A broad picture of funerary practices can be created through a careful analysis of written sources and archaeological material. However, it is important to note that this may not be appropriate for all time periods or places. As Lindsay (2000: 150) argues, the belief system of the Romans was complex, and varied across different time periods and regions. The aims of this chapter are twofold: firstly, to create an understanding of Roman funerary practices, and secondly, to understand the occasions in which the divide between life and death was permeable. I highlight why the funeral ceremony and the festivals of the dead were important events that celebrated the life of the deceased, and how the living family and the deceased's descendants would have interacted at their graveside. In doing so, and by applying phenomenological techniques, it is possible to understand when Romans would have visited the necropoleis, and what effect the practices discussed may have had on the mood of the necropoleis.

The Romans believed that death was a form of pollution, which should be expelled from the city. A law in the Twelve Tables (Frag. 10.1) stipulated that burials should not occur within the city, which several scholars (Toynbee, 1971; Hopkins, 1983) attribute to a fear of pollution, which would anger the gods who were responsible for their wellbeing. However, Lindsay (2000; 153) argues that many other factors, including hygiene and health factors associated with dead bodies, also contributed to the exclusion of the dead from within the city walls.

As a result, separate areas for the burial of the dead were created outside of the city walls. Land plots in close proximity to the city walls were valued as they would be regularly viewed. This created competition amongst the wealthy elite for the most prominent positions, especially those near to the city gates, (Patterson, 2000, 92). Within the Isola Sacra, there are stark differences between the wealthy and the poor graves. While many tombs were grand structures, the necropoleis of Ostia demonstrate that even the poor received a formal burial, in modest graves. For example, at the Isola Sacra cemetery, graves of the poor are often in the form of amphora graves or *tomba a cassone* – tombs in the shape of chests – which are located behind Tombs 38 – 43 (figure 11) in an area that Calza (1933) named *campo dei poveri,* 'field of the poor'. While wealthy tombs contained architectural features such as dining

furniture for involvement in funerary banquets, Graham (2005) argues, even the poor would join in the funerary festivities, but with more modest meals and smaller offerings.

Figure 11: Field of the Poor, Isola Sacra

3.1 The Funeral

A Roman funeral lasted a total of nine days (Graham, 2005: 135), during which the family and friends of the deceased would gather to lament the dead at the deceased's house before a procession would lead the mourners to the burial site. The funeral was followed by a-mourning period of nine days for the deceased and was marked with funerary feasts, commencing with a grave side meal, the *silicernium*, eaten on the day on the day of burial. These events, collectively known as *funus*, culminated on the *novendialis*, at the side of the grave where a final meal known as the *cena novendialis* was eaten, and libations were offered to the spirits of the dead (Toynbee, 1971). Ovid's *Fasti*, written in the early first century AD, describes how the Romans believed that the dead became *manes* – spirits - and resided by the grave. It was believed that the deceased could interact with the living, in some form, during the ceremonies that took place at the tombs (Scheid, 2007). By offering libations to the *manes*, the living were appeasing the spirits of the dead, and providing them with nourishment for the afterlife. Another ancient author, Petronius, provides invaluable information on funerary activities. In his *Satyricon*, written in the first century AD, Trimalchio, a freedman, speaks of his lavish funeral and tomb. Despite being a satirical novel, it can be argued that Trimalchio's wishes

are based on practices that already existed in the Roman world. Petronius describes these festivities of the *novendialis*, where a feast was held for the death of Scissa, a valuable slave, and libations poured on the ashes. By pouring libations into the ground at the tomb, or directly onto the bones of the deceased, the living were involving the dead in the festivities, which emphasises their belief that the dead were still present. In holding these feasts, in which the life of the deceased was celebrated, the tombs were animated with life and noise, which would have been heard throughout the necropolis.

Furthermore, many people were interred within the one tomb, resulting in repeated visits while subsequent funerals were held. When the archaeological remains are examined, it is evident that tombs were created for multiple burials, with numerous niches for cremations and inhumations. Tomb 43 at the Isola Sacra necropolis contained space for a minimum of fifty burials (Borg, 2013: 22). Epigraphic evidence, demonstrates that several members of the family, as well as slaves, would be interred within the same tomb (figure 12). Furthermore, the creation of *columbaria*, of which examples can be seen at the Isola Sacra and the Porta Laurentina necropolis (figure 13), demonstrate the inclusive nature of the tombs due to their large amount of space available. The *columbaria* had a larger capacity than the typical tombs, with room to hold over one hundred urns, suggesting a long and continued usage (Meiggs; 1971, 460). As a result, many funerals would have been celebrated at these graves for many members of the family over a long time period. This suggests that with the subsequent burials in the tomb, there would be repeated visits and celebrations at the site.

Figure 12: Epitaph from Tomb 78, Isola Sacra, stating that their descendants, freemen, freedwomen should be buried here

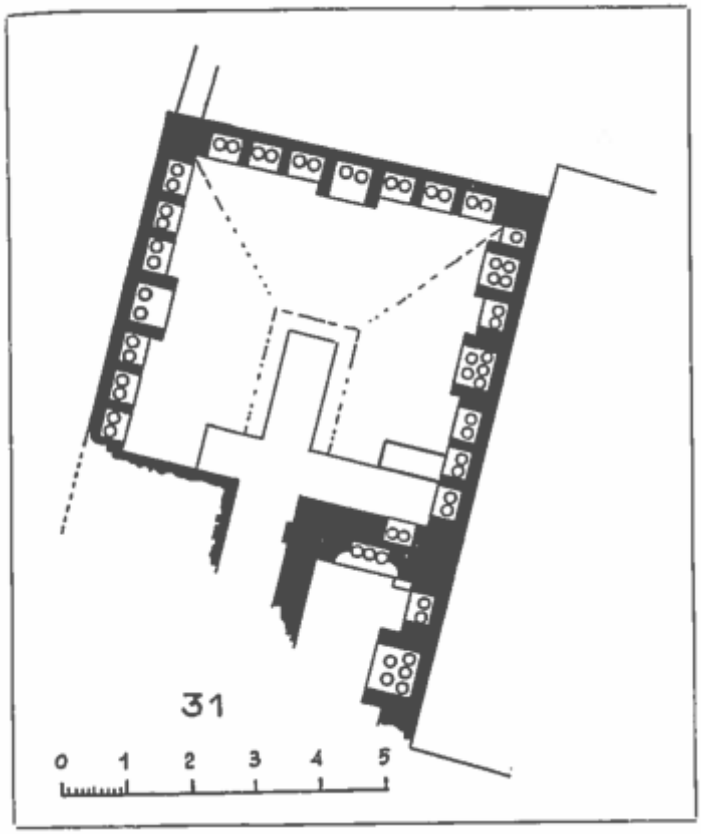

Figure 13: Plan of Columbarium 31, Porta Laurentina Necropolis, displaying niches for cremations

3.2 The Festivals of the Dead

The Roman calendar had festivals throughout the year in which the gods were worshipped and sacrifices made. Two of these festivals specifically celebrated the deceased, in order to perpetuate their memory and appease the spirits (Scullard, 1981; Toynbee, 1971; Scheid, 2007; Miller, 2010). The importance of the funerary festivals held in Roman society is clearly demonstrated by the provisions that some would leave in their will. Dolansky (2011) explains that some would ensure their family observed the festivals by leaving money in their will to be spent on food, wine and flowers. Several examples of this are seen in cities in the Roman Empire. One such example is from Ostia, where Iunia Libertas, a wealthy woman from Ostia, left her property to the people of Ostia, stating that if her relatives died, 100 sesterces should be used for the observance of the *Parentalia, Violaria* and *Rosalia* each year (Dolansky, 2011: 134). By leaving allowances for such festivals in their wills, the deceased ensure that their graves would continue to be visited by their families. This illustrates the significance of funerary rites in Roman society, and suggests that the necropoleis would be visited in order to adhere to the social practices.

The first festival, the *Parentalia* took place from the 13th to the 21st of February, where both public and private worship of the deceased occurred. The *Parentalia* honoured deceased parents and ancestors, and gave the living relatives opportunities to give offerings to the dead (Dolansky, 2011: 128). This festival has been written about by Ausonius of Bordeaux, a fourth century AD writer, who completed 30 poems titled *Parentalia*, dedicated to his deceased family and friends. He writes of the importance of worshipping at the grave in order to perpetuate their memory (Ausonius, 8 – 9). Throughout this festival, businesses closed and public places such as Temples were shut, in order for the society to worship their relations (Scullard, 1981). Ovid describes the festival of the *Parentalia* in book 2 of Fasti:

> "Honour is paid, also, to the tombs. Appease the souls of your fathers and bring small gifts to the extinguished pyres. The ghosts ask but little: they value piety more than a costly gift" (Frazer, 1959: lines 533- 537).

In giving these offerings, Ovid states that the spirits of the dead are pacified, more so by the act than the offering itself. This passage demonstrates that the Romans, who are described by Scullard (1981) as being superstitious, would have visited the cemeteries over the course of this festival, in order to give offerings and have graveside meals with their deceased relatives. During this festival, the family would have had graveside banquets, and drank wine at the tomb. Hopkins (1983:233) notes that early Christian sources often criticised the Romans

who would feast and become inebriated at the graveside. Zeno, a Christian writer, writing in the 4th century AD, conveys his displeasure in *Sermones* 1.16, believing it to be unsuitable behaviour for Christians. Tertullian, writing in the early 3rd century AD, comments on the fact that people would become drunk on the wine that was brought for libations (*Resurrection 1*). These sources illustrate the activities and behaviour of the people who visited the graves during the funerary festivals. It can be inferred that necropoleis would have become lively and dynamic places, where people would become drunk and loud.

The second festival to commemorate the dead was the *Lemuria*, celebrated on the 9th, 11th and 13th of May (Toynbee, 1971: 64). In contrast to the *Parentalia,* it was not a joyous occasion, according to Scullard (1981: 118). The celebration of this festival, in particular, highlights that the deceased could become threatening, and therefore the fulfilment of rites and sacrifices were believed to be a means of pacifying the spirits of the dead. In the course of this festival, it was believed that the dead would be present in the land of the living, such as visiting relatives in their homes. During this festival, the cemeteries were filled with the spirits of the dead, who could become malicious. Ovid writes (*Fasti*, V, 421 ff) that in order to placate the spirits, and return them to their graves, the Romans would perform religious rites in an attempt to banish the unwanted spirits, including sacrifices and offerings of beans. This illustrates the necessity for the Romans to respect the dead, and suggests that the Romans would ensure the correct dues were given by regularly visiting the graves.

In addition to these two funerary festivals, the tombs were frequently visited on other occasions. The festival of the *Rosalia* was celebrated throughout May to mid July, while roses were in bloom, and involved the scattering of roses, or violets, over the tombs (Graham, 2005: 135). Flowers in bloom are symbolic of life and birth, suggesting that they were placed on graves to symbolise life after death. Furthermore, the presence of flowers would add brightness and colour to the cemetery, emphasising the symbolic nature of this festival. As Dolansky (2011) argues, the replacing of fresh flowers on the graves would have necessitated the need for regular visits to the necropolis throughout the Spring and Summer months. By bringing flowers to the tombs, the living incorporated another aspect of life into the necropolis.

Other occasions on which the grave would be visited were on the Kalends, Ides and Nones of the month (Toynbee, 1971: 63) where lamps were lit or incense burnt for the dead. In addition to this, on the birthdays of the deceased - *dies natalis* - the family would visit the graves with flowers and offerings (Toynbee, 1971: 63) and would hold feasts in honour of the deceased's birthday. On these occasions, the cemeteries would become a colourful place with life coming from the warmth of the lamps, the colourful flowers and the smells of burning incense.

By considering the funeral and festival activities from a phenomenological perspective, it is possible to understand the effect that these practices would have had on the necropoleis. The family members that were present at the funeral and festival feasts would be speaking and creating noise which could be heard nearby. Furthermore, if they were becoming drunk, then their voices and actions would become louder. As the family participates in the festivals to celebrate the life of the deceased, it suggests that there would be laughter and joy as they reflect. Their presence would, therefore, create a lively atmosphere in the necropolis, and emphasise the living rather than the dead. This aids our understanding of the necropoleis as more than just cities of the dead, because the living can be seen to be a dominant aspect of these areas. The preparation of meals and sacrifices would create rich smells, which would travel around the necropolis and when the ovens were being utilised, the smell of baking bread would diffuse throughout the necropolis. These feasting activities reflect events that occurred out with the cemeteries, which creates a parallel between the cities of the dead and the cities of the living. Consequently, the necropoleis should not be considered as places for only the dead; instead, they should be seen as areas created for the living to practice the funerary cult and to provide links with their deceased relatives.

Chapter 4: The Wider Community

As discussed in previous chapters, one of the main forms of interaction between the living and the dead were through familial visits to the necropoleis, a feature of the funerary cult of the dead. However, another source of interaction at the necropoleis arose from visitors entering and leaving the city. This chapter examines the extent of interaction that the necropoleis would have had with visitors to the city. As Roman necropoleis were constructed along the main roads into the city (Patterson, 2000: 91) visitors would have had to pass through them as they entered or left the city. In the case of Ostia, Keay (2009) states that much of the traffic along the roads in and out of the city would have been traders travelling between Ostia and its neighbouring town of Portus. Therefore, this chapter will firstly consider the location of the necropoleis, by examining the roads upon which they were located. By considering their location and examining the integration of utilitarian buildings into these areas, it will be possible to understand how and when members of the wider community would have interacted with this environment. Secondly, this chapter will provide an overview of the epigraphic evidence from the Ostian necropoleis. This is important, since the epigraphy was a means for the dead to communicate with the living (Koorbojian, 1996). By examining this evidence, it is possible to understand how a traveller would have experienced the necropolis and the ways in which the necropoleis were a living environment.

4.1 Tomb Location

In order to construct a profile of likely passers-by, it is necessary to consider the function of the roads on which each necropolis was situated. While the Porta Marina and the Porta Laurentina necropoleis provide insight into the development of the necropoleis, it is necessary to limit this section to the study of the Isola Sacra and the Porta Romana necropolis. The network of roads connecting Ostia, Portus and Rome was established by the second century AD (Keay, 2012) and was supplemented by a system of canals that connected them for trade. By examining the layout of the surrounding roads (figure 14), it is possible to construct a hypothesis about who the likely traveller on the road may have been, and how busy the roads were. However, there are limitations in this technique, as there is no archaeological or written evidence to support these hypotheses. Campbell (2014) theorises what the likely traveller may have been like, on the roads leading to Pompeii; by adopting Campbell's principals, it is possible to construct a potential identity for the Ostian traveller. A study of the roads on which the necropoleis are located can give an indication of how often people passed through the locality, and the travellers' status may have been an influencing factor in deciding tomb location. Meiggs (1973: 456) notes that the necropoleis sited at the Porta Laurentina and the

Isola Sacra contain the tombs of traders, while the necropolis of the Porta Romana contain the tombs of elite individuals and magistrates. This suggests that the different necropoleis were utilised by diverse social groups in direct response to the status of the road, as evidenced at the Porta Romana and the Isola Sacra.

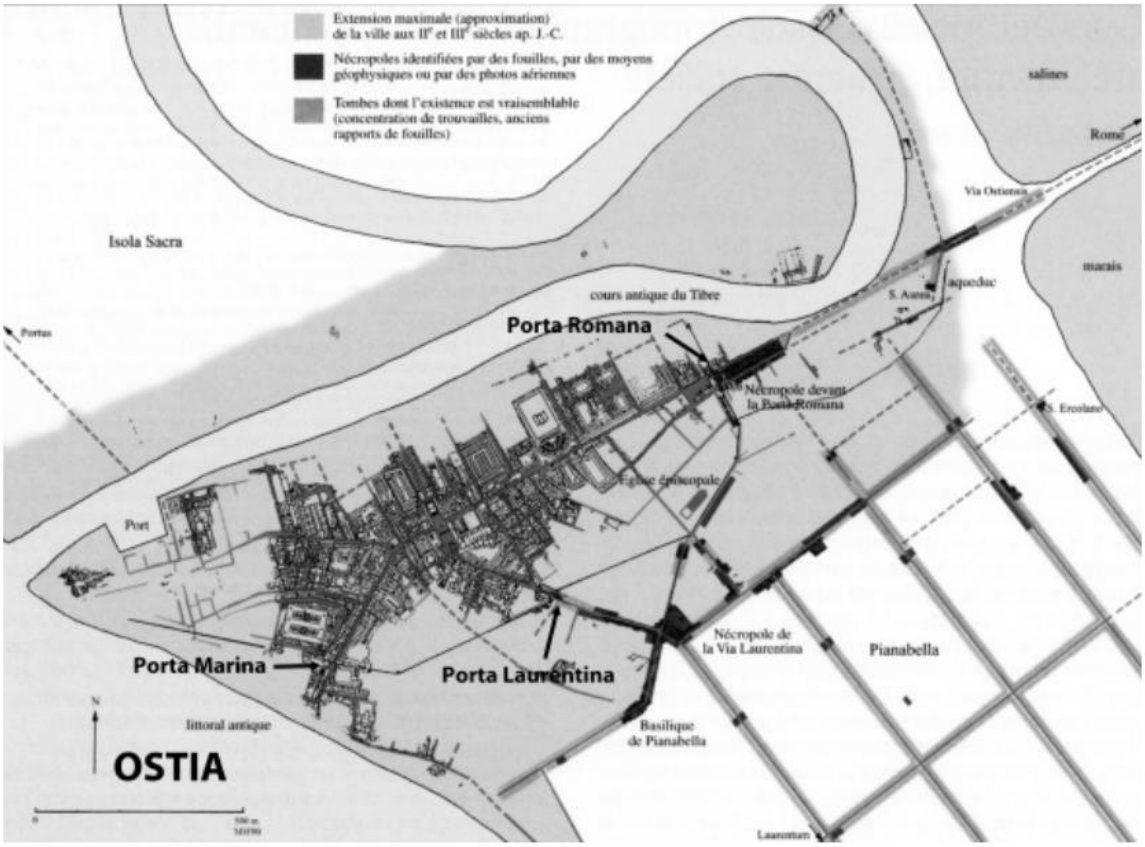

Figure 14: Plan of Ostia, with the city gates and necropolis labelled

The Isola Sacra is an artificial island created between Ostia and Portus, connected by the Fossa Traiana canal. With the development of Portus as the harbour of Rome, Ostia developed grand *horrea* for traded goods (Heinzelmann, 2008: 6). Since Ostia retained much of the administrative power for facilitating trade, a good communication system between Portus and Ostia was essential. The Piazzele delle Corporazioni, 'square of the guilds', details the offices of various merchants, shippers and guilds (Hermansen, 1981). This demonstrates that after docking at Portus, some of the cargo would have been taken to Ostia for trading or possibly for onward shipping via land or sea. Since Ostia was responsible for the administrative aspect of trade, it would have necessitated travel between the two towns by officials to ensure that the harbours were running efficiently. The *Via Flavia* and the *Via Severiana* facilitated travel through the Isola Sacra, alongside a series of canals, necessary for the movement of traded goods. The *Via Flavia* was a large road, with a width of 10.5m (Hermansen, 1981) suggesting that the road had been built in anticipation of a heavy traffic

flow between Ostia and Portus. Since Ostia had a larger population than Portus it can be hypothesised that Ostia acted as a commuter town for the workers of Portus (Keay, 2009) and that many of the Portus traders resided in Ostia, where more domestic buildings were present (Keay, 2009). Between commuters, merchants and workers, it can be suggested that a large number of people would regularly travel between Ostia and Portus. This demonstrates that the Isola Sacra acted as a busy thoroughfare for traders, resulting in many people passing through the necropolis.

Furthermore, Ostia had an important role in the supply of trade to Rome and it is likely that officials from Rome would have travelled to Ostia in order to monitor business. The *Via Ostiensis* was constructed in the fourth century BC in order to enable communications between Ostia and the capital (Keay, 2012:49). A visitor to the city of Ostia from Rome, or vice versa, would have had to pass through the Porta Romana, located at the entrance to Ostia on this road. Since the *Via Portuensis,* which connected Rome and Portus, was not fully constructed until the fourth century AD (Hermansen, 1981: 12), trading officials would have had to pass through Ostia from Rome, before reaching the harbour sites at Portus. This suggests that many of the Porta Romana necropolis passers-by would have been of higher status. This is reflected by the appearance of monumental tombs and sarcophagi at this necropolis (Meiggs, 1973), suggesting that the deceased anticipated travellers of a higher elite status.

At the Porta Romana necropolis, there is evidence that the tombs were interspersed with buildings that functioned as shops and apartments (Baldassarre, 1987). Although the function of the buildings at the Porta Romana necropolis are not identified, Baldassarre (1980) and Heinzelmann (2000) suggest their function; Figure 15 provides an indication of the building use, with five utilitarian structures (indicated in blue) and eight structures which are thought to be shops (indicated in red). The presence of buildings in the necropolis illustrates another aspect to the function of the necropolis, aside from housing the dead. Patterson (2000: 93) notes that the city walls acted as a customs boundary, where traders would be taxed when bringing products into the city. He suggests that to avoid these taxes, some traders would have created shops on the outskirts of the city walls. It is possible that some of the shops would have had a function related to the building or decoration of the tombs, such as workshops for epigraphers. Furthermore, it is possible that food produce was also sold in these shops, as they were located closer to the hinterland of the city, resulting in fresher produce. The presence of shops demonstrates that there was most likely a daily flow of people to and from the necropolis, who interacted with this environment. This suggests that the necropolis developed from being an area for the dead, into a living environment.

Figure 15: Plan of the Porta Romana Necropolis with shops and utilitarian structures highlighted

4.2 Epigraphic Evidence

Epitaphs and funerary portraits are key features that adorn many Roman tombs. On the one hand, their format and style can give an indication of an individual's status, as well as the period in which it was created (Carroll, 2011). On the other, it is also important to study the context in which they were made, as the information conveyed in these features suggests a desire for the deceased to communicate with the living (Koortbojian, 1996).

The perpetuation of identity was of great importance to Romans, as they wanted to be remembered after death (Carroll, 2011: 58). A means of doing this was by creating funerary monuments, on which their achievements, family name and profession were displayed. Ulpian writes of this desire to be remembered in *Digest* 11.7.2.6:

"A monument is that which exists for the sake of preserving memory" (Monro, 1904)

Epitaphs were created as a means for the deceased to express their identity beyond the grave (Hope, 1997: 113). The information that the deceased conveyed on the tombs is significant, as the words were deliberately chosen in order to commemorate certain aspects of their life (Carroll, 2011: 58). Meiggs (1973) notes that while early tombs tended only to name the individuals within and the tomb measurements, by the second century AD tombs became less reserved, and displayed the descriptions of the individual's life. By emphasising specific roles and achievements, the deceased had an opportunity to influence what type of information was remembered, as well as control the perception of their status. Inscriptions would often be placed above the door of tombs, on travertine panels (Meiggs, 1973: 458) in an area that was visible to passers-by.

By addressing the passer-by in the epitaph, the deceased endeavoured to communicate with the living. In doing so, the inscriptions provided a voice for the dead and animated the tombs. From epigraphic evidence in many regions of the Roman world, such as Italy, Spain and Germany (Carroll, 2011: 54) it is apparent that the reader was encouraged to speak the epitaph aloud. Examples of this are seen in Ostia: one inscription informs the reader that 'your voice is my voice' (CIL XIV.356). By reciting the inscription aloud, it was believed that the passer-by would reanimate the deceased, and give them a voice again. A similar inscription from Ostia, states that the deceased can talk 'without a voice through the inscribed marble' (CIL XI. 480). Chioffi (2015: 627) argues that by reciting the words aloud, a link is created between the world of the living and the world of the dead. This ability helps to bring the dead back to life, and creates a bond between the deceased and the reader of the inscription.

It is important to consider the level of literacy in Roman Italy, in order to understand the likelihood of these inscriptions being read. Scholars (Beard, 1991; Horsfall, 1991; Cooley,

2012: 309) postulate that literacy levels were low across Roman Italy. Harris (1983; 1989) has produced figures for literacy levels in Italy, estimating that less than 20 – 30 % of the adult male population in Italy between the first and second century AD were literate. Koortbojian (1996: 219) suggests that the phrases, style and context would have aided illiterate passers-by to understand the sentiment conveyed in the inscription. The size and decoration of the tomb would have made a statement about wealth, allowing the passer-by to understand the status of the deceased and their profession. As Carroll (2011: 56) explains, by following formulaic patterns of words, most people would have been generally able to understand the information the tomb owner wished to communicate. The inscriptions are aided by the inclusion of images, and when viewed together would have made the meaning clear.

Tomb portraiture provides a great deal of insights into the Roman world, for example indications of wealth and status, fashion and style, and familial lineages (Hope, 1997; D'Ambra, 1998; Graham, 2009; Zanker, 2010). However, as it is out-with the scope of this dissertation, tomb portraiture can only be briefly mentioned. As Hope (1997: 114) argues, tomb portraiture was an effective way to catch the eye of a passer-by. By including a portrait on the monument, the deceased influenced the way that he (or she) was remembered, whether that was at a certain stage in life, or incorporating their profession into the art (Carroll, 2011: 37). The incorporation of portraits with inscriptions was an effective way for the deceased to create a bond with the reader (Koortbojian, 1996:233) and communicate with a wider audience. Furthermore, the portraits are eye catching, and the larger tombs with more intricate designs might encourage the on-looker to stop and examine the detail, and encouraging them to stay longer in the necropolis.

A link can be drawn between the epitaphs and the belief that the deceased were still present in the tombs. As Koortbojian (1996) argues, the elements of inscriptions and funerary portraiture allows the deceased to have a voice in the necropoleis. This presents a picture of a two-sided conversation between the living and the dead. The architectural elements of the tombs effectively demonstrate the interaction of the living with the deceased, for example incorporating benches to the exterior of the tombs. An example of this is found at the necropolis of Porta Marina. This evidence suggests that these benches were built in order that a passer-by may sit and contemplate the life of the deceased (Koortbojian, 1996) while reading the epitaph. This was an effective way for the deceased to incorporate the living into the necropoleis.

Overall, the epigraphic evidence demonstrates the ways in which the deceased could encourage conversation with the passer-by. The tombs competed for attention, and the tombs that contained larger inscriptions, or more detailed imagery would have demanded the

attention of a passer-by. The inclusion of inscriptions and funerary portraits was an effective way to catch the eye of a traveller, and encouraged them to interact with the tombs. This suggests a dual purpose for the tombs, while they were created by and for the deceased, it was with the knowledge that the living would interact with them. This consideration of the epigraphic evidence also suggests that the passers-by on their travels were encouraged to engage with the tombs. By reciting inscriptions aloud and creating a conversation with the dead, the necropoleis became an environment in which the living were an important feature and an environment that recognised the interaction between the living and the dead.

Conclusion

In the study of Roman necropoleis, scholars have tended to concentrate upon their status as a reflection of Roman cities, that is, created primarily for the dead. My research has demonstrated that, in fact, there is strong evidence to suggest that there were many activities that would have occurred within the necropoleis, transforming these areas from cities of the dead to cities that welcomed and encouraged the living to become part of their environment. The necropoleis developed along the roadside on the outskirts of the Roman cities, and visually, the dominant form of 'house tombs' present at many of the necropoleis instinctively creates parallels with the Roman cities. However, this dissertation has illustrated the necropoleis as a complex environment, where the living was an essential feature, ensuring that the dead remained part of Roman family life. This has been achieved by highlighting some of the occasions, such as the festivals of the dead, when the necropoleis would be frequented by families and hypothesising the effect that this would have had within the necropoleis. While the primary use of the necropoleis was for the interment of the dead, it has been demonstrated that the funerary space was utilised by the living in numerous ways, which resulted in the necropoleis signifying more than just cities of the dead.

Chapters Two and Three considered the necropoleis during the funerary rituals involved in the cult of the dead, in which family and relatives would visit the necropoleis. The practices of the funerary cult were presented in Chapter Two, by studying the archaeological remains of the Isola Sacra. Firstly, the form of house tombs was considered to suggest that the dead were also present in the necropoleis. While these tombs were initially contemplated as evidence for the necropoleis being cities of the dead where the dead were interred, it was then argued that the deceased, although physically dead were in fact spiritually still alive and residing in these tombs. As a result, the question of naming the necropoleis cities of the dead was further countered, as the dead were an active part of the necropoleis, rather than a passive feature. The remains of *biclinium* and tables provides evidence for the feasts that were eaten at the tomb side, while the structures of ovens and wells demonstrate that meals were cooked in the necropoleis. As a result, this dissertation has demonstrated that the necropoleis would have been lively environments where the family members of the deceased enjoyed everyday activities, such as eating and drinking while in the necropoleis.

Chapter Three examined the Roman cult of the dead, to comprehend some of the reasons for visiting a necropolis, and the ritual activities that would have occurred. Through the study of ancient sources it was possible to create an understanding of the festivals of the dead, and rituals associated with the funerary cult. In doing so, a deeper appreciation of the

times at which the necropoleis were frequented was created. As a result, it was possible to hypothesise the likely effect that the funerary feasts and customs would have had on the environment. In using a phenomenological approach, I was able to postulate how an ancient Roman would have experienced the landscape, and ultimately how he would have impacted the environment. While these hypothesises are not attested to in the archaeological record, it is beneficial to consider the evidence in this way as it provides insights into the synergy with the landscape. As a result, it has been suggested that the necropoleis were lively and dynamic environments, especially during the funerary festivals. By hypothesising that the necropoleis would have been filled with the sound of voices, especially if they were inebriated, and the smells of food preparation, it was argued that the living created an energetic environment in the necropoleis. Furthermore, the presence of life in the necropoleis was emphasised by the display of flowers, such as roses, or the regular lighting of candles. These activities depict the necropoleis as dynamic landscapes, where one would expect noise, smells and colour akin to the streets of a Roman city.

The cult of the dead was celebrated regularly throughout each month, indicating that the necropoleis would have been busy areas, where the living was a dominant feature. Other forms of incorporating the living into the necropoleis were further attested when studying the wider community. The necropoleis of Ostia were regularly passed through by people of different social classes and professions. Chapter Four illustrated that the necropoleis of the Isola Sacra and Porta Romana were busy thoroughfares that were vital to Ostian commerce. A constant flow of people through the necropoleis would have brought life to these areas, and would have provided an audience for the family performing funerary rituals, as well as acting as a voice for the dead. By considering the nature of epigraphy in conjunction with the epigraphic evidence from Ostia, it has been demonstrated that passers-by would have interacted with the necropoleis, providing a reader for the inscriptions. The presence of the funerary inscriptions suggests that the monuments were created with a dual purpose of remembering the dead, and to provide a visual attraction for the living. A significant and unique feature of the Porta Romana necropolis is the presence of shops and utilitarian structures, as identified by Heinzelmann (2000). These structures indicate a consistent flow of people to the necropolis in order to trade everyday items. This demonstrates that the necropoleis developed to accommodate utilities for the living, portraying the cemeteries as multi-functional and diverse landscapes.

Ultimately, consideration of these factors together creates a deeper understanding of the function of necropoleis. While it is plausible to consider aspects of the cemeteries as a reflection of the Roman city, the necropoleis should be considered a dynamic landscape, which was utilised by the living for various purposes, most notable being the cult of the dead.

As death was a common aspect of Roman life, it is conceivable that the necropoleis became an extension of the cycle of life. This dissertation has demonstrated that the combination of familial visitors, for the funerary cult, and the wider society utilising these areas for trade and travel, the necropoleis would have been a lively environment. Whilst the necropoleis provided a space for the burial of the deceased, it is evident that they grew to symbolise more than cities of the dead. Shops were created for public use, structures, such as dining furniture, were incorporated into the tombs for the comfort of the living, and epigraphs called out to the passer-by. This illustrates that the necropoleis were created for the living, as much as they were created for the dead. The activities that took place within the necropoleis created an energetic environment, ultimately illustrating that the necropoleis were created as cities of the dead, for the use of the living.

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