

## **Buried together, buried alone: Christian commemoration and kinship in the early Middle Ages.**

*The essay aims to explore the ways in which strategies of commemoration elaborated by kin groups changed after the end of the Western Roman Empire and what role Christianity played in these transformations. In order to shed some light on the situation, a broad sample of cemeteries dated from Late Antiquity to the early Middle Ages was analyzed, focusing on the spatial organization of the individuals within the cemeteries and around cult places. For this purpose archaeological, physical anthropological and epigraphic data were studied and juxtaposed with the theoretical debates expressed by Christian writers. The data at hand seem to suggest that rather than radically transforming kinship commemoration strategies, Christianity added new ideological layers, making its use and display multi-dimensional.*

### **Introduction: san Severus' family and the practice of kinship burial**

At the beginning of the eight century Agnellus Ravennatis tells the story of Saint Severus' family burial in Classe:

When the daughter of this most blessed man confessor of Christ Severus, by name Innocentia, had died, everyone came to place her small body in the tomb of her mother Vicentia. They saw that the tomb was small and said: "Two bodies cannot rest here, since the container is too small." With tears the lord Severus said: "O wife, why are you troublesome to me? Why do you not make a place for your daughter? Take what you bore, do not hesitate to receive what was taken from your flesh. Behold I give you what you have given to me, don't be dumb. She has returned from hence she came. Give her a place for burial, do not sadden me". At his voice the

bones of his wife moved by themselves to the side with great speed so fast that living bodies of man could hardly move more swiftly, and she allowed her daughter a space for burial.

Later on:

‘One day, when he had celebrated mass and he had received the holy flesh and blood of the Lord, wrapped in the pontifical stole, he ordered his tomb to be opened, he entered alive and lying himself down between his wife and daughter, he ordered it to be closed. There, while praying he rendered up his precious soul to God.’<sup>1</sup>

Dyan Elliott points out that Severus’ wife is a disturbing presence in Agnellus’ narrative. At the time the *liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis* was written, Europe, under the auspices of the Carolingian Reform, was experiencing the first series of attacks on clerical marriage. Agnellus, aware of these debates, constructed the story of Severus first acknowledging and then conciliating the anxieties surrounding the figure of the clerical wife. Nonetheless, “the tensions surrounding the clerical wife as a constructed problem are confronted and then dispelled. What remains at the center and also, in many ways, central to this account is the image of peace when the family is finally reunited in death.”<sup>2</sup> What interests us here are not the debates concerning the priest’s wife, but rather the fact that Severus’ family burial is legitimate in light of the purity of the couple and the achievement of spiritual marriage, values defining well behaved Christians deserving to be buried together.

Interestingly, the first location of the relics of Saint Severus was brought to light in Classe; it was a small chapel paved with mosaics where Severus’ name appeared.<sup>3</sup> At the end of the sixth century his body was translated inside a newly built basilica. What about his daughter and wife? Were they really buried with him as Agnellus says? And, if so, did they eventually remain in the small chapel? We will never know.<sup>4</sup> However, the small chapel remained an important burial place and it was flanked, at the same time the basilica was built, by a new family mausoleum. Subsequently, eleven more single and multiple graves were created around and inside the chapels.

In one of these graves nine individuals were found.<sup>5</sup> Debora Ferreri, analyzed the individuals and found that their epigenetic traits would indicate consanguineous relations among them. This kind of grave was in use from the seventh until the tenth century.<sup>6</sup> Was this a family burial used for many generations?

Starting from these puzzles, this essay is addressed to the subject of family burial and the changing strategies of kinship commemoration under the influence of ecclesiastical regulations.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth century imagination, the early medieval world was characterized by the meeting and clash of two distinct cultural groups: the Roman and the barbarian. The polarity between these two entities was projected to all aspects of society, including family structure. Unlike the Roman family, which was hierarchically structured under the power of the *pater familias*, the Germanic family was characterized by a more open structure and by horizontal, *cognatic*, ties. Recently the rigid and binary construction of this type has been revised, revealing the complexities of the transformations of the family system from the end of Antiquity and the fact that these changes started within the Roman world.<sup>7</sup> A particularly important role in this process of transformation was played by bishops which, by promoting themselves as alternative defenders of the *domus* and more widely, of the social order, transformed and deteriorated the power of the *pater familias*.<sup>8</sup>

One of the perspectives through which such processes of transformation can be observed is that of memory. Many studies were dedicated in the past decades to the strategies of remembering and oblivion elaborated by aristocratic families as a way of mediating their identities and establishing their cohesion.<sup>9</sup> Christianity offered important new tools for such strategies: the foundation of monasteries and churches and the establishment of funerary areas around them were ways for keeping the patrimony intact in spite of fragmentation caused by equally divisible inheritance among the offspring, and for creating places of memory around which kin groups could identify themselves and display their status.<sup>10</sup> The success of such new strategies resulted in an increasingly important role for the clergy, which started to promote itself as the medium between

the living and the dead. Therefore, while during the Roman period funerals were organized and displayed directly by the relatives of the dead person, during the early Middle Ages the clergy started to take on the role of “memory organizer”.<sup>11</sup> As Michel Lauwers has pointed out, Christianity transformed the cult of death from a private affair into a public one.<sup>12</sup> In this process, local bishops started promoting new ways of defining social ties and status, which were not connected exclusively to kinship any more but mostly to new values of Christian behaviour. In this process, biological parenthood lost its relevance and was substituted by spiritual relationships. These transformations were, however, not linear and very often spiritual superiority just masked power and strategic kinship relationships and, moreover, members of influential families could be part of the laity or the clergy acting for the same objectives. It is only in the later Middle Ages that the division between laity and clergy become more clearly defined.<sup>13</sup>

Memory strategies have been best explored by written sources, particularly wills and donations, which testify to the direct intentions of the authors.<sup>14</sup> Much less attention has been dedicated to these aspects in studying the archaeological record.

While during the Roman period, family relationships can be investigated through the analyses of funerary inscriptions, the decline of this practice during the early Middle Ages and the wider diffusion of grave goods depositions makes the interpretation of graves more complex for this historical period. However, in spite of the decrease of written memorialisation still archaeologists have recently stressed the role of mourners in preparing the grave and selecting the artefacts for their relatives. It has been noticed that in certain areas particular emphasis was given to gender identity and social status connected to the life cycle, so for instance females dying while fertile received the most lavish grave goods. These graves have been interpreted as the result of a conscious behaviour operated by kin groups to compensate for an important loss through funerary rituals, in fact the dead of a young daughter would have meant the demise of important social connections and the possibility of having new heirs through her marriage.<sup>15</sup> With Christianization new values were gradually spread: the ideal of humility and simplicity and the care for the souls in

the afterlife transformed the investments for burial. Family goods were not any more interred into the graves but were donated to the Church for releasing the soul after death;<sup>16</sup> at the same time the desire of proximity to the holy, perceived as a reflection of the position in Heaven, generated a new emphasis on funerary space which, as many scholars have stressed, become hierarchical.<sup>17</sup> If the attention of archaeologists has been addressed to investigate the transformations of cemetery topography generated by these new Christian values, less attention has been paid to understand the familial dimension in the archaeological context.

Starting from this background, the aim of this paper is to consider the transformations of burial practices from Antiquity to the early Middle Ages, focusing on the visibility or invisibility of kinship ties in the context of Christian cemeteries and how family intervention in commemoration was transformed. In order to offer new insights, my perspective will be diachronic and multidisciplinary: I will employ written, epigraphic and archaeological sources considered on the long term, from the 4<sup>th</sup> until the 11<sup>th</sup> century AD.

First of all I will consider theoretical texts elaborated by the clergy on the matter of the care for the dead, I am particularly curious to see what role was auspicated for kinship members and laity mourners.

Secondly, I will investigate a consistent sample of funerary epitaphs with the aim of considering in which ways the emphasis on kinship ties, visible during Roman times, changed during late Antiquity. For this purpose I have collected and analyzed 418 funerary inscriptions from Aquileia, dated from the 1<sup>st</sup> until the 4<sup>th</sup> century, and 185 epitaphs from the cemetery of Manastirine in Salona, dated from the 4<sup>th</sup> until the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. These two sites offer the most comprehensive sample of epigraphic material excavated until now<sup>18</sup> and because they date to subsequent phases they are very useful in grasping the changes in epigraphic commemoration through space and time. Moreover the funerary monuments from Manastirine are particularly interesting because they were in connection with a Christian cult place which was transformed physically and conceptually by the construction of a basilica during the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> century

A.D. In addition, I have also collected a sample of 338 epitaphs found inside or around churches from different sites in Italy, dated from the 5<sup>th</sup> until the 9<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>19</sup> All this data allows seeing how the practice of funerary inscriptions and kinship commemoration were transformed on the long term as the result of Christianization of death and the development of Christian cemeteries.

Thirdly, I will consider burials connected to churches to try and understand the ways funerary rituals were transformed. For this purpose, I have collected a sample of 1235 graves found inside and outside 150 churches located in Italy and dated from the 4<sup>th</sup> until the 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>20</sup> The graves contained in total 1357 individuals, however anthropological analyses of the skeletons were performed on 932 individuals only. I would like to stress here that this is a pilot project: data collection of both the epigraphic and archaeological records is still in progress. I am still gathering sites and implementing the dataset therefore the results here presented might slightly change in the future.

By juxtaposing written texts concerning the care of the dead with epigraphic and archaeological data I want to see to what extent different means of communication diverged or met in promoting and displaying commemoration and in defining the role of mourners. Lets' start considering the written evidence first.

### ***From sepulcrum patrum to corpora in ecclesiis sepulta***

When talking about burials, early Christian writers refer to them using the definition of *sepulcrum patrum*. Ambrose of Milan stressed the importance of being buried in such places of memory. In his *de Abraham* written around the year 378, he says: “we shall construct our graves not in foreign places but rather next to our relatives or nearest ones”.<sup>21</sup>

Ambrose seems here attached to the Roman tradition which precisely defined, through legislation, the rights over grave property and the roles of kinship members.

For example, in the Digest of Justinian (530-533), which contains the Roman laws, in the part dedicated to burials and funerals which is titled *De religiosis et sumptibus funerum et ut funus*

*ducere liceat*, at point 5 he cites a definition of Gaius (a jurist of the second century AD) which clarifies the meaning of burials made for one's heirs or for the members of one's household: 'Tombs which a man builds for himself and his household are called household tombs, those he constructs for himself and his heirs are called hereditary tombs.'<sup>22</sup> Further, at point 6 of the same chapter, Ulpian (end of the second –beginning of the third century) says:

In each kind of tomb, his heirs and other successors of whatever sort may be buried and may bury their dead, even if they are heirs to a very small share by will or by intestacy and even without the consent of the other heirs. The same right is granted to children of either sex and of any degree, even emancipated children whether they have qualified as heirs or have refused the inheritance. Unless the testator, acting out of reasonable ill-feeling, has specifically forbidden it, those who have been disinherited are allowed on compassionate grounds to be buried there themselves, but they may not bury anyone other than their own descendants. Freedmen can neither be buried nor bury others, unless they are heirs to their patron, although some people have inscribed on their tomb that they have built it for themselves and their freedmen.<sup>23</sup>

Thus family graves were meant to be representative of larger groups of blood-relatives or of members of the same household.

The archaeological data testify to the widespread use of family funerary enclosures, during the first and second centuries.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, the large sample of funerary epitaphs from Aquileia, dated to the first and second centuries A.D. indicates that 40% of individuals were commemorated alone, while the remaining 60% of the individuals were commemorated in the epitaphs together with other members of their family or household. Epitaphs are eager to indicate the bond among those who are buried together. As can be seen from [figure 1](#), most of the epitaphs commemorating more than one individual included either a couple or members of extended kin groups which, as suggested by

Ulpian, could include also freedmen or freedwomen. It seems, therefore, that Ambrose of Milan recalled this funerary trend when referring to: *tumulos parentum vel proximorum*.<sup>25</sup>

However, only three decades later the perspective toward family graves had changed. Augustine, in fact, denies their importance and more generally emphasizes the secondary role played by burial places and funerals. In his *Confessions*, he praises his mother Monica for having chosen to be buried in a church near the altar, rather than in her homeland near her ancestors: ‘In fact as her final day was approaching, she did not consider having her body contained in a sumptuous grave, nor having it preserved with unguents, she did not desire a precious monument nor a grave close to her relatives.’<sup>26</sup>

Moreover, in his *De cura pro mortuis gerenda*, written around 420, Augustine explains that ‘The solemnity of funerals, the nobility of the grave, the grandiosity of rituals are rather a comfort for those who remain, and not for those who have passed away.’<sup>27</sup> The care for the dead is a way of showing respect to the corpses which contained the souls and were created by God, but does not guarantee salvation. And further on:

Then the only reason why the name Memorials or Monuments is given to those sepulchers of the dead which become specially distinguished, is that they recall to memory and by putting them in mind cause us to think of those who by death are withdrawn from the eyes of the living, that they may not by forgetfulness also be withdrawn from men's hearts.<sup>28</sup>

In the same way, being buried near to one’s family is a comfort only for the living. In fact, Augustine writes:

We find in the Books of Kings, God through one prophet threatens another prophet who had transgressed His word, saying that his body should not be brought into the sepulchre of his fathers.[...] Now, if in considering what interpretation is to be made of this punishment, we go by the Gospel, where we have learned that after the slaying of the body there is no cause for fear lest the lifeless members should

suffer anything, it is not even to be called a punishment. But if we consider a man's human affection towards his own flesh, it was possible for him to be frightened or saddened, while living, by that for which he would have no feeling when dead.<sup>29</sup>

These ideas became a central concept developed by later Christian writers during the medieval period. Gregory the Great, Isidore of Seville, Alcuin, Jonas of Orleans, Hrabanus Maurus and Hincmar all discuss in detail the matter of graves in the terms raised by Augustine.<sup>30</sup> However, they no longer refer to them as *sepulcrum patrum*, but as *corpora in ecclesiis sepulta*, they thus seem to shift the emphasis on burials from a familial dimension to one where position is central.

### ***Christiana devotio* and burial location**

If we consider epitaphs again, it seems that by the time both Ambrose and Augustine were writing commemoration had changed making kinship increasingly less visible on stone monuments. The sample from Aquileia I have analyzed seems to indicate that from the third century on only very few people were still commemorated through an epitaph and they figure now as single individuals (figure 2). Similar trends can be recorded also in the epigraphic material from the site of Manastirine outside the ancient walls of Salona, in the Dalmatian coast.<sup>31</sup> Here a Christian funerary place developed during the fourth century on a pre-existing cemetery, which was in use from the first century A.D. Later on, around the middle of the fifth century a basilica was built. In this prestigious funerary area, kinship relations can still be observed during the fourth century; they are mainly represented by couples (figure 3).<sup>32</sup> In this phase, graves were dug because of the presence of a cult site which developed around a central area where possibly the body of Saint Domnio, bishop of Salona and martyr, was buried, followed by the depositions of other martyrs and bishops.<sup>33</sup> According to archeological reconstructions this cult site was organized in the form of family chapels arranged in a circular manner around the martyrs' graves (figure 4). This family oriented burial place was apparently razed to construct the basilica during the second half of the fifth century.<sup>34</sup> The epitaphs on stone coffins connected to the basilica become silent about kin

relationships. As can be seen from [figure 5](#), mainly single individuals were commemorated and only a dozen couples are defined as such. More specifically, the construction of the basilica seems to operate a deliberate selection of graves of clergy members, particularly evident in the transept of the church. This part of the church was built above the fourth century martyr and bishop burials and their existence underneath was stressed by a series of inscribed marble plates, visible on the pavement of the transept. Later on, new inscribed sarcophaguses dedicated to members of the clergy were deposited in this area. [Figure 6](#) shows that half of the individuals commemorated by an epitaph buried inside the basilica were male members of the clergy.

Such results are in line with more general trends observed in Italy. During the early Middle Ages inscriptions become notoriously rare,<sup>35</sup> however, even though few in number they are illuminating about new trends. In particular, a sample of 338 epitaphs dated from the fifth to the ninth century indicate that, at a time when commemoration through inscribed stone monuments had mostly disappeared, it still was employed to commemorate mainly single individuals and no longer extended kin groups or couples.<sup>36</sup> Most of the individuals were males, and most of them are identified by their status, which could be an ecclesiastical grade (most often: *diaconus*, *presbiter* and *episcopus*) or a title indicating a specific rank ([Figure 7](#)); it seems however that such titles were less important for females and children than were for males.<sup>37</sup> Laymen, both males and females, are more often defined as “*viri honesti*” and “*honesta femina*”. According to Salvatore Cosentino<sup>38</sup> this epithet, which in antiquity was used to indicate employees of the public administration, from Late Antiquity became a title testifying the moral behavior of the holder. This title could be acquired when reaching major age and was then mentioned in all juridical documents; the *honesti* of the fifth and sixth century were members of the high-middle class of land owners, artisans, merchants and professionals.<sup>39</sup> Even though in lower numbers, also “*clarissimi*”, “*spectabiles*” and “*inlustres*” appellatives indicating civil or military office, appear on the epigraphic material here considered.<sup>40</sup>

These trends seem in line with the slow and persistent attempts operated by local bishops to control burial practices, particularly inside churches. A series of provisions started to be promoted

from the time of pope Gregory the Great, which aimed at limiting the freedom of the laity in disposing of their dead within the churches. They reinforce the power of the clergy in deciding who should be included or excluded from burial located inside religious buildings. The laity should presumably be admitted as long as they had lived their lives following Christian principles of behavior.

Gregory the Great, in his Dialogue IV deals with these problems. Prayers, he asserts, may be of help if the individual has only committed minor sins, but they cannot help in the atonement of major sins. Similarly, the location of a burial is of no advantage to the soul of the deceased. Sinners and infidels who after payment demand to be buried in a Church are only causing further harm to their souls: ‘for those who are oppressed by heavy sins, being placed inside the Church does not guarantee salvation but an aggravation of the punishment.’<sup>41</sup>

Connected to this matter, the problem of fees paid to the priest for choosing burial places, was an important concern, which started to be discussed at the end of the sixth century by the same pope Gregory but was later reiterated in Christian writings and provisions. Gregory, in two letters addressed to the bishops of Messina and Sardinia stresses that: ‘we have passed an ordinance banning the ancient custom totally from our church, and we do not give our assent to anyone, that places for burial should be obtained at price.’<sup>42</sup> In fact:

It is all too serious and far from the office of a priest to seek payment from land set aside for rotten corpses and to want to make a profit from another person’s grief. But if you ever allow someone to be buried in your church, if indeed his parents, relatives or heirs want to offer something of their own accord, for the lighting, we do not forbid you from accepting it. But we totally prohibit anything being sought or charged, in case, and it is extremely irreligious, the church is said to be for sale, Heaven forbid! Or you appear to be rejoicing over people’s death, if you are keen to make a profit in any way from their dead bodies.<sup>43</sup>

After two centuries in which written sources regarding grave matters are particularly scanty,<sup>44</sup> such provisions are strengthened again in the course of the ninth century. In this period a series of law codes, both canonical and secular intended to limit the freedom of the laity in arranging their graves, giving more power to the priests. More specifically, Cristina La Rocca has shown that in the case of Italy some of such provisions aimed clearly at restricting the action of the local elites in deciding about family memory places, as a wider strategy to limiting the local elite's power.<sup>45</sup> The first of such provisions was taken by the Council of Mainz of 813, stating that 'No dead shall be buried within the church, except bishops, abbots, worthy priests or faithful laymen.'<sup>46</sup> The Council of Paris (845-46) further developed such measures:

No one shall presume to bury anybody within the church as if it were a hereditary right, except those whom the bishop or the priest has considered worthy for the distinguished quality of their conversion and life, and no one shall remove the bones of whoever is dead from its burial or shall violate in any way the graves with a rash proposal.<sup>47</sup>

A similar position was expressed even more explicitly by Hincmar, in his *Capitula Episcoporum* of 856: 'No Christian shall assume to dispute about his/her grave as if he/she had hereditary right over it, but the place where they are buried should be defined, according to their Christian devotion, by the priest's providence.'<sup>48</sup> Here Hincmar reaffirms also Gregory's position about the payment of fees for burial: there should be no fixed sum to be requested for the location of burial which should be decided freely by the priest, but offerings from the relatives of the dead are not to be refused.

These provisions were aimed at limiting the freedom of the laity in disposing of their dead within the churches. Moreover, violation of graves and removal of bones was explicitly prohibited, restricting the maintenance of family graves which were used for several generations. They seem to reinforce the power of the clergy in deciding who should be included or excluded from burial

located inside a religious building. Laity should presumably be admitted as long as they had lived their lives following Christian principles of behavior.

However, looking at the sample of epitaphs mentioned above, which explicitly commemorate well placed members of the community, it seems that indeed the measure of “well behaving” was connected to social and economic status, if so many *honesti viri* were visible in connection to churches. Most probably, in spite of the lamentations of Gregory and Hincmar, offerings and donations to assure burial places were quite effective. Well behaving *pauperes* would probably not be able to afford an inscribed epitaph, nor would they be able to afford a voluntary donation to be buried inside the churches.<sup>49</sup> The range of fees is for instance defined in the letter Gregory the Great addressed to the bishop Donus of Messina. Here Gregory, lamenting the payment of fees for burials, says that this was represented by a gold brooch offered for his burial by “the father of Faustinus, a most eloquent man”.<sup>50</sup> Thus, as Marios Costambeys puts it: “location of burials was governed as much by levels of patronage as by the widespread desire for proximity to the holy.”<sup>51</sup>

The documentation seems to reveal that indeed the clergy was to gain the power of control over burial position and location but the laity was left with space to maneuver.

### **All buried together**

In contrast with the documentation provided by epitaphs, which shows few people commemorated as individuals, archaeological documentation of burials inside the churches offers quite a different scenario. As illustrated in [figure 8](#), while the mean number of graves founded inside the churches did not substantially vary over the centuries we are considering, the mean number of buried individuals gradually increased starting in the sixth century and reaching the highest peak in the period between the nine and the eleven centuries.

We should here noticed that in the cases I have here considered the direct connection between inscriptions and graves has not been totally clarified by archaeological excavations. In this way it is not possible to connect directly the number of individuals buried within the same grave and the

texts surmounting them. In some cases, this is due to the fact that churches were rebuilt and reorganized in subsequent periods moving the epitaphs from their original position. This is the case for instance of S. Stefano di Garlate. Here fifth and sixth century epitaphs on marble slabs commemorating single individuals were originally located above the pavement of the church. Subsequently they were removed from their original position during the 9<sup>th</sup> century when the church was newly paved. The archaeologists have found the probable hole left under the 9<sup>th</sup> century floor when one of the inscribed slab was taken off. It is highly probable that the epitaphs were originally in connection with the multiple graves dated from the fifth to the seventh centuries which the archaeologists excavated under the pavement of that phase. However we will never know this for sure.<sup>52</sup> In other cases, such as at Manastirine, the epitaphs were found in their original position but the coffins have been emptied and no skeletons were found inside.<sup>53</sup> Nonetheless, even if we cannot directly connect the epigraphic and the skeletal data,<sup>54</sup> still it is very interesting to be aware of the contrasting commemoration strategies expressed by these two types of evidence: the first suggests that only few and prestigious individuals were made visible in death, while the second makes it clear that in practice graves contained several individuals placed in subsequent phases. Their burial remained invisible and anonym on the surface, however their relatives and the community frequenting the church were well aware of their presence underneath.

Opposite to the above mentioned ninth century prohibitions, archaeological data clearly testify to the continuous reopening of graves and tampering with skeletons to create places for new individuals.

Considering in more detail multiple graves deposited inside and outside the churches, the sample I have collected indicates that in most cases they included individuals of mixed sex and age. In particular, **Figure 9** shows that multiple graves were exclusively of a mixed nature until the end of the fifth century. From the sixth century multiple graves containing only male individuals do also appear; doubtless at least some of these graves included members of the clergy buried together, however they percentage remains quite low. Interestingly from this time on graves including only

children are also documented in the sample, while graves including groups of only females are totally missing. Unfortunately, we do not know the nature of the relationship among the individuals who occupied the same grave. In some cases, like the above mentioned multiple grave found next to Saint Severus's church in Classe, anthropological traits may indicate biological resemblance. More accurate information could be offered by genetic analyses. In only one site were mitochondrial-DNA<sup>55</sup> analyses conducted on the skeletons of three multiple graves located beside the external walls of the church of S. Caprasio ad Aulla (MS).<sup>56</sup> In each grave two individuals were buried: in the first an elderly woman and an adult man, in the second an adult male and a child and in the third two adults, one male and the other whose sex was not determinable. In none of the cases was it possible to prove that the individuals were related from the maternal side. This, however, does not exclude they could be related through the male line or that they represented a couple. Moreover, recent research has shown that the concept of kinship was broad and flexible, particularly during the early Middle Ages; this might have resulted in burials including next of kin as well as larger groups of persons connected by different kinds of social links. The ideal of spiritual kinship further loosened the conception of blood links in this period, as it will be discussed below.

This data suggest quite a different picture than the one offered by funerary inscriptions from Manastirine and the Italian peninsula, where members of the clergy resulted particularly visible. It seems that while there was a significant selection in the way memory was externalized, the members of the community frequenting the churches were allowed to reopen the graves and to bury the members of the same community or the same kin groups together.

A large amount of literature has shown that between Antiquity and the early Middle Ages smaller churches and chapels were often founded by private aristocrats, and archeologists have in several cases recognized the grave of the promoters or funders of the church buried in a privileged position inside the cult place.<sup>57</sup> Possibly, in later phases their descendants were also buried within the same building or even inside the same grave, next to their ancestors.<sup>58</sup>

The data collected and analyzed seem to suggest that family ties disappeared from explicit visual commemoration, but they remained an important aspect of memory organization which the Christianization of the rituals did not alter. The mourners were, and remained to some degree, the promoters of the funeral and the providers of the graves of their dead relatives, with the difference that they could no longer act independently.

Susan Wood observes that starting in the twelfth century the attempts to prohibit payment for burials ceased: the pope allowed Christians the possibility of choosing the location but demanded payment of a fee.<sup>59</sup> In this way, Wood points out, a hierarchy of funeral spaces was started.<sup>60</sup> The wealthy could pay and choose, while the poor had no possibility of choosing.<sup>61</sup> The data that we have gathered here would seem to indicate that this practice was already accepted and in use long before the twelfth century.

### **The zealous skeletons, in conclusion**

In spite of the harsh prescriptions promoted by the clergy starting in the seventh century but more rigidly from the ninth century, the same ecclesiastical literature offered a solution to the real need of reopening the graves and making space for the new corpses of members of the community in the existing graves.<sup>62</sup> In a providential way, fully packed graves did not need to be emptied to leave space for new individuals: upon demand, skeletons could miraculously move aside. As in the life of Saint Severus quoted at the beginning of this essay, the miracle of multiple burial is, in fact a recurring one. Such a miracle occurred, Gregory the Great tells us, in the monastery of Praeneste. A monk of venerable life (*vitae venerabilis*) had been promised that he would be buried in the same grave as the abbot. However, as there was no space in the grave for the body, one of the attendants at the funeral said: ‘Ehi, father, where is what you promised, that this grave will hold both of you?’ Upon hearing this voice, the body of the abbot which had been buried before and laid supine, moved immediately to the side of the grave, providing an empty space for the body of the monk.<sup>63</sup> Not only clerics, but also worthy couples could lie together inside small graves. Such is the story of

Reticus, bishop of Autun, and his wife, narrated by Gregory of Tours. Reticus' wife, on her deathbed, implores her husband that they be placed in the same tomb 'so that as the love of a single chastity preserved them in one bed, it would maintain them in the fellowship of the grave'. So he promised it would be so. On the day of his death, after his body was washed and placed on the funeral bier, despite their efforts his servants could not move it.

Then they heard from an old man who said that Reticus had sworn to his wife that the space of one tomb would receive them both. At the end of his statement the bier was immediately lifted and brought to the tomb. Bishop Reticus regained his spirit and addressed his wife. He said: "Remember sweetest spouse, what you had asked from me. Now accept your long-awaited brother, to join with undefiled limbs those which lust did not defile but true chastity cleansed". As he said this, the tomb was moved in a marvelous fashion and the bones of the virgin were gathered in one place.<sup>64</sup>

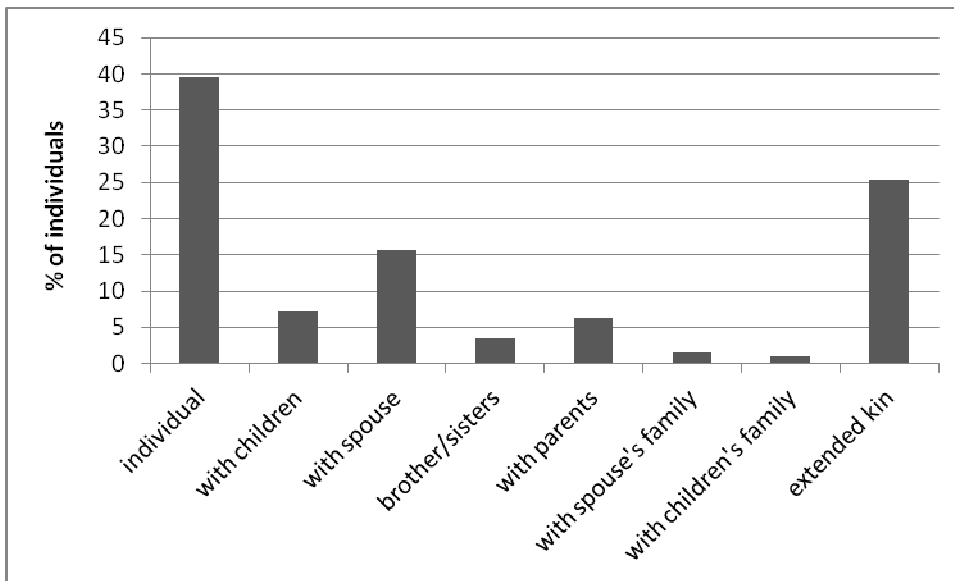
Similarly, Iniuriosus and Scolastica, a pious and undefiled couple, were at first buried separately; but during the night their tombs moved side by side as a proof of their purity.<sup>65</sup>

Even if a great emphasis was put on purity and devotion, still the couple or the nuclear family is at the center of concern regarding burial and body disposal. Albeit spiritual kinship was promoted by Christianity as a form of parenthood superior to the biological one, nonetheless the two forms seem to coincide and coexist in these examples.<sup>66</sup> Blood parenthood was still an important link in the funerary context, however it could be enriched and sublimated by the chaste behavior of its members and this was the key to gaining important burial positions within churches and, by extension, in Heaven. Kinship could guarantee to its members burial in the same grave in prestigious places, but this was in the name of something superior to just their parental link. The lack of explicit allusions to family bonds in the epitaphs, so carefully expressed during Roman times, can be interpreted in this light. Blood kin, or whatever group, could potentially be spiritual and, as such, deserving to rest in the same grave in prestigious places. The data investigated here

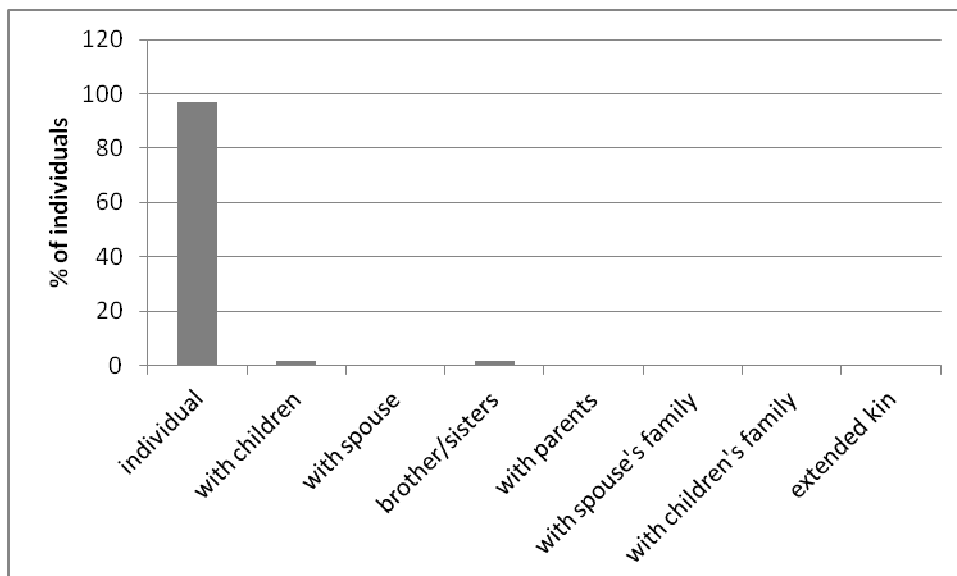
seem to confirm what has already been observed by other scholars, that the concept of spiritual kinship was not in real competition with that of the biological one, but rather, the two could complement each other.<sup>67</sup> Anita Guerreau Jalabert has shown that during the early Middle Ages the clergy used and transformed the vocabulary of kinship also to describe the spiritual bond, elaborating as a result a flexible interpretation of parenthood, in which the spirituality was ‘superimposed on the bond of real kinship, and absorbed it’.<sup>68</sup> In the same way as words, also the semantics of graves seem to have become more fluid in representing social links. In fact, burials were filled with bodies linked by different kinds of relationships, which could symbolize multi-layered connections. At the top stood the chaste and spiritual bond which absorbed and thus enhanced the more material kinds of social or biological links.

In this framework, the attempts at limiting hereditary burial places had the effect of increasing the role of the clergy in deciding about burial places without limiting the possibility for kin groups, particularly wealthy ones, to guarantee special burial places for themselves and their relatives. These could be achieved through exemplary behavior, expressed materially by alms and donations. In this way commemoration display and exploit become complex and multi-layered. Each individual could enter a grave, not only as member of his/her kinship but also and mostly as a member of a spiritual community, which in reverse was constructed on the network of social connections of its members and by extension on their kinship. Thus, commemoration become imbedded with new ideals which were explicitly manifested on the surface of churches, nonetheless, the older mechanisms of social practice were on stage underneath. Hence, as the literature suggests, pure and chaste couples deserved to be buried together, in spite of the prohibitions of moving and rearranging bones and burials and, in fact, the excavated graves are full of “miraculously” rearranged skeletons.

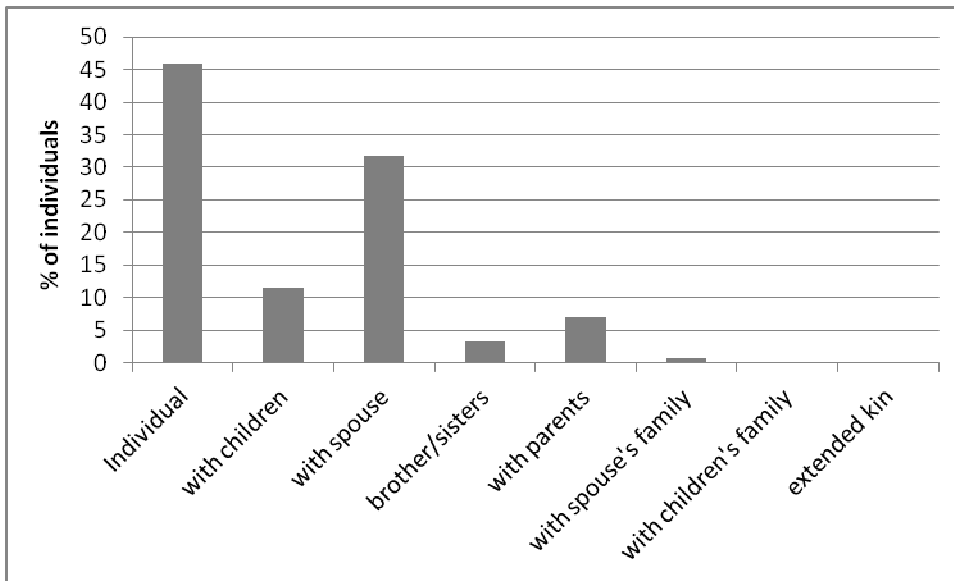
## Figures



**Figure 1:** Epitaphs and kinship in Aquileia. Percentage of individuals commemorated singularly and with other kinship members, between the first and the second century A.D. The graph includes data related to 319 individuals.

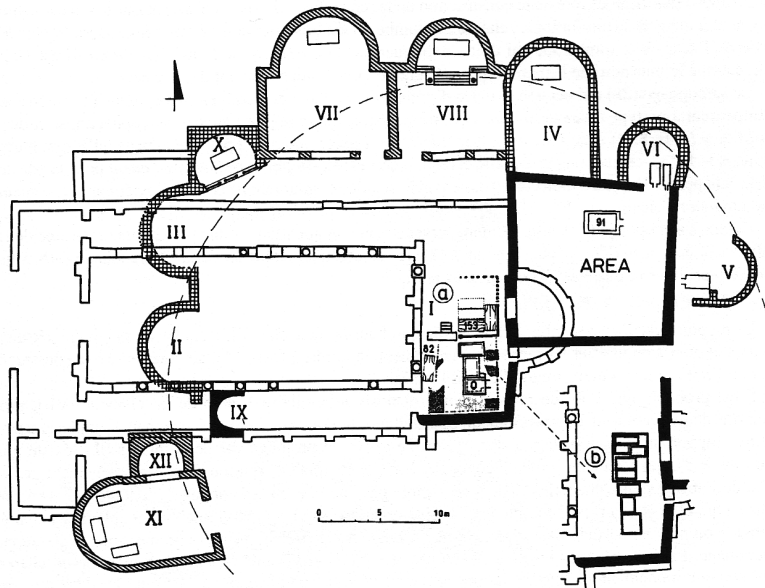


**Figure 2:** Epitaphs and kinship in Aquileia. Percentage of individuals commemorated as single and with other kinship members between the third and the fourth century A.D. The graph includes data related to 67 individuals, commemorated in this period.



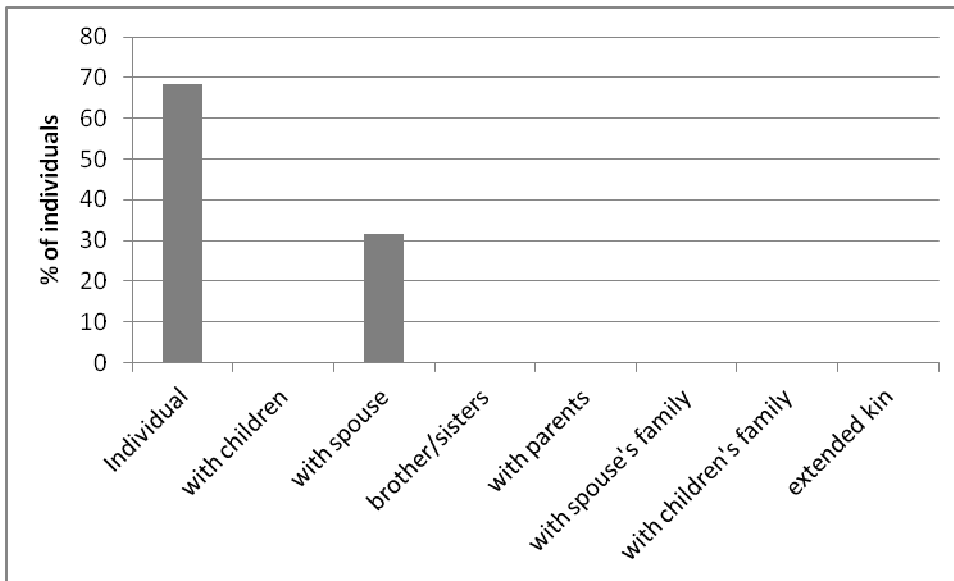
**Figure 3:** Epithaphs and kinship in Manastirine (Salona) between the 4<sup>th</sup> and the mid 5<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The graph includes the percentages related to 157 individuals commemorated in this chronological phase.

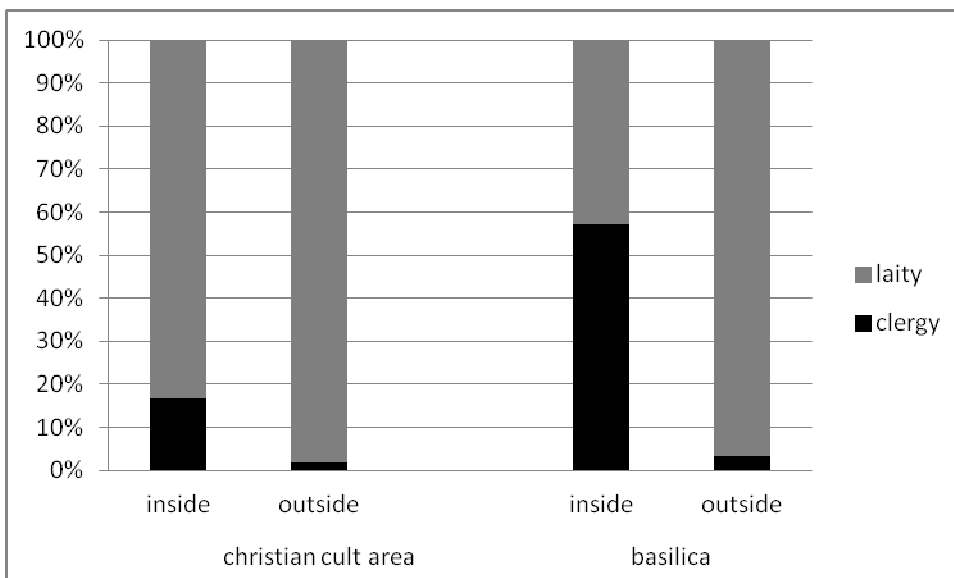


**Figure 4:** Reconstruction of the burial area of Manastirine. fourth century chapels (from II to XI in the map) developed around a central area *a*, where martyrs' and bishops' graves were deposited.

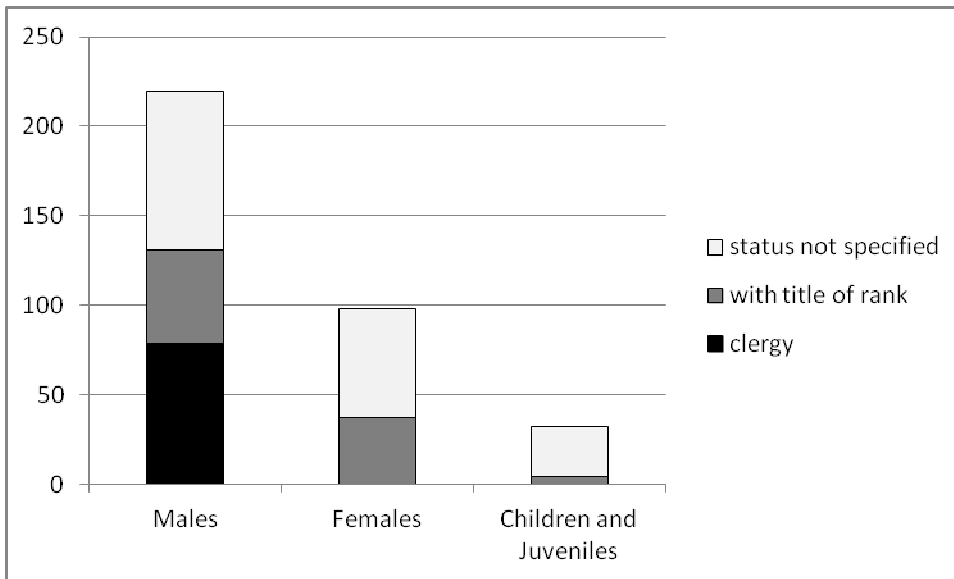
Later on the basilica was superimposed on them around the middle of the fifth century (source: Duval and Marin, 2000, Fig. 246).



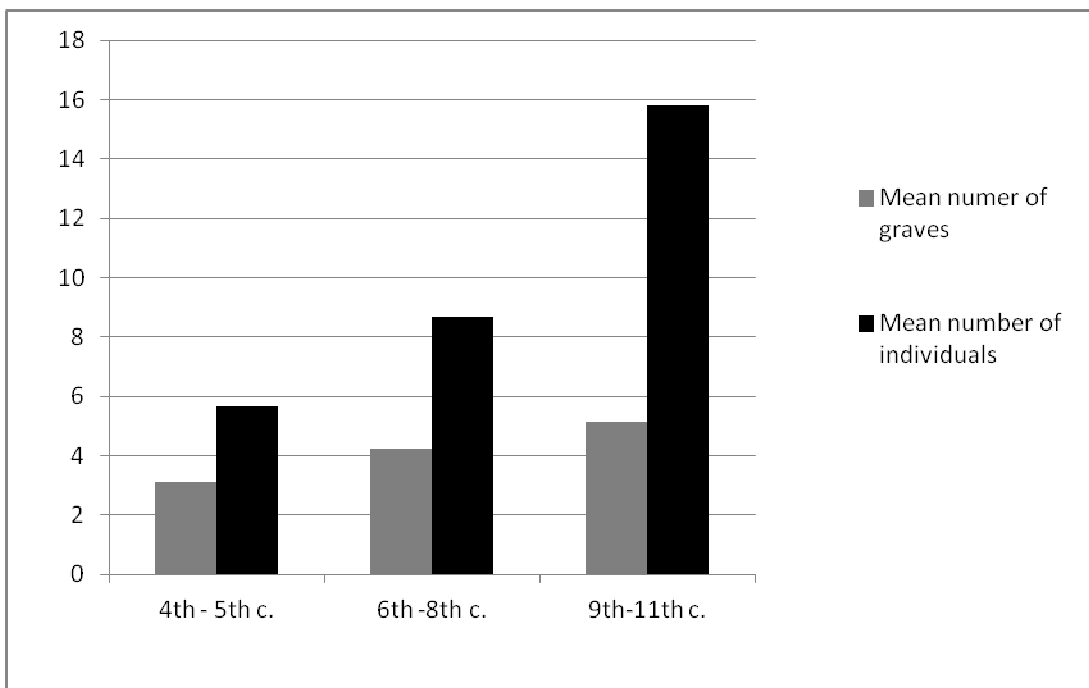
**Figure 5:** Epitaphs and kinship in Manastirine (Salona) between the the mid fifth and the end of the sixth centuries. The graph includes the percentages of individuals related to 57 individuals commemorated in this chronological phase.



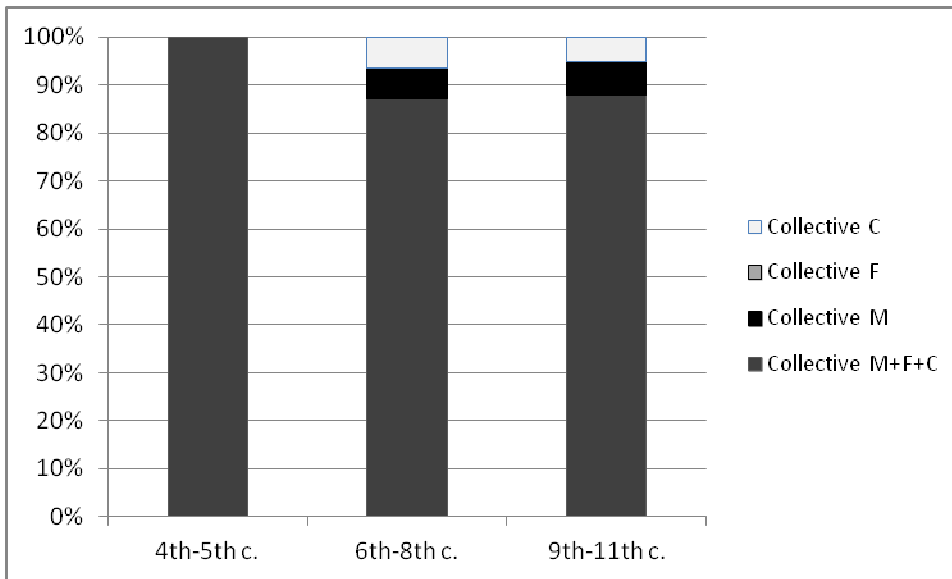
**Figure 6:** percentage of epitaphs commemorating laity and clergy, found inside and outside the fourth century Christian cult area and inside and outside the basilica built around the middle of the fifth century and in use until the end of the sixth century.



**Figure 7:** number of epitaphs dedicated to males, females, children and juveniles found in different sites in Italy, between the fifth and the ninth centuries.



**Figure 8:** Mean number of graves and of buried individuals excavated inside a sample of churches dated from the fifth to the eleventh century.



**Figure 9:** sex of the individuals buried in multiple graves from the fourth to the eleventh century. C: children, F: female, M: male, M+F+C: male, female and children.

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<sup>1</sup> Agnelli Ravennatis, *Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis*, ed. D. Mauskopf Deliyannis, (Turnhout, 2006), pp. 111-112.

<sup>2</sup> D. Elliott, *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality, and Demonology in the Middle Ages*, (Philadelphia, 1999), p. 90.

<sup>3</sup> D. Ferreri, 'Spazi cimiteriali, pratiche funerarie e identità nella città di Classe', *Archeologia Medievale* 37 (2011), pp. 59-79.

<sup>4</sup> This small chapel was excavated in the 1960s, and the bodies found in the graves were not analyzed or preserved, see G. Belmont Montanari, *La chiesa di S. Severo nel territorio di Classe. Risultati dei recenti scavi* (Bologna, 1968).

<sup>5</sup> D. Ferreri, 'Spazi cimiteriali', pp. 59-79. See also I. Barbiera and D. Ferreri, 'Placing bodies and constructing memory at San Severo', *Annual of Medieval Studies* 13 (2007), pp. 187-196

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<sup>6</sup> D. Ferreri, 'Spazi cimiteriali', pp. 59-79.

<sup>7</sup>J.M.H. Smith, 'Did Women Have a Transformation of the Roman World?', in P. Stafford, A.B. Mulder-Bakker (eds.), *Gendering the Middle Ages*, (Oxford, 2001), pp. 23-41.; R. Le Jan 'Il gruppo familiare di Totone: identità e strategie patrimoniali', in S. Gasparri e C. La Rocca (eds.), *Carte di famiglia*, (Roma 1995), pp. 13-28; A. Arjava *Women and Law in Late Antiquity*, (Oxford 1996); A. Arjava, 'The Survival of Roman Family Law after the Barbarian Settlements', in R.W. Mathisen (ed.), *Law, society, and authority in Late Antiquity*, (Oxford, 2001), pp. 33-51.; J. Goody, J. Thirsk, E.P. Thompson (eds.), *Family and Inheritance. Rural society in Western Europe, 1200-1800*, (Cambridge, 1976).

<sup>8</sup> K. Cooper, *The Fall of the Roman Household*, (Cambridge 2007).

<sup>9</sup> P. Geary, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages*, (New York, 1994), pp. 30-45 1994; R. Le Jan, 'Il gruppo familiare di Totone', pp. 13-28; C. La Rocca 'Segni di distinzione. Dai corredi funerari alle donazioni "post obitum" nel regno longobardo', in L. Paroli (ed.), *L'Italia centro-settentrionale in età longobarda*, Atti del convegno, (Ascoli Piceno, 6-7 ottobre 1995), (Firenze, 1997), pp. 31-54; C. La Rocca, 'Donare, distribuire, spezzare. Pratiche di conservazione della memoria e dello status in Italia tra VIII e IX secolo', in G.P. Brogiolo, G. Cantino Wataghin (ed.) *Sepulture tra IV e VIII secolo*, (Mantova, 1998), pp. 77-87; C. La Rocca and L. Provero, 'The Dead and Their Gifts. The Will of Eberhard, Count of Friuli, and His Wife Gisela, Daughter of Louis the Pious', in F. Theuws, J. L. Nelson (eds.), *Rituals of Power*, (Leiden, Boston, Köln, 2000), pp. 225-280; C. La Rocca, 'Le Élités, Chiese e sepolture familiari tra VIII e IX secolo in Italia settentrionale', in P. Depreux, F. Bougard R. Le Jan (eds.), *Les élites et leurs espaces: mobilité, rayonnement, domination (du VIe au XIe siècle)*, (Turnhout, 2007), pp. 259-271.

<sup>10</sup> F. Bougard, C. La Rocca, R. le Jan (eds.), *Sauver son âme et se perpetuer. Transmission du patrimoine et mémoire au haut Moyen Age*, (Collectione de l'École française de Rome 351), (Roma, 2005).

<sup>11</sup> On the transformations of the funerary liturgy see: M. Costambeys, "Burial topography and the power of the church in fifth- and sixth-century Rome", in *Papers of the British School at Rome*, 69 (2001), pp. 169-189; F. Paxton, *Christianizing Death. The Creation of a Ritual Process in Early Medieval Europe*, (Ithaca, 1996).

<sup>12</sup>M. Lauwers, *La mémoire des ancêtres, le souci des morts. Morts, rites et société au moyen âge (diocèse de Liège, XIe-XIIIe siècles)*, (Paris 1996); M. Lauwers, 'Le cimetière dans le Moyen Age latin. Lieu sacré, saint et religieux', in *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 54 (1999), pp. 1047-1072; M. Lauwers, *Naissance du cimetière. Lieux sacrés et terre des morts dans l'Occident médiéval*, (Paris 2005).

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<sup>13</sup> This particularly was the aim of the Gregorian Reform in the eleventh century, see M. Miller, ‘Reform, Clerical Culture and Politics’ in *The Oxford handbook of medieval Christianity*, (Oxford, 2014), pp. 305-322; M. Miller, ‘Italy in the Long Twelfth Century: Ecclesiastical Reform and the Legitimization of a New Political Order, 1059-1183’, in T.F.X. Noble (ed.), *European Transformations in the Long Twelfth Century* (Paris, 2012), pp. 117-131.

<sup>14</sup> C. La Rocca, ‘Donare, distribuire, spezzare’, pp. 77-87; C. La Rocca and L. Provero, ‘The Dead and Their Gifts.’, pp. 225-280.

<sup>15</sup> G. Halsall, ‘Female status and power, 289-314; I. Barbiera, *Changing Lands in Changing Memories. Migration and Identity during the Lombard Invasions* (Firenze, 2005).

<sup>16</sup> B. Young, ‘Exemples aristocratique et mode funéraire dans la Gaul mérovingienne’ *Annales ESC*, 2 (1986), pp. 379-407; C. Treffort, *L’Eglise Carolingienne et la mort*, (Lyon, 1996); C. La Rocca, (1997), ‘Segni di distinzione. Dai corredi funerari alle donazioni "post obitum" nel regno longobardo’, in L. Paroli (ed.), *L’Italia centro-settentrionale in età longobarda*, Atti del convegno, Ascoli Piceno, 6-7 ottobre 1995, (Firenze, 1997), pp. 31-54; C. La Rocca, ‘Donare, distribuire, spezzare. Pratiche di conservazione della memoria e dello status in Italia tra VIII e IX secolo’, in G.P. Brogiolo, G. Cantino Wataghin (eds.) *Sepulture tra IV e VIII secolo*, (Mantova, 1998), pp. 77-87; B. Effros, ‘Symbolic Expressions of Sanctity: Getrude of Nivelles in the Context of Merovingian Mortuary Costume’, *Viator* 27, (1996), pp. 1-10.

<sup>17</sup> F. Paxton, *Christianizing Death. The Creation of a Ritual Process in Early Medieval Europe*, (Ithaca, 1996); B. Effros, ‘Beyond Cemetery Walls: Early Medieval Funerary Topography and Christian Salvation’, in *Early Medieval Europe*, 6 (1997), p. 1-23; B. Effros (2002), *Charing for Body and Soul. Burial and the afterlife in the Merovingian World*, (Barkeley, 2002).

<sup>18</sup> With the only exception of Rome, obviously. However I have decided to live out the capital of the Empire which would need a study in itself only on epitaphs.

<sup>19</sup> The sample here considered includes only funerary monuments which were connected to churches, being found inside or around them. Monuments whose original location is unknown were not taken into account. Up to now I could not manage to find inscriptions dated after the 9<sup>th</sup> century, however the research project here presented is still in progress, so I will be able to consider properly the trends of funerary epitaph production across the centuries only later on. The most consistent part of sites I have collected up to now is from *Gallia Cisalpina*. They have been collected from

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CIL, volume VI and from F. De Rubeis, *Inscriptiones medii aevi Italiae (saec VI-XIII). Veneto, Belluno, Treviso, Vicenza*, (Spoleto, 2011). As for the sample from southern Italy included into my sample, I have considered L. Cimarra et alii, *Inscriptiones medii aevi Italiae (saec VI-XIII), Latium, Viterbo I*, (Spoleto, 2002); P. Guerrini, *Inscriptiones medii aevi Italiae (saec VI-XIII), Umbria. Terni*, (Spoleto, 2010); P. Arthur, B. Bruno (ed.), *Apigliano. Un villaggio bizantino e medioevale in terra d'Otranto. L'ambiente, il villaggio la popolazione*, (Galatina, 2009); E. Scampoli, Firenze, *archeologia di una città (secoli I a.C.- XIII d.C.)*, (Firenze, 2010); G. Volpe et al., 'Il complesso episcopale paleocristiano di san Pietro a Canosa. Seconda relazione preliminare (campagna di scavi 2002)', *Archeologia Medievale* 30 (2003), p. 107-164. I have also consulted the database available at: [http://www.edr-edr.it/Italiano/index\\_it.php](http://www.edr-edr.it/Italiano/index_it.php).

<sup>20</sup> Different churches here considered after being founded were rebuilt and substantially transformed; in such cases the buildings belonging to different chronological periods were considered separately even if located in the very exact site. I decided to do so to be able to consider the transformations across the centuries and to consider together the churches belonging to the same chronological span. For instance, the church of S. Zeno at Campione d'Italia was founded in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, later on during the 10<sup>th</sup> century it was demolished and rebuilt. See, G.P. Brogiolo, 'La chiesa di San Zeno di Campione e la sua sequenza stratigrafica', in *Carte di Famiglia.*, pp. 81-105.

<sup>21</sup> *Ut non in alienis locis, sed nostris potius aedificamus tumulos parentum vel proximorum*, Ambrosius of Milan, *De Abraham*, I. IX.80.

<sup>22</sup> "*Familiaria sepulchra dicuntur, quae quis sibi familiaeque suae constituit, hereditaria autem, quae quis sibi heredibusque suis constituit*", *The Digest of Justinian I.7.5*, ed. A. Watson (Philadelphia, 2009) ,.

<sup>23</sup> *Vel quod pater familias iure hereditario adquisiit. Sed in utroque heredibus quidem ceterisque successoribus qualescumque fuerint licet sepeliri et mortuum inferre, etiamsi ex minima parte heredes ex testamento vel ab intestato sint, licet non consentiant alii. Liberis autem cuiuscumque sexus vel gradus etiam filiis familiae et emancipatis idem ius concessum est, sive extiterint heredes sive sese abstineant. Exhereditatis autem, nisi specialiter testator iusto odio commotus eos vetuerit, humanitatis gratia tantum sepeliri, non etiam alios praeter suam posteritatem inferre licet. Liberti autem nec sepeliri nec alios inferre poterunt, nisi heredes extiterint patrono, quamvis quidam inscripserint monumentum sibi libertisque suis fecisse*, *The Digest, I.7.6*

<sup>24</sup> See for instance the case of Aquileia, in V. Hope, *Constructing Identity: The Roman Funerary monuments of Aquileia, Mainz and Nimes*, British Archaeological Reports International Series 960, (Oxford, 2001).

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<sup>25</sup> Ambrosi Mediolanensi, *De Abraham Libri Duo*, I. IX.80 Patrologia Latina, ed. J.P. Migne, vol 14, p. 472.

<sup>26</sup> *Namque illa imminente die resolutionis suae non cogitavit suum corpus sumptuose contegi, aut condiri aromatibus, aut monumentum electrum concupivit, aut curavit sepulcrum patrum; non ista mandavit nobis.* Augustine, *Confessiones*, IX.36, ed. H. Chadwick (Oxford, 1992).

<sup>27</sup> Augustine, *De cura pro Mortuis gerenda*, 2.4, Patrologia Latina, ed J.P. Migne, vol. 40; See also, E. Rebillard, *The Care for the Dead in Late Antiquity*, (Ithaca and London, 2009), pp 85-87.

<sup>28</sup> Augustine, *De Cura*, 2.6

<sup>29</sup> Augustine, *De Cura*, 2.9

<sup>30</sup> M. Lauwers, *La mémoire des ancêtres*

<sup>31</sup> At the extraordinary site of Manastirine in Salona several different archaeological campaigns were conducted during the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. See, R. Egger, *Forschungen in Salona II. Der altchristliche Friedhof Manastirine*, (Wien, 1926). More recently a French-Croatian campaign was conducted from 1983 to 1997; the results of the excavations with comments on previous campaigns and a reconstruction of the dynamics and developments of this site are published in: N. Duval (ed.), *Salona III. Manastirine. Etablissement preromain, necropole et basilique paleochretienne*. Collection de l'École française de Rome 194/3. (Rome 2000). See also: N. Duval, 'État des problemes posés par le complexe de Manastirine à Salone, en vue des nouvelles recherches', *Rivista di archeologia cristiana* 62, (1986), pp. 343-345.

<sup>32</sup> The epigraphic material of Salona, including also the funerary epitaphs from Manastirine are published and commented in the magisterial recent work: N. Gauthier, E. Marin, F. Prévot (ed.), *Salona IV, Inscriptions de Salone chrétienne, IVe-VIIe siècles (Volume I and II)*. Collection de l'École française de Rome, 194/4, (Rome/Split, 2010).

<sup>33</sup> On the problem of identifying the martyrs of Salona and their burial place, see: A.M. Yasin, 'Reassessing Salona's Churches: *Martyrium* Evolution in Question', *Journal of early Christian Studies* 20 (2012), pp. 59-112.

<sup>34</sup> N. Duval, M. Jeremić, E. Marin, B. Pender, P. Chevalier, J. Mardešić, A. Pralog, 'L'architecture du complexe chrétien', in N. Duval (ed.), *Salona III. Manastirine. Etablissement preromain, necropole et basilique paleochretienne*.

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Collection de l'École française de Rome 194/3. (Rome 2000), pp. 283-617; N. Duval and E. Marin, 'Conclusions', in N. Duval (ed.), *Salona III.*, pp.619-664.

<sup>35</sup> F. De Rubeis, 'Rappresentatività sociale delle epigrafi tra IV e X secolo, in Archeologia e società tra tardo antico e alto medioevo', in G.P. Brogiolo, A. Chavarria Arnau (eds.), *XII seminario sul tardo antico e l'alto medioevo, Padova*, 29 settembre-1° ottobre 2005, (Mantova 2007), pp. 387-399; I Barbiera, 'Le trasformazioni dei rituali funerari tra età romana e alto medioevo', in *Reti Medievali Rivista*, 14/1 (2013), pp. 1-24.

<sup>36</sup> In seven cases two individuals are commemorated on the same stone, but the two epitaphs were written in different moments and the relationship among the individuals, if there was any, is not mentioned. In ten cases the relationship among individuals is specified, these are: three couples, three fathers with children, one of which is a *presbiter cum prole eius*, two mothers with children, one grandfather with grandchildren and in the last case two brothers.

<sup>37</sup> As mentioned above, the database of funerary epitaphs is still under construction, further research may slightly change the results visible in figure 7.

<sup>38</sup> S. Cosentino, 'Il ceto dei "viri honesti" (oi aidesimoi andres) nell'Italia tardo antica e bizantina', *Bizantinistica. Rivista di Studi bizantini e Slavi*, 2.1, (1999), pp. 13-50.

<sup>39</sup> S. Cosentino, 'Il ceto dei "viri honesti".'

<sup>40</sup> For a discussion see: M. Sannazzaro, 'Chiese e comunità cristiane rurali nelle fonti epigrafiche dell'Italia settentrionale', in G.P Brogiolo (ed.), *Chiese e insediamenti nelle campagne tra V e VI secolo*, (Mantova, 2003), pp. 39-55.

<sup>41</sup> "Nam quos peccata gravia deprimunt, non ad absolutionem potius quam ad maiorem damnationis cumulum eorum corpora in ecclesiis ponuntur" Gregorius I papa, *Dialogorum libri iv*, IV, LII, Patrologia Latina, ed J. P. Migne (Paris, 1849).

<sup>42</sup> Gregorius I papa, *Registrum epistularum*, VIII.3, ed. J. Martyn, (Toronto, 2004).

<sup>43</sup> Gregorius I papa, *Registrum epistularum*, VIII.35, ed. J. Martyn, (Toronto, 2004).

<sup>44</sup> Treffort, *L'Eglise Carolingienne*, pp. 28-29.

<sup>45</sup> C. La Rocca, 'Le Élités, Chiese e sepolture familiari', pp. 259-271.

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<sup>46</sup> *Nullus mortuus infra ecclesia sepeliatur, nisi episcopi aut abbates aut digni presbyteri vel fideles laici. Capitula e canonicis excepta*, in MGH, *Capitularia Regnum Francorum*, I.78, ed. A. Boretius (Hannover, 1984); see also: C. La Rocca, 'Le Élités, Chiese e sepolture familiari', pp. 259-271.

<sup>47</sup> *Ut nemo quemlibet mortuum in ecclesia quasi hereditario iure, nisi quem episcopus aut presbiter pro qualitate conversationis et vitae dignum duxerit, sepelire praesuma nec quisquam ossa cuiuslibet mortui de sepulcro suo eiacere aut sepulturam cuiusquam temerario ausu quomodo violet*. Concilium Parisiense in MGH, *Concilia aevi karolini*, 72, ed A. Werminghoff (Hannover, 1906).

<sup>48</sup> *Nemo Christianorum presumat quasi hereditario iure de sepultura contendere, sed in sacerdotis providentia sit, ut parochiani sui secundum Christiana devotione in locis, quibus viderit, sepeliantur*. Hincmarus Remensis, MGH, *Capitula Episcoporum*, CXXV.731, ed. P. Brommer (Hannover, 1984).

<sup>49</sup> For the matter of provision of burial for the poor see: E Rebillard, 'Les forms de l'assistance funéraire dans l'empire romain et leur evolution dans l'antiquité tardive', *Antiquité tardive* 7 (1999), pp. 269-282.

<sup>50</sup> Gregorius I papa, *Registrum epistularum*, VIII.35.

<sup>51</sup> M. Costambeys, "Burial topography and the power of the church", p. 189.

<sup>52</sup> See G.P. Brogiolo, 'S. Stefano di garlate e la cristianizzazione delle campagne', in G. P. Brogiolo, G. Bellosi, L. Vigo Doratiotto (eds.), *Testimonianze archeologiche a S. Stefano di Garlate*, (Lecco, 2002), pp. 285-302; M. Sannazzaro, 'Le iscrizioni paleocristiane', in G. P. Brogiolo, G. Bellosi, L. Vigo Doratiotto (eds.), *Testimonianze archeologiche a S. Stefano di Garlate*, (Lecco, 2002), pp. 248-256.

<sup>53</sup> N. Duval (ed.), *Salona III*.

<sup>54</sup> On the contrary the effective connection between inscribe monuments and buried individuals is available at least in one later case. In the church of Prata di Pordenone, during the thirteenth century several skeletons were buried in subsequent phases inside the two coffins carrying the names of their first ancestors: Pileo, Niccolò and Caterina. While the first one contained two adult males, one female and three children, the second one held sixteen individuals, of which thirteen were males, one female and two children. Epigraphic and archaeological documentation here testify that the founders of these privileged burial place were visible through the inscriptions on the coffins, later on their descendants were buried in their same coffin but without having their names engraved.

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<sup>55</sup> Mitochondrial DNA is transmitted through the mother, and can thus give information on the genetic patrimony acquired from female-members of a kin group. See E. Pilli, D. Caramelli, 'Ricostruzioni parentali in campioni antichi: le nuove metodologie molecolari al servizio dell'archeologia', *Archeologia Medievale* 38 (2010), pp. 75-79.

<sup>56</sup> Arslan E.A., Bartoli F., Boggi G., Burdassi L., Casati M.L., Giannichedda E., Lanza R., Lippi B., Mallegni F., Mennella G., Pagni G., Ratti O., Mannoni T., 'Indagini archeologiche nella chiesa dell'abbazia altomedievale di San Caprasio ad Aulla (MS)', *Archeologia Medievale* 33 (2006), pp. 176-221.

<sup>57</sup> A. Settia, *Pievi e cappelle nella dinamica del popolamento rurale*, in *Cristianizzazione e organizzazione ecclesiastica delle campagne nell'alto medioevo: espansione e resistenze*, Settimane XXVIII, (Spoleto, 1982), pp. 445-89; G. Cantino Wataghin, V. Fiocchi Nicolai, G. Volpe, 'Aspetti della cristianizzazione degli agglomerati secondari', in R.M. Carra Bonacasa, E. Vitale (eds.) *La cristianizzazione in Italia fra tardoantico e altomedioevo*, Atti del IX Congresso Nazionale di Archeologia Cristiana, Agrigento, 20-25 novembre 2004, (Palermo 2007), pp. 85-134. For the case of Ravenna, see: A. Augenti, 'Ravenna e Classe: il racconto di due città, tra storia e archeologia', in A. Augenti, C. Bertelli (eds.), *Santi, banchieri, re. Ravenna e Classe nel VI secolo*, (catalogo della mostra), (Milano, 2006) pp. 17-22.

<sup>58</sup> The process of church foundation by the laity and their use as family burial places as means of self-promotion is best illustrated by the exceptional documentation regarding the church of San Zeno at Campione d'Italia and the family involved, for which written sources and archeological data is available, see R. Le Jan 'Il gruppo familiare di Totone', pp. 13-28; P. Blockley et alii, 'Campione d'Italia. Scavi archeologici nella ex chiesa di San Zeno', in S. Gasparri e C. La Rocca (eds.) *Carte di Famiglia. Strategie, rappresentazione e memoria del Gruppo familiare di Totone di Campione*, (Roma, 2005), pp. 29-80; G.P. Brogiolo, 'La chiesa di San Zeno di Campione e la sua sequenza stratigrafica', in *Carte di Famiglia.*, pp. 81-105.

<sup>59</sup> S. Wood, *The Proprietary Church in the Medieval West*, (Oxford, 2006); For a detailed analyses of twelfth century canon law and of the *Decretum Gratiani*, see: C.J. Reid jr., *Power over the Body, Equality in the Family. Rights and Domestic Relations in Medieval Canon Law*, (Michigan, 2004).

<sup>60</sup> S. Wood, *The Proprietary Church*.

<sup>61</sup> See the interesting study on property of burial location in fifteenth century churches in The Netherlands, in K. Goudriaan, 'Ownership of Graves in Medieval Parish Churches in Holland', in W. Blockmans, A. Janse (eds.), *Showing Status. Representation of Social Positions in the Late Middle Ages*, (Turnhout, 1999) pp. 197-223.

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<sup>62</sup> For some considerations on personhood and the meaning of burial reopening, see M.C. van Haperen, 'The distributed dead: Personhood from the Perspective of reopened graves', in B. Ludowici (ed.), *Individual and Individuality? Approaches towards an Archaeology of Personhood Moreover in the First Millennium AD* (Hannover, 2013), pp. 89-93; moreover, as Lafferty has underlined, the cult of saints and holy relics also made necessary the reopening of graves and manipulation of dead bodies, see: S. Lafferty, 'Ad Sanctitatem Mortuorum. Tomb Raiders, Body Snatchers and Relic Hunters in Late Antiquity', *Early Medieval Europe* 22 (2014), pp. 249-279.

<sup>63</sup> Gregorius I papa, *Dialogorum*, I, XXIII.

<sup>64</sup> Gregorius Turonensis, *In gloria confessorum*, 74, ed. R. Van Dam, (Liverpool, 1988), pp. 54-55.

<sup>65</sup> Gregorius Turonensis, *Historia Francorum*, 1.47, ed. W. Arndt, B. Krusch (Hannover, 1884)

<sup>66</sup> On spiritual kinship, see: J. Lynch, *Godparenthood and Kinship in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton, 1986); D. Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage. Sexual Abstinence in Medieval Wedlock* (Princeton, 1993); B. Jussen, *Spiritual Kinship as Social Practice: Godparenthood and Adoption in the Early Middle Ages*, (Cranbury, 2000).

<sup>67</sup> D. Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage*, p. 16-46.

<sup>68</sup> A. Guerreau-Jalabert, 'La désignation des relations et des groupes de parenté en latin médiéval', *Archivum latinitatis medii aevi* 46-47 (1986-87), pp 65-108.