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THE FUNERARY WORLD OF TARRACO

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL, ANTHROPOLOGICAL AND
PALEOPATHOLOGICAL REALITY

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CONTEXTUALISATION OF THE SITES STUDIED

Dying and being laid to rest in Tarraco

“Bury me with all speed that I may pass the gates of Hades; the ghosts, vain shadows of men that can labour no more, drive me away from them; they will not yet suffer me to join those that are beyond the river, and I wander all desolate by the wide gates of the house of Hades.” (Homer, *The Iliad*, 23.71-4)¹

With these bitter words the unhappy soul of Patroclus complained when Achilles, deep in the throes of mourning, refused to bury the body of his friend. Without a proper funeral, and more importantly, without the performance of a specific burial rite, the soul of the deceased could not leave the world of the living and pass over to the other side. Literary Latin texts are replete with stories of ghosts and tormented souls who beg the living to grant them the right of a decent burial so that they can stop wandering the earth in limbo.² But it was not only the fear of an agitated soul that drove the living to perform their compulsory funerary rites. Although it is impossible to know for certain, sentiment and a sense of duty to family members and friends (the virtue of *pietas*) must have played a preeminent role in the practice of *funera*. In fact, funerary epitaphs from the Roman era coming from the funeral areas of Tarraco provide ample testimony to indicate that it was the nuclear family that was responsible for commemorating the life of the deceased and, by extension, financing their funerals. These epitaphs mention mothers and fathers, brothers, sisters, sons, daughters and even aunts, uncles and grandparents. Although these texts are very often based on stereotypes and are very formulaic, it cannot be said that they are mere empty words. In one of these long epitaphs, a widow bids farewell to her husband with these words: “If the Manes were just they would have taken me, your wife. Where is the sense in living anymore? I do not want to see the light again. I lost my sweet light when I lost you, my husband. If tears are worth anything, show yourself in my dreams. This house for you alone... Goodbye forever and ever my dearest husband” (Alföldy, 1975, RIT 228).

When death called at a house, the family of the deceased was considered impure, ill-fated. It was a difficult time because the disappearance of an individual affected the entire community. From that moment on, a sequence of symbolic gestures were performed for the purpose of dealing with that imbalance. The announcement of the death by the head of the family (*funus agnoscere*) gave rise to a whole series of purification ceremonies. The house had to be purified, the family, those present, the gods of the house, everything that had been contaminated by seeing or coming into con-

¹ Homer: the *Iliad*, introduction by Louise R. Loomis, translation by Samuel Butler, Wildside Press LLC, Holicong PA, USA, 2007.

² There were an abundance of popular stories about spirits which intervened in the world of the living in the form of ghostly and nocturnal apparitions. For example, *Philopseudes* by Lucianus is an anthology of stories of this type. Other authors such as Pliny the Younger tell of the legend of a cursed house where the victim of a murder has been buried. When the skeleton is discovered and the Manes deities were pacified, the ghost stopped haunting the living (Epist., 7.27). Suetonius tell us of the roaming ghost of Caligula, who had been secretly buried in a garden, and of apparitions that did not cease to appear until one of his sisters had him exhumed and reburied in a tomb (Cal., 59).

tact with the corpse had to be treated. Men let stubble grow on their faces, women went out with their heads uncovered, their hair dishevelled. To a certain extent, the whole world changed: the slovenliness of the living contrasted with the immaculacy of the dead, who were perfumed, dressed in their best clothes and crowned with flowers in an image of illusory and eternal beauty (Scheid, 1984:123). During the procession that transported the deceased to his or her tomb, candelabras and lamps were carried in the full light of day, songs were sung and music played to drown out the silence of death. The burial grounds were always located outside the city walls and as near as possible to busy roads. This kept the dead permanently present in the lives of the living. Necropolises served as the antechambers to the city. Funeral rites culminated with the burial ceremony and a funerary banquet. It is difficult to accurately describe the rites that took place, as ancient sources provide contradictory accounts. We know that there were three rituals performed at the tomb: the burial, the sacrifice of the *porca praesentanea* and the funerary banquet. The burial did not take effect until the deceased, cremated or burned, had been covered with earth (Cic. Leg., 2.57). This was the first condition that had to be in place in order for the family to move beyond their ill-fated state. Merely burying the deceased, however, was not enough: a sow had to be sacrificed to Ceres (Verg. Aen., 3:67-8). Then the *cena ferialis* was held in which the meat of the sacrifice was shared out between the living and the dead. The recipients used were then burned or, according to a passage by Propertius, destroyed (Prop., 4.7.34).

Textual sources provide us with an unrealistically fixed image of the rite. In the Roman world, funerals were not held in any one specific way because there was no priest class to define or regulate them. Funerary archaeology accentuates the richness of regional variations and reveals the weight of family traditions in the necropolises of the provinces. Traditionally, our knowledge of Roman funerary rites has been heavily influenced by written sources that tend to undermine the importance of archaeological evidence. The study of written sources has placed funerals and the worship of the dead within a more general framework. However, most of these indications refer to Rome in a very specific period between the 1st century BC and the first centuries of the empire. Literary sources explain little to nothing about funerary practices in the rest of Italy or in the provinces. This panorama comes into contrast with the more advanced knowledge that we today hold about funerary rites and necropolises at an archaeological level (Scheid, 2008; Reichert, 2001; Pearce et al., 2000).

Studies of the funerary areas of Tarraco do not only provide insight into the rites performed in these areas, but they also help to identify their internal organisation and their evolution over time. Funerary evidence is also very useful in the study of the social structures and demographics of these communities.

The primary focus of interest in funerary areas used to be limited to inscriptions, funerary architecture and the method of treating the cadaver (burial/cremation). Today, the information collected in studies of Roman-era necropolises concerns a much broader body of knowledge, including data on rituals and funerary gestures. At the same time, other disciplines like paleopathology and archaeozoology have also become involved in studies of this type. And funerary archaeology has been further enriched by the contribution of various different analytical techniques that offer much more data and which help to paint a clearer picture of the archaeological context beyond chronometric dating and understanding the urban setting. This allows us to determine with increasing accuracy the date of death of an individual, to discover some of what he ate as his last meals, to analyse his genes, and through the study of bone remains, to identify social, cultural and nutritional aspects of the Roman population. We could draw up a very long list of elements of interest that reflect the enormous potential of the human remains that are constantly being exhumed in our city and in the ancient *territorium* or *ager tarraconensi*.

Our friend Josep Giné represents a group of professionals from outside the scope of archaeology who have drawn closer to our practice in recent years. First curious and then passionate, he shows us how his vision, which we would consider paleopathology in the strictest sense, contributes numerous observations that the humanistic vision of archaeology has overlooked and which show us how to see our findings as an endless source of scientific data. Moreover, these types of approaches humanise our work because beyond our historicist goals, they remind us that we are also dealing with people or, as Josep likes to call them, “patients who don’t complain”.

This brief volume³ aims to offer a general vision of the funerary panorama of Tarraco, the gateway to Rome in Hispania and the capital of the largest province in the empire for three centuries (Figure 1. Map 1).

| Site | Area | Dating | Bodies |
|---|-----------------|--|--------|
| C. Francesc Bastos (between C. Eivissa and C. Manuel de Falla) (1994) | Western suburb | 1 st century BC–4 th century AD | 12 |
| C. Hernández Sanahuja, 2–4–6 (2009) | Northern suburb | 1 st century BC–4 th century AD | 2 |
| C. Sant Antoni Maria Claret, 2 (2009) | Northern suburb | 1 st –2 nd century AD | 6 |
| C. Robert d’Aguiló, 38 (1984) | Eastern suburb | 1 st –2 nd century AD | 21 |
| C. Robert d’Aguiló, (1978–1979) | Eastern suburb | 1 st –2 nd century AD | 4 |
| C. Robert d’Aguiló, (1997) | Eastern suburb | 2 nd – 3 rd century AD | 13 |
| Camí dels Cossis, 9 B (2001–2002) | Eastern suburb | 1 st – 3 rd century AD | 12 |
| C. Antoni Company i Fernández de Córdoba, 11, (2004) | Eastern suburb | 1 st – 3 rd century AD | 26 |
| C. Antoni Company i Fernández de Córdoba, 7, (2006) | Eastern suburb | 1 st – 3 rd century AD | 12 |
| Camí dels la Platja del Cossis (1998) | Eastern suburb | End 1 st – start 3 rd century AD | 37 |
| Camí dels Cossis (1998) | Eastern suburb | 1 st – 3 rd century AD | 12 |
| C. August, 51 (2006) | Northern suburb | 1 st – 4 th century AD | 3 |
| C. Manuel de Falla, 22 / C. Francesc Bastos, 24 (1995) | Western suburb | 1 st – 5 th century AD | 23 |
| Av. Ramon i Cajal, 82–84 / pg. Independència 17 (1994–1996) | Western suburb | 1 st – 5 th century AD | 172 |
| C. Felip Pedrell, 4 (1999) | Western suburb | 1 st – 6 th century AD | 4 |
| Amfiteatre (1998) | Eastern suburb | 1 st – 6 th century AD | 35 |
| C. Felip Pedrell, 10–12 / Av. Vidal i Barraquer, 44–46 (2005) | Western suburb | 1 st – 7 th century AD | 33 |
| C. Robert d’Aguiló, 32 (1997) | Eastern suburb | 2 nd – 3 rd century AD | 13 |
| Av. Prat de la Riba, 9 (2002–2003) | Western suburb | 2 nd – 4 th century AD | 27 |
| C. Eivissa, 22 (1997) | Western suburb | Start 3 rd – end 4 th century AD | 16 |

³ A broader examination of this subject can be found in Gurt/Macias. 2002; Macias. 2008; Ciurana/Macias. 2010. For further schematic documentation please refer to Macias et al. 2007, also available at <http://oliba.uoc.edu/icac/libres/tarraco/>.

| | | | |
|--|-----------------|--|------|
| Necròpolis de Pere Martell (1969) | Western suburb | 3 rd – 5 th century AD | 46 |
| C. Manuel de Falla (2002) | Western suburb | 3 rd – 5 th century AD | 20 |
| C. de Pere Martell, 20 (1978) | Western suburb | 3 rd – 5 th century AD | 8 |
| C. de Ramón i Cajal / Av. Roma (Parc de la Cuitat / Quintà de Sant Rafael) (1987) | Western suburb | 3 rd century–450 AD | 97 |
| Av. Juan Antonio Guardias, 17 (2002)– Mas Rimbau | Northern suburb | 3 rd – 5 th century AD | 61 |
| Av. Josep Gramunt Subiela, 41-53 / C. Lluís Domènech i Muntaner, 18-32 / Av. Juan Antonio i Guardias, 60-62 (1992/1993) - Mas Rimbau | Northern suburb | 3 rd – 5 th century AD | 372 |
| Av. Josep Gramunt Subiela, 41-53 / C. Lluís Domènech i Muntaner, 18-32 / Av. Juan Antonio i Guardias, 60-62 (1992/1993) - Mas Rimbau | Northern suburb | 3 rd – 5 th century AD | 136 |
| Av. Josep Gramunt Subiela, 41-53 / C. Lluís Domènech i Muntaner, 18-32 / Av. Juan Antonio i Guardias, 60-62 (1991) - Mas Rimbau | Northern suburb | 3 rd – 5 th century AD | 6 |
| C. Sant Auguri, 1-9 (1995) | Northern suburb | 4 th –6 th century AD | 6 |
| Necròpolis de Sant Fructuós (1925-1934) | Western suburb | 3 rd – 6 th century AD | 2041 |
| Av. Prat de la Riba - Av. Ramon i Cajal, (1994) | Western suburb | End 3 rd century– 450 AD | 234 |
| C. Manuel de Falla, 10 / Av. Vidal i Barraquer, 40-42 / C. Felip Pedrell, 13 (2001) | Western suburb | 4 th –6 th century AD | 12 |
| C. Sant Auguri, 1-9 (1995) | Northern suburb | 4 th –6 th century AD | 6 |
| C. l'Alguer, 5 (1998) | Western suburb | 325–450 AD | 4 |
| C. Pere Martell, 15 (1998) | Western suburb | 5 th –6 th century AD | 91 |
| Av. Joan Antoni Guardias, 64-70 / C. Lluís Domènech i Muntaner, 1-13 (1997) - Mas Rimbau | Northern suburb | 5 th –6 th century AD | 68 |
| Av. Joan Antoni Guardias, 15 (2000) - Mas Rimbau | Northern suburb | Not determined | 9 |

List of archaeological excavations with human remains documented since 2009 in the city of Tarragona (Figures 2 and 3. Maps 2 and 3, respectively).

1. The first funerary areas of Tarraco (2nd to 1st centuries BC)

In about the year 100 BC, Tarraco was beginning to take shape as a Roman city. The land near the former Iberian *oppidum* had been prepared for urban development by means of a large regular reticle and was defined by *insulae* of 1 by 2 *actus*. At the same time, an extensive sewer system or *cloaca maxima* was built that crossed the length of the city following a natural gully that, thanks to Hernández Sanahuja, we know began at the top of the hill of Tarragona. The second phase of the

construction of the city walls was also undertaken during the second half of the 2nd century BC and involved the clear expansion of the *pomoerium* and, we assume, was the first great transformation of the *portus tarraconensis*. This city in transformation needed a new centre and that gave rise to the construction of the *forum*, the heart of civic life for the citizens of Tarraco.

The space encircled by the city walls began gradually filling with areas intended for use by the civic community. But what areas were set aside for the dead in the republican era? Scant evidence has survived concerning the funerary customs of the city during the 2nd century BC and the information we do have has primarily been gleaned from inscriptions⁴ and decorative architectural features that shed little light on the reality of the time. All of this data come from the city's western suburb, a sector bordered to the east by the republican city walls, to the north by the coastline and to the west by the Francolí River. These were the early years of the great Roman city that, through continual expansion radiating from its port, covered an area of approximately 80 to 90 hectares by the 2nd century AD. The republican city gazed upon the sea and over the alluvial plains of the Francolí River, which constituted the strategic means of military penetration into the interior of the peninsula and which accommodated the fertile lands that provided sustenance for the citizens of Tarraco.

A road, possibly dating to the Iberian period, crossed through this area and has enjoyed a very long life, very likely coinciding with the medieval La Fonteta road, which is today called Carrer Eivissa. We know very little, almost nothing, of the necropolises and the funerary practices of the Iberians who inhabited *Tarrakon/Kese* before the Romans arrived. When the first Italics installed themselves in the city, they located their epitaphs and monumental tombs on the sides of the main and most frequently travelled roads, which at that time was the La Fonteta road. Romanised indigenous individuals imitated Roman customs as a sign of prestige and an element of social inclusion. However, they did not completely abandon their identity, and their tombs suggest that a sort of cultural hybridisation was taking place. A good example of this phenomenon is the bilingual epitaphs written in both the Latin and the Iberian alphabet.⁵

Three cremated bodies deposited in *kalathoi* from this period have been recovered near Carrer Felip Pedrell and in the Avinguda de Ramón i Cajal (Otiña/Pociña, 2005; Mir, 2000). They are the only three known vestiges of the funerary practices of the republican era and, at the same time, they constitute the first evidence of cremation in the city. These three cremations have various traits in common. In all three cases, the ashes of the deceased were placed in an Iberian *kalathos* painted with geometric designs. To protect the ashes, a black gloss Campanian pottery (type A) plate was placed over the wide mouth of the urn (Lamboglia type 36). Two of the urns had been placed at the bottom of shallow pits excavated into the rock, while the third had been inserted into a small hole made in the sandy stratum that covered the rock. All three of the bodies had been cremated according to the Roman ritual of cremation and their ashes placed within an urn. Inside one of the pits and around one of the urns, three ceramic unguentaria were found that show evidence of contact with fire.⁶

⁴ The oldest Latin funerary inscription in Tarraco is found on the epitaph of Cn. Lucretius, son of Luci, of the Scaptia tribe (RIT 12). The epitaph was dated to the end of the 2nd century to the start of the 1st century BC by Professor G. Alföldy (Alföldy, 1975). According to B. Ariño (2008:155-6) although the deceased was a member of the Scaptia tribe, which was very uncommon in Hispania, he was a Roman citizen because the tribe to which the new citizens were assigned to was the Sergia tribe.

⁵ RIT 9, 18. An archaeological fragment with a Corinthian capital and part of architrave with the Iberian inscription: [-]NEI /]ban). Traditionally this architectural element had been attributed to a hypothetical temple to Apollo. The most recent interpretations based on analysis of the architecture lead to a new interpretation. C. Berns (2008) believes this to be an architectural fragment from the corner of a turritiform funerary monument from the republican era.

These three cremations verify the assimilation of Roman ritual practice, even though the funerary container used was a vessel typical of the indigenous people. This would have been a logical choice, as the ceramic vessels used were very modest and *kalathoi* would have been widely available at that time.⁷ It is also possible that this is an example of the phenomenon of cultural hybridisation similar to that reflected in the bilingual inscriptions. Taking all this together, it is extremely difficult to ascertain whether these are the tombs of individuals that came from Italy or whether they are the remains of Romanised locals.

Starting from the 1st century BC, and especially during the second half of that century, the funerary panorama changed markedly. A significant increase occurred both in the number of epitaphs in stone and in architectural decorative components belonging to monumental tombs. Epitaphs were still being written in both languages at this time, but inscriptions commemorating individuals from the freed class were becoming more and more common. Interestingly, some of these epitaphs are made up of actual lists of individuals who depended on the same *patronus*.⁸ Many of the inscriptions dating from the 1st century BC are engraved in blocks of local stone, indicating that they formed parts of walls or other structures of a certain monumental character. On the other hand, other epigraphs were engraved in more humble media, such as *stelae* with rounded ends.⁹

This funerary, and especially monumental, boom documented in the area of the La Fonteta road can be explained by the general upswing the city was experiencing at the time. First of all, Julius Caesar had made Tarraco a colony in about 49 BC. The elite citizens of Tarraco took their places within the new order, and during this period the first honorary inscriptions began to appear (Alföldy, 2001:63). In the last quarter of the 1st century BC, a significant phase of construction was put into action in the city: at the foot of the hill, near the sea, in the location later occupied by the theatre, port warehouses were built, which demonstrated the vitality and dynamism of the port of Tarraco. This phase of expansion culminated during the principdom of Augustus, when the emperor himself took to the city during a period of convalescence, making Tarraco the imperial seat for two years as well as the capital of the *provincia Hispania Citerior*. After the change of era, the reign of the Julio-Claudian emperors sparked a period of economic splendour, demographic growth and, above all, increased political influence in Rome on the part of the elite citizens of Tarraco, which was also reflected in the urban development of the city and its funerary epigraphs.

Archaeology has revealed the appearance of great public buildings during this time, the proliferation of *thermae* and the development of rich domestic architecture evidenced by a wealth of monumental statues and massive road paving works. Part of this richness was due to increased use of the land based on the Italic model of production known as *uillae*. A *forum adiectum* was built next to the colony's republican forum, which featured a legal basilica and possibly a *calcidicum* with statues. Remodelling work got underway in what is now the historic quarter of the city (the Part Alta), which was later completed with the installation of the seat of the *Concilium Prouvinciae Hispaniae Citerioris*. The theatre leisure complex and public baths were built on the seafront, and the *intra* and *extra moenia* road network was refurbished. During the rule of Domitianus, the monumentalisation of the city centre within the walls was completed with the construction of

⁶ This data was provided through the results of Jordi López's research on these materials. He is currently preparing an article for publication in the near future.

⁷ In the necropolis of Galia Cisalpina and el Véneto the survival of indigenous ceramic containers from fires of the late republican era has also been documented (see Fasold et al., 2004).

⁸ Inscriptions RIT 6, 10 and 14 are illustrative examples of this (Alföldy, 1975).

⁹ The epitaphs of Decimus Titurnius Diphilus (RIT 16) and Lucia (RIT 11) belong to this class. These steles, designed to indicate the locus sepulturae, are less than a half a metre high.

first the circus and later the amphitheatre at the beginning of the 2nd century AD, thanks to an act of benevolence from a provincial *flamen*. The port, the centre of the city's economic activity, was expanded towards the west with the construction of new warehouses.

2. The splendour of the burial routes (1st-2nd centuries AD)

The development of the peri-urban road network took on particular importance in the formation of the funerary areas of Tarraco in subsequent centuries. As mentioned earlier, during the late republican period the first burial areas of Tarraco were established in the western suburb of the city alongside the La Fonteta road, where the elite citizens of Tarraco erected funerary monuments directly inspired by those built on the Italic peninsula. In the era of Augustus, a second funerary area was born in the eastern suburb of the city, located to the east of what is today the historic centre of the city of Tarragona. It covers a sector of land bordered to the north by the Roman, medieval and modern city walls and to the south by the sea at Miracle beach. The first tombs occupying this area outside the walls began to appear during the principdom of Augustus, connecting the first funerary evidence with the road works ordered by the emperor himself. Although these road works have been well documented by means of milestones found in Tarragona dating from between the years 12 and 6 BC (RIT 934), such conclusive evidence is lacking at an archaeological level. Archaeological excavations in the western area and near the Francolí River have documented other stretches of road that have been dated to the Augustus era (López Vilar, 2006:52). The existence of a road in this sector of the western suburb during the reign of Augustus can also be inferred by funerary remains dating to that time (Koppel, 2009:505-11).¹⁰ The presence of burial monuments as well as funerary portraits, which would be integrated in the turriform type funerary monuments used in the last years of the 1st century BC along the La Fonteta road, corroborate the monumentalisation of the road.

The road improvement work in the eastern suburb opened up access to that part of the city, doing away with what had been a rough track along the Minerva tower and allowing entrance by means of what is now the Rambla Vella. This determined the location of the southernmost façade of the circus nearly a century later. It was probably under the rule of Augustus that the gateway was built using the opus quadratum technique that brought the road into Tarraco (Dupré et al., 1988:65), and it is possible that at that time the first monumental tombs were also built near the new gate. This is indirectly indicated by some decorative architectural features that are still embedded in the medieval and modern city walls.¹¹ Furthermore, the oldest inscriptions recovered in this suburb – the epigraphs of Rubenia (RIT 15), of L. Minucius Philargurus (RIT 13) and the epitaph of Ephesius (RIT 5) – have all been dated to between the last years of the republic and the first years of the empire.

During the first half of the 1st century AD, tombs began to appear in the areas of the eastern suburb nearest to the city. In fact, the first mausoleums and burial grounds were built in the Julio-Claudian era. This is when we see a quantitative leap in terms of archaeological evidence, with a boom in

¹⁰ In his article, E. M. Koppel examines a total of nine statue torsos which correspond to the funerary depictions of four men and two women. Four of these statues, all hewn from local stone, are surely from the paleo-Christian necropolis and have been dated by the author to the third quarter of the 1st century BC.

¹¹ This refers to two fragments from friezes which are part of the wall decorations on the of Passeig de Sant Antoni. One of the friezes depicts the head of a bull surrounded by garlands. In the other the triglyphs of a Doric frieze can be discerned. During the excavations of the amphitheatre by Ted'a a piece which depicted a bull and a small boat and was very similar to the aforementioned pieces was recovered (Ted'a, 1990, AFO-1047). Based on stylistic considerations, these pieces have been dated to the late republican era and the Augustan era.

funerary vestiges suddenly appearing in all of the city's suburbs. The use of the eastern suburb for funerary purposes intensified greatly during the first and second centuries. Part of this jump in funerary evidence coincides with the time at which the Tarraco amphitheatre was being built, during the first half of the 2nd century (Ted'a, 1990). An *extra moenia* site (outside the walls) was chosen near one of the city gates which opened onto the great architectural complex made up of the worship grounds, forum square, and the circus. The amphitheatre was the last large structure that Tarraco added to its urban landscape, which eliminated a small funerary space that was located near the road leading to the port area. This stretch of road had to be diverted to adapt to the new topography of the area.

The funerary areas of the western suburb had to compete for space with very solid urban development made up of luxurious suburban residences, more humble domestic dwellings and areas dedicated to production activities. In fact, the very densely built up area near the gate in the city walls meant that funerary areas had to be located increasingly further afield. However, archaeological studies have detected the presence of open-air areas with a square layout and monumental tombs to the north and south of the road (Amo and Barriach, 1975:111-2). During the first half of the 2nd century AD, a large group of funerary monuments was established along the end section of the La Fonteta road consisting of a very wide range of types from turriform tombs to monumental altars.¹² Several tombs have also been discovered in another area on the outskirts of Tarraco, although these are not linked to a main road like those in the eastern and western suburbs. It is on the northern periphery of the city, in a large area located to the northwest of the walled city of Tarragona. Here, the presence of archaeological remains is quite weak compared to other areas surrounding the city. However, several archaeological vestiges of tombs and funerary monuments have been recovered dating to the turn of the 2nd to 3rd centuries AD (Figure 4).

In terms of the treatment of the cadaver, cremated and buried remains share the same funerary spaces in the necropolises of Tarraco. This means that the members of a single family might be either cremated or buried depending on the preferences of the family at the time. During the 1st century AD and, to a lesser extent, during the 2nd century AD, cremations and burials occurred side by side, although *humatio* was the dominant rite. Therefore, it seems the choice of one rite over another was due to family traditions and personal options and cannot be attributed exclusively to specific religious or eschatological beliefs. In absolute numbers, of a total of 644 funerary units documented in Tarraco during this period, only 28 correspond to cremations (4.34%). The remaining 616 funerary units (95.65%) are burials. Cremations took place within an extensive chronological framework stretching from the 2nd century BC to the end of the 2nd century AD. These can be categorised into two groups: primary cremations and secondary cremations. Primary cremations generally coincide with *busta*, where the body is cremated in the same place in which the ashes will be deposited. Secondary cremations involve the more or less complete transport of the remains of the deceased (*ossilegium*) who had previously been cremated in the family or public *ustrinum*, or funeral pyre. Meanwhile, those who chose the interment route were usually buried in simple graves or in graves covered with a horizontal A-frame *tegulae* roof. Other types of funerary vessels have also been documented, such as sarcophagi and lead coffins.

The funerary rite did not only involve the disposal of the body. Other items were also buried, such as funerary trousseaux. Some of the items in this collection of goods had belonged to the deceased, while others were little gifts or *munera* that the participants in the *funus* deposited in the

¹² Often only the foundations of the structures have survived. The poor state of preservation of these structures very frequently makes it impossible to recreate their original form. However, several architectural decorative elements are available which help us to deduce the size of the original monument (see Claveria, 2008 and 2009).

tomb. Other objects were of symbolic worth, such as coins or lamps, and still others were provided as protective charms to ward off bad fortune. Of a total of 644 documented tombs, only 136, or 21.11%, had trousseaux. These data emphasise that the people of the time did not ascribe to any single ritual behaviour, but rather employed a wide range of customs and variability that regional studies must verify and contextualise. During the development of Christian funerary archaeology, the “typical pagan tomb” was obsessively sought after for the purpose of comparing it with the “typical Christian tomb”. The presence of trousseaux and a different orientation were considered clear signs of paganism. But the presence of trousseaux is not a distinguishing feature of pagan tombs if funerary behaviours actually reflect religious beliefs.

The objects recovered in the tombs of the funeral areas of Tarraco stand out for their lack of variability. Coins, oil lamps, unguentaria and ceramic recipients appear in profusion. Many of these are items linked to specific ritual practices, such as the wake (lamps¹³), the cleansing and displaying of the body (unguentaria) and the making of offerings and celebration of funerary feasts (plates, bowls, cups). Others, such as coins and amulets are meant to protect the deceased from harmful influences and ensure a peaceful journey to the afterworld. Despite the overwhelming uniformity that characterises the composition of the trousseaux, there are some exceptions. Some of the trousseaux recovered from the tombs of women and children display notable differences. In some women’s tombs, personal grooming items have been recovered such as mirrors, boxes of cosmetics, combs, and implements used for make-up. The presence of these components defines the social identity of the woman as a *matron*. Another exceptional case is found in the tombs of children. *Immatura* or *acerba* death is particularly dramatic and traumatic, and this is reflected in the trousseaux of children, which stand out for the presence of numerous amulets and toys (Figure 5).

The cycle of ritual did not end with placing the trousseau near the body inside the tomb. At that time, the deceased received recognition of his or her new condition from the community of the living through various rites of aggregation. The funeral banquet (*silicernium*) in which libations were made, was held on the same day as the funeral. In the funerary areas of Tarraco, no architectural structures intended for the celebration of banquets have been documented. This is probably because these feasts were frugal affairs that would have made use of simple wooden furnishings for the event. However, animal remains have been documented in some tombs, including eggs as well as the bones of sheep, goats, rabbits, oxen and hens. In other cases, offerings of food during the *silicernium* can be inferred through the presence of ceramic dishes in the interior of the tomb. The presence of special channels in sarcophaguses and tombs bear witness to the rite of *profusio* or the offering of libations (Figure 6).

3. The establishment of large suburban cemeteries (3rd-4th centuries AD)

Starting at the end of the 2nd century AD a series of economic and political transformations took place in Tarraco, in keeping with the global context of Hispania at the time. These changes gave rise to a stage of regression in terms of the wellbeing of the residents in many rural settlements as well as in the city of Tarraco itself. Epigraphs from the time indicate that new parameters defined the elite citizens of Tarraco – a phenomenon that has been associated with the consequences of the civil war between Septimius Severus and Clodius Albinus. The adherence of the nobility of the Citerior to the cause defeated by Septimius may have triggered the beginning of the political decline of the *prouincia Hispania Citerior*. In the 3rd century, the city was also partially destroyed by

¹³ Lamps were given to the dead as gifts in festivals for the dead: ita ut ... omnib(us) K(alendis), nonis, idibus suis quisquib(us) mensib(us) lucerna lucens... ponatur incenso imposito (CIL VI, 10248).

Frankish invaders and the expansion of the province was cut short during Diocletian's reform. Archaeological studies have revealed that the city no longer had the resources needed to maintain its theatre, its sewer system, its street cleaners or many of its port warehouses. New construction practices were gradually put into place, as demonstrated by a decline in the resources used and an evolution that many consider a precursor to the medieval city structure.

With regard to death and burial, at around the middle of the 2nd century we start to see the first changes in the funerary scene described above. At that time many suburban structures, which had been left empty and abandoned, began being used for burials. This gave rise to small necropolises made up of a maximum of four tombs and located far from the main roads. It is hard to pinpoint the reasons for this phenomenon, but it seems that these necropolises located in run-down areas reflect the funerary practices of a poorer population. And it is likely that this practice was abusive, that is, that the families that used these properties to bury their dead were not their rightful owners. These practices are confirmed by legislative texts such as the *Lex Lucerina* of the colony of Luceria, which establishes the prohibition of littering (*stercus*) or dumping bodies (*cadavera*) on land belonging to someone else (Carrol, 2006:74-5).

At the end of the 2nd century, we also see a decline in terms of construction activity in the funerary areas along the La Fonteta road and in the section of the Via Augusta that passed through the eastern suburb. Some of the monumental tombs began to fall into ruin and their architectural features were plundered. There were still areas in which some late-imperial structures underwent remodelling, although they continued receiving tombs, especially in the western suburb.¹⁴ In the eastern suburb, on the other hand, we find fewer and fewer tombs dating from the period, until eventually funerary activity completely died out in the middle of the 3rd century. In some ways, this was bound to happen, as the progressive Christianisation of the city brought with it a loss of regard for the old pagan architecture. A good example of this might be the refurbishment of the city wall in the *Barcino* neighbourhood, which resulted in the destruction of a good part of the peri-urban funerary architecture for the purpose of reusing the construction and epigraphic materials.

Throughout the 3rd century, the suburban landscape underwent significant change. This began with the development of extensive open-air cemetery areas, the use of which reached a peak during the 4th and 5th centuries. These are uncovered funerary areas that expanded outward without affecting the tombs already in place and which were crossed by narrow paths. They mixed with other funerary sites without differentiating between social classes. This is how the necropolis of Mas Rimbau came to be located on the northern periphery of the city on the slope of Oliva hill, separated from the walled city centre by about 700 metres during the second half of the 3rd century. An extensive funerary belt made up of the Pere Martell necropolises was also developed in the western suburb, north of the La Fonteta road and near the route of the Via Augusta (Amo, 1973), the Parc de la Ciutat (Ted'a, 1987) and Avinguda Prat de la Riba.

South of the La Fonteta route and towards the port area, as of the end of the 2nd century we begin seeing a great transformation related to the abandonment or reduction of the port warehouse system erected in earlier times. Domestic privatisation also becomes clear through the appearance of widely dispersed suburban houses containing evidence of isolated burials, a few architectural tombs and a large mausoleum. This corresponds to another type of funerary practice, with more

¹⁴ In the sector of the necropolis documented near Avinguda Vidal i Barraquer evidence of activities of this type has been detected in the funerary areas of the Julio-Claudian era (Remolà and Sánchez, 2004).

widely scattered sites integrated in the new urban landscape defined during the 4th century. But this built-up and lively urban area lacked large open-air funerary areas, as here there was a clear coexistence between the living and dead.

We have already mentioned that at the end of the La Fonteta road, in the western suburb, there was an extensive funerary area dating from the late imperial era or even earlier. At the end of the 3rd century, a period of active development began at the St. Fructuosus necropolis, located near the Francolí River and clearly associated with the road running parallel to it. The complex reached its peak during the decline of the empire (4th, 5th centuries), a time at which an extensive and rich Christian necropolis – *ad sanctos* – was developed in association with the memory of the local martyrs: Fructuosus, Augurius and Eulogius (López, 2006). The funerary rite of cremation all but disappeared during this period, with no documented cases of cremation in any of the funerary areas of Tarraco. The rite of burial had taken hold for good. Trousseau and others materials related to the funerary rite also become scarce. This does not mean that these rites stopped being performed, but rather that there is less evidence of them in archaeological record, which leads us to believe that a generalised impoverishment affected the people and/or a change in mentality had taken place.

4. The dead in the *Terracona* of late antiquity (5th-6th centuries AD)

In an increasingly Christian society, the peri-urban roads and the large Christian complex along the Francolí River best describe the funerary topography of the time. And although the area inside the city walls was undergoing a process of ruralisation (except in the topmost section of the city called the Part Alta), the area on the perimeter of the city walls maintained its legal status during the 5th century and burials did not occur within the zone. In the 5th century, as the only peninsular capital not affected by bands of Germanic invaders, Tarraco recovered part of its formerly substantial political role on the Iberian Peninsula. Once the empire fell, the Visigoths represented a shift in power, but on a cultural level, the change of rulers did not incur a change in rituals.

The funerary area known as the paleo-Christian necropolis is the greatest vestige surviving from those times. It is an extensive cemetery documented below and around a large martyr basilica built over a pre-existing wall-enclosed necropolis that had been established after the deposition of relics of the saints in the middle of the 3rd century. It is the only necropolis of Tarraco in which the prior tombs were not respected and, consequently, funerary overlapping is a constant reality, with everyone seeking proximity to the exact placement of the martyr relics (*tumulatio ad sanctus or martyres*) without concerning themselves about concealing the already existing tombs of their fellow Christians. We do not know the chronology of the Christian temple, but we can assume that it dates to the end of the 4th century, more or less the same age as the other nearby funerary basilica which was also affected by urban expansion in this part of the city. Numerous funerary mausoleums have also been found in this part of the city which, along with the many sarcophaguses, gravestones, and other funerary evidence, indicate a very attractive funerary area that people sought out in order to bury their loved ones near a local martyr or inside the funerary basilica, attributed to we know not whom.

This practice was maintained throughout the 5th century, and in the next, a series of processes took place that are still today not very well defined, but that all point to a transfer of the centre of religious prestige towards the area where the medieval cathedral is now located. Funerary practices in the sector of the Francolí River decreased and privileged citizens began being buried in the area of the cathedral. At the peak of the Visigoth era, the funerary area called Mas Rimbau was develo-

ped. The choice of this site in the 3rd century is a mystery, as it is an area removed to the south from the city, although as the crow flies it is closer to the Part Alta than the port area. It is located in one of the most undeveloped areas outside the city, but would have been easily accessible with a well-worn path marked out by funerary processions. The fact that it persisted during the Visigoth era indicates that the citizens could access it by means of paths, making this the most attractive option for the people who lived inside the city walls in the Part Alta. A clear transition took place between one phase in the 4th to 5th centuries, in which funerary vessels were amphorae or were made from terracotta, and the following centuries in which the use of stone slabs were used in the construction of coffins and covers. It was a new custom that was completely consistent with other contexts typical of Visigoth funerary practices (Figures 7 to 10).

To conclude this brief description of the funerary context of Tarraco, we must also mention that a small funerary area has been discovered inside the confines of the amphitheatre and associated with the church built there in the 6th century to commemorate the site where Saints Fructuosus, Augurius and Eulogius were martyred.

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Figura 1. Plànol 1. Planta de Tàrraco (Ciurana/Macias 2010). 1. Via republicana. 2. Via Augusta sector oriental. 3. Via de costa. 4. Via Augusta d'accés al fòrum. 5. Via Camí de la Fonteta. 6. Via portuària. 7. Via paral·lela al riu Francolí.



Figura 2. Plànol 2. Planta arqueològica de la necròpolis de Mas Rimbaud.

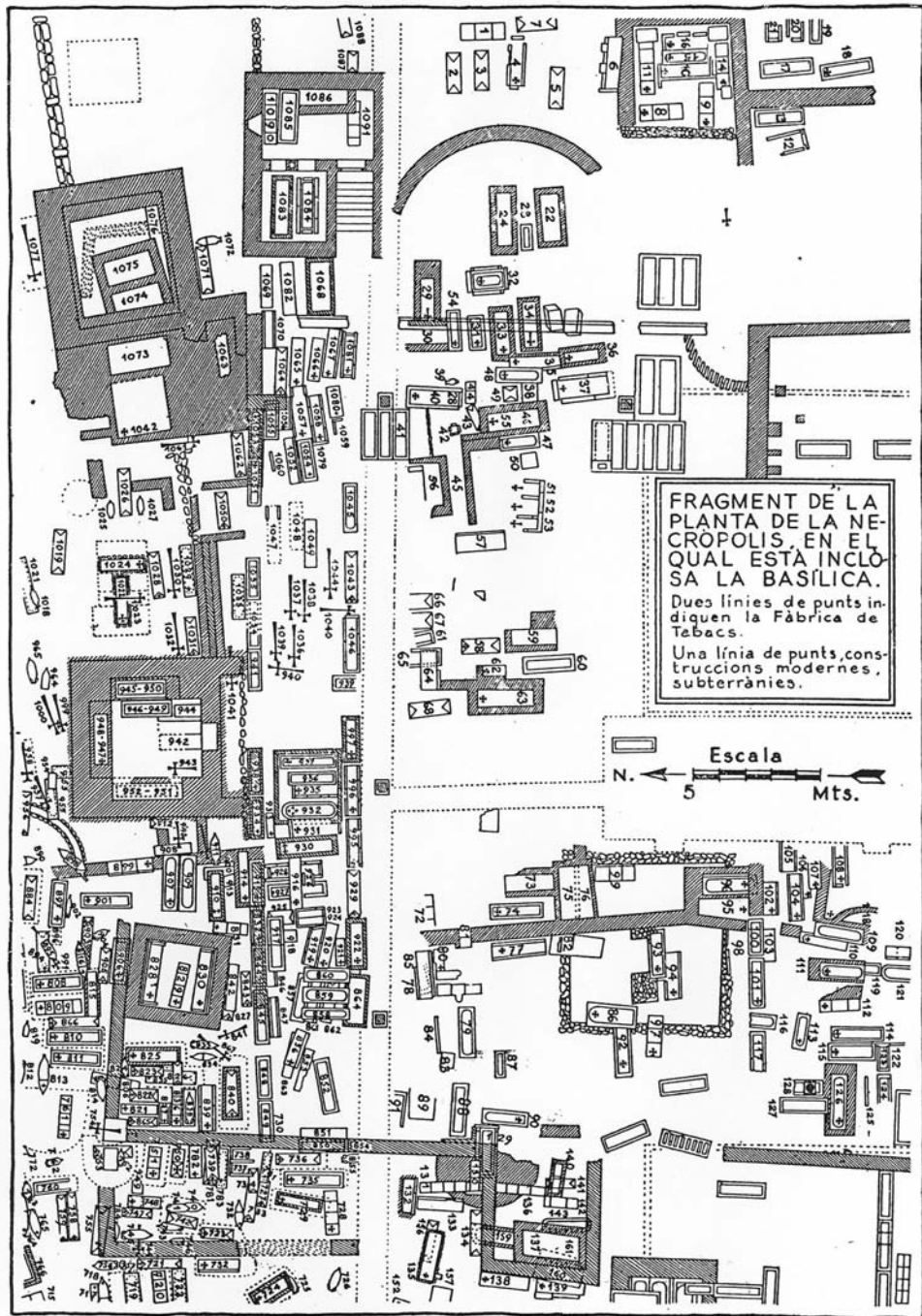


Figura 3. Plànol 3. Planimetria arqueològica de part de la necròpolis i basílica paleocristiana de la Tabacalera. (Serra Vilaró).



Figura 4. Tipologies més usuals dels suports epigràfics de les commemoracions funeràries a Tàrraco. 1. Bloc (RIT 547). 2. Placa (RIT 232). 3. Placa (RIT 367). 4. Estela (RIT 213). 5. Altar (RIT 407). 6. Pedestal d'estàtua (RIT 470). 7. Tapa de sarcòfag (RIT 503). Fotos extretes d'Alföldy 1975.



Figura 5. Mostra d'aixovars funeraris d'època altimperial. 1. Petita ànfora. 2. Anforisc. 3. 5 petits vasos. 6-7. Llànties. 8. Ungüentari. 9. Calamus de bronze. (Ciurana/Macias 2010).



Figura 6. Detall d'una tomba amb obertura per libacions del Camí dels Cossis. (Arxiu Codex).



Figura 7. Vista general de l'àrea funerària d'Antoni Guàrdias, 17. (Arxiu Codex).



Figura 8. Detall de l'àrea funerària d'Antoni Guàrdias, 17. (Arxiu Codex).



Figura 9. Detall de l'àrea funerària d'Antoni Guàrdias, 17. (Arxiu Codex).



Figura 10. Detall de l'àrea funerària d'Antoni Guàrdias, 17, amb tomba reutilitzada. (Arxiu Codex).



Figura 11. Aspecte de la pell d'un pacient afecte d'osteomielitis crònica.