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Christian Burial Practices at Ostia Antica:

Backgrounds and Contexts with a Case Study

of the Pianabella Basilica

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Christian Burial Practices at Ostia Antica:

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of the Pianabella Basilica

by

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Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School

of the University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2008

Dedication

To Tania, Kérix and Krícis

"Todos vamos embarcados na mesma nau, que é a vida, e todos navegamos com o mesmo vento, que é o tempo; e assim como na nau, uns governam o leme, outros mareiam as velas; uns vigiam, outros dormem; uns passeiam, outros estão assentados; uns cantam, outros jogam, outros comem, outros nenhuma cousa fazem, e todos igualmente caminham ao mesmo porto; assim nós, ainda que não o pareça, vamos passando sempre, e avizinhando-nos cada um a seu fim; por que tu, conclue Ambrósio, dormes, e teu tempo anda: *tu dormis, et tempus tuus ambulat.*"

Padre António Vieira, *Sermão da Primeira Dominga do Advento*.

Acknowledgments

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Publication No. _____

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2008

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This study investigates the archaeological and social contexts of early Christian burial practices at Ostia Antica, Rome's port city, through a case study of the cemeterial basilica at Pianabella. Built on a pagan necropolis in ca. 400 AD, the Pianabella Basilica is one of the few unambiguously Christian monuments from Ostia in the Late Antique period. Consequently, it provides evidence for the continuities and transformations of late Roman culture during the period of Christianity's rise to prominence. Examination of the construction of the basilica , as well as its rich iconography and epigraphy, proceeds through a social approach within a holistic view of material culture, showing that the physical characteristics of Christian burial were acquired through selective appropriation

of common pagan mortuary practices while also adjusting to changing cultural assumptions.

The Pianabella inscriptions show the persistence of patronage, while the construction of the basilica and its dedication to a nameless saint show the increasing importance of the *suburbium* for the city's religious topography. The semi-monumental nature and advantaged location of this basilica made it an important meeting place for the Christians, whose appropriations can be seen in three aspects: (1) epigraphy suggests that patronage by the institutional church gradually replaced that by important families; (2) patterns of sarcophagus use point to attempts at social improvement while showing clear preference for less iconic forms of sarcophagi; and (3) the arrangement of the burials in the basilica's main funerary enclosure and epigraphy emphasize the prominence of the saint to whom the basilica was dedicated. The basilica thus took on much of the ritual and social creativity that had belonged to the family tomb, where reunion in death did away with death's sting, while providing Christians with a sense of community. The organization of funerary space at Pianabella suggests further that the focus of mortuary provision was ultimately on the living. Taken together, it seems that funerary processions to the basilica provided a sphere in which local Christians could benefit from communal meals and the spectacle of status display, while pointing to God as a new and improved type of *paterfamilias*.

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Introduction

Late-antique Christians residing in and around Rome were Romans in the sense that they often behaved like the other inhabitants of the metropolis – whether Roman citizens or not –, reacting in similar ways to political ideas, business practices, and other cultural issues, as long as they had been exposed to them over the generations. What should we then expect from them in relation to burial practices and the commemoration of the dead? Recent scholarship points to a relatively peaceful coexistence of Christians and non-Christians, as well as to a perplexing multiplicity of ways in which they honored their dead. While the evidence adduced so far for Ostia is sparse and late, the necropolis that developed around the basilica of Pianabella, which was located 300 m southeast of the Porta Laurentina (Fig. 1), has provided us with an abundant source of new evidence, which – although not mainly Christian – allows us to assess a rich repertoire of iconographic and epigraphic material, and helps us explain the choices that the Christians made when reutilizing non-Christian material.

My choosing the Cemeterial Basilica of Pianabella at Ostia Antica as a case study has allowed me to assess what the implications were for the construction of a Christian basilica in a mainly pagan necropolis.[1] The suburban area between the Porta Romana and Pianabella has often been associated with the early Christians at Ostia.[2] There, they co-opted a pagan necropolis, and a certain tension between adaptation and distinctiveness emerged. The Pianabella basilica is a relatively recent discovery, and its excavations have brought to light a bulk of funerary evidence (including epigraphic and iconographic material), thus broadening the typologies for Christian burials insomuch as these relate – among

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[1] A cemeterial basilica (*basilica ad corpus*) is defined here as a cemeterial, basilica-like architectural structure whose floor was kept underground while its upper parts emerged from the ground, cf. KRAUTHEIMER 1939:137.
[2] PAVOLINI 1996:271 conjectures that, there, they also started their first residential quarters.

other things – to sarcophagi, "lastre di chiusura di loculo" (stone slabs or large tiles used to seal a *loculus*), cinerary urns, and the iconography featured on them.[3] The evidence collected from the site suggests that these Christians were socially mobile and often strove for status displays beyond their means.[4] The area of Pianabella is an excellent candidate for additional studies at Ostia since, as Lauro puts it, its topography remains very uncertain.[5] Pieces of evidence coming from other supposed Christian buildings at Ostia are only circumstantial – as I will show – while other new finds which will eventually supply important data have not been thoroughly examined and it is likely that a long period of time will elapse before any significant contribution can be derived from them. The so-called Constantinian Basilica, for instance, is yet barely excavated. I argue therefore that to date the Pianabella Basilica is our clearest evidence for late-antique Christianity at Ostia.

Another reason for choosing Pianabella springs from the fact that this southeast district of about fifty hectares – which stretches from the sand banks of Ostia straight to the ocean – was the focus of numerous archaeological efforts in the closing years of the twentieth century, and offers us abundant material, most of which has not yet been thoroughly examined. Recent work at Ostia is showing, contrary to the earlier theories of Meiggs and Becatti, that the city was not in

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[3] Apart from inscriptions, sarcophagi and marble slabs, other findings from the Pianabella excavations remain unpublished; such is the case, for instance, of ancient lamps. For brief references to the lamps found in Pianabella, see STERNINI 1995. See also UBOLDI 1995.

[4] The specimens recovered from Pianabella are now part of a larger project, whose main goal is to collect all the "lastre di chiusura di loculo" recovered, so far, from Ostia and Portus, in order to develop typologies for form and iconographic contents, and in order to study the rapport between these and sarcophagi in general. Cf. AGNOLI 1995:129.

[5] LAURO 1983:165. According to her, it is still of foremost importance to determine the relationship of this area to two important thoroughfares of Ostia, the via Severiana and the via Laurentina. This need has been minimized to a certain extent by recent "pedogeologic probes" conducted by Dr. A. Arnoldus in 1996, cf. CARBONARA, PELLEGRINO & ZACCAGNINI 2001:139n. She conducted a series of manual drills to a depth of 1-3 meters.

severe decline after the third century.[6] Rather, it was burgeoning, but mostly in the south and southwestern suburbs. This puts Pianabella into the mainstream debate concerning the ancient city. In fact, at a time when scholars are convinced that late antiquity is a story well worth telling, the finds at Pianabella must be brought into the discussion.[7] In addition, the publication of the excavations at Pianabella was innovative for at least four reasons: it represented a rupture with the archaeology of the monumental, it encouraged attention to a late-antique building, it focused upon a suburban area, and it promoted the study *in situ* of sarcophagi and funerary urns.[8] At a time when voices are rising to urge scholars to give closer attention to the Roman suburbs in order to provide a comprehensive view of its long history, it seems opportune to bring in Ostia as well.[9]

Ostia is a particularly interesting site for this kind of study because it offers a great number of *comparanda*. After all, the city was served by a number of ancient cemeteries, which have been well preserved. Such is the case, for instance, of the cemetery of Isola Sacra, one of the most significant archaeological finds in the region. On the other hand, Ostia was not a typical Roman city. In fact, it was a town that came to prominence because of its role as the most important

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[6] See, for instance, BRUUN 2002. So, introducing excavations carried out under the Casone del Sale, PAROLI 1996 insists that in spite of an economic depression Ostia was not totally deserted in Late Antiquity and early Middle Ages.
[7] BROWN 1996:23.
[8] ZEVI 1999:7-8.
[9] Speaking of the suburbs of Rome, PERGOLA 2002:51 states that a task like that should include issues such as the relation between the *necropoleis*, the inhabited area and the cultivated zones, the articulation between the spaces of the living and those of the dead, the destination of the suburbs, and the retrieval of the evidence disregarded by "traditional" classical archaeology with its urban emphasis. For a study devoted to the creation of "Christian space" in the suburban landscape of late antiquity, see SPERA 2003. For a study concerned with the changes of the Roman cityscape in late antiquity under the conditions of the demographic crisis of the fourth and fifth centuries and the ensuing transformations taking place in the Roman necropoleis, see MENEGHINI & SANTANGELI VALENZIANI 2000. For a description of the research history on the Roman countryside with special emphasis on landscape archaeology and Roman villas, see DYSON 2003. See also CHAMPLIN 1982:97-117; PURCELL 1987a:25-41; 1987b:187-203.

harbor of the Empire.[10] It became extremely cosmopolitan and a miniature of the Empire itself. What is claimed here is not the kind of equivalence, which Brown argued for in his *effigies parva* theory, according to which the archaeological evidence from Cosa should be understood for the most part as a reflection of that from Rome,[11] or "a Rome in miniature,"[12] but rather Pavolini's "lente di ingrandimento" theory, which uses Ostia as an important *comparandum* for Rome and imperial Italy,[13] without setting either Rome or Ostia as models for the rest of the Empire. Influences go in both directions. In fact, there is a lot of regional variation, and Ostia is but one of many examples, which does not diminish its importance. It is Ostia's "atypicality" that makes it convenient for this study.[14] The immigrants to Ostia resorted to various practices, and diverse courses of action converged in the city. It is appropriate, therefore, to address some main issues regarding the ancient Roman Empire with reference to Ostia. In fact, when Pliny the Elder starts his analysis of the geography of ancient Latium, he begins with Ostia. According to him: *in principio est Ostia* (*Naturalis historia* 3.5.56). The writer was perhaps unconsciously indicating the important role the city was then playing as Rome's granary. I use the term "Roman" as loosely as the

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[10] Ostia's position at the mouth of the Tiber made it into an important control point for the Romans. Besides, good harbors were not very common in the region. According to BARKER & RASMUSSEN 1998:38, "both the Tyrrhenian and Adriatic coastal waters are ideally suited for moving people and goods up and down the peninsula…" However, "well protected deep harbors are relatively few." According to SPURZA 2005, "Ostia's immediate surroundings made it, more locally, the nerve center of a nexus of harbor facilities, coastline settlements, extramural developments and transport-communication lines".

[11] BROWN 1980. See FENTRESS 2000 for well-argued criticism to Brown's approach.

[12] As it is posited by ROSTOVTZEFF 1957:568n and MACKENDRICK 1983:315.

[13] According to PAVOLINI 1996:v, this is especially true concerning the second and third centuries A.D., "periodo nel quale la funzione di Ostia come appendice marittima e annonaria di Roma giunge al suo culmine."

[14] Several aspects suggest that Ostia was not an average Roman city: (a) its close proximity to the metropolis and the ambiguous relationship it entertained with Rome (cf. BRUUN 2002:161-192; SPURZA 2002:123-134); (b) its role as the most important harbor in the Roman Empire; (c) its character as a "boom town" whose residents' main interest was real estate speculation (cf. HEINZELMANN 2002:103-122); and (d) its great attractiveness to immigrants (which is clearly

cosmopolitan nature of Ostia and Rome will allow me to.[15] By that I mean to say that I am mostly interested in the Christian burials that took place in and around these two neighboring cities, but it seems that the rest of the Roman Empire tended to reproduce – one way or another – the trends that had become popular in these two important centers. In fact, by 416 Augustine was asking his audience, *quis iam cognoscit gentes in imperio Romano quae quid erant, quando omnes Romani facti sunt, et omnes Romani dicuntur?*, "who now knows which nations in the Roman Empire were what, when all have become Romans, and all are called Romans?" (*Enarrationes in psalmos* 58.1.21).[16]

My purpose here is therefore to assess the evidence for Christian burial practices at Ostia. But differently from recent studies which focused mainly on the developmental history of Ostia's necropoleis, on the description of specific necropoleis, or on new finds in these necropoleis,[17] I will pay especial attention to the impact that the construction of a semi-monumental cemeterial Christian building had on the local Christian community and their ways to bury the dead. This case study will examine the relatively recent archaeological discovery of the cemeterial Basilica of Pianabella, which was first excavated during the 1970s and whose excavation report was published only in 1999, and assess whether and how

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perceived, among other things, in the onomastic profile of the city, cf. SALOMIES 2002:135-160).

[15] I am well aware of the caveats regarding the inappropriateness of using the term "Roman" in an archaeological sense (cf. WELLS 1999; FREEMAN 2000:817), but the creation of a new label strikes me as impractical. Accordingly, I also try not to overuse the term "Romanization," which arose from a Eurocentric approach to history given the fact that much of recent writing on Western imperialism consciously theorized about itself with reference to the Roman past (cf. HINGLEY 2005:1-13; SADDINGTON 2006). Fortunately, current classical scholarship has progressed beyond the Eurocentric emphasis (see, e.g., WOOLF 1998; KEAY & TERRENATO 2001). On aspects of the political, social, and economic organization of the Roman Empire from the perspective of its impact, see: DE BLOIS et al. 2003; DE LIGT, HEMELRIJK & SINGOR 2004.

[16] According to CONANT 2004:1, "by the fifth century of our era, the Roman Empire had accomplished a political miracle in forging – at least to some degree – a single people of the disparate groups living within its boundaries."

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it alters in significant ways our current understanding of the way early Christians buried their dead. My thesis is that Christians at Ostia by the early fifth century were able to adapt basilical design as an identifiable form of Christian architecture because it allowed them to replicate many of the funerary and social functions commonly associated with the Roman family tombs, working simultaneously as a place for burial, for recalibrating social roles, and for creating community. The organization of funerary space at Pianabella and funerary processions to the basilica, taken together, provided a sphere in which local Christians could benefit from communal meals and the spectacle of status display, while pointing to God as a new and improved type of *paterfamilias*.

It is extremely important to note that the cemeterial basilica of Pianabella was built, in the late fourth or early fifth century, on top of and contiguous to a Roman necropolis that was in continuous use from the mid first century B.C. to the late third century or early fourth century A.D. Thus, this study will look into the Roman forms of burial and epigraphic commemoration as well as the history of Christian funerary practices against the backdrop of the necropolis of Pianabella, in terms of continuity versus change, taking into consideration changes of emphasis, shifts in interest, and responses to new needs.

Most importantly, I will focus on issues such as who might have built the Pianabella basilica. Did the institutional church build it? Was it built with the donations from a prominent family? We do know that the Anicii built basilicas, but whose responsibility was it to bury people and – therefore – build a cemeterial basilica? That responsibility seems to have rested mainly on the family, on burial guilds and on religious associations, so could it be that the institutional church was already edging out individual patrons, and setting the stage for the role it

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[17] On the developmental history of Ostia's necropoleis: HEINZELMANN 2000a; 2001; on specific necropoleis: PAROLI 1999; BALDASSARRE 2001:385-390; on new finds: GERMONI 2001:391-392; CARBONARA, PELLEGRINO & ZACCAGNINI 2001:139-148.

would so adamantly play in the Middle Ages? Are we entitled to look at the basilica of Pianabella as a family tomb – one belonging to the family of God? The practice of building family tombs is due to the fact that reunion in death somehow takes away something of death's sting.[18] The question "is it necessary to be a member of a community in order to attain a peaceful hereafter?" is also important. Thus, the construction of the Pianabella Basilica as a family tomb for Ostia's suburban Christians probably meant that a considerable degree of social integration had already been attained by them.

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[18] MEYERS & STRANGE 1981:98.

Chapter One: Ostia as Social and Religious Environment

Prior to his death in 1989, Russell Meiggs never had the opportunity to address the new discovery at Pianabella of a Christian cemeterial basilica.[19] Had he done so, it might have changed his perspective on late antique life at Ostia. Meiggs was not the first to register surprise at the paucity of explicitly Christian evidence at Ostia. In 1960, at least, he viewed it as insignificant and generally late.[20] Nor had the picture changed dramatically by 1973, when Meiggs supplied an addendum on newer finds.[21] Before turning to a careful examination of this putative Christian archaeological evidence noted in earlier work (which will be treated in the next chapter), it is important to examine some of the implications of recent archaeological work for our understanding of Ostia's urban history. For it would be overly simplistic to assume that the apparent lack of significant Christian evidence was a function of the city's rapid decline in the fourth and fifth centuries, precisely when Christianity was gaining ascendancy in the Roman world. Yet, such assumptions have been the norm operative until recently.

By traditional accounts, Ostia was in severe economic distress and sliding into urban decline by the latter part of the third century. It was virtually defunct by the the fifth century: "sacked by the barbarians, decimated by malaria, Ostia by the fifth century was desolate, and the road to Rome overgrown with trees."[22] To this view the discovery of the Pianabella basilica poses a serious conundrum. Who on this model could imagine building a large funerary monument measuring over 820 square meters as late as the fifth century, or that it would be Christian, or

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[19] The site was first identified during excavations in 1976-1977, but the basilica proper and its immediate surroundings were excavated only during the third and fourth campaigns, which were conducted in 1981 and 1988-89, respectively. For the history of the excavations of Pianabella, see Chapter 3 below.
[20] MEIGGS 1960:389, 400.
[21] MEIGGS 1973:589.

that it would continue in use until the late 10th century? Thus, in order to understand where the Pianabella basilica fits into the urban development of Ostia, we must first survey the recent archaeological work for the transition from later imperial to early medieval city. Ostia did not just suddenly fall apart in the fourth or fifth century, as was once thought. Rather there was a more gradual process of urban change. As we shall see, the Pianabella basilica further suggests that Christians played a role in this transition, just as other religious groups had done in earlier periods of the city's history.

Next in this chapter, we shall examine comparable archaeological evidence for the place of new or "foreign" religious groups in Ostia's pluralistic environment. Such groups may foster both social change and urban development through construction of religious sanctuaries and social centers. It will be shown that key periods of urban expansion or renewal offered even newcomers the opportunity to participate in the urban economy by sponsoring building projects and the chance to be recognized with greater social standing as a result. One such Ostian family is the Caltilii, who provide evidence of tentacular networks of social dependency by sponsoring the cult of Isis and Serapis and by engaging in civic politics connected to religious benefaction and local patronage. Archaeologically, then, this evidence is important because it shows both the ways that these aspiring "newcomers" might fit into Ostia's civic culture and the means by which they could broadcast it in religious architecture and inscriptions.

New Perspectives on Ostia's Urban Development

We have learned a great deal about Ostia in the last thirty years due to a new emphasis on social history and a closer reading of the archaeological evidence. Many scholars now tend to reject the traditional date for the foundation

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[22] MACKENDRICK 1983:331; CALZA et al. 1953:162 speaks of Ostia as a "città morta" by the fifth or sixth centuries.

of the city,[23] as well as the previously accepted view that the city plunged into an irreversible and escalating decline, starting in the third century A.D. and culminating with the abandonment of the city by A.D. 600. According to tradition, Ostia's origins go back to the sixth century B.C.,[24] but archaeological evidence points to a much later date.[25] Regardless of how Ostia started out, it soon became a city bourgeoning in response to increases in mercantile operations, and standing on the perimeter of an existing network of exchanges between Etruscan and Greek centers.[26] Ostia's urban development has in fact been significantly revised in the light of recent archaeological work over against the older theories most closely associated with Becatti and Meiggs. Scholars now propose later dates for important events in Ostia's history such as the construction of the *castrum* and city walls, the establishment and rebuilding of the forum, and the decline of the city.

Later Dates for the Castrum

The *castrum* is the first archaeologically visible effort to make the site into a planned settlement. Calza, Zevi and Meiggs place its construction soon after the fall of Veii as an important undertaking by the Romans in order to consolidate

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[23] PAVOLINI 2006:20-26.

[24] A long list of ancient sources – including Livy, Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Pliny the Elder – place the foundation of the city in the so-called regal period. *In ore Tiberis Ostia urbs condita*, Livy, *Ab urbe condita* 1.33, 9; Dionysius of Halicarnassus 3.38; Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis historia* 3.68-70. Most of these writers claim that Ancus Marcius, Rome's fourth king, was the city's founder. Livy (1.32, 1) identifies Ancus Marcius as the grandson of Numa Pompilius. According to him, *Numae Pompili Regis nepos, filia ortus, Ancus Marcius erat*. See also Cicero, *De re publica* 2.18, 33; Plutarch, *Numa* 21; Dionysius of Halicarnassus 2.76; and Isidorus, *Origines* 15.1.56. In fact, Livy portrays him with the characteristics of both Numa and Romulus: *medium erat in Anco ingenium et Numae et Romuli memor*. According to them, Ancus Marcius founded Ostia as a result of the war that he waged against certain Latin cities including Tellenae, Politorium, Medullia and Ficana. Marcius won the war, supposedly transferred the inhabitants of those cities to the Palatine, at Rome, and founded a colony at the mouth of the Tiber *ex novo* in order to make the poltical statement that the Romans intended to keep the area under control.

[25] Cf. *infra*.

[26] DESCOEUDRES 2001:36-38.

their recently acquired control over the Tiber in the early or mid fourth century B.C.[27] Despite the glacial longevity of this view, it has increasingly come under attack by scholarship. Rebuffat was the first to try to slide the dating of the construction of the *castrum* into the late fourth century based on his dates for the Attic pottery found there.[28] But it is Archer Martin who has brought the most relentless criticism to an early dating of the *castrum* walls based on the probes conducted in the site by Panella and a close comparison of numismatic evidence with the pottery thereby obtained.[29] He now dates the *castrum* to the first decade of the third century B.C., and Zevi seems prepared now to accept this date, too.[30]

Later Dates for Ostia's Wall Circuit

Previous scholarship assumed a Sullan date for most of Ostia's wall circuit, except for the stretch rebuilt near the Porta Marina during the Empire.[31] Trial trenches dug at the Porta Laurentina in 1999 hinted, however, at a possible Ciceronian date for the city walls rather than the Sullan date traditionally accepted for them.[32] The wall was exposed for a height of about 4 m on its outer side, where it showed the rather uneven opus quasi-reticulatum that tapers by about 5 cm for each 60 cm of height. The excavators came also to the conclusion that the Porta Laurentina gate was not built at the time of the construction of the wall.[33] Whatever conclusion one may draw from that, it remains certain that the metropolis had these walls built at Ostia because the city – in its emergent

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[27] ZEVI 2002a:12-13; MEIGGS 1973:22, 471. See also MAR 1991:81-109; PAVOLINI 2006:22.
[28] REBUFFAT 1974:631-654.
[29] MARTIN 1989a:111-119; 1996:19-38. For a different reading of the evidence, see: COARELLI 1988; BRUUN 2002:3.
[30] ZEVI 2002b:11-32.
[31] CALZA & BECATTI 1960:9; MEIGGS 1973:34-36.
[32] ZEVI 1997:61-112; MARTIN & HEINZELMANN 2000a; ZEVI 2004:15-32; PAVOLINI 2006:24.
[33] MARTIN & HEINZELMANN 2000a:282.

involvement in the storage of grain for Rome – had become vital for the survival of the Roman people.

Later Dates for the Forum

Despite previous discussion concerning the possible existence of a Republican forum at Ostia which occupied what became the free area of the imperial forum; scholars now agree that this area was in use in the centuries that precede the systematization of that space for a forum.[34] The accepted view is now an Augustan-Tiberian establishment of the forum with a Hadrianic rebuilding followed by other civic expansion.[35]

The construction of the imperial harbor (A.D. 100-106) by Trajan and the founding of an adjoining community had no immediate impact in the development of Ostia, so ingrained was its image as the storeroom of the Empire. Ostia remained the headquarters of the *annona*, the imperial administration of grain imports and of the complex network in charge of its subsequent distribution. With Hadrian, in fact, the city reached a new level of urbanization.[36] He saw to the reconstruction of whole blocks of buildings and established a new plan for the forum, which was enlarged to receive a new Capitolium. The second-century building explosion in the center of Ostia was the consequence of private speculation based on heavy commercialization and seems to have pushed out the owners of earlier small and medium-sized properties. The forum was remodeled extensively during the reign of Hadrian (A.D. 117-138) when it was surrounded

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[34] MEIGGS 1973:117; PAVOLINI 1988:99-105.

[35] PAVOLINI 1996:12; GESSERT 2004. New builders raised the level of Ostia in 1 meter under Domitian (81-96 A.D.), probably to protect these new edifices from Tiber floodings. At that time a *basilica* was built to the west of the forum, further improving its architectural setting.

[36] HEINZELMANN 2002:103-122. The emperor made the so-called *insulae* (that is, multistorey buildings with apartments), the hallmark of his project for domestic architecture, relying – for that purpose – on a combination of diagonal tufa blocks for wall-facing and bricks for the quoins, a technique known as *opus reticulatum mixtum*, of which, the so-called *Case a Giardino* is the most

by four major public buildings: the Capitolium at the north end, while the Tiberian Temple of Rome and Augustus faced it from the south end, the Curia towards the north-west, and the Basilica towards the south-west. Moreover this is a time when significant urban development began to the west and the north-west. The Caltilii built Ostia's Serapeum in commemoration of the emperor's birthday and probably as a part of Hadrian's intensive building program.[37]

Later Dates for Ostia's Decline

Builders under the Antonines kept the pace of Hadrian's intense building activity with the construction of *thermae*, *horrea*, temples, *collegium* halls, and apartments for lease.[38] But political chaos hit Rome under the Severans, and – as a result – building activity at Ostia then started to drop. The accepted view until recently was a description of a steady collapse.[39] According to Meiggs, the third-century decline was an inevitable consequence of the collapse of brick industry, the deterioration in the health of local government, economic breakdown resulting from trade disintegration, and the growth of Portus, this decline being archaeologically apparent from the reduced number of inscriptions harvested from this time period and the non-existence of any important new building or reconstruction in areas once vital to Ostia's trade.[40] In this section, I intend to briefly point to how Meiggs' theory of a sudden decline of Ostia in the third and

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conspicuous example (GERING 2002:109-140). DeLaine argues, however, for a rapid but piecemeal development in domestic architecture under Hadrian (DELAINE 2002:41-102).

[37] A whole section of this first chapter is dedicated to the involvement of the Caltilii in the cult of Serapis. So, please look below for more details regarding their participation in the dedication to Hadrian.

[38] They now used a more refined technique consisting of the use of bricks to face walls, the so-called *opus latericium*.

[39] This position is epitomized by Mackendrick, according to whom, "sacked by the Barbarian, decimated by malaria, Ostia by the fifth century was desolate, and the road to Rome overgrown with trees" (MACKENDRICK 1983:331). CALZA et al. 1953:162 speaks of Ostia as a "cittá morta" by the fifth or sixth centuries.

[40] MEIGGS 1973:82-89.

fourth century was revised by Pavolini into a theory of a decline changing the city into either a "villaggio-dormitorio" or a summer resort, and how the latter's theory has been updated into a theory of Ostia's resilience as a summer resort. My thesis is that Ostia went through a critical moment between the Severan and Post-Severan periods when its inhabitants were uncertain as to the city's future. Contractors hesitated to start new projects in the trade business but others realized the potential for investments in modern amenities to suit the taste of the aristocrats who sought Ostia for leisure and real-state speculation while attending to more mundane pursuits in Portus.

Although Pavolini still estimates that building activity started to drop off after the Antonines and became extremely rare in the sixth and seventh centuries, he revises Meiggs' theory by showing that Ostia's decline was not as sudden for two reasons: evidence showing Severan building projects and evidence showing that Post-Severan Ostia had acquired a new nature.[41] According to him, we are able to identify Severan public projects, which result in the strengthening of the physical connection between Ostia and Portus. These include the construction of the via Severiana (from A.D. 198 to 209), linking Ostia to Terracina and southern Latium, the restoration of the Pons Matidiae, by which the Claudian via Flavia crossed the "fossa Traiana" and reached Portus, and the construction of a large *emporium* near the Hadrianic *navalia* and temple complex.[42] He also claims that, despite the drop in the harvest of inscriptions, the loss of Ostia's municipal rights in 314, a decrease in prosperity and population, and a general shrinkage of trade,

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[41] PAVOLINI 1996:268-271.

[42] Under Septimius Severus, small-scale business proliferated in the form of shops, workshops and taverns, and that led to economic diversification, while a general loss of monumentality allowed for living quarters to be built for workers and merchants. There was a gradual shift of gravity away from the river. Space within the city had become less precious, and – as a result of that – scarcely any urban space was left free from buildings. Despite that, two large open areas were cleared; one, the so-called Foro della Statua Eroica, on the south side of the eastern Decumanus, east of the Forum; and the other, the so-called Piazzale della Vittoria, at the entrance to the town inside the Porta Romana.

Post-Severan Ostia saw the repair of long-standing public baths and the building of two new sets of *thermae*.[43] He thus contends that more concern started to be shown regarding amenities than regarding trade.[44] In fact, even Meiggs concedes that, as an attempt to make up for the sharp decline of trade, there is a new rise in public *nymphaea*, and signs of apparent wealth reappear at Ostia when the shift of population from Ostia to Portus stops in the fourth century: old houses are readapted to new tastes, shops are readapted to houses, marble is lavishly used, *nymphaea* continue to be built, and heating systems appear in selected rooms.[45] Meiggs also points that a strikingly large number of inscriptions – most of them with pompous official language – and good quality sculpture then re-emerge in the city.[46]

Pavolini argues that at this point we know what Ostia was not, but know considerably less about what it was becoming.[47] The presence of Roman aristocrats at Ostia in the third, fourth, and fifth centuries, is demonstrable in the luxurious habitations and inscriptions of this period.[48] Pavolini suggests, first, the

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[43] One on the via della Foce, the other behind the House of Jupiter the Thunderer.

[44] Minucius Felix, in the Severan period, referred to Ostia as a most pleasant town, *amoenissima civitas* (*Octavius* 2).

[45] MEIGGS 1973:92-93.

[46] I am unable to provide estimates for the number of inscriptions harvested from this time period (many of which are associated with building activity). A good number of these inscriptions were published in CIL 14, but the remainder are scattered and many are still unpublished. The number, however, is large enough to make Meiggs state that "if we confined our attention to a selection of private houses and inscriptions we might imagine that a real prosperity had returned to Ostia in the fourth century" (MEIGGS 1973:92).

[47] PAVOLINI 1996:264.

[48] We have clues attesting to the presence of Rome`s aristocracy at Ostia during this time period. Senator Volusianus (Rome's *praefectus Urbi* in 365?) probably owned the Domus dei Dioscuri, a luxurious house not far from the former temple of the Fabri Navales, which the senator had turned into a marbe depot (PAVOLINI 1996:265-266). Anicia Italica and her husband Valerius Faltonius also owned property in the city as indicated by a *fistula* inscription – while her cousin Anicius Auchenius Bassus set an epitaph for St. Monica, who died in the city in 387, and another Anicius restored the *Macellum* some time later (PAVOLINI 1996:265-266). Finally, another fistula naming the poetess Betitia Faltonia Proba and her husband Clodius Adelphius (*praefectus urbi* in 351) was recently found in a late-antique bath building at Ostia (HEINZELMANN 2001b:313-328).

possibility that – due to its newly-acquired quietness – Ostia had turned into a "villaggio-dormitorio" for the high officials of the grain administration at Portus.[49] On the other hand, he rejects the possibility that Roman aristocrats might be interested in establishing *latifundia* at Ostia, alleging that their presence at Ostia was certainly not connected to agricultural concerns since the *ager Ostiensis* was not especially good for growing produce, at this period.[50] He suggests, then, that agricultural activity in the city had become a mere cover-up for aristocrats who felt compelled to conceal the fact that they derived most of their wealth from commercial enterprises.[51] In a society where the aristocracy took pride in leisure time, these powerful Romans may have used Ostia as a façade for their intense commercial activities at Portus since it would have looked debasing for an aristocrat to spend time at a city where profiteering was widespread.[52] Wealthy landowners would thus come to Ostia on the pretense of spending time away from Rome in order to enjoy countryside leisure while in fact they would keep quite busy looking after their trade interests in Portus.

According to both Meiggs and Pavolini, a crisis that affected the Empire made it more and more difficult for the emperor to protect both Ostia and Portus, this difficulty – due mainly to the fall of the Severi – consisting of "una gravissima crisi dinastica, politico-economica e militare,"[53] which was paralleled by border disputes with the Barbarians, and which led to the breakdown of

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[49] The iconography found at the Domus della Fortuna Annonaria seems to confirm this hypothesis (including a statue of Ceres personifying the prosperity of Rome's maritime commerce represented with walls, cornucopia and oar-blade).

[50] So, the fact that Symmachus, the leader of the pagan aristocracy at Rome in the late fourth century, owned a farm near Ostia is assumed to be an isolated case.

[51] PAVOLINI 1996:266.

[52] The Romans saw work as the denial of leisure. Their low regard for trade and other forms of labor can be perceived even in a poem such as Virgil's Georgics, intended to promote Augustus' back-to-the-land policies: *labor omnia uicit / improbus* (1.145-146). For the common Roman attitudes toward work, see: FITZGERALD 1996:389-418; MEYERS 2005:103-129.

[53] This view argues for revolts and assassination becoming a means of power, leading to a rapid succession of emperors with little continuity in policy.

centralized power and the collapse of the brick industry.[54] But this so-called "crisis of the third century" is a notorious problem in the scholarship, and numerous recent scholars have argued against its strongest version.[55] Despite an alleged hold-up in construction work, which Calza and Becatti call "un notevole rallentamento,"[56] Aurelian gave Ostia a new forum (*Historia Augusta*, Aurelian 45), his successor Tacitus donated one hundred columns of yellow marble to the city (*Historia Augusta*, Tacitus 10), and Maxentius built a mint at Ostia in 309 (Zosimus, *Historia nova* ii.12). So, here, too, our picture is changing. In other words, the "crisis" was not as severe, even though there were important transformations taking place after the Severans. Ostia started to play a different role in its interface with Rome although we cannot be sure whether its inhabitants were yet fully aware of that fact.

No monuments were erected at the Piazzale delle Corporazioni after the Severi, while the fire brigade (the *vigiles*) and the detachment of veterans (the *vexillatio*) were deactivated. These are conspicuous indications that decline had started occurring. In fact, in the late fourth or early fifth century, the temple opposite the Schola del Traiano – believed to be the guild hall of the *fabri navales* – was transformed into a storage facility for marble slabs belonging to a senator named Volusianus.[57] A broad-spectrum downgrading of domestic architecture started to afflict the city when a new building technique called *opus vittatum* or *opus listatum* was adopted, which consisted of a return to the use of tufa blocks on account of the decline of the brick industry.[58] On the other hand, this new

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[54] PAVOLINI 1996:254; MEIGGS 1973:81ff. For a recent scholarship on the Roman brick industry, see BRUUN 2005.
[55] MACMULLEN 1984 and 1997; BROWN 1971 and 1992; MILLAR 2004.
[56] CALZA & BECATTI 1960:11.
[57] HERRMANN & BARBIN 1993:91-103 identify this Volusianus as a Rufius Volusianus; I identify him, more precisely, as Rufius Antonius Agrypnius Volusianus when I discuss – below – the inscriptions of the so-called Basilica Cristiana sul Decumano.
[58] At the same time, *tabernae* were consistently abandoned. According to PAVOLINI 1996:257, "fra la metà del III e il IV secolo possiamo documentare circa 100 situazioni di tabernae o

technique consisted of a massive reuse of older materials, suggesting much new construction activity. What we see, in fact, is evidence for a reconfiguration of the cityscape in order to counter this first wave of pressure towards decline. Using the so-called "Insula of the Paintings" as a paradigm for Ostia's condition as a city in flux, DeLaine suggests that in the third and fourth centuries decay was no more common than renewal.[59] Constantine and his successors marked a new upsurge of activity, and the rise of Christian influence in the imperial ranks (by the end of the fourth century) set up a period of consolidation by the fifth century. The third and fourth centuries are therefore a time of incongruous behavior towards the city on the part of builders and contractors. Some fear decline but others bet for continuity. Moreover, the reconstruction of a whole section of the Schola del Traiano, the consistent transformation of *tabernae* into public spaces such as that occupied by guild houses, *nymphaea*,[60] *thermae*, and latrines, or into religious spaces occupied by Christian and foreign cults, and the restoration of inns, hotels, bakeries and fulling shops suggest that the city was determinedly staying disintegration.

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retrobottega aboliti o trasformati per un altro uso: semplicemente abbandonati in molti casi, magari dopo un incendio (come le botteghe del Caseggiato del Sole: non c'era più un corpo di pompieri a prevenire simili disastri)..."

[59] DELAINE 1995:99. We can especially see this double trend in domestic architecture. In fact, "the houses of late antiquity in Ostia represent both tradition and innovation" (MUNTASSER 2003:214).

[60] According to GESSERT 2001:340ff, this spread of *nymphaea* may simply reflect the aesthetic concerns of the *praefecti annonae* who were using the creation of new spaces (such as that of the Foro della Statua Eroica) as well as some new constructions (such as the monumental *nymphaea* across the street from the Foro, and the exedra blocking the Semita dei Cippi) to conceal the underlying urban deterioration. Of course, the *praefecti* did not intend their generalized use of *spolia* and the projects they carried out at the expense of surrounding buildings to dismantle the trappings of Ostian civic identity, but – according to Gessert – that is precisely what they accomplished. The *seviri Augustales* disappeared, and the productive partnership between the local aristocracy and the guilds was no longer effective. At a time when the Romans were receiving no more booty from the provinces and civic office had become a burden, imperial legislation imposing one's participation in public life and creating a new imperial bureaucracy, which made the *praefectus annonae* the chief magistrate at Ostia, led to a power glitch and a broad-spectrum cynicism regarding the mechanisms of traditional Roman life.

It is true that major residential complexes – such as the Casa di Diana (i.iii.3-4) and the Caseggiato dei Dipinti (at the city's very heart), or the Casa delle Ierodule (iii.ix.6) – show signs of abandonment, and they seem to have turned into ruins some time between the second half of the third and the beginning of the fourth century when many windows and doors were closed in order to avoid structural collapse. Was this the result of lack of maintenance only? Many of the tufa blocks (and bricks) used in *opus vittatum* are actually *spolia*. This may be evidence of decline in the imperial brick production, but it may also be evidence for something else. There is growing evidence that a tsunami or an earthquake followed by a fire did significant damage at Ostia in ca. 275, especially near the beach.[61] Rather than a "decline" there was another kind of crisis that required rebuilding. Some of the buildings clearly damaged in this earthquake include the Case a Giardino (iii.ix),[62] the Caseggiato dei Molini

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[61] A conspicuous example of the damage caused by this earthquake near the beach is that shown by geophysical research, conducted by the German Archaeological Institute in Rome and directed by Michael Heinzelmann, regarding a suburban villa lying in the south-west part of region IV, to the east of the Terme di Porta Marina (iv.x.1-2) and to the north of the Synagogue (iv.xvii.1). Heinzelmann suggested that the Suburban Villa might have been destroyed by the earthquake of the late third century: "Die Villa entstand um 60-80 n.Chr., erfuhr Umbauten und Neudekorationen im 2. Jh. und wurde am Ende des 3. Jhs., möglicherweise infolge eines Erdbebens, vollständig zerstört. Drei nachfolgende Besiedlungsphasen des 4. und 5. Jhs. nahmen keinerlei Rücksicht mehr auf die älteren Villenstrukturen. Diese ursprünglich am Rande der Stadt gelegene suburbane Villa bildete die erste in einer lückenlosen Reihe von Meervillen, die von hier über viele Kilometer nach Süden reicht. Anders als diese Villen wurde sie jedoch im Gefolge des Baubooms des 2. Jh. vollständig von der städtischen Bebauung umfaßt und so in das Stadtgebiet integriert" (http://www.ostia-antica.org/heinzelmann/2001.htm; see also http://www.ostia-antica.org/regio4/villa/villa.htm). The fact, however, that a Roman road runs over the villa (clearly visible in DAI trench 35 in 2001), that would seem to connect with the Via Severiana very near the Synagogue area (at IV.15.1), would also allow for intentional abandonment and rebuilding of the area in the Severan period, at the same time that the Via Severiana was built (so L. M. White in private communication).

[62] For the building history of the Case a Giardino, see CERVI 1998:141-156. For the details on how the earthquake damaged this residential complex, see GERING 2002:109-140. According to him, the Garden Houses were largely destroyed by an earthquake, triggering also a fire, traces of fire being found in the destruction layer, still visible in the re-used fragments of the upper floors. Also according to him, torsion-cracks testify to the earthquake: often one part of a wall was lifted in a different way (higher, lower, etc.) than another, so that after falling it would for example protrude from an adjoining stretch (http://www.ostia-antica.org/regio3/9/9.htm).

(i.iii.1),[63] and perhaps even the Casa di Diana. Concurrently, the reconstruction of the city walls seems to coincide with the period that immediately follows the earthquake showing that much reconstruction work was happening at the time.[64]

New *domus* were built in this period, although in a smaller number, including the Casa di Amore e Psiche, the Casa del Ninfeo, and the late-fourth century Casa dei Dioscuri.[65] These domus retained some portentousness but looked more like *insulae* turned into one-family apartments lacking a second floor. Ostians began to build less monumental structures whose plan was entirely determined by the space available to them, and which lacked atria and other floors rather than the ground floor. Although their owners tried to compensate for a certain lack of architectural grandiosity by paying special attention to the decoration, these new "domus" lost their aristocratic touch. In fact, even the city's old houses were renovated in a way that betrays that tendency. *Tabernae* were generally absorbed into domestic space, showing that they were now owned by the same owner. But this is no sure evidence for decline, since the city was actually reinventing itself by progressively taking a new function. Ostians had begun to feel the shortcomings derived from the fact that Ostia was no longer needed as Rome's granary. The third century gave Ostia many *mithraea*, *thermae*, and tenement houses, making the city ready for its new function as Rome's summer resort. According to Gessert, a new aesthetic is brought to Ostia

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[63] "The building was destroyed by a fire. The excavators saw traces on walls and floors, and found a thick destruction-layer (1.5 to 3 metres high). The fire can be dated fairly accurately. No masonry in the building can be dated to the time of Diocletian or later. Many coins were found. The series ends under Probus (276-282 AD). Apparently the building was destroyed in the last quarter of the third century, perhaps as the result of an earthquake, of which several traces have been found in Ostia. After the fire at least the lower part of the ruins was left undisturbed. On Via dei Molini parts of the walls of the building were found, and on top of these a thick layer of rammed earth: a path had been created at an average height of 2.20 above the Hadrianic street level" (cf. J. T. Bakker, http://www.ostia-antica.org/regio1/3/3-1.htm). For the building history of the Caseggiato dei Molini, see HERES 1988:37-74.

[64] Cf. http://www.ostia-antica.org/heinzelmann/ostia_i.htm.

[65] For the Casa dei Dioscuri and the Casa di Amore e Psiche, see MUNTASSER 2003:174-189; 204-209.

characterized by a certain preference for private and recreational buildings, a certain disruption of the cohesion of the urban framework (due to more attention being given to internal amenities than to external factors), a certain preference for inward-looking houses, a distinct drift towards the southern and western quadrants of the city, and a decisive preference for the proximity to the ocean and for access to Portus.[66] A general escalation of social differences in late antiquity made it possible for Ostia to attend to the needs of aristocrats who – more and more – saw themselves as deserving to enjoy the amenities of life vis-à-vis the members of a struggling middle class to whom they were willing to make no concessions.[67] This explains why status symbols became even more important in the *domus* of this period and why there is clearly a "mini" building boom under Constantine and continuing into later fourth century.[68]

The idea of decline prevails especially because a devastating blow was given the city when Constantine transferred all municipal rights from Ostia to Portus in 314. He now called Ostia's neighboring city Civitas Constantiniana or Portus Romae, instead of Portus Ostiae or Portus Augusti as it had been previously known. From that time on, it is Portus that is closely associated with Rome and no longer Ostia.[69] But instead of a complete shift in population in the fourth century, what we see is that it simply tilted in favor of Portus; and, again, that does not necessarily mean that Ostia plunged into an irremediable decline as it has often been claimed in regards to the fourth century in particular. Archaeological evidence shows that the city held up well: it ceased being a

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[66] GESSERT 2001:339ff.
[67] MEIGGS 1973:94 deems this as the collapse of the middle class. Religious differences widen the social gulf, as Ostia becomes a retreat shelter for the wealthy.
[68] MUNTASSER 2003.
[69] The so-called *Tabula Peutingeriana*, the only surviving copy (made in the Middle Ages) of a late Roman road map dating from the fourth century and showing the roads and distances across the Roman Empire, is often cited as reflecting the status exchange that made Portus rather than Ostia one of the most important destinations from Rome.

commercial hub but it took new importance instead as a summer resort.[70] Even in the fourth century the city received considerable investments in real-estate. Comfortable *domus* were built or renovated;[71] *nymphaea* spread everywhere; and the *exedra* became a commonplace architectural space in the city. Renovations and repairs regarding the city's *thermae* persisted, and the so-called Collegio degli Augustali underwent extensive beautification also during this period. It appears that the temple of the Dioscuri was still in use in 359, although many other religious buildings suffered from a general disregard for statuary.[72]

DeLaine suggests that from the fourth century there is no sense of overall planning at Ostia, and that the decline of the *insula* is counterbalanced by the rise of the *domus*. According to her, we can perceive two contrasting trends in this city's urban make-up: expansion and decay, that is, pockets of active reorganization side by side with zones of passive decay.[73] Archaeological evidence suggests a transition away from the old areas near the river and the upsurge of new buildings in the southern and western areas of the city, including the extra-mural areas.[74] The construction of the Pianabella Basilica near the beginning of the fifth century and the fact that it remained in use until the tenth century suggest that at least Ostia's southern, extra-urban district had a vitality

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[70] This commercial setback is undeniable since many of the city's magazzini were demoted to being mere storage facilities for victuals. However, according to GERING 2004, around the main streets, squares and promenades, a new city arose, tailored to meet the entertainment-needs of its wealthy residents, on the coast along the Via Severiana and in the country-side between Ostia, Portus and Rome.

[71] BOERSMA 1985:219; MUNTASSER 2003.

[72] By this time, the pagan poet Rutilius complained that Ostia had come short of Aeneas's glory: *laevus inaccessis fluvius vitatur arenas / hospitis Aeneae Gloria sola manet*. Likewise, Procopius states in 540 that the via Ostiensis had been taken by the woods and that the Tiber had been deprived of its ships.

[73] DELAINE 1995:98-100.

[74] The fact that the Southern (so-called Constantinian) Basilica was central to the later life of the city is one important transition. Heinzelmann and Martin (DAI project, 1999) have documented archaeologically the rise of the streets in these areas in the later periods (especially Sondaggi 10, 11, 12, 16 on the rises of level in the Via del Sabazeo, which show building collapse and new construction above). See HEINZELMANN & MARTIN 2000:277-283.

that challenges the long-established view of an utter desertion of the city in the fifth/sixth centuries or earlier.[75] Christians continued to be buried and to make status displays at the cemetery where the Pianabella Basilica was located and this also challenges the current view that Christianity spread from Ostia to Portus where it became considerably more successful than at the old harbor city.[76] Besides, new evidence shows that Ostia's real decline may have happened at a later period. The city lived on well into the eighth century at least, although obviously not in its peak condition. Although the harbor was now silted, Ostia turned from a commercial city into a summer resort. The archaeological evidence suggests that the utter abandonment of Ostia happened by the seventh or eighth century, a view that seems to fit better our general understanding of the state of affairs in Italy.[77] Martin now suggests that Ostia gradually shrank to a smaller village encircling the so-called Constantinian Basilica in the southeast area of the city. According to him, people still inhabited the city in the eighth century, when Ostia was still receiving trade goods from Gaul.[78] What we will see in the next chapters is that the Pianabella district remained for long an important entrepôt for the wealthy owners of the *villae* lining the coastline in the vicinity of Ostia. The heterogenous nature of the people who inhabited the city reveals to us a syncretistic religious context that brought together different cults operating along similar lines of action, as we shall see in the next section, which is dedicated to religion as a vehicle for civic patronage. This will set the background for our

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[75] According to PAVOLINI 2006:38, "ma nel suo complesso Ostia, a patire dagli inizi del V sec., andò incontro a una seconda e definitiva crisi."

[76] This goes against Pavolini's current position that Christianity developed mainly at Portus rather than at Ostia (PAVOLINI 2006:286).

[77] According to POTTER 1987:207, life in towns was not wholly a picture of decay and decline in fourth-century Italy where the picture was a rather rosier one than is often supposed. By the seventh century, however, the empire emerged as "a rump holding Asia Minor, Constantinople, a bit of Thrace, a few coastal fortresses in Europe, and a swiftly contracting area of Italy" (OLSTER 1994:1).

[78] MARTIN 2006.

analysis of how patronage informed social relations among the Christians who built the Pianabella Basilica.

Religion as a Vehicle for Civic Patronage and Urban Development

Christianization was once thought to be mainly perceived in the speediness with which new Christian churches were built in a given city, but scholars are now much more skeptical that Christianization can be quantified in such a precise and conclusive way.[79] Instead, several sources of evidence need to be evaluated, including epigraphy, iconography, prosopography and the architecture of private and public buildings. In fact, it is important to determine whether the Christianization of Ostia was a top down process initiated by Constantine's conversion to Christianity or whether it was a natural outgrowth of the intense cultural interchange between that society and foreign religions. The top-down view of Christianization posits that once the emperors had adopted Christianity, there was so much gain in favor of adopting the religion of the emperor that the conversion of the aristocracy, like that of the population at large, was more or less inevitable.[80] Urban development in the light of both internal and external influences offers opportunities for newcomers to play a larger role, assuming that they can do so while also integrating themselves into the existing frameworks of social interaction A first objective, in this section, is therefore to focus on the prosopography of a family comprised of many immigrants to Ostia in order to get a glimpse of contacts of people in that city. A second goal is to show how such contacts of people, which had already been operative in Ostia's earlier "heyday" had a bearing upon the social and religious fabric of that society. This assessment is relevant for our comprehension of the gradual process that changed Ostia from a pagan society into a Christian one.

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[79] BRENK 2001:262.
[80] SALZMAN 2002:178.

Foreigners at Ostia

The answer to the question concerning the origins of Christianity at Ostia is connected with the questions related to the contacts of people from different parts of the Roman Empire as they came together in the city. In fact, the prosopographic linkage of names found in funerary, architectural, epigraphic, and iconographic contexts at Ostia may prove useful for the consideration of the patchwork of foreign characters that helped build Ostia's identity as a cosmopolitan society.[81] The appraisal of the ways cultural differences affected the multi-ethnic environment of Ostia and the growth of non-traditional Roman cults in the city is another key factor for our understanding of how a transition from paganism to Christianity was made possible. In a broad sense, this section is a study of the "tentacular networks of social dependency" that were often created in response to social and religious differences,[82] and looks into the prosopography of a Roman family which was not part of the original aristocracy of Ostia, and which

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[81] Of course, there is no direct relationship between epigraphy and ethnicity, hence Février's constructive appeal for a more archaeological slant to epigraphic material (FÉVRIER 1989:1, 75). MACDONALD 1998:187-188 warns against three incorrect fundamental assumptions associated with the very widespread use of onomastics to identify ethnicity: (a) that names contain linguistic information and that they represent the language used by their bearers; (b) that epigraphic categories should be treated as if they were coterminous with ancient ethnic groups; and (c) that adjacent communities were in some way in watertight compartments and that fashions in name-giving in one group would have no influence on another. His conclusion is that "in epigraphy one all too frequently has to infer the monkey from two inches of tail [as Sir Arthur Evans is said to have done with a wall-painting at Knossos]. But once we have restored the monkey, we should try not to forget that the original, fragmentary picture may not have been of a tail after all, but of part of the trunk of an elephant!" (p. 190). No one would deny, however, that epigraphy and onomastics can be useful tools for the study of ethnicity in ancient societies. In fact, a field in which onomastic studies have proven to be very productive in the investigation of contacts of people is Etruscan studies. The Etruscan culture extended over a broad span of time and across diverse regions; it was also open to foreign contacts through trade and immigration. Giovannangelo Camporeale from the University of Florence has documented the patterns of immigration as known from the archaeological record, primarily from onomastic studies of inscriptions (COVE & WHITEHEAD 1996:68).

[82] According to WHITE 1997b:50, "such tentacular networks of social relations merit fuller examination, if one is to understand the diffusion of Jews and Christians in the Roman environment." See also WHITE 1992:15-21.

incorporated many immigrants along its history: the Caltilii. Previous studies focusing on the families of Ostia have concentrated on the city's aristocratic echelon, paying close attention to well known families such as the Publii Lucilii Gamalae, the senatorial Egrilii, the Acilii, and the Nasennii.[83] As far as the Caltilii are concerned, scholarly attention has highlighted simply their involvement in the so-called foreign cults,[84] and no studies have been undertaken for their own sake, that is, in order to assess – in a systematic way – the history of that family.

Although freedmen and even freeborn people also tended to move away from Italy,[85] they sometimes moved to Roman urban centers in the hope of improving their social standing.[86] When that was the case, they seemed to have sought the help of those from the same homeland in order to get adjusted to the new environment, thus conserving their ethnic distinctiveness for quite a long time.[87] In fact, as we shall see, people with the same ethnic background had even a tendency to concentrate in the same part of town. They lived together, worked together, spoke the same language, and held on to the same traditions (cf. Juvenal 3.62-65). The irony is that this reproduced among them the same social structures that oftentimes worked against them.[88]

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[83] MEIGGS 1973:493-510; COARELLI 2004.

[84] This is the case of VIDMAN 1969; MOROVICH 1999, and ZEVI 2003, for instance.

[85] Although modern accounts stress migration to Rome as the main means by which it grew, this demographic picture may be too simple, cf. EDWARDS & WOOLF 2003:10. PURCELL 2005:85-105 refers to the Roman citizens who left Italy for various reasons and became the face of Rome in the rest of the Mediterranean world during the age of Augustus as constituting a "Roman Diaspora." See also: MORLEY 2003:147-157.

[86] According to WHITE 1997b:51n, a glimpse of the "centripetal pull of provincials into this social mix appears even in a casual reference from a private letter from Egypt, in which it is reported that 'Herminos went off to Rome and became a freedman of Caesar in order to receive offices' (Ἑρμῖνος ἀπῆλθεν ἰς Ῥώμ[ην] | καὶ ἀπελεύθερος ἐγένετ[ο] | Καίσαρος ἵνα ὀπικία λάβ[η]). The text is from P. Oxy. XLVI 3312, lines 11-13 (ed. John R. Rea)… The letter is variously dated between the first and third centuries C.E." Immigration to Ostia has been studied by several scholars (notably MEIGGS 1973:214-216) who mention people from Africa, Spain, Gaul, the Greek East, Egypt, and the Italian localities of Praeneste, Ravenna, Vercellae and Umbria.

[87] LA PIANA 1927:197; JEFFERS 1995:21.

[88] JEFFERS 1995:22.

Because the cultural differences within Ostian society thus include the customs of a large number of *incolae* (or immigrants) to the harbor community, they are complex and operate alongside other effects of commerce and urbanization.[89] Therefore, it is necessary to utilize multiple and complementary methodologies – especially prosopography – in order to examine both the influence of immigration, and the impact of foreign religions on the social, religious and cultural levels of the processes of change at Ostia.[90] Since prosopography is mainly an exploration of the common background characteristics of a historical group – whose individual biographies are barely discernible – by means of a combined study of their lives, a prosopographic approach thus presupposes the assessment of supporting funerary, onomastic, epigraphic, iconographic and architectural evidence.

Onomastic Evidence

About 7,000 Latin and Greek inscriptions have been recovered from Ostia and Portus.[91] This large corpus offers us an excellent background in which geographic origin, social provenance and ethnicity can be tentatively investigated,

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[89] For a recent assessment of the status of *incolae* in Roman Italy, see GAGLIARDI 2006.

[90] For assessments of the cultural differences between Romans and aliens, see MACMULLEN 1988; BALSDON 1979.

[91] These are the figures proposed by LICORDARI 1977:239. This number may be a slight exaggeration since C.I.L. 14 and 14 Supplement 1 contain only 3,237 inscriptions from Ostia and Portus proper (the vast majority in Latin); THYLANDER 1952b contains 787 inscriptions, with only a slightly higher percentage in Greek (but only 175 previously unpublished inscriptions, cf. CASTAGNOLI et al. 1972-1973:153); BLOCH 1953 contains 72 previously unpublished inscriptions; MARINUCCI 1991 contains 35 previously unpublished inscriptions; and CÉBEILLAC 1971 and PETERSEN 1980 contain a few others, while individual finds are published piecemeal in specific articles (such as the case of CASAMASSA 1951; SESTON 1971; CÉBEILLAC-GERVASONI 1980 and 2000, among others) or in the *L'Année Épigraphique*. For a recent survey of the epigraphic evidence for the relationship between Rome and the *ager Laurens*, the coastal region between Ostia and Ardea, see COOLEY 2000. A recent study has estimated that around 250,000 inscriptions survive from the Roman world and the majority of these originate from the funerary context (SALLER & SHAW 1984:124). According to HOPE 2000:157, "for sheer quantity the evidence of inscriptions, much of which is funerary in nature, has to be regarded as one of the primary sources available for the Roman era."

since Roman inscriptions in general tend to hint at such factors.[92] Just as in any other epigraphic setting, the question of ethnicity in a funerary context is a complex one. In fact, some scholars use terms such as "native" and "Roman," "ethnic" and "racial" while others avoid the extreme complexities of such descriptions.[93] As it has been often acknowledged, there is a close relationship between funerary monuments and the inscriptions associated with them, the physical qualities of the tomb providing complementary information to that of the inscription.[94] Unfortunately, Ostia is an exception to the rule that most inscriptions do not move far from their original location.[95] Despite that, epigraphy has an important role in the development of ideas about ancient Ostia because inscriptions are, as it were, the vocal authentication from the ancients: they make monuments come alive and demonstrate ideas and actions some of which are also found in the ancient writers. My point is that, in a study – such as this one – whose main focus is a marginal Christian community at Ostia made up mostly of

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[92] Ethnicity is to be taken here in the sense used by MACDONALD 1998:181 "to refer to the social community or communities of which persons feel themselves to be members and/or to which they are considered by others to belong… Ethnicity is thus primarily a matter of perception – of how one perceives oneself and how one is perceived by others. It is seldom, if ever, simple and there are always overlapping levels of membership of different groups." In fact, ethnicity came to play such an important role in the dynamics of the fourth and fifth centuries that PORTER & PEARSON 2002:83 see it as a contributing factor for the split between Christians and Jews in the fourth century as well as for most of the theological controversies of the fourth and fifth centuries. The ethnic approach has been a "long held obsession" especially when applied to the study of grave-goods (cf. JAMES 1980:36), which has been one of the main sources for the study of immigrants in the Roman world (cf. GASTALDO 1998:15). However, archaeologists have become increasingly aware that grave-goods do not constitute reliable evidence for ethnic provenance (cf. GASTALDO 1998:15-16), hence my decision, here, to concentrate on epigraphic and prosopographic evidence.
[93] PEARCE, MILLET & STRUCK 2000:270. So, HALL 2002 addresses the thorny problem of how one should define ethnicity, and provides, in his first chapter, a complex but very useful discussion of key theoretical concepts and approaches to the study of ethnicity. He goes as far as arguing for the need to rethink our methodologies for dealing with material culture and its ethnic implications.
[94] Cf. FELDHERR 2000:225: a tomb's "position, quality, and size, and above all its sculptural decoration, provide information that helps locate the dead within the community by revealing their occupation, wealth, and status." The Hadrianic tomb of T. Statilius Aper or that of Eurysaces are conspicuous examples of that.

foreign individuals or their descendants, the vital subject of ethnicity is difficult to assess and therefore requires that we start the investigation by means of a comparison with other foreign and freedman groups from Ostia that are more well-known, particularly in settings open to such an investigation such as the commercial, civic, funerary or religious milieu.

Evidence from Ostia's business environment suggests – among other things – that immigrants were actively engaged in the organization and maintenance of guilds. The so-called *stationes*, cubicles located in the Piazzale delle Corporazioni and used by the different commercial guilds, displayed interesting black-and-white mosaic decoration on their pavement, which often contained inscriptions. They point to the weight of Ostia's maritime commerce, as the ubiquitous presence of the *modius*[96] – the emblem of grain commerce – in the mosaics indicates. The mosaics and their inscriptions are also good evidence for the organization of the guilds at the end of the second century A.D., time when the decoration was completed.[97] They show, for instance, that the guilds tended to group geographically. Thus, the *stationes* on the east side were used mainly by the guilds from Africa. In fact, the province of Africa – which excluded Egypt – is very well represented in the *stationes*, and Egypt has some *stationes* on the north and west sides. The absence of *stationes* connected with cities in Greece and Asia Minor is not surprising since commerce with those cities was made preferentially through Puteoli. The guilds present at the *piazzale* were not, however, exclusively comprised of foreigners. There were guilds constituted upon ethnic bases but there were also those formed upon local bases, as the *navicularii Ostienses*, for example.[98] The shipbuilders from Africa and Sardis (*domini navium Afrarum*

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[95] GREENHALGH 1989:173.
[96] A cylindrical, three-legged vase containing a standard measure of grain (about 6.5 kg).
[97] ROMANELLI 1960:63-70.
[98] PAVOLINI 1996:89 mentions several other inscriptions that attest as well to the importance of the wine trade at Ostia.

universarum item Sardorum) dedicated an honorary statue found in the *piazzale* – evidence that, sometimes, different ethnicities came together for business purposes.[99]

Onomastic studies independently conducted by Thylander, Kajanto, Licordari, Heinzelmann, Salomies and Mouritsen suggest that freedmen formed a considerable percentage of Ostia's population and that the city received a great number of immigrants. If we leave out the fragments with names that cannot be identified, there are epigraphic references to 12,520 identifiable persons at Ostia.[100] Greek *cognomina* are somewhat fewer there than at Rome (40% at Ostia against 63% in Rome).[101] Licordari suggests that this is due to a more conservative local environment at Ostia where there probably were fewer slaves and a greater pressure for foreigners to mimic the Romans even in their names.[102] Except for the necropolis at Via Laurentina – where inscriptions related to freedmen and slaves predominate –, this percentage of non-Latin cognomina remains constant in the second and third centuries A.D. because the decrease of foreign *cognomina* due to social ascension was compensated by a larger influx of slaves and foreign merchants.[103]

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[99] GORDON 1934:65-77; MASTINO & VISMARA 1994.

[100] For a good summary on Roman names, see BALSDON 1979:146-160.

[101] SOLIN 1971:110-113. Inscriptions and other documents bearing a Latin text were sometimes written in Greek characters, and those bearing a Greek text were sometimes written in Latin characters, cf. KRAMER 1984.

[102] LICORDARI 1977:240.

[103] It was customary – towards the end of the Republic and under the early Empire – for foreign slaves to take on their master's *praenomen* on the occasion of their manumission. Cf. KAJANTO 1963:3. For two different and competing analyses of the inscriptions of the via Laurentina necropolis, see HEINZELMANN 2000a and MOURITSEN 2004:281-304. Mouritsen criticizes Heinzelmann's on the ground of the methodological inconsistencies of his study of the funerary inscriptions of the Porta Romana and the via Laurentina *necropoleis*. According to him, these include the fact that (a) Heinzelmann is merely interested in who built the tombs, (b) he assumes that inscriptions placed on the front of the monument actually belong there (what Mouritsen considers problematic), (c) his identification of tomb owners is problematic in several ways, (d) tomb measurements are not given, (e) his identification of freedmen and freeborn is full of errors, and (e) his criteria for dating the inscriptions are not consistent. Mouritsen proposes that (a) the overwhelming majority of the dedicators were freedmen, (b) one senses a deliberate wish to

Although Licordari identifies 650 *gentilicia* at Ostia, with the exception of the Lucilii Gamala, the Egrilii and very few others, it is extremely difficult to follow up the history of individual families.[104] Some of the *gentilicia* are exclusive to Ostia, such as Auscia, Nungulanius, Sulfius and Nerulanus. A few others are exclusive to Ostia and Rome, such as Caltilius, Durdenius, Fraeganius and Tinucius. According to Salomies, Egrilius was the second commonest *nomen* at Ostia but extremely rare at Rome.[105] He also highlights some surprising differences between Ostia and Rome, both in the prevalence of particular *nomina* and in the preferred combinations of *praenomen* and *nomen*. Over fifty *nomina* are found at Ostia and elsewhere but not at Rome, and another fifty are found at Ostia but nowhere else in the Roman world, the *praenomen* Decimus and the cognomen Mercurius being surprisingly common at Ostia. Also according to him, names suggest substantial immigration to Ostia, especially from Africa: twenty-three Ostian magistrates have *praenomen* and *nomen* combinations which are not otherwise attested at Ostia, suggesting that their freedmen are not recorded in the city because the magistrates themselves were not resident there.[106]

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distinguish and separate freeborn and freedmen onomastically, (c) freeborn dedicators were usually the children or spouses of freedmen, (d) the practice of building funerary monuments and commemorating one's family appears to have been closely associated with manumission, (e) Heinzelmann's main contribution is the convincing demonstration of the dynamic nature of the *necropoleis*, (f) epigraphic references to plot sizes betray fear of encroachment, and (g) freeborn population had little interest in the *necropoleis*.

[104] LICORDARI 1977 eliminates fragmentary names and misspellings and suggests the following distribution of *cognomina* of various origins (that is, excluding Latin and Greek *cognomina*) at Ostia: 28 Semitic *cognomina* for 52 persons; 8 *cognomina* from Asia Minor for 12 persons; 9 Egyptian *cognomina* for 22 persons; 4 African *cognomina* for 6 persons; 3 Thracian *cognomina* for 5 persons; 4 Illyrican *cognomina* for 4 persons; 6 Celtic *cognomina* for 7 persons; and 7 *cognomina* of uncertain origin for 9 persons. That is, 69 *cognomina* for 117 persons.

[105] SALOMIES 2002:135-159 compares names from Ostia with those from Rome and Aquileia, using a database of 6,900 Ostians with an identifiable *nomen*. He generally groups Roman *nomina* into three subsets: imperial *nomina* (Aelius, Aurelius, Claudius, Flavius, Iulius, Septimius, and Ulpius); common *nomina* (Acilius, Aemilius, Annius, Antistius, Antonius, Ap(p)uleius, Attius, Aufidius, Baebius, Cassius, Cornelius, Domitius, Egnatius, Herennius, Iunius, Licin(n)ius, Marius, Memmius, Octavius, Petronius, Pomponius, Popil(l)ius, Sempronius, Terentius, Valerius, Vettius, and Vibius), and other nomina (SALOMIES 1998:215ff).

[106] SALOMIES 2002:135-159.

Freedmen must, in fact, have represented a considerable percentage of the population of Ostia because of their importance for trading and maritime activities.[107] If one refers specifically to them, one finds 925 *cognomina*.[108] Freedmen often associated in order to assure that they would be given proper burial rites, and their presence at Ostia is attested by the great diversity of their *cognomina*: 572 Greek, 325 Latin, and 38 *cognomina* of various origins.[109] Their *gentilicia* confirm this great diversity (especially during imperial times): 191 Aelii, 234 Aurelii, 250 Claudii, 250 Egrilii, 269 Flavii, 500 Iulii, 82 Ostienses, 98 Ulpii, etc. Onomastic studies show that a large number of immigrants, most of which were freedmen, lived or regularly spent time at Ostia. There they did business and were commemorated after they died. Among these immigrants were the Caltilii, a family whose *gentilicium* was exclusive to Rome and Ostia.[110] Since this Roman family lived exclusively at these two cities, any of its members bearing foreign names must have come to Ostia as immigrants.

Prosopographic Linkage: The Caltilii as the Sponsors of a Foreign Cult at Ostia

A successful prosopographic approach depends on an accurate onomastic linkage of different inscriptions and literary references to a single individual or family. Because this section is mainly interested in contacts of people along with the complex interlocking issues of the representation of communal and religious

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[107] In this regard, see HEINZELMANN 2000a and MOURITSEN 2004:281-304.

[108] Much of the initial research on Latin onomastics dealt with elite names, but Thylander sought to correct that methodological flaw by undertaking a special study of freedmen's names in the Roman Empire. He concluded that – just like the freeborn – freedmen bore the *tria nomina* during the two first centuries A.D. (THYLANDER 1952a:57). A freedman generally received his *praenomen* and *gentilicium* from his patron, and kept his slave name as a cognomen. His servile origin was indicated – in pagan inscriptions – by the word *libertus* generally shortened to *l.* or *lib.* preceded by the genitive of his patron's *praenomen*. The disappearance of the designation of the status of slaves and freedmen is the first great difference between pagan and Christian epigraphic practice, cf. KAJANTO 1963:6ff.

[109] LICORDARI 1977:242.

[110] THYLANDER 1952a; KAJANTO 1963; LICORDARI 1977; HEINZELMANN 2000a; SALOMIES 2002 and MOURITSEN 2004:281-304.

identities, once again the ethnic element becomes pertinent here.[111] Although the relationship between the ethnic origin of a name and the ethnic provenance of a person cannot be immediately established,[112] such a relationship can be taken as an indication of a possible connection – especially when attached to a specific context, be it religious, commercial, civic, or military. Such is the case of the Caltilii. Not only is prosopographic linkage possible due to the fact that we have about forty inscriptions (nineteen of which come from Ostia, cf. Table 1) bearing that family's name but we also have a context for the activities of many of its members. Besides, this family consisted mostly of people of freedman stock who lived exclusively at Ostia and Rome between the end of the first and the beginning of the second century A.D. Through their activities they appear to have developed many social ties, especially in relation to the cult of Isis and Serapis. In order to show that the process of urban expansion is integrally related to the aspirations and patronage of the Caltilii (and dozens more like them), I need to present the archaeological evidence for the Serapeum as well as a prosopographic analysis of the Caltilii. Several scholars, most recently Crook, have shown that patronage was an essential part of cult sponsorship. Crook's recent study on the relationship between patronage and conversion in the religions of the ancient Mediterranean illustrates how the two semantic and social realms of sponsorship (benefaction) and patronage interweave and interact to such an extent that the terms benefactor and patron are almost interchangeable.[113] In the case of the

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[111] MILLAR 1998:159.

[112] LICORDARI 1977:243 indicates that only 57 inscriptions from Ostia point to the provenance of the person they commemorate, and they come mainly from a military context. They represent people from all Roman provinces, with a certain prevalence of Africa (6 cases), Egypt (4 cases) and the East in general (14 cases). Only 18 of them indicate an Italic provenance. Interestingly, we have knowledge of only four examples, outside Ostia, of inscriptions claiming an Ostian provenance for the people they commemorate: *CIL* XIII 6621; VIII 2825 and 3283; and inv. 7001.

[113] CROOK 2004. The act of providing financial support or protection in exchange for loyalty and services rendered (that is, patronage) was a major and overarching structure that controlled ancient social and economic relations. This social mechanism became a keystone even in Christianity (BROWN 1981; DAVIS 1999).

Caltilii, they built a temple and kept the status of *cultores* of an international religion.

The Isis and Serapis cult had become multi-ethnic by the time when a monumental temple dedicated to Isis and Serapis was built in the Campus Martius at Rome,[114] in key with an imperializing religious mentality that progressively valued universalism, henotheism and monotheism.[115] The fact that Egypt was a main grain supplier for Rome played an important role in the universalization of the Isis cult, since Alexandria housed the famous Isis Pharia temple. At the same time, polytheism was starting to drift towards universalism and/or monotheism as a way to focus the universal identity of the Roman Empire in a cultural context of pluralism. This is suggested by the establishment of the imperial cult under Augustus, the universalization of cults such as that of Isis and Dionysus, the promotion of Sol (the Sun god) from Aurelian onwards, Helios-Mithras under Julian, and Christianity under Constantine.

By the second century A.D., the cults of Isis and Serapis had become quite important at Ostia.[116] The votaries of the latter cult managed to procure a

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[114] BEARD, NORTH & PRICE 1998; PAOLO 1997:290-296; TAKACS 1995.

[115] In this regard, see: VERSNEL 1993 and FOLDEN 1993. According to VAN DER HEEVER 2005:12ff, what we see is a dual hierarchization process: the institutionalization of autocratic government with an intensified stratification of power relationships, and as its mirror image, the institutionalization of a set of religious discourses of imperialized gods as exercisers of power, that is, the pairing of imperial and divine power.

[116] The importance of the Isis cult at Ostia is suggested by a second or third-century fresco showing a *navis caudicaria* called the *Isis Giminiana* being loaded with sacks of corn (cf. *C.I.L.* 14 2027-2029, specifically 2028, all from the same tomb in the Porta Laurentina necropolis). CARCOPINO 1910:397-446. According to MOLL 1929, the fresco was discovered in 1865 in the via Laurentina necropolis. It probably belonged to the tomb of someone who had survived a shipwreck, since it was common practice to dedicate a fresco to Isis in such a case (Juvenal, *Sat.* 12.22-26). It has received considerable renovation and is now in the Vatican Museums. The fact that Isis is called Giminiana relates her cult at Ostia to that of the Dioscuri – who were also considered as protectors of sailors (MORALES 1999:212, n. 38). Another less likely interpretation for the epithet (proposed by WALTZING 1896:59-60) is that Giminius was the name of the owner of the ship. Here is Utley's picturesque description of the painting (see also MEIGGS 1973:294-295 and fig. 25e), which Bakker associates directly with the Aula dei Mensores (http://www.ostia-antica.org/regio1/19/19-1.htm): "On the roof above a little cabin the pilot Pharnaces stands with his hand on the rudder. Towards the middle the Captain Abascantus oversees the workmen.

headquarters for it under Hadrian. Ostia's first Serapeum lay on one of the secondary streets radiating from the Via della Foce (iii.xvii.4) in an area which was the object of urban expansion and civic growth under Hadrian (Fig. 2-3), and doubtless a result of the new harbor of Trajan.[117] Real estate speculation connected to this area under Hadrian led to the transformation of the nearby Temple of Hercules into a multipart architectural complex whose activities were no longer *stricto sensu* religious but included bath services in the Terme di Buticosus, tenancy units for rent, and *tabernae* opening to the via degli Horrea Epagathiana.[118] This state of affairs is comparable to the situation in the Temple of Serapis where the religious building was closely connected to the "Termas de la Trinaca", the Caseggiato di Bacco e Arianna, *horrea*, and *tabernae*.[119] The Domus del Serapeo (iii.xvii.3) adjacent to the Serapeum proper is also Hadrianic in date and must rely on some of the same social connections, also it has a large and lavish dining room that bespeaks the social interactions of the cult (Fig. 3).[120]

Porters bent under the weight of a sack of corn are coming from the river bank towards a small plank connecting the boat and the land. One has already boarded the boat and is pouring out the contents of his sack into a big measuring apparatus (*modius*) whilst a *mensor frumentarius* charged with the duty of safeguarding the interests of the administration, is watching to make sure that the measure is quite full; he holds the edges of the sack so that none of its contents shall be wasted. A little further off another porter, whose sack is empty, is sitting down resting and his whole expression shows the satisfaction explained by the words written below by the painter: 'I have finished, *feci*'" (UTLEY 1925).

[117] Other parts of this area also show significant signs of second century renovation or new construction: the Area Sacra of Hercules with the construction of adjacent residential units as a result of urban speculation and the transformation of its sacred grove into a garden (MAR 1996:115-164), the Case a Giardino (GERING 2002:109-140), the Tempio et Aula dei Mensores (JOUANIQUE 1969), etc. See also MOLS 2007, which discusses the cults of Isis and Serapis in Ostia and Portus, especially the location and urban context of the *Serapeum* in Ostia, and provides arguments against a supposed Oriental quarter in the neighborhood of the sanctuary.

[118] MAR 1996:136.

[119] MAR 1995:27-52; MAR 1996:136.

[120] The Domus del Serapeo, built in Hadrianic *opus mixtum* and originally connected with the Serapeum to the north, has a wall-niche, built in the late third or early fourth century A.D., in a corner of the *domus*. On the floor is a Hadrianic polychrome mosaic, consisting of 68 compartments, 14 of which have been preserved, the niche being near the entrance to the room, which was plastered. Some structure was set against one of the walls of the room, perhaps a bench,

Besides, the first phase of the Palazzo Imperiale complex was the bath built under the patronage of the empress-mother, Matidia, which is not far from the Serapeum.[121] In fact, it seems that the urban expansion initiated by Hadrian and other local notables offered the opportunity for aspiring new-comers, such as the Caltilii, to get into the game, hence the choice of this site for the temple. Social mobility is achieved through participation in the urban economy, but religious affiliation is also allowed to become a vehicle for civic activity; so, the inauguration of the Serapeum was important enough to be mentioned in the *Fasti Ostienses*, which place it on the day of Hadrian's birthday in 127 A.D. (January 24th).[122] These honors suggest that the cult votaries were paying homage to the emperor for his benevolence towards them.[123] The inscription gives us the name of the person who paid for the expenses of building the edifice: a certain Caltilius.

The temple was not monumental or ornate (Figs. 3 and 4). It was more similar to those sanctuaries in Ostia belonging to the many guilds of the city. Located behind a courtyard with a portico and pilasters, the temple displayed rather plain ornaments, which included a figured black mosaic of a bull on a white ground at the entrance, a black-and-white mosaic of Nilotic scenes in an open court, and a figured terracotta intaglio, depicting a bull, the symbol of the god

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so that this may have been a cult-room (BAKKER 1994:33). The hall was probably used for banquets.

[121] SPURZA 1999; SPURZA 2002.

[122] *Fasti Ostienses* 127: *VIII k(alendas) Febr(uarias) templum Serapi, quod [.] Caltilius P[? - - - -] | sua pecunia exstruxit, dedicatum [es]t.*

[123] "Hadrian's lively interest in Ostia had long been known from the inscriptions; one of them was set to him in 133 by a grateful *colonia Ostia conservata et aucta omni indulgentia* [*CIL* XIV 95]. If one remembers the public buildings alone which were erected by Hadrian in Ostia, we must admit that the sentiments of Ostia's citizens were amply justified. Recently we learned from the *Fasti Ostienses* that Hadrian went so far as to have himself elected *duo vir* of Ostia in 126 [Degrassi, *Inscript. Italiae* XIII 1, 203: *Per Latina oppida dictator et aedilis et duumvir fuit (scil. Hadrianus)*]. Not by accident the Serapeum of Ostia was dedicated on the emperor's birthday in the following year, and so is symbolically linked with Hadrian. Because of the insight it offers us into the meaning of Roman brick-stamps, the Serapeum of Ostia will always remain a landmark in the history of the unprecedented development of Roman architecture in those decades of the second century." BLOCH 1959:238.

Apis. The temple court was originally connected, north and south, with two other buildings, which, according to Meiggs, must have been associated with the cult, and which may have been the living quarters of the temple warden and the priests.[124] Serapis was not an exclusive deity, and his association with Isis was widespread. However, no temple of Isis has yet been found at Ostia. The epigraphic evidence is the most important factor in assessing her cult. In fact, the distribution of inscriptions and dedications referring to her cult suggests that it was on or near the riverbank.

The religion that the Caltilii sponsored had a strikingly public dimension. The festival known as the *navigium Isidis* was celebrated every 5th of March when navigation was resumed after the *mare clausum* of the winter. Isis took at Ostia the role of protectress of the sea, receiving the epithet Pelagia. The festival must have been especially attractive since the city was a place with obvious connections with the sea and shipping.[125] In fact, most of the inscriptions and iconography related to Isis and her priests have been recovered from the west side of town, close to the mouth of the Tiber and the coast. This sector housed not only the Serapeum (iii.xvii.4) and the Hadrianic Domus del Serapeo (iii.xvii.3) but also the Severan Caseggiato del Serapide (iii.x.3), an insula so called because its courtyard housed a small altar dedicated to the god. According to Pavolini, it is possible that many members of the god's cult lived in this large residential complex.[126] In fact, it is even possible that the whole block around the Serapeum was a district with a high presence of Eastern immigrants – particularly members of the cult.[127] In contrast, however, with the practice among Serapea at other

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[124] MEIGGS 1973:367.

[125] In fact, PAVOLINI 1996:159 describes a ship-shaped terracotta lamp recovered from Ostia, which depicts – on a relief – Isis, Serapis, and their son Harpocrates.

[126] PAVOLINI 1996:159.

[127] Of course, this does not mean that the members of the cult were limited to this area, since Minucius Felix (in the beginning of his *Octavius*) refers to an image of Serapis possibly placed on

harbors, including Portus, where Greek was the normal language of dedications,[128] most of the inscriptions concerning Serapis at Ostia are in Latin. This shows that the association between these immigrants and their homeland had become less strong by the time the Caltilii were sponsoring the cult, a period when they had developed a powerful connection with the city in which they were now living.

As we said before, an interesting aspect of the association of the Caltilii with the cult of Isis and Serapis is that neither deity was exclusive. Not far from the Serapeum, for instance, were found two bases, which once carried dedications to Hercules and to the Dioscuri in honor of I(uppiter) O(ptimus) M(aximus) S(erapis).[129] Similarly, P. Cornelius Victorinus, a clerk in town government service, donated, presumably to the temple of Isis, a statuette of Mars on horseback.[130] That means that the Caltilii could keep faithful to their original religious affiliations and concurrently come to good terms with the traditional Roman cults. That was a considerable advantage for them over those immigrants who favored Christianity, a religion that from the outset was hostile – at least nominally – to the Roman gods.[131]

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the Decumanus Maximus, and not on the Via della Foce. Besides, representations of Serapis have been found at many points in the town, in private houses and in public places.

[128] TAYLOR 1985 [1913]:74 explains the use of Greek in all the inscriptions relating to the Serapeum at Portus, except in one sepulchral inscription, through the close relationship of the shrine at the harbor with the great temple at Alexandria.

[129] MEIGGS 1973:368.

[130] *S* 4290: *signum Martis cum equiliolo Isidi reginae restitutrici salutis suae*.

[131] For the evidence regarding Christianity's hostility to the Roman gods, see KIRSCH 2004. A charge commonly brought by the Roman pagans against the early Roman Christians was that they did not follow in the footsteps of their ancestors. Romans, such as Cicero, held great respect for the *mos maiorum*, the authority of ancestors. This authority meant that Romans should continue in the worship of the same gods which they had previously worshiped. According to MANZULLO 2000, "the Jewish religion was tolerated in the Empire, even though it did not agree with the Roman state religion, because it was known to have existed for so long, in keeping with Jewish ancestors. However, the Christian religion was *nova* ('new'), and it went against, in the view of Rome, the Jewish religion, thereby going against their ancestors. Not only did the Christians go against their Jewish ancestors, but also, by denying that the Roman gods existed, they went against the Roman ancestors – a double crime in the eyes of the Romans." Besides, Christian cults

A small marble base informs us that Caltilia Diodora dedicated a silver Venus, one pound in weight, with two wreaths – one of gold – to Isis.[132] In the inscription she is also called Bubastiaca, which implies that she was a priestess or warden of Isis. Vidman also suggests that Diodora is the wife of the Caltilius who dedicated the Serapeum.[133] There should be little controversy about his supposition that Diodora was Isis's *cultrix*, since Isis and Bubastis were often conflated.[134] In the general religious syncretism of the middle Empire Isis assimilated the cults of the dog-headed Anubis, conductor of souls in the underworld, and of Bubastis, whom the Romans identified with Artemis.[135] Thus, Diodora, herself titled *Bubastiaca*, makes her dedication to Isis Bubastis.

Inscriptions tell us that the Caltilii at Ostia were closely connected with the Isis/Serapis cult. Such cults tended to privilege the members that had advanced socially, and provided an appropriate context for status display. They also reveal the ambitious deportment of the Caltilii, which is especially perceived in the way they used sponsorship of this cult and the ensuing patronage of a local religious community in order to engage in a beneficial relationship with the city and the imperial house. After all, one Caltilius dedicated the Serapeum on the emperor's birthday. Even before that, however, the family seemed intent on making an incursion into the higher ranks of Ostia's society. For that reason, in

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transgressed the Roman definition of *religio* because Christians did not perform sacrifice to the gods and thus did not participate in the Roman sacrificial system. See BEARD, NORTH & PRICE 1998, however, on the troubles of the early Christian Church to enforce exclusivity. According to these scholars, the boundary between paganism and Christianity was not very clear even for the inhabitants of Christianized Rome.

[132] *CIL* XIV 21: *Isidi Bubas[ti] Vener[em] arg[enteam] p[ondo unum semissem], cor[onam] aur[eam] p[ondo uncias tres scriptula tria], cor[onam] anal[empsiacam] p[ondo uncias quinque scriptula octo] Caltil[ia] Diodora Bubastiaca testamento dedit.*

[133] Concerning Diodora's role as a priestess, he states that *Bubastiaca est cultrix Bubastis*. As far as the relation between the Diodora and Caltilius, he says that *Caltilia potest esse uxor eius, qui templum dedicavit, sed certe eiusdem familiae est, mea quidem sententia; nisi titulus ad Serapeum pertinet, Isidi peculiare sacellum fuisse cogitandum est.* VIDMAN 1969:248.

[134] VIDMAN 1969, inscriptions n°. 92, 173, 274, 422, 423, 433, 664.

fact, they commissioned – under the emperor Trajan – a series of splendid portraits of family members (Fig. 5), four of which are extant. The portraits are slightly earlier than the inscription referring to the Caltilius who dedicated the Serapeum and attest to the family's desire to honor their ancestors. In fact, the heads of two members of the Caltilian family cut in low relief on a funerary monument, preserved in the Lateran Collection now in the Vatican Museums, are among the most impressive Trajanic portraits that have survived.[136] The fragmentary marble inscriptions that accompany these two heads (*CIL* XIV 311) are very concise, and read simply, "Dedicated for Lucius Caltilius Hilarus," *(L.) Caltilio Hila(ro)*, and "Dedicated for Lucius Caltilius Celer by his brother," *L. Caltilio Celeri Frat(er)*. A third head from the monument, of Caltilia Moschis, has been identified in the Mattei palace.[137] The inscription (*CIL* VI 14259) reads, "Dedicated for Caltilia Moschis, a most indulgent mother," *Caltiliae Moschidi matr(i) ind(ulgentissimae)*. The fourth portrait, a mutilated image of a woman, has been associated with two fragments, which were found in the Thermae Antoninianae, and are now in the Ostia Museum (*CIL* XIV 311 add.). The two fragments read, "Dedicated for Caltilia Felicula Avia," *(Cal)tiliae Fe(li)culae Aviae*.

A funerary inscription (*CIL* XIV 310), which is now in the Musée Lapidaire de Lyon, shows that some Caltilii were of freedman stock. That a prominent family had freedmen seems hardly surprising, but this inscription hints at the interconnected and longitudinal networks that such ties reflect. Although the find spot of the inscription is uncertain, it can be linked to the Caltilii of Ostia

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[135] MEIGGS 1973:369. For a more complete overview of the epigraphic evidence for the cults of Serapis and Isis in the Graeco-Roman world, see VIDMAN 1970.
[136] The origin of these sculptures can be attributed to local workshops, cf. MEIGGS 1973:435.
[137] MEIGGS 1973:596.

since the names of Lucius Caltilius Hilarus and of Caltilia Felicula – of whom we heard before – appear on the marble.[138] The inscription reads as follows:

> *L(ucius) Caltilius G(aiae) Libertus Hilarus | Augustalis | Caltilia L(ucii) L(iberta) Felicula | Sibi Et | L(ucius) Caltilius L(ucii) L(ibertus) Stephanus | Et Suis | Libertis Libertabus Posteri* [sic] *| Eorum Omnibus | In Fr P XX In Ag P XXV.*

> Lucius Caltilius Hilarus, an *Augustalis* and a freedman of Gaia,[139] and Caltilia Felicula, a freedwoman of Lucius, built this tomb for themselves, and Lucius Caltilius Stephanus, a freedman of Lucius, built it for all his freedmen and freedwomen and their descendants; width: 20 feet, length: 25 feet.

Benefaction offered foreigners a means for social integration and advancement. This *titulus* is very informative given that it tells us that a freedman of the Caltilii – Lucius Caltilius Hilarus – had become an *Augustalis* and a *patronus* of other *liberti*. The *Augustales* were the elite of the freedmen who had come under the patronage of the emperor.[140] In fact, they were organized as a kind of parallel order to that of the freeborn aristocratic *decurions*.[141] They were therefore the highest status group among freedmen. That shows us how relatively easy it was for immigrants to advance socially at Ostia. Despite the fact that both Hilarus and Felicula are Latin *cognomina*, they bear strong "servile" connotations.[142] The title *Augustalis* goes back to the period that precedes the organization of the freedmen under the designation of *seviri Augustales* in the late first or early second century A.D.[143] Their hierarchy became highly structured then, and the simple title

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[138] Of course there is always a possibility for two people to have the same name. There are, for instance, two funerary inscriptions, which read Claudia Helpis, in Isola Sacra: inscriptions A71 and A 72 in THYLANDER 1952b.

[139] The inverted C in the inscription stands for the female name Gaia in its old spelling Caia.

[140] For the Augustales, see DUTHOY 1978:1254-1309; BUONOCORE 1995:123-139; GRADEL 2002:213-233.

[141] According to MEIGGS 1973:217, freedmen were at the very center of Ostian society, the most important factor in their rise to prominence being the institution of their special priesthood for the imperial cult, which focused their loyalty in the emperor and the imperial house and at the same time gave them an official standing in the town.

[142] MOURITSEN 2004:289.

[143] TAYLOR 1914:231-253; D`ARMS 1985: 121-148 plus Appendix.

Augustalis was no longer used. The title therefore belongs to some time in that first period. That means that the freedmen of the Caltilii attained early prominence in the city of Ostia. The Caltilii had a long-term involvement with the *Augustales* since a later inscription from Ostia (AE 1988:205) names a certain Lucius Caltilius Epagathus among the *seviri Augustales*:

> D(is) M(anibus) | L(uci) Caltili | Epagathi | severi [sic] Aug(ustalis) | idem q(uin)q(uennalis).
>
> To the divine shades of Lucius Caltilius Epagathus, *sevir Augustalis* and *quinquennalis*.

The fact that Lucius Caltilius Hilarus (*CIL* XIV 310) was an Augustalis shows that the Caltilii probably came to Ostia as slaves. They perhaps embraced the business connected with the tugboats that towed the larger ships as they docked or to the lighter vessels that were usually employed in order to alleviate the weight of larger ships. We know of the involvement of immigrants in this kind of commercial operation from a roll of the members of the guild of the *lenuncularii* dating to A. D. 192 (*CIL* XIV 251), now in the Capitoline Museum.[144] The guild roll includes the names of two members of the family: Lucius Caltilius Blastianus and Lucius Caltilius Eutychianus. Both were freeborn, since freedmen were generally not allowed to register into a guild. By engaging in one of the profitable commercial activities of the harbor city, the Caltilii were eventually able to purchase their freedom. One can reasonably speculate whether this Lucius Caltilius Eutychianus is the son or the brother of a Caltilius Eutyches whose name appears on a marble inscription (*CIL* XIV 266) found in 1631 on the pavement of an altar at the Basilica Vaticana. The fragmentary nature of the

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[144] At Ostia the *lenuncularii* were divided into five guilds, which sometimes combined although each constituent guild had its own title and represented a separate function (cf. MEIGGS 1973:296).

inscription does not allow us to ascertain Eutyches's *praenomen*, but the relationship with Eutychianus is possible.

Lucius Caltilius Hilarus (*CIL* XIV 310) was a freedman before 98 A.D. but Caltilius P. (mentioned in F.O. 127) and Caltilia Diodora (*ca*. 127 A.D.) seem to be freeborn. The transition has commenced. Despite the fact that the Caltilii were rich and maintained close ties with the imperial house, the repeated use of the title *libertus* on their funerary monuments outside Ostia attests to the fact that many of them had servile origins. Thus, a fragment found in the beginning of the ancient Via Appia and Via Latina (*CIL* VI 14255) reads

> *Ossa A(ppi) Caltili A(ppi) L(iberti) Erotis.*
>
> (Here lie) the bones of Appius Caltilius Eros, a freedman of Appius (Caltilius).

Another inscription, bearing large and well-cut letters (*CIL* VI 14256), reads,

> *L(ucius) Caltilius L(ucii) L(ibertus) Lepidus (et) | Aurelia L(ucii) L(iberta) Game T(itu|l)um Ex Testamento Arb(itratu) | (Lucii Cal)tili L(ucii) L(iberti) Lysi(machi pos).*
>
> Lucius Caltilius Lepidus, a freedman of Lucius, and Aurelia Game, a freedwoman of Lucius, built [this tomb] according to the will of Lucius Caltilius Lysimachus, a freedman of Lucius.

And yet another fragment (*CIL* VI 14254), of considerable size, found in the Forum Boarium, reads simply

> *L(ucii) Caltili L(ucii) L(iberti) An(?).*
>
> (Tomb?) of Lucius Caltilius An(?), a freedman of Lucius

The *formulae* in both inscriptions lead us to assume that the name of the patron is Lucius Caltilius. It was normal for an enfranchised slave (i.e., a new

freedman) to take the name of the patron who freed him and enfranchised him.[145] The *tria nomina* is his badge of enfranchisement and signals its source. With so scanty a reference to the patron as L. l., he can hardly be anything but a Lucius Caltilius. Now the problem for us is that we cannot be sure which Lucius Caltilius was the patron here. Presumably they all knew, and in some cases one can tell by the cognomen of the freedman emulating that of the patron, i.e., in the adoptive form –ianus. Here, however, we have a number of Greek *cognomina*, and that is worth noting, in that it seems that the Caltilii had some strong ties to Greek immigrants.

Freedmen could not hold any magistracy in the city, but freedman status only lasted for one generation, their children then being considered freeborn.[146] Thus, the Caltilii are able to shake off that status, and aim at relations that would put them on a higher echelon at Ostia. One of their lines of action consisted of establishing marriage connections. In fact, given the central role of family in late Roman society, marriage continued to be viewed as a social and political act uniting not only a man and a woman but, more to the point, two aristocratic men and their families.[147] Thus, an inscription (*CIL* XIV 332), preserved in the Lateran Collection now in the Vatican Museums, recovered in 1856 from a monument outside the Porta Romana at Ostia and dated to the first half of the second century, provides evidence to that as being one of this family's strategies for social ascension. The inscription reads,

> *D(is) M(anibus) | Clodiae Helpidis | Quae Vixit Annis XXVII | M(arcus) Aemilius Hilarianus | Dec(urion) Flam(en) Aedilis IIvir | Coniugi Incomparabil(e) cum | Caltilia Tyche(?) et Attio | Herme(?) Parentib(us) Fecit.*

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[145] The *locus classicus* for studies on the processes of enfranchisement in Roman times is TREGGIARI 1969.
[146] MOURITSEN 1988.
[147] SALZMAN 2002:190.

> To the divine shades of Clodia Helpis who lived 27 years. Marcus Aemilius Hilarianus – *decurion*, *flamen*, *aedilis* and *duovir* built [this monument] for his incomparable wife together with Caltilia Tyche and Attius Hermes, her parents.

This inscription lists the *cursus honorum* of Aemilius Hilarianus. The cognomen Hilarianus is liable to different interpretations, since it might suggest adoption by an aristocrat,[148] freedman descent, or a desire to perpetuate a mother's name, according to the fashion of that period. But Aemilius Hilarianus was a freeborn descendant of a freedman, since the name of his wife, Clodia Helpis, strengthens the suspicions aroused by his own cognomen. In fact, Meiggs cites him as further evidence for the fact that there was a substantial admixture of servile blood in the ruling class.[149] This inscription shows that mutually beneficial marriages worked quite well for the social advancement of the Caltilii. In this case, Clodia was a freeborn Caltilia whose marriage to an important city administrator was probably a family estrategy in order to attain social betterment.

Aemilius Hilarianus very likely started his public career as a *flamen* of one of the deified emperors or of the imperial cult in general;[150] he was, then, elected aedile and *duovir*. The main function of the aedile was to assist the *duoviri*. The aedileship was non-essential in the *cursus honorum*, but it was useful for men with political ambitions. At Rome, the *aediles curules* were, in fact, the first officers to enjoy full senatorial dignity and the *ius imagines*. Because this office

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[148] "By standard Roman practice, obtaining as far as records show, until the end of the second century B.C., an adopted son, passing from one family into another, took a full name (apart from non-hereditary agnomina such as 'Africanus') and filiation from his adopted father, but retained his previous *gentilicium* (ending in –*ius*) in a modified form (ending in –*ianus*) as a cognomen or *agnomen*. Thus a L. Aemilius L. f. Paullus adopted by a P. Cornelius P. f. Scipio would become 'P. Cornelius P. f. P. n. Scipio Aemilianus.' Since such adoptive cognomina or agnomina were non-hereditary, the nomenclature of children born to the adoptee after his adoption (those born before retained their names unaffected) and of their descendants showed no trace of the original family." BAILEY 1976:81.
[149] MEIGGS 1973:204.
[150] The word *flamen* appears to mean "priest" or "sacrificer," cf. *O.C.D.*, 441. The word alone occurs very few times, and may imply *flamen divorum* (the priest of the combined cult of all the deified emperors), cf. TAYLOR 1985 [1913]:47.

was not essential for the *cursus honorum*, those who were not the first choice for a more important magistracy, but wanted to start a public career, generally took it. At Ostia, the office of *duovir* was the most important magistracy.[151] The *duoviri* were the two magistrates in charge of the routine administration of the city, and also in charge of the local levy against raiders. They made the decisions that did not require Rome's referendum. So, as far as Ostia is concerned, Aemilius Hilarianus made it all the way to the top. In fact, he was even appointed by Rome as a *decurion*. The *decuriones* were recruited from the ex-magistrates and by censorial appointment at the quinquennial census, holding office for life. The qualifications were those required for the magistracies and included criteria of wealth, age, status, and reputation. As a *decurion* Hilarianus became part of the *consilium* of the magistrates, which, in practice, controlled the public life of the community.[152] The inscription tells us therefore that Caltilia Tyche managed to marry her daughter to a wealthy and important magistrate. Yet, there is no indication that Caltilia Tyche was a freedwoman. The lateness of this inscription in relation to the previous ones indicates that very possibly Caltilia Tyche was a descendant of a freedman family but not a freedwoman herself. That, in actuality, made it possible for her daughter to marry such an important figure of Ostia's public administration. Thus, an aspiring duovir is married to a woman who is the daughter of an intermarried Caltilia. And all these families are climbing progressively together through this process. The point is that Ostia was open to social advancement, even for immigrants, freedmen and their freeborn descendants, as long as they were willing to play by the rules, among which we now place intermarriage and cult sponsorship. Both strategies were intimately

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[151] MEIGGS 1973:173-174. The functions assigned to the duoviri were not, however, entirely uniform in all *municipia* and *coloniae*. For a succinct summary on how they varied, see CANCIK, SCHNEIDER & VON PAULY 1997:843-845, Bd 3.

connected with patronage, the overarching social structure that I believe motivated the Pianabella Christians to build a semi-monumental basilica in a vital area in the suburbs of Ostia.

As it was the common practice, the indication of freedman stock disappears from the family's record after the first generation of freeborn. It is absent, for instance, from the labels on the family's portraits, and from the inscriptions, which reveal the involvement of the family with the foreign cults, as noted above. A fragment discovered in 1675 (*CIL* VI 14258) reads simply, "(Tomb?) of Caltilia Chrysis," *Caltiliae Chrysidis*.[153] Despite the fragmentary nature of the inscription, it is certain that a reference to a freedman status is absent, since – had it been present – it would have immediately followed the *gentilicium* "Caltilia." This is also the case of an inscription found near a sepulchral altar at Ostia (*CIL* XIV 621). It reads,

> *D(is) M(anibus) | Asiciae C(laudi) Fil(ia) Semniane | Q(uae) V(ixit) A(nno) I M I D(iebus) XII | C(laudius) Asicius Eutyches et | Caltilia Epithymete Quae et Voconia | Parentes Fecerunt.*[154]

> (Dedicated) to the divine shades of Asicia Semnianis, daughter of Claudius, who lived one year, one month, and twelve days. Her parents Claudius Asicius Eutyches and Caltilia Epithymete made (this monument) for her and Voconia.

Except for their Greek *cognomina*, there is no direct reference, here, to a freedman lineage. Finally, another fragment (*CIL* XIV 741), now in the Ostian

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[152] Among their attributions, the decuriones were responsible for the local administration and finance, the sending of deputations and petitions to Rome, the voting of honorary decrees and statues, etc. Cf. *O.C.D.*, 318.

[153] An alternative reading for the inscription that would interpret the lettering as *C. Altiliae* is very improbable.

[154] Each one of the letters D and M, which abbreviate Dis Manibus, is on one side of the inscription.

Museum, mentions the name of Caltilius Epictetus.[155] Again we have a Greek cognomen but no reference to a freedman status.

An inscription from a small cinerary urn (*CIL* VI 14257) tells us of a time when those Caltilii who had emerged from a servile condition now possessed their own freedmen:

> *(Dis Manibus sacrum) | L(ucii) Caltili | Salutaris | Caltilia Politice | et Sabinus Lib(erti) | P(atrono) B(ene) M(erenti) F(ecerunt).*

> (Consecrated to the divine shades) of Lucius Caltilius Salutaris. Caltilia Politice and Sabinus, his freedwoman and freedman, made [this urn] for a well-deserving patron.

Caltilia Politice was a freedwoman of Lucius Caltilius Salutaris. Another inscription (*CIL* XIV 1154) found in an Ostian tavern informs us that a Caltilia Isidora commemorated her foster child named Claudius Iulius Ingenuus. The letters are almost effaced, but the probable reading for the inscription is,

> *D(is) M(anibus) | C(laudius) Iulius Ingenuus | Qui et Mininnus V(ixit) A(nnis) VIII M(ensibus) X | Caltilia Isidora Alumno | Dulcissimo Fec(it).*

> (Sacred) to the divine shades. (Here lies) Claudius Iulius Ingenuus, also called Mininnus, who lived eight years and ten months. Caltilia Isidora [built this monument] for her sweetest foster son.[156]

Since this child has another name or nickname, it may well suggest that he was a slave given the special status of *alumnus* of the family. This is the adoption into the family, which gives him the equivalent status of a freedman or better.[157]

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[155] This inscription is very fragmentary, and reads, *(Memor)iae | (?) I. L. Pal Callis(?) | (?)ani Qui Vixit | (An)nis XI Mens I Die|(bu)s VIIII In XII Kal Sept | (C)altilius Epictetus Pa(?) | (?).*

[156] The inscription is fragmentary and the lettering for Mininnus is not certain. An alternative reading could be Miniunus, an *agnomen* found on an African titulus, cf. *CIL* VIII 9079.

[157] There is epigraphic evidence that some *alumni* are probably foundlings (MEIGGS 1973:228). The majority have the names of freedmen or citizens, bearing the same names as their adoptive father or mother. The standard view is that they are slaves who received their freedom very early, or freeborn children who were sold by their parents into other families where they are expected to work as slaves (HARROD 1909). But I am following NIELSEN 1987:142-143, when he suggests

Conclusion

The nineteen inscriptions included in the corpus of the Caltilian inscriptions treated here come mainly from a funerary context, only three coming from a different milieu (*F.O.* 127, *CIL* XIV 251 and 266). A quantitative analysis of the funerary inscriptions from the necropoleis of imperial Ostia shows that twice as many dedications were made by *liberti* and *libertae* (66.6 %) than by freeborn individuals. The former (62.5%) were also more engaged in building funerary monuments than the latter; interestingly, most dedications were likewise made to *liberti* and *libertae* (62.5%) rather than to freeborn individuals. For that reason, Mouritsen concludes that monumental burial in the *necropoleis* of imperial Ostia was a typical – although marginal – behavior of freedmen, and that the freeborn population had little interest in the *necropoleis*.[158]

The prosopographic linkage of names of members of the Caltilian family to funerary, architectural, religious and commercial contexts suggests that the family was striving to promote their own economic interests and to improve their own social status. This study has shown that several of the Caltilii came to Ostia as slaves, became involved in the administration of the tugboats at the harbor, and amassed enough money to purchase their own freedom. The Caltilii showed ambition and initiative: they wholeheartedly embraced the emperor's ideological propaganda by becoming involved with the imperial cult, and they tried – at the same time – to make good use of their Eastern connections by remaining socially visible by means of their efforts to sponsor the cults of Serapis and Isis. Their association with the imperial cult suggests that they saw themselves as Romans

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that (a) foundling is not the primary sense of the word, (b) the word is not used only of minors, (c) *alumnus* does not mean orphan, (d) the word is equivalent to *filius* although with no blood ties to the fosterer, (e) the word implies a lifelong relationship based on a feeling of affection, and (f) the word implies a relation of quasi-adoption. According to NIELSEN 1991:221-240, *verna* is another word that deserves a new interpretation since it also seems to denote quasi-kin relationships.

while their affiliation to the cults of Serapis and Isis provided them with a conspicuous opportunity to exert patronage on behalf of foreigners and of the less fortunate members of their own family. Besides, the important festival of the *navigium Isidis* supplied them with a social context for their associating with mariners from different parts of the world and for establishing connections with the different guilds. Once the Caltilii attained a status that allowed them to claim membership in the guild of the *lenuncularii*, they also started to commemorate their family members with splendid portraits and to entertain marriage connections with other ex-freedman families that had been more successful than they had. They never quite made it to the top, but in their attempt to attain higher status they seem to have been willing to accept certain elements of Romanness, and to play the game of status advancement according to the rules established by the city's aristocracy. Given the importance of this acquiescent attitude towards patronage and status display as seen in the relationship of the Caltilii to the other segments of Ostian society, especially the religious landscape in which they sponsored an international cult, we can reasonably assume that the Christians who wanted to make a creditable incursion into Ostia's civic and political life should adopt a similar strategy.

Our assessment of the Caltilii should not be too assertive, however, since many aspects of this investigation are open to discussion. The dates of the inscriptions utilized have not yet been established beyond doubt, and sometimes it is not possible to determine whether they fit an Ostian context better than a Roman milieu, for the reason that no find spot has been recorded for some of them. Nonetheless, the close connection that existed between the two cities justifies their utilization for the purposes of this study. Only two of the nineteen inscriptions of our corpus provide the dates for their cutting (*F.O.* 127 and *CIL* 14.251) while the presence of the formula *D. M.* has allowed us to broadly ascribe

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[158] MOURITSEN 2004:288.

a date in the second or third centuries to five inscriptions (*CIL* 6.14257, 14.332, 621, 761 and 1154).[159] Three inscriptions are put in the early second century on account of the Trajanic heads to which they belonged (*CIL* 6.14259, 14.311 and 311.*add.*). One inscription can be ascribed to the late first century because it refers to the *Augustales* rather than to the *seviri Augustales* (*CIL* 14.310), while one inscription should be ascribed to a date later than the late first century for the contrary reason (*AE* 1988:205). In fact, only seven inscriptions are given no dates (*CIL* 6.14254-14256, 14258, 14.21, 266 and 741).

The Caltilii show us how aspiring "newcomers" fit into Ostia's civic culture and how they could broadcast it in religious architecture and epigraphy. The assessment of the ways that the Caltilii got themselves involved with an international cult at Ostia provides us with important clues as to what types of social phenomena we should expect to be happening among the Ostian Christians, especially those belonging to the community surrounding the Pianabella Basilica from which scholars have not been able to single out a family for study. The cult of Isis and Serapis was directly related to patronage, architectural visibility, intermarriage concerns and status advancement. It was promoted mainly by immigrants, especially freedmen, with an important role played by women. Besides, since the votaries of Isis and Serapis preferred to concentrate the construction of buildings and the placement of inscriptions and iconography associated with their deities on the west side of town, close to the mouth of the Tiber and the coast, it is not surprising that the Ostian Christians also chose a particular sector of the city in which to establish themselves, as we shall see in the next chapters. That gave them more visibility and made the social ties between them easier to obtain and retain. In that sense, grand rituals and socially important

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[159] Of these inscriptions, only *CIL* 14.761 had not been previously dealt with, and reads, *D(is) M(aninus) | Caltiliae | Felicitosae | Vix. An. XXVI*. According to MOURITSEN 2004:285, n. 27, "the formula D(is) M(anibus) is generally accepted as a broad indicator of a second/third century date."

membership were important elements to attract worshippers, and it is likely that individuals of varied origins began to join together because of shared religious beliefs, since this entailed political power for the group, especially its leadership.[160]

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[160] NORTH 2000:63-67.

Chapter Two: The Evidence for Christianity at Ostia

The construction of a Christian cemeterial basilica at Pianabella in the late fourth or early fifth century A.D. clearly presupposes the presence of a thriving Christian community in the city by that time. To a great extent, this comes as a surprise. This chapter provides an assessment of the evidence and critical issues surrounding the presence of Christianity at Ostia, and seeks to understand how the early Christians related to that city's social environment. In the process I highlight the patrician Anicii of Rome and their complex set of social connections as they became more and more interested in sponsoring Christianity at Ostia in the fourth century and later. The time frame of this section covers those centuries that come before – and coincide with – the construction and first use of the Pianabella Basilica. Attention will be paid to the physical remains that have been used to substantiate the presence of Christianity at Ostia during this period, including iconographic, epigraphic and architectural evidence. The discussion first briefly focuses on the few literary references that shed light upon the subject, and then, with more detail, on the iconographic representations, inscriptions and the buildings that make Christianity become visible to us at Ostia. The locations of these buildings are shown in Fig. 6. I discuss them below, including the early basilicas or other buildings that supposedly functioned as meeting places for the Christians at Ostia and Portus. In the process, I also address two other issues currently in debate: whether the expansion of Christianity was a top-down process, and whether Christianity arrived comparatively late to Ostia. The purpose of this section is not only to present a general interpretation for the so-called lateness of the penetration of the Christian faith in the city but also to list the main problems which scholars face concerning the assessment of certain pieces of archaeological evidence often presented as indicative of the presence of Christianity at Ostia.

The Problem of Christian "Triumphalism"

According to Meiggs, Christianity started rather late in Ostia in comparison to other prestigious urban centers in Italy.[161] My suggestion here is that this assumption is mistaken in certain ways because it is based upon a "triumphalist" history of Christianity that was prevalent until the late twentieth century, which is no more accepted by the historians of Christianity. Francis complains that it was fashionable to speak of second-century paganism as a bankrupt religious system that had ceased to command the attention, much less the conviction, of the citizens of the empire:

> The explanation of the eventual triumph of Christianity was sought in a decrepit paganism riddled with contradictions and plagued with rising "superstition" and "oriental syncretism." The intellectual landscape of the age was painted as rife with conflict and confusion between unity and diversity, polytheism and monotheism, rationalism and irrationalism. Even a scholar as sympathetic to paganism as E. R. Dodds could state that while Christian intellectuals endeavored to *supplement* authority with reason, contemporary pagan philosophers tended to *replace* reason with authority. Such views have now been shown to be in clear contradiction to the evidence.[162]

It now seems, however, that although Constantine's interest in Christianity had almost immediate consequences for the Empire, syncretistic practices continued for many centuries to come, and the traditional religion for long remained

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[161] MEIGGS 1973:389.

[162] FRANCIS 1995:144-145. According to Ramsay MacMullen, "whatever might have been said back in the eighteenth or nineteenth century, by the twentieth it had become clear and agreed on all hands that nothing counted after Constantine save the new triumphant faith. From that point on the "Roman" had become "the Christian Empire…" This, the consensus, was rarely called in question before the 1980s. Then hesitant doubts and contrary hints found their way into print, discussion grew animated, new details were added or the old presented in a way to reveal the past more clearly. It is now possible to see that there might well be a story to tell of a good deal of significance, involving the two systems as both alive and interacting to a much later point in time than anyone would have said until recently" (MACMULLEN 1997:2). The author further states (p. 5) that "the record seems to suggest that pagans were not only defeated by the end of the fourth century but had in fact all been converted. Really, however, such was far from true."

stubbornly alive. In the succeeding generation, Theodosius (A.D. 379-395) promulgated harsh anti-pagan laws and ordered the destruction of the world-famous Serapis temple in Alexandria (cf. Rufinus).[163] Christians often misrepresent the true proportions of religious history.[164] As I showed in Chapter One, pagan cults still thrived in the third and fourth centuries at Ostia. Prosopographic, epigraphic and architectural evidence suggest that the Caltilii, one of the many families sponsoring pagan cults at Ostia, were actively involved in the cults of Serapis and Isis as well as in the imperial cult, which they used as a means for higher status claims through patronage, benefactions, intermarriage and status displays. The epigraphic and iconographic evidence from the business stations at the the Piazzale delle Corporazioni suggest religious and commercial connections with their foreign headquarters for as long as these stations remained active. Likewise, an inscription discovered at Ostia in 1938 shows that the restoration of a temple of Hercules in 394 by Numerius Proiectus, *praefectus annonae*, was commemorated with a dedication to the emperors Theodosius and Eugenius.[165] The inscription was discovered "not far from the temple of Hercules" (about 50 to 60 yards away) in the "via degli Horrea Epagathiana." The

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[163] COCHRANE 1944:324 calls Theodosius "the real prototype in history of 'the Christian Prince'," based on Augustine's famous reference to the Emperor: *de fide ac pietate Theodosii Augusti* (*De Civ. Dei* 5.26). For a more recent and critical assessment of Theodosius' reign, see LEPPIN 2003. For a detailed assessment of the events related to the destruction of the Serapeion at Alexandria in 392 A.D., see HAHN 2004:15-120.

[164] MACMULLEN 1997:3. MacMullen describes (a) the determination of the Christian leadership to extirpate all religious alternatives, expressed in the silencing of pagan sources and, beyond that, in the suppression of pagan acts and practices, with increasing harshness; (b) the successive layers of paganism which came under threat of destruction; (c) the transition of the classical religious thought-world to the medieval and Byzantine one; and, finally, (d) the reception by the church of pagan acts and practices along with pagan converts, and how these helped to shape Christianity.

[165] According to O'DONNELL 1978, "of the inscription several things need to be said: that the dating is plausible but uncertain in the restoration of an extremely fragmentary inscription; that it is not clear that what Proiectus did was in any way counter to the laws against the ancient cults as laid down by Theodosius (merely restoring a building was not culpable at that time -- and for that matter, the crucial verb describing what Proiectus did to the *Cellam Herc.* is entirely missing from the inscription); and that if we restore *cellam Herc[uleam]* (cf. *ILS* 622, *porticu Herculea),* the structure could easily become a granary dating to the reign of Maximian."

inscription find spot and dating are not entirely certain.[166] Despite that, it seems that traditional historians have failed to take into account the evidence for pagan resilience. While they often comprehended that documents such as the Edict of Milan, to which the church owed its freedom under the "peace of Constantine," were a fiction,[167] they still argued that although they were a fiction, the facts for which they stood remained unaltered.[168] History allowed for the writings of Christianity to be transmitted to the next generations, but seldom those of Christianity's enemies. Together with the destruction of unwanted books, unwanted fact itself disappeared.

Meiggs complains that "one of the most surprising features of Ostian excavations has been the comparative insignificance of explicit Christian evidence,"[169] but this may reflect a more common pattern than it is generally assumed. It suggests that open conflict or counter-polemics between Christians and non-Christians was not the rule at Ostia at that time. In fact, MacMullen states that "if Latin inscriptional material is measured across time, the balance of forces, Christian and non-Christian, in the west as a whole in late antiquity seems to resemble the African model [less Christianized] more than the Syrian [more Christianized] and allows some correction to be made for distortions pervading the literary record."[170] Only late evidence has survived for Christianity in Ostia, but that does not mean that Ostia was especially resistant to Christianization. My suggestion is that the Ostian community indiscernibly and gradually embraced the new faith with little or no ensuing conflict.

It is common to ask why the older religions of Rome – whether traditional or foreign – lost and Christianity eventually won. Based on the evidence at Ostia,

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[166] BLOCH 1994:201.
[167] CUNNINGHAM 1982:14.
[168] BAYNES 1929:349; COCHRANE 1944:178, n. 1.
[169] MEIGGS 1973:389.
[170] MACMULLEN 1997:6.

it is possible to say that such a question is not entirely pertinent. The upper hand of Christianity in relation to paganism may be very well due to a long process of assimilation and accommodation. Local elites derived their social distinction not so much from specific religious confessions as from noble birth and education, and it was often possible for Jews, Christians and pagans to live peacefully together.[171] Religious conflicts were at all times mingled with other problems: purely religious violence was not the rule but rather the exception in late antiquity. Consequently, as Laeuchli puts it, "to search for the authentic historical impact of Christian faith is [...] a demand of the historical situation itself."[172]

Ostia as a Syncretic Religious Environment: Assessing the Archaeological Evidence

As we saw previously, religious life at Ostia was not in serious decline. In fact, Ostia continued to be a religious melting pot which provided adequate space for the thriving of several types of cult: whether traditional, imperial, collegial or foreign.[173] The same can be said of Ostia regarding the religion of both Jews and Christians. Sea harbors and commercial centers where different types of people

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[171] That was at least the case with Alexandria, which – despite that – is often cited as outstanding evidence for Christian violence against pagans in the fourth century A.D. (cf. HAHN 2004:15-120).

[172] LAEUCHLI 1967:91. LAEUCHLI 1967:100ff presents two major reasons for the triumph of Christianity over co-existing pagan religions: the power of its message and the force of its community. For a description of how Christianity came to pervade all aspects of life, see: CASTAÑOS-MOLLOR Y ARRANZ 1984. The author reviews the position of early Christian authors concerning secular pursuits such as professional work, business, politics and state authority, the Roman army, and culture.

[173] A great number and a striking variety of temples existed at Ostia, where the most significant local cult was Vulcan's. Vulcan's priests were responsible for supervising the other cults and for controlling the edification of private religious buildings and monuments. The Ostians were also devoted to Fortuna and Spes (the deities venerated by the Roman traders), to Castor and Pollux (the protectors of the Roman sailors), and to Ceres (the goddess of grain). For the possible identification of the Temple of Castor and Pollux on top of the *navalia*, see HEINZELMANN & MARTIN 2002:5-19. For an early assessment of the different cults of Ostia, see TAYLOR 1985 [1913]. For a brief analysis of the diversity of appeal and impact which the foreign cults exerted on the population of Rome, see STAMBAUGH 1978:591-599.

gathered and different types of temples were built, places where foreign cults were especially flourishing, these were the regions in which Christianity did well. Pavolini, however, describes the situation of Christianity at Ostia in the first centuries A.D. by repeating Meiggs' argument that since Greek immigrants and other foreigners arrived relatively late at Ostia, this hindered the development of Christianity in the city.[174] According to him, when the foreign element finally entered the city through a vigorous development of Mithraism, this was no aid to the establishment of a Christian community in the city because Mithras was not an exclusive deity, but the Christian God was. This would explain why both the Jewish and the Christian communities developed at Ostia in peripheral areas, supposedly contending against Mithraism as these religions competed in order to become more visible in the city.[175] But perhaps we should speak more properly of a two-way influence rather than competition between Christianity and cults such as Mithraism, the cult of Cybele and the like.[176]

Many foreigners lived or carried out their business at Ostia, and they erected, in the city, altars and temples for their home deities. Archaeologists found, in the city, altars and statues to Isis and Serapis,[177] a temple to the Mother of the Gods,[178] as well as more than ten shrines to Mithras,[179] the insatiable

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[174] PAVOLINI 1996:164; cf. MEIGGS 1973:389.

[175] For a similar view of competition between Christianity and the cult of Cybele, see FEAR 1996:37-50.

[176] See BEARD, NORTH & PRICE 1998 on the troubles of the early Christian Church to enforce exclusivity. According to these scholars, the boundary between paganism and Christianity was not very clear. For an opposing (but less scholarly) view, see KIRSCH 2004. According to this latter scholar, Christianity was, from the outset, intent on exclusivity.

[177] For a brief analysis of the intensity of local patronage to the votaries of the Egyptian gods, see Chapter One where I discussed the involvement of the Caltilii in sponsoring the cults of Isis and Serapis.

[178] According to MEIGGS 1973:356, for Cybele the evidence from Ostia is fuller than for any other foreign cult. The Ostians took part in the main ceremonies related to the goddess. Her festival opened with a parade of reed-bearers (the *cannophori*); there followed nine days of fasting and continence during which came the procession of the tree-bearers (the *dendrophori*). A few inscriptions attest to the importance of the *dendrophori* in Ostia. The period of feasting was ended by the day of rejoicing, the *Hilaria*. The large open trapezoidal area in front of her temple was the

Persian god (*deus indeprehensibilis*). In the case of these so-called foreign cults,[180] monumental architecture was an exception. Most *mithraea*, for instance, could not seat more than forty people. One *mithraeum* – known as Painted Walls – was a small domestic chapel located just west off the via della Foce (Reg. iii.i) in a house built in the later Republican period and extensively renovated under Augustus and later in the second century A.D. (Fig. 7). The *mithraeum* originally occupied one room of the house, with an aisle of the peristyle made into a *pronaos*. Instead of the columns commonly found in Christian basilicas, differences in the floor levels of this long rectangular structure indicate three spaces.[181] Each level was reserved for devotees of a different social rank, a natural division in a cult in which hierarchy played an important part. This elegant chapel was paved with an exquisite type of marble, and the decoration of the altar was made at the expense of a certain C. Caelius Hermeros, identified as a priest (*antistes*) by an inscription on a marble *cippus* from room A.[182]

At Ostia and other cities of the Empire, Roman authorities were tolerant of what seemed harmless to the existing social order. Cults like that of Mithras seem to have caused little or no conflict.[183] In fact, Laeuchli's study of Mithraism in Ostia argues, for instance, that the religion became so widespread in the city that

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field of the Great Mother (*Campus Magnae Matris*), the scene of the *taurobolium*, where bulls were sacrificed. For the role played by the Phrygian gods at Ostia and in Roman religion in general, see TAYLOR 1985 [1913]:57-65; STAMBAUGH 1978:592-593; BREMMER 1987:105-111; GRUEN 1990:5-53; BEARD, NORTH & PRICE 1998(2):44-45.

[179] See discussion below regarding the exact number of *mithraea* at Ostia.

[180] I say, "these so-called foreign cults" because there is now ample evidence that most such cults did so well in Rome that they could hardly be called "foreign" (MARTIN 1989b:2-15).

[181] For a full description and analysis of the archaeological evidence regarding this *mithraeum* and seventeen other *mithraea* excavated at Ostia until 1954, see BECATTI 1954:59-68. See also WHITE 1997b:370-376.

[182] *C. CAELIUS Er/MEROS / ANTIS/TES Hui/US LOCi / FECIT / S(ua) P(ecunia)*, "C(aius) Caelius (H)ermeros, antistes of this place, made it from his own funds." Inscription n°. *CIMRM* 1.269 in Vermaseren's *Corpus Inscriptionum et Monumentorum Religionis Mithraicae.*

[183] For Roman tolerance concerning foreign cults, see HAENSCH 2006:233-247 and NORTH 2000:63-75. In the specific case of Mithraism, see GRIFFITH 1993 which shows how it was favored by many senators in imperial times.

"it looks as if a Mithraic board of evangelism had planned the distribution of the new sanctuaries."[184] Likewise, Groh enumerates the fourteen most well-preserved sanctuaries of Mithras in an attempt to show that they were widely scattered throughout the city of Ostia: the Animals, Seven Doors, Planta Pedis, House of Diana, Painted Walls, Seven Spheres, Imperial Palace, Lucretius Menander, Baths of Mithras, Frucosus, Felicissimus, Sabazeo, Porta Romana, and the Serpents.[185] But it is not certain whether this "conquest" was numerically as impressive as it seems today archaeologically. The problem with Laeuchli's assessment is that we do not have incontrovertible evidence for more than fourteen *mithraea* and not all of these were operative simultaneously. In fact, we know that several seem to represent successive stages in a single cult group. Such can be demonstrated clearly for the Mithraeum of the Painted Walls. It dates to the later second century, but by the third century, it appears that the cult had been moved to new quarters in the Palazzo Imperiale complex. Two inscriptions make mention of the same Caius Caelius Hermeros as donating two statues of Cautes and Cautopates (*CIMRM* 1.255 = *CIL* 14.58-59) and a small altar that stood before a tauroctone statue (*CIMRM* 1.259 = *CIL* 14.57) to the *mithraeum* of the Palazzo Imperiale.

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[184] LAEUCHLI 1967:89. According to SQUARCIAPINO 1962a:59, "l'evidenza dei monumenti prova che ad Ostia il mitraismo si diffonde verso la metà del II secolo con puntate massime nel III, dopo che l'iniziazione di Commodo gli aveva garantito la protezione imperiale." But scholars tend to overemphasize its importance. See also: VERMASEREN 1971; GORDON 1976:119-165; STAMBAUGH 1978:597-598; BECK 1984:2002-2015; GORDON 1996; BEARD, NORTH & PRICE 1998(2):88-91.

[185] GROH 1967:9. See also BAKKER 1994:111-117. According to LAEUCHLI 1967:90, "if we reckon with 20 Mithraea (there may have been more), with a possible maximum figure of 50 in each sanctuary, conservatively counting, we would have to assume 1,000 believers at the zenith of Ostian Mithraism. Out of a possible 50,000 people in Ostia, they would thus comprise roughly 2 per cent. This is indeed not far from Harnack's 30,000 Christians in third-century Rome, who would represent approximately 3 per cent of a possible one million inhabitants… The infiltration of Mithras in such a scale into the Roman seaport, parallel to the eighty Mithraea in Rome itself, serves as a symbol for the advent of new religious vitality from the East." For Harnack's estimation, see: VON HARNACK 1965. See also VON GERKAN 1940; GRANT 1977 and LO CASCIO 1994:23-40. STOREY 1997 estimates a population of only 450 thousand inhabitants for ancient Rome. For the difficulty concerning population estimations in Rome and Ostia, see:

Both inscriptions have basically the same wording as the inscription from the *mithraeum* of the Painted Walls, and identify Hermeros as an *antistes*, or "presiding priest". According to White, that the same individual could have held the identical office in two different *mithraea* simultaneously seems odd.[186]

The Mithras cult was rather multifaceted and often embedded in the fabric of intricate social relations. Mithras was not an exclusive deity,[187] and the unexpected swiftness with which Mithraism gained its way to Ostia shows how open the city was to new cults,[188] and there is no reason why we should suppose that Ostia was less willing to embrace Christianity. After all, Mithraism was mystical and had an almost brotherly character – features that were also found in Christianity. Furthermore, there is no reason to suppose that the history of new cults at Ostia during the first centuries of the Empire should be significantly different from that of the Roman Metropolis.[189] Thus, we should not assume that Christianity found any notable resistance at Ostia in comparison to Rome. Rome itself was more pagan than Christian until the 390s,[190] when the balance began to change. In fact, non-Christians outweighed the Christians in wealth and position. Likewise, in the two port-towns at the mouth of the Tiber, pagan priesthoods were

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PACKER 1967 and PIRSON 1997. The *mithraeum* of the Baths of Mithras is briefly discussed below in this Chapter on account of its alleged adaptation into a Christian meeting hall.

[186] For full evidence for the possibility that the *mithraeum* of the Painted Walls and the *mithraeum* of the Imperial Palace are two phases of a single cult, see WHITE 1997b:376-378. See also SPURZA 1999.

[187] Contrary to previous assumptions by CUMONT 1942 and others, recent scholarship tends to see Mithraism as a much more public and inclusive religion than it was first thought to be, not being restricted to Roman soldiers only. In fact, STEUERNAGEL 2001:41-56 sees *mithraea* as "neighborhood clubs" operating along a set of quite complex social relations.

[188] Although the archaeological evidence points to a widespread diffusion of Mithraism at Ostia, the first sure manifestation of such diffusion is, in fact, late. Mithraism does not show up anywhere at Ostia before the mid-second century.

[189] Squarciapino, in her thorough analysis of foreign cults at ancient Ostia, makes the following statement concerning this subject: "Mi sembra quindi che si possa ritener giusta la già enuciata premessa che la storia delle religioni orientali ad Ostia é intimamente legata e condizionata da quella di Roma, e che la composizione cosmopolita della città non ha influito che parzialmente e marginalmente su di essa." SQUARCIAPINO 1962a:70.

[190] MACMULLEN 1984:81.

filled openly, not all from within senatorial ranks, and building went on at various pagan centers.[191] So, both Rome and Ostia were – in a way – permeably syncretistic until the fourth century, and the early Christians took full advantage of such permeability. This conclusion concurs with the view now advanced by historians of Christianity according to which Christianity was, up to a certain level, entirely compatible with Hellenism and the Roman world.[192] Much of what White's study on architectural adaptation among pagans, Jews and Christians has established concerning Mithraism can be very likely applied to Christian buildings.[193] Except for the cave symbolism which is characteristic of *mithraea*, early Christian buildings shared several features with *mithraea* such as no exterior architectural iconography, great variety in plans and proportions, and multiple stages of renovation.

A Jewish Community at Ostia

The study of the Jewish community at Ostia is very important for the understanding of the development of Christianity in the city, because the traditional assumption is that Christianity developed more easily in places where Jews were already thriving. Scholars tend to think so because this is the picture of early Christianity painted by the canonical *Acts of the Apostles*. According to Pavolini, "si ritiene generalmente che la presenza di una fiorente comunità ebraica in una città antica fosse una delle condizioni favorevoli per un precoce sviluppo di una comunità cristiana."[194] Whether or not the depiction of *Acts* corresponds precisely to the spread of Christianity in general through the Roman Empire, it is important to assess the evidence for the Jewish community at Ostia in order to determine its relationship to Ostia's multicultural environment because Jews and

[191] MACMULLEN 1984:81.
[192] CHUVIN 2004:15-34.
[193] WHITE 1996 [1990]:47-59.
[194] PAVOLINI 1996:164. See also STARK 1996.

Christians probably dealt with multiculturalism in similar ways.[195] On the other hand, it is necessary to verify as well if a Jewish presence at Ostia had any influence in the spread of Christianity in the city. So, Meiggs objects to an early growth of Christianity in Ostia on the grounds that the city was not Greek-speaking, so he says a tremendous obstacle to its propagation. According to him, "on general grounds it would not be surprising if Christianity was slow to gain a firm hold in Ostia."[196]

Scholars like Boissier, de Rossi and Frey had – prior to this view – held the opinion that the linguistic difficulty was counterbalanced by the presence of a Jewish community at the harbors. Boissier argued that Christian expansion in Ostia had been relatively fast, pointing out that Ostia and Portus had received many Jews, as shown by a large number of Jewish inscriptions in Greek supposedly recovered in the two cities, which bore the seven-branch candlestick and the formula *En eirēnēi*.[197] On the basis of the commercial importance of

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[195] For the relationship of the Jews to the rest of the Graeco-Roman world from diverse perspectives and with the benefit of a variety of techniques and types of evidence, see: GOODMAN 1998.

[196] MEIGGS 1973:389; See also PAVOLINI 1996:164.

[197] According to BOISSIER 1895:273-310, "la présence des Juifs à Ostie explique aussi pourquoi le christianisme s'y est vite développé. Il y posséda bientôt deux sièges épiscopaux, l'un à Ostie même, l'autre à *Portus Traiani,* qui fut illustré par S. Hippolyte." One of the inscriptions mentioned by Boissier makes reference to a leader of the community as the "Father of the Hebrews:"

ἐντάδε κῖτε θυγατέρες δύο πατρὸς τῶν ῾Εβρέων
Γαδίατος. Κάρα ἐν εἰρήνῃ.

But Leon dismisses all these inscriptions as not being originally set up in Portus. According to him (LEON 1952:173-175), the two synagogue names mentioned in the inscriptions actually refer to congregations in Rome. Besides, since one half of the so-called "Cattia Ammias inscription," in which the synagogue of the Calcaresians is mentioned, was at the Lateran in Rome, while the other half was in Portus, it is much more likely that the Portus half was carried away from Rome than the reverse. Finally, the stones themselves differ in no respect from those which were found in the Monteverde catacomb, and there could never have been a catacomb of any kind at Portus (because of its alluvial soil). Meiggs objects, likewise, to Boissier's position by contending against the validity of such inscriptions as expressive of a Jewish presence at Portus: "a large number of Jewish inscriptions including reference to a synagogue and an organized community have been

Portus, M. de Rossi argued that the Jews found in it a favorable location, for which reason he supposed that there must certainly have been one or more synagogues established there prior to the fourth century.[198] A column capital from Pammachius's *xenodocheion* bearing crude Menorah drawings led Frey to posit that the building used for the Christian holstery had previously housed a synagogue.[199]

For a long time, the evidence for the presence of a Jewish community at Ostia was no more compelling than that for Portus.[200] Despite Leon's reluctance to consider that possibility, the 1961 discovery of a synagogue in the outskirts of Ostia proved that prosperous Jews lived by the harbors.[201] The building stood close to the ancient shoreline and faced onto the Via Severiana (Figs. 1 and 6), the main Roman road coming south from Portus to Laurentium. Its final form – a

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attributed to the harbours, but convincing arguments have recently been put forward to show that the most important inscription in the series were almost certainly taken to the bishop's palace at Portus from Rome" (MEIGGS 1973:390).

[198] DE ROSSI 1868:40. This argument was dismissed by Leon because there is actually little or no evidence that the Jews of ancient times had a particular leaning toward commerce (LEON 1952:166, n. 4).

[199] FREY 1931. A *xenodocheion* was a shelter which served Christian pilgrims, as well as the sick and the poor, and which, unlike the *pandocheion*, was normally not associated with money and the dangers of the worldly life, cf. the first chapter in CONSTABLE 2003. For more on Pammachius's *xenodocheion*, see below. Again, Leon tries to dismiss this evidence on at least three grounds: the coarseness of the drawings, their occurrence in only one of the seven capitals from the building, and the fact that the drawings were hardly visible. He prefers to see them merely as talismans pointing to the presence of some Jew or Jews at the site, possibly even after the collapse of the Christian building (LEON 1952:175).

[200] According to RUNESSON 2002:n. 133, "we also have possible Jewish epitaphs from the Porta Laurentina burial ground, which date from the first half of the first century B.C.E. to the first decades of the first century C.E.; if their Jewish identity can be assured, these inscriptions indicate Jewish presence at Ostia, but cannot be used as evidence of an organised community since titles are lacking." But these have not been catalogued and analyzed, so the claim for dates is rather problematic; some of these are very likely modern, perhaps dating to the period of Musolini. This suggestion comes from personal communication with L. M. White who has seen the graffiti and discussed them with local archaeologists.

[201] The find was first published in SQUARCIAPINO 1961, and although no final excavation report was yet published, SQUARCIAPINO 1962b provides us with a detailed account of the excavations (although written before the completion of the second and final excavation campaign, cf. p. 299-300, 313; SQUARCIAPINO 1963 was, on the other hand, written after the end of the

large complex measuring 36.6 x 23.5 m (Fig. 8) – included an elaborate entryway comprised of a porch from the via Severiana and a multipart vestibule (Rooms 1-4); a composite inner court with a fine mosaic floor (Rooms 7-9); a tripartite inner "gateway" (Rooms 11-13) which incorporated an impressive structure of four columns of gray marble functioning as a portal and an *aedicula* serving as a Torah shrine; a main hall (Room 14) in which we can see two other columns of the same period (but not on the same axis) as well as a tiered *bema* against the western wall; a kitchen (Room 10); a storage pantry (Rooms 15-17); and a large dining hall with a low bench 1.8 m wide running along the southern and western walls (Room 18). Subsequent excavations immediately northwest of the synagogue building exposed an adjacent edifice containing a *nymphaeum* – with contiguous walls – which may have been original to the whole complex.[202] The remains of the synagogue attest to a multistage process of construction, whereas for a long time scholars claimed it as the only *de novo* synagogue in existence from the Roman Empire.[203] White has recently challenged this view, however. According to him, Jews and other smaller "religious" groups tended to adapt existing buildings, especially homes and other select architectural settings, for religious use.[204] The plan reflects only the final stages of this building after renovation in the fourth century A.D. Certain changes can clearly be seen. Room 10 had earlier been a dining room, but was converted into a kitchen/bakery. Room 18 had been an open

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excavations, but it is a rather incomplete synopsis of the results). See also: SQUARCIAPINO 2001:272-277.

[202] We do not have any reports from the excavations of these areas, and there are many difficulties involved in the dating of these structures, cf. RUNESSON 2002:n. 94.

[203] KRAABEL 1979:497-500. RUNESSON 2002:171-220. The original excavator also claims that the edifice dates to the mid first century (SQUARCIAPINO 2001).

[204] WHITE 1996 [1990]:69-71, 79 (especially). See also WHITE 1997a:379-397. The *locus classicus* for the theory that the Ostia synagogue was not originally built as such is WHITE 1997b. See also FELDMAN 1996:62ff; WHITE 1998; COHICK 1999:123-139; and LEVINE 2000:97, 255-258. For criticism of White's analysis, see: RUNESSON 1999. For White's response, see WHITE 1999. See also STAMBAUGH 1978:599-601; RICHARDSON 1996; RUNESSON 2001a:29-37; 2001b; and 2002; MITTERNACHT 2003:521-571.

courtyard but became the enlarged dining area. Other liturgical embellishments can also be seen in the fourth century renovation, notably the installation of an apsidal aedicula (Room 13) for storing the Torah scrolls.

The process of monumentalization of the complex with the addition of columns and new rooms shows that this Jewish community was socially active, with the apparent involvement of local patrons: "the community itself was growing in both numbers and economic strength and was finding a high degree of social acceptance in the local environment,"[205] while developing a robust, self-conscious Jewish identity. Since 2001 new excavations and analysis have been undertaken by L. M. White and a team from the University of Texas.[206] In 2005-2006 a new trench under the floor of the main hall (Room 14) clearly showed that this portion of the building could not date any earlier than the Antonine period, based on solid ceramic evidence.[207]

After the discovery of this synagogue, three Jewish inscriptions came to light at Ostia,[208] which refute Leon's thesis that the Jews had not come to Rome as slaves and that they had never been freedmen.[209] One of them, the so-called "Mind(i)us Faustus inscription," written in Greek and reused in the synagogue as

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[205] WHITE 1997b:38.

[206] I participated in the 2002 and 2003 campaigns.

[207] According to personal communication from L. M. White in October 2007, we now have evidence for a general ground-raising project in the area from the Porta Marina baths down to the Synagogue, all dating to the second century b.C. The Antonine synagogue structure is sitting on top of this fill. Then the Severan highway project (usually dated 200-208) raised the ground level higher still (to roughly the present level of the Via Severiana). At this time, too, we know that the big Roman villa just to the north was demolished and the whole area of that empty field was expanded in a new extra urban quarter. All of this looks like a conscious urban expansion program, probably connected to the Severan building boom in Ostia. A critical bit of evidence is a paved street running E-W. across the top of the demolished villa that seems to intersect another new street running N-S. as a side street off the Via Severiana. So, the whole area around the Synagogue, and stretching back toward the city both to the north and the West was being further developed as residential neighborhoods in the early third century. Besides, masonry analysis of both the Synagogue complex and the Baths of Musiciolus suggest that there was a major fourth century renovation of this area as well. Unfortunately, no figures are yet available to illustrate these conclusions.

[208] WHITE 1999:435-464.

construction material,[210] is noteworthy in this regard because the formula PRO SALVTE AVGvsti (featured in Latin) engraved on it is most common among groups or individuals who are clients of the emperor.[211] White studied the synagogue and the epigraphic evidence in its social context and came to the important conclusion that the construction of the synagogue occurred as part of a larger pattern of urban development along the via Severiana (Fig. 2), and that its *gerusiarchs* were – during the later second century – socially connected and upwardly mobile, being tied socially as clients both to other Jews and to non-Jews.[212] The main evidence for the growth of this Jewish community is late second to early fourth century but not earlier, although it is possible that it lasted much later than it is generally assumed – even into the sixth century.

So, the evidence for Judaism at Ostia is in key with what we have already seen concerning the cults of Serapis and Isis (discussed in Chapter One) and Mithras (discussed in the previous section): architectural adaptation and preoccupation with patronage, status display, social mobility, and the active

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[209] LEON 1960:141-142.

[210] *Pro salute Aug(usti) | oikodomēsen ke aipo- | ēsen ek tōn autou do- | matōn kai tēn Keibōton | anethēken nomōi hagiōi | Mindi(o)s Phaustos ME | [….….] DIŌ […..]*, "for the well-being of the Emperor. Mindius Faustus […dio…] constructed this and made it out of his own gifts, and he set up the ark for the sacred law" (text and translation from WHITE 1997b:39-40). See also WHITE 1999:435-464.

[211] For a recent analysis of the *pro salute* formula (or its Greek equivalent *hyper sōtērias*), see MORALEE 2004. The author divides the epigraphical material bearing the formula into two groups: dedications for the safety (or "salvation" as he prefers) of the emperor and dedications for the safety of the dedicator and/or other private individuals. The assumptions that underlay dedications for the emperor's safety were that the empire and its inhabitants depended on the welfare of the emperor, that the emperor in turn depended on the favor of the gods, and that it was thus important for the inhabitants of the empire to petition the gods (or God) for the emperor's salvation. According to him (p. 57-58), these inscriptions served both to create "an imperial identity that transcended race, social status, and political clout" and at the same time "to affirm social distinctions at the local level."

[212] WHITE 1997b:33, 51. White's assertion goes well with the fact that RAJAK 2002 has recently provided ample corroboration on the basis of epigraphic evidence for the integration of Jewish communities into the Greco-Roman world through the informal ties of private benefaction. For a relatively recent assessment of the social and religious hierarchy of synagogues in the Greco-Roman world, see: LEVINE 1998:195-214.

involvement of freedmen and immigrants. We will now turn to the evidence for Christianity hoping to determine whether the same social phenomena were taking place among the Ostian Christians as well as to set the background for the study of the Christian community in its relation to the Pianabella basilica.

A Christian Community at Ostia

In the established view as noted above, Christianity made little headway at Ostia during the second century, but spread widely during the third century. On the basis of the martyrological studies of M. de Rossi,[213] Meiggs came to three main conclusions regarding its establishment at Ostia. Firstly, that the Christian community at Ostia had their own bishop and priests in the third century.[214] Secondly, that Constantine's basilica was probably the first church within the town. Thirdly, that there is no evidence that Ostian magistrates or prominent laymen were involved in the martyrdoms.[215] The impression derived from the late houses was that the aristocracy was predominantly pagan – which is not inconsistent with such Christian traditions as they survive.

The view shared by Meiggs and Pavolini that Christianity arrived late at Ostia is sometimes linked to the idea that the decline of paganism, in the city, is to be explained in terms of the arrival of the new religion. Bakker's studies of the evidence for private religion in the city of Ostia between 100 and 500 claim that most of the dated evidence for pagan practices at Ostia is from the reigns of Trajan, Hadrian and Antoninus Pius. According to him, as far as Ostian workshops, depots, shops, markets and hotels are concerned, the evidence from

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[213] DE ROSSI 1868; MEIGGS 1973:518, 525-526.

[214] By the time of Augustine it was a well-established tradition that the Pope should be consecrated by the bishop of Ostia (cf. MEIGGS 1973:392).

[215] "Gallicanus, residing in Ostia, but probably not an Ostian, should be regarded as exceptional, though there may have been a small minority of his social peers who shared his views." MEIGGS 1973:256.

the later second and first half of the third century is scanty.[216] His conclusion is that paganism was alive at Ostia in the first two centuries of the Christian era, and that its decline began to be felt in the third century. But Bakker's data refer mainly to the evidence for private religion in commercial establishments, and, in my opinion, proves only that people felt little inclination towards displaying their religious beliefs in the environment of their businesses.[217]

If the monuments and the largest part of the Christian artifacts retrieved in the excavations cannot be dated before the fourth century, a letter by St Cyprian (*Epistula* 20.4) confirms the arrival and settlement of Christians at Ostia during the mid third century. The dates proposed by Meiggs, Bakker and Pavolini for the arrival of Christianity are correct, but when these scholars argue that Christianity was a late phenomenon at Ostia and that there was considerable struggle between Christians and non-Christians, they go beyond the evidence. There is much more consensus concerning the picture that emerges from the late fourth and the early fifth century, for which I will now collect epigraphic, iconographic and architectural evidence. As I do so, I will also assess – to a certain extent – the evidence for the early centuries A.D. in an attempt to show that Ostia's society did not resist the arrival of Christianity but welcomed it rather willingly as it generally did any new cult.

The Literary Evidence

As in other main areas of the archaeological investigation of early Christianity at Ostia, the literary evidence for an early Christian presence in the city is rather insufficient. The examples are few but very well known. Such evidence is, in fact, attached mainly to only a handful of texts, including the prologue to the *Octavius* and Augustine's account of the death of St Monica. The

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[216] BAKKER 1994:91.
[217] For other criticism of Bakker's methodology, see PALMER 1996:381-385.

earliest of these texts is probably the *Octavius*, dating in all likelihood to the early third century. It is likely one of the first Christian apologies written in Latin,[218] but it tells us very little about Christianity at Ostia since the only piece of information that we can derive from it is that the dialogue between a Christian and a pagan took place, putatively, at Ostia. If the dialogue is principally a fiction, then the text gives no real evidence for Christianity at Ostia.

The second earliest literary witness to Christianity at Ostia comes from a letter by St Cyprian, bishop of Carthage (*Epistula* 20.4). This letter dates to about 250 A.D., and provides us with a picturesque account of Christian pilgrims staying at Ostia and Portus during their journeys from Africa to Rome and back. Our next literary evidence comes from two documents, which purport to describe events set in the time of Diocletian, and which often display some striking discrepancies. The *Acta sanctorum* and the *Acta Martyrium ad Ostia Tiberina sub Claudio Gothico* refer to several martyrs reportedly killed at Ostia: Aurea (a virgin from the imperial household), Cyriacus the bishop, Maximus the presbyter, Archelaus the deacon, the consul Gallicanus, Asterius (a member of the staff of the *praefectus annonae*), seventeen soldiers, a certain Nonnus Hippolytus, and his *vicarius* Sabinianus. Despite their mutual contradictions, these documents receive some confirmation from a few later texts, especially from a letter by Pope Gregorius I dating to 598, and from the *Liber pontificalis*. Even so, the texts themselves do not date any earlier than the time of Gregory the Great and, thus, cannot be used as absolute historical evidence for events at Ostia in the earlier period.

Ostia is also the theater for another great moment of Christianity: the death of St Monica. In A.D. 387 Monica, the mother of Augustine of Hippo, died and

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[218] The *Octavius* and Tertulian's *Apologeticus* contend for this honor. Cf. CALZA 1949-1951:123ff; MUSURILLO 1966 and MEIGGS 1973:490-492. Both seem to have come to Rome from North Africa.

was buried in Ostia. Augustine describes the circumstances of her death in his *Confessiones* (9.8.17b). Both mother and son were moneyless and probably relied on their contacts with the well-to-do in order to find a place to stay at Ostia,[219] the house where they stayed becoming now the target of much controversy on account of the many unsuccessful attempts to identify it.[220] The fact that Maximus, bishop of Ostia, is present at a council in Rome, summoned by Constantine in October 313 to patch up a split in the African Church, is an indication that Christianity got a foothold at Ostia before the reign of Constantine.[221] In reality, Augustine himself informs us that already in his time (354-430) it was the privilege of the bishop of Ostia to ordain the new bishop of Rome: *non Numidiae sed propinquiores episcopi episcopum ecclesiae Carthaginis ordinant sicut nec Romanae ecclesiae ordinat aliquis episcopus metropolitanus, sed de proximo ostiensis episcopus*.[222]

Finally, Jerome speaks approvingly of the *xenodocheion*, which Pammachius had set up together with Fabiola at Portus, in a letter to this Roman senator who had lost his wife Paulina two years earlier, and describes his own similar shelter at Bethlehem (*Epistula* 66.11 of A.D. 397). Then again he praises Fabiola posthumously for her endeavors associated with the *xenodocheion* at Portus in a letter to Oceanus: *xenodochium in portu Romano situm totus pariter mundus audivit. sub una aestate didicit Britannia, quod Aegyptus et Parthus agnoverant vere*, "the whole world knows that a home for strangers has been established at Portus; and Britain has learned in the summer what Egypt and Parthia knew in the spring" (*Epistula* 77:10 of A.D. 399). In conclusion, then, there is some literary evidence for Christianity at Ostia by the mid third century, and it had its own bishop by ca. 313. By the later fourth century it was known as a

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[219] These were probably their friends the Anicii. Cf. below.
[220] HERMANSEN 1981:15, n. 26. Cf. below.
[221] This meeting is known as the First Lateran Council or the Synod of Rome.
[222] *Brevic. collat cum Donat.* 3.16.29.

way-station for traveling Christians from other parts of the Empire. Thus, literary evidence points to no serious religious clash at Ostia: we see Christians stroll by the beach and pilgrims enjoy the hospitality of the well-to-do.

The Architectural Evidence

A few religious buildings attest to the development of Christianity at Ostia from the fourth to the fifth centuries: the Constantinian Basilica, the Basilica Cimiteriale di Pianabella, the Basilica of S. Ercolano, and the Basilica Sanctae Aureae. Although we really do not know whether the so-called Basilica Cristiana sul Decumano was a religious building in fact, scholars tend to study it within this category. This is the reason why I decided to include it here. There is also a *mithraeum* seemingly converted to Christian use at the Baths of Mithras (Fig. 6). The evidence from private buildings – on the other hand – is scanty, and very difficult to connect, in a convincing way, to any aspect of Christianity at Ostia. None of the archaeological evidence for private or public Christian buildings is unproblematic until we get to a fairly late period and the two basilicas found in the last twenty years or so: the Constantinian Bishop's Basilica and Pianabella.

The "Oratory" of the Baths of Mithras

The *mithraeum* (i.xvii.2) located in the north-west part of the service area at the western wing of the Baths of Mithras (near the *frigidarium* of the Baths),[223] was purportedly converted to Christian use by the middle of the fourth century (Fig. 9).[224] Calza calls it "l'oratorio delle terme del Mitra."[225] This room had two

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[223] Incidentally, a Christian funerary inscription was also found reused as a threshold for the Baths of Mithras. It reads, *SILO HIC DORMIT IN PACE | QUI VIXIT ANNOS P(lus) M(inus) XX MAXIMILLA | VXOR POS(uit) SI(bi) ET CONIVGI BENE MERENTI* (Marinucci's inscription n°. 30).
[224] The Christian adaptation has been dated to the fourth century on the basis of the building technique and the paleographic use of the alpha and omega as Christian symbols (cf. BRENK 2001:264).

apses built in *opus listatum* and *opus latericium*. Since the excavator did not record the exact place where he found four pilasters, two of which contained Christian monograms, it is not possible to ascertain their precise function. Brenk – following Calza – speculates that they framed an enclosure for the choir.[226] Although there does not seem to be any other evidence that allows us to assess how and when, or to what extent, the building was actually converted to Christian use, the building gives some evidence for fourth-century Christianity at Ostia, since it included this oratory-like cubicle in a screened-off area, which was decorated with a *gruppo di Mitra* (a famous *taurobolium* scene from Ostia) found mutilated. If this is evidence for an architectural adaptation by Christians, then it may reflect their quest for new meeting places. Their willingness to make concessions in order to secure a meeting place for their use perhaps explains why this "oratory" was at such a late date still in a basement below baths. It seems that they still had to be content with second-hand buildings off the cuff.

The find of a *mithraeum* made into a Christian building is exceptionally fortunate given the co-existence of the two religions during a period of time when either of the two could have become universally accepted in the Roman Empire, for which reason the proximity of the two religions in this building might have seemed out of the ordinary were it not for the fact that it is now attested at Ostia.[227] One of the most remarkable finds from this *mithraeum* was the

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[225] CALZA 1949-1951:129-131. According to BECATTI 1954:139, "nel grande salone absidato termale sovrastante si impiantò un luogo di culto cristiano, come attestano i due pillastrini marmorei con il monogramma inciso, facenti parte di un recinto dinanzi ad un'absidiola costruita all'interno della sala verso la fine del IV secolo." Others hesitate between identifying it as such or as a school for catechumens, cf. CASTAGNOLI *et al*. 1972-1973:152.

[226] BRENK 2001:264. According to CALZA 1949-1951:130-131, "il trovamento di questi quattro pilastrini nella stessa sala dove rimangono le due absidi descritte, e dei quali il carattere cristiano è chiaramente indicato dal monogramma, fanno pensare al recinto di un coro o di un prebisterio di una chiesetta o ad un oratorio o semplicemente ad un luogo di riunione (scuola di catecumeni?) rappresentato dagli elementi murari *in situ*."

[227] We can also see this kind of proximity in the Aventine *mithraeum* adjoining the Church of Sta Prisca in Rome (cf. VERMASEREN & VAN ESSEN 1955:3-36; 1965) and also in San Clemente at Rome. For both, see WHITE 1997a:398-404.

fragments of two large tablelike basins (Fig. 10) found on the via della Foce at a site which the excavators describe vaguely as "non lontano dalla chiesa cristiana delle Terme del Mitra."[228] The circumference of the first basin has been estimated to be 4.64 m, whose borders bear a sculptural relief 13 cm deep, which portrays the motif of the *Missio Apostolorum*. The four fragments that remain include five of the possible thirty figures, depicted as bearded and beardless apostles wearing *pallia*. The iconography is arguably Christian but not definite by itself.[229] The purpose of such a large basin is still unknown. Calza clearly took it to be Christian. If he is right in interpreting it as a utensil intended for the celebration of the *agape* banquet, we can imagine that the *mithraeum* had become – despite its unpretentious architecture – an important meeting place for the emerging Christian community of Ostia. The other basin (whose circumference was about 2.10 m) bears no persuasively Christian iconography, but there is nothing to make us believe that it fulfilled a different purpose.

The "Basilica Cristiana" sul Decumano

The so-called Basilica Cristiana sul Decumano (iii.i.4) was discovered in 1940 and was, for a short time, thought to be the basilica built by Constantine,[230] but the building is so unimpressive that it was early on downgraded to an "oratorio cristiano" by some scholars (Fig. 11).[231] It lies on the northwest side of the western Decumanus (Fig. 6), and is built over two adjacent buildings and an intervening street, whose entry to the Decumanus it closes. Two columns supporting an architrave with inscription mark the entrance to a courtyard. The

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[228] CALZA 1964-1965:242-249.
[229] For a study of this kind of iconography, see MICHON 1915.
[230] The identification of the Basilica sul Decumano as a Christian basilica is due to Guido Calza (CALZA 1940b) who informed the members of the Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia in 1940 that he had discovered a Christian basilica at Ostia that dated to the time of Constantine, thus positing that it could be the famous Constantinian basilica. As noted in *Liber pontificalis* 1.28.45f, a basilica was built by Constantine *in civitate Hostia, iuxta portum urbis Romae*.

earlier street was flanked by shops on the south side and by public baths on the north. The new building encroached upon three rooms of the adjacent baths, while the shop entrances were closed to form the south wall. The building also includes three rooms on its northern side, and is – in its final form – long and narrow, divided by a row of columns.

The identification of the building as the Constantinian basilica was soon disavowed on two main grounds. First, a date in the late fourth century is more probable than one in the first half of that century.[232] In fact, later studies showed that the walls had been built in a very irregular *opus listatum*, which – together with the highly schematized aspect of the capitals and the epigraphic evidence – attested to a date in the late fourth century at the earliest.[233] Secondly, the absence of any conspicuous iconographic or epigraphic indication that it was in fact the famous basilica of St. Peter, St. Paul and St. John the Baptist referred to in the *Liber pontificalis* under Pope Sylvester (314-335) made its identification as such very unlikely. The *Liber pontificalis* (1.28.45ff and 1.183) informs us that the Constantinian basilica was endowed with magnificent utensils and decoration, and that Gallicanus's patronage added to its splendor, whereas the plan (Fig. 11), poor masonry and equally poor decoration of the so-called basilica cristiana suggest that it was not a prominent building.

Although displaying certain originality, the building is entirely unimpressive. In fact, in closing the shop entrances on the southern side no attempt was made to provide a continuously straight line for the new wall. Besides, several of its walls were left unfaced.[234] For these reasons, Meiggs concluded that the building was a Christian basilica – equipped with a baptistery –

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[231] DAL MASO & VIGHI 1975:72.
[232] HERES 1982:135.
[233] CALZA & NASH 1959:99, fig. 138 and 139; HERES 1982:135.
[234] Including the back sides of the enclosures along the south wall and of the apse of the so-called baptistery.

other than Constantine's.[235] Even the identification of the edifice as a "Christian basilica" is by no means beyond doubt, and a number of scholars have now rejected it.[236] It could have been a school for catechumens,[237] a library,[238] a *xenodocheion*,[239] a *martyrium* (left nave) with a room for meetings (right nave) and living quarters,[240] the residence of a Christian family,[241] or even the headquarters for a heterodox Christian sect.[242] The building has, in reality, a fairly odd plan, consisting of a miscellaneous combination of different elements. It started out in the second century A.D. as a small domus with five rooms and a small courtyard. A portico was added in the fourth century, which connected the building to the Decumanus and encroached upon the nearby Baths. A section of the original domus was then reinforced in order to provide the supporting structure for a second floor or a type of belvedere accessible through a large stairway. The next phase of the building included an unroofed apsidal room accessible through a colonnaded entrance. A marble pool in the apse was then connected to an impressive roofed *nymphaeum*, which was revetted with marble.

The epigraphic evidence from the so-called Basilica Cristiana sul Decumano plays an important role in the controversy surrounding the edifice. Two inscriptions found in the building have been the center of much discussion: one found on the architrave above the entrance to the so-called baptistery (Fig. 12) and another one on a column used in the building. The architrave inscription is poorly cut and poorly centered, and reads, IN XP GEON ˚ FISON ˚ TIGRIS ˚ EUFRATA | {TI}CRI[ST]IANORUM ˚ SUMITE ˚ FONTES ♥. It is usually

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[235] According to MEIGGS 1973:397, "such miserable conditions do not fit the early fourth century." Cf. also p. 474, note H.

[236] PAVOLINI 1988:144. Likewise, BRENK & PENSABENE 1998-1999 doubt the identification of the building as a basilica. EGGER 1960:226ff sees it simply as a generic Christian building.

[237] VON GERKAN 1942:22.

[238] KLAUSER 1942.

[239] HERES 1980:87ff; HERES 1982:135.

[240] FÉVRIER 1956.

[241] BRENK 2001:265-266.

interpreted as an invitation for the Christian to enjoy the benefits of the four primeval rivers of paradise.[243] The bipartite marble architrave measuring 3.85 m in length was not found *in situ* but in a contiguous building.[244] No doubts remain, however, as to its placement in the building's so-called left nave. The marble stone was probably being reutilized in our building, since remains of an earlier inscription, which Burzachechi dates to the first or second centuries A.D., on the topside of the architrave – and therefore not visible from below – indicate that it was first used as an honorary inscription at an Ostian guild.[245] There is also evidence that the stone was wearing out due to its use as a threshold sometime after it had been used as an honorary inscription and before its use as an architrave.

The crucial problem with this inscription is the lettering of the first word in its second line. The word Calza reads as "Cristianorum" has one or two letters that are not legible: S and T. Besides, the word seems to be preceded by two letters that do not fit Calza's reading. Mercati reads the word as [PERE]GRI[N]IANORUM,[246] while Burzachechi reads it as [TI]GRI[N]IANORUM. Both dismiss Calza's explanation according to which the stonecutter would have made a mistake on account of the presence of the word "Tigris" on the line above. For Burzachechi it seems illogical that the commissioner of such a monumental inscription would not have demanded its correction before setting it up. So, Burzachechi hypothesizes that the Tigriniani were either a family that had built a *nymphaeum* for public use or a never-heard-of-before sect of heretical Christians, which had favored a heterodox baptismal

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[242] BURZACHECHI 1958-1959.

[243] The symbology of the four rivers of the earthly paradise had – in its origins – no connections with the sacrament of baptism, being rather linked to martyrdom (FÉVRIER 1956. See also MARROU 1966:160-165 and PAVOLINI 1988:144).

[244] The architrave is made up of two marble slabs which clearly had diverse provenance.

[245] BURZACHECHI 1958-1959:177-187.

[246] MERCATI 1958-1959:13.

rite probably under the influence of Augustine's stay at Ostia.[247] This is an implausibe speculation since the need to conjecture about the existence of an unheard-of heretical Christian sect seems irrelevant when nobody denies the Christian nature of the inscription. A better explanation would probably be one that reads the word as "Cristianorum," and makes sense of the two letters that precede it. I propose two possibilities for that: either the presence of a symbol that would be a counterpart of the Christian monogram XP, which appears in the previous line, or the presence of some other word or abbreviation,[248] which would fill the two spaces, such as, the number "four" (IV), for instance: IN XP GEON ˚ FISON ˚ TIGRIS ˚ EUFRATA | IV ˚ CRI[ST]IANORUM ˚ SUMITE ˚ FONTES. In this latter case, we would have an invitation to approach the four streams of paradise.[249]

The second inscription from this so-called Basilica Cristiana was found on one of the columns, and simply bears the name Volusianus. The name – which was associated with the great Caeionian family – recurs on other similar columns,

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[247] BURZACHECHI 1958-1959. For the connection of the sect with a heterodox baptism, Burzachechi revitalizes Calza's initial supposition that the room was actually used as a baptistery. Calza tells us of a baptismal basin found in the building, which has now been lost. However, as Burzachechi (p. 179) himself admits, "la sala non ha nulla di un battistero." MARROU 1966:163-165 proposes what he calls "une troisième explication," according to which Tigrinus was a Roman priest famous for building funerary basilicas on the via Latina.

[248] EGGER 1960:226-229 reads the two mysterious letters as FL, an abbreviation for *fluminum*, but this interpretation is unnecessarily redundant: "approach the fountains of the Christian rivers."

[249] Brenk's suggestion that the building belonged to a Christian family who made their *nymphaeum* available to their friends for cooling down during hot days seems only a little more attractive than Burzachechi's, since he presents no epigraphic examples of the fourth- or fifth-century Christian family of the Tigriniani as well as no convincing reasons for the dismissal of a religious context for our inscription. According to him, "le nymphée est typique pour l'Antiquité tardive; il est bien situé à l'intérieur de la maison, mais peut être mis à disposition d'un plus grand cercle d'hôtes à certaines occasions, comme l'indique l'inscription qui invite à l'usage profane de l'eau pour boire et se laver, mais aussi au plaisir de la voir et l'entendre couleur. Le propriétaire du nymphée et de la maison était un chrétien éclairé à qui son nymphée rappelait les quatre fleuves du paradis. Il s'agit là de la christianisation d'une forme païenne d'association d'idées. A Antioche, l'historien Malalas atteste l'existence d'un nymphée que l'empereur Probus fit orner d'une mosaïque représentant la figure d'Okéanos. Si les païens associaient Okéanos à l'eau d'un nymphée, la mentalité des chrétiens cultivés remplaçait le dieu marin par les quatre fleuves du paradis." BRENK 2001:265-266.

spolia stored in the temple of the shipbuilders next door (iii.iv.2).[250] Meiggs speculates that the pagan temple had presumably been abandoned and that a dealer in marble was using its area.[251] The crux, here, is the identification of this Volusianus. He is certainly not the Rufius Volusianus, one of the several senators who served both Maxentius and Constantine, and who was city prefect in 310 and 313-315, since that date is too early for the building. Besides, an inscription mentions him as first of seven pagan priests and philosophers.[252] Neither must our man be the C. Caeionius Rufius Volusianus *signo* Lampadius who sponsored, at Ostia, a *taurobolium* in honor of the Great Mother, and who was praetorian prefect in 355 and city prefect in 365.[253] Although his offices fit the date of our building, it is unlikely, as Meiggs puts it, that "a Roman aristocrat who had proclaimed his pagan sympathies by a *taurobolium*" would have allowed his columns "to be used by the religion he was fighting."[254] Coming from a solidly pagan family, an inscription describes him as *pater, ierofanta, profeta Isidis, pontifex dei Sol(is)*.[255] His son Ceionius Rufius Volusianus, who was *vicarius Asiae* before 390,[256] is no better choice. He received – with his sister Rufia

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[250] Cf. *supra*.

[251] MEIGGS 1973:398.

[252] JONES, MARTINDALE & MORRIS 1971:978.

[253] According to Ammianus Marcellinus 27.3.6, Lampadius gave magnificent games during his praetorship. Also according to this Latin author, he had his name carved on old buildings as if he had built them himself (27.3.7). He describes him as *homo indignanter admodum sustinens, si (etiam cum spueret) non laudarebur, ut id quoque prudentur praeter alios faciens, sed non numquam severus et frugi* (27.3.5). In fact, his house near the Baths of Constantine was nearly demolished and burned by a rioting crowd on one occasion and he had to flee to the Milvian Bridge (cf. 27.3.11). The mansion was saved when his senatorial neighbors organized their own households to repel the mob. Accordingly, when Ambrose (*Epistula* 40.13) writes to Theodosius he reminds the emperor of other prefects who underwent similar circumstances: *non recordaris, imperator, quantorum Romae domus praefectorum incensae sunt, et nemo vindicavit?* This was an experience not at all uncommon (cf. Symmachus, *Epistulae* VI 15, 18, 121; 61, 66, etc.). It is very unlikely that the inscription on the columns of the so-called Basilica Cristiana refers to him, since, as MEIGGS 1973:398 has noted, when this Volusianus advertised himself he did it in monumental inscriptions on public buildings.

[254] MEIGGS 1973:399.

[255] JONES, MARTINDALE & MORRIS 1971:980.

[256] *I.L.S.* 4154.

Volusiana – the *taurobolium* in 370. He renewed it when he dedicated an altar in 390, a fact that he commemorated with a dated inscription set in the Phrygianum at Rome.[257] That shows that – like his father – this Volusianus was entirely committed to paganism.[258] Our best candidate is Lampadius's grandchild, a Volusianus who was especially known for being city prefect in 417-418. Literary sources inform us of his visits to Ostia,[259] and he may well have actually owned a comfortable house there.[260] This Volusianus – whose full name was probably Rufius Antonius Agrypnius Volusianus[261] – became a Christian after his proconsulate in Africa,[262] while spending some time in Carthage. His father must have been one of Lampadius's four sons.[263] His daughter Laeta also married a Christian, Julius Torquatus, son of Jerome's patroness Paula.[264] Publilius Caeionius Caecina Albinus, the eldest son, was a pagan by conviction who married a Christian wife.[265] Ceionius Rufius Albinus, the youngest son, also married a Christian wife,[266] and he served as city prefect from 389 to 391.[267] The

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[257] *I.L.S.* 4154. The Phrygianum was a place dedicated to the worship of the Phrygian goddess in the neighborhood of the Vatican. When Pope Paul V, Borghese laid the foundations of the southeast corner of the new façade of S. Peter's, between 1608 and 1609, at a depth of thirty feet below the level of the ground, several altars and pedestals were discovered, on which the history of the shrine was engraved. It seems that these marbles had been hammered and split into fragments at some unknown period; perhaps after 394.

[258] This *tauroboliate* Volusianus may have been the brother of Caeionius Rufius Albinus, city prefect from 389 to 391. Cf. MATTHEWS 1975:231.

[259] Rutilius Namatianus, *De Reditu*, 1.168f.

[260] Meiggs speculates on very scanty evidence that his grandfather – Lampadius – owned the House of the Dioscuri at Ostia (p. 212ff and 474).

[261] MATTHEWS 1975:285.

[262] Agrypnius Volusianus was proconsul of Africa, before 410, while still a *puer* (cf. Rutilius Namatianus, *De Reditu*, 1.173).

[263] MEIGGS 1973:474 believes him to be the eldest son, and JONES, MARTINDALE & MORRIS 1971 the youngest.

[264] Jerome, *Epistula* 107.

[265] Jerome, *Epistula* 107.1. According to JONES, MARTINDALE & MORRIS 1971:34-35, Publilius Caeionius Caecina Albinus is to be identified with the Caecina Albinus in the *Saturnalia* of Macrobius, a pagan and a contemporary of Q. Aurelius Symmachus Eusebius (*Saturnalia* 1.2.15). For that network, see also WHITE 1992:10-12.

[266] Augustine, *Epistula* 136.

letters that our Agrypnius Volusianus exchanged with Augustine[268] and Flavius Marcellinus[269] seem to have been instrumental to his decision to embrace the Christian faith. At the time of his correspondence with Augustine and Marcellinus, he was still a pagan, but willing to listen to Christian argument. We hear later of his conversion by his niece Melania (the younger)[270] in 434, while he was on official business at Constantinople.[271] He was critically ill, and died soon afterwards. The rough inscriptions on the columns of the so-called Basilica Cristiana are simple marks of ownership. They probably refer to a member of the great Caeionian family, and attest admirably to the remarkable way Christianity made gradual inroads into a solidly pagan senatorial family. Recent scholarship related to this building concludes that, since structurally it cannot be a basilica, it must be something else rather than a public meeting place for the Christians at Ostia. We may well see it as a *domus* typical of the late antique period, owned by a Christian aristocrat. The architrave inscription and fountains fit well with elite domestic architecture of this period.[272]

The Basilica of Sant'Ercolano

[267] Ceionius Rufius Albinus is described as one of the most learned men of his time (Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 6.1.1).

[268] Augustine, *Epistulae* 132, 135 and 137. He is also alluded to in *Epistula* 139.3 and *Enchiridion* 10.34.

[269] Augustine, *Epistulae* 136 and 138. This Marcellinus presided the Council of Carthage, which took place in the early fifth century in order to end the hostilities between Catholics and Donatists, cf. MANDOUZE 1982:671.

[270] Melania the younger – to whom Augustine dedicated his book *De gratia et peccato* – was the daughter of Albina and Publicola and granddaughter of Melania the elder. According to Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 54.58, 61, she was married to Pinianus at the age of thirteen. The Greek version of the *Vita S. Melaniae* (6-8) informs us that – after making a pact of chastity with her husband at the age of twenty – she decided to live in continence and to devote herself to a religious life.

[271] The Greek version of the *Vita S. Melaniae* 50-56.

[272] For this kind of architecture, see MUNTASSER 2003.

The Basilica of Sant'Ercolano, located about 800 m southwest of the Porta Romana (Fig. 1), was first excavated in 1988 and 1989.[273] It commemorated the martyrs Taurinus and Herculanus who were allegedly buried at Portus.[274] Three inscriptions mention Herculanus. The first one (*C.I.L.* 14.1942), a sarcophagus inscription dating to the late fourth or, more likely, to the early fifth century, was recovered *in agro ostiensi*, and is now in S. Paolo. Although found in Ostia, it probably had its original display venue at Portus, since it makes mention of a *martyrium* built for the two saints by Nevius Zaristus and Constantia. The second one was found during the excavations of the Basilica of S. Ippolito in Isola Sacra, and dates to the sixth century. The third one – another sarcophagus inscription – dates to the seventeenth century and mentions the translation of the relics of Herculanus, Hippolytus and Taurinus to the Church of the Isola Tiberina by Pope Formoso (891-896) at the end of the ninth century. The name Sant'Ercolano is not used for the church before 1871, suggesting that no traditional names were initially established for it.[275] The church has gone through much restoration, but its earliest work may date from the fifth century. The majority of the Christian funerary inscriptions found at Ostia have been recovered from the necropolis associated with this little church (Fig. 13), and a few funerary structures dating to the first and second centuries A.D. have also been recovered from this churchyard.[276]

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[273] LORETI 1990; PERGOLA 1990.

[274] Herculanus was commemorated by the *Depositio Martyrum* (supposedly written in the mid-fourth century): *Nonas Septembres Aconti, in Porto, et Nonni Herculani et Taurini*. The *Acta Sanctorum* (Aug. IV and Sept. II), a later narration of the martyrdom of Aurea and Cyriacus, place the deaths of Herculanus and Taurinus in September 5, 282. According to MEIGGS 1973:395, their memory was still revered on a fifth-century sarcophagus. The sarcophagus inscription reads,

> *DEO PATRI OMNIPOTEN | TI ET XRO EIVS Et SANCTIS | MARTYRIBUS tAURINO | ET HERCULANo oMNI | ORA GRATIAs agiMUS | NEVIVS ZARIstus eT | CONSTANTia martV | RIA SIBI FECerunt* (*C.I.L.* 14.1942).

[275] PERGOLA 1990:173.

[276] PERGOLA 1990:173-174; LORETI 1990:83-84.

The building has been described as remarkably complex, since its chronology and construction development are difficult to pin down.[277] The most ancient strata along the church's south wall show evidence of a funerary building in *opus reticulatum* belonging to the first or second century A.D. and including a small *columbarium*. After a period in which the building was no longer used, it was reclaimed for use in the fourth and fifth centuries, as suggested by the *cubilia* walls with spolia *reticulata*. Several tombs *a cappuccina* with only one deposition oriented east to west (but with no grave goods) belong to this phase. There are indications of successive phases of use, especially along the church's north wall, where several strata have been identified and a great number of human bones have been found. But no convincing evidence has been presented to authenticate the supposition that the small church was once dedicated to Herculanus.

The Basilica of St Aurea

The Basilica Sanctae Aureae is a small church (Fig. 14), which occupies a site where tradition has placed a number of tombs associated with early Christian martyrs (Fig. 1). In fact, epigraphy suggests that a Christian cemetery developed in the area.[278] The basilica became Ostia's most important church in the twelfth century as it attained the status of *ecclesia cathedralis* when Ostia and Velletri became one only diocese on account of their population decline.[279] The early basilica was dedicated in the fifth century to St. Aurea, a noble young girl who allegedly suffered martyrdom either under Alexander Severus or, more likely,

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[277] LORETI 1990:83.

[278] Besides the tradition referring to the Christian martyrs in the area, Christian funerary inscriptions have been recovered from the vicinities of the Basilica Sanctae Aureae: *C.I.L.* 14.195 (which was identified as Christian after some fragments were retrieved and published as Marinucci's inscription n°. 23), Marinucci's inscription n°. 22, etc.

[279] PANNUZI 2006:371; NIBBY 1848:438-441.

under Claudius Gothicus (268-270), and was buried at Ostia.[280] The building must have been in ruins as early as the seventh century when Pope Sergius I restored it. According to the *Liber pontificalis, hic basilicam sanctae Aureae in Hostis, quae similitur fuerat distecta vel disrupta, cooperuit suoque studio renovati* (687-701). Repairs under Leo III are also described: *sarta tecta vero ecclesiae beatae Aureae sita in Ostias omnia noviter reparavit* (795-816), and the building seems fairly functional under Leo IV: *missam in ecclesia beatae Aureae decantavit* (847-853). The church as it exists now, as part of the Castello Giuliano, is the work of the fourteenth century architect Baccio Pontelli from Florence.[281] Within the church, a small column to the left of the baptistery bears an inscription with the abbreviated name of the martyr (S AUR) found in the area of the early apse in 1950.[282] This inscription is thought to have belonged to the altar of the fifth century basilica. In 1981, another inscription was found in close proximity to the church. It was a marble fragment of a grave plate with the Latin inscription, CHRYSE HIC DORM(IT), "Chryse rests here." We cannot be sure, however, whether it belonged to Aurea's grave or was later interpreted as such, since both Aurea and Chryse mean "the golden one, and this inscription could have been recut on older marble."[283] Yet, the site was especially dear to the Christians at Ostia because it was the place chosen by Anicius Auchenius Bassus to set up the epitaph to commemorate Augustine's mother.[284]

The Constantinian Basilica

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[280] According to MEIGGS 1973:520-521, "the story of Aurea has been generally rejected as historically valueless, and there are indeed many features that do not ring true" [...] and "though there is a kernel of truth in the narrative, there has almost certainly been a conflation of different stories, apart from embellishment."
[281] PAVOLINI 1988:18.
[282] PAVOLINI 1988:18; BROCCOLI 1986:79-80. For recent excavations in this church area, see PANNUZI 2006:369-377.
[283] BROCCOLI 1986:79-80.
[284] Cf. *infra*. See also BRENK 1998:528.

The discovery of Ostia's Basilica *intra Muros* – the so-called Constantinian Bishop's Basilica – argues for a strong development of Christianity at Ostia by the fourth century.[285] Even though the building had been mentioned in two ancient sources,[286] it was located only in 1996. A geophysical survey conducted by the German Archaeological Institute of Rome – with the use of magnetometry and aerial photography – located it in the southeast part of the town, between the so-called Via del Sabazeo and the city wall, near a secondary gate not far from the Porta Laurentina (Fig. 1). According to later literary sources, the building was dedicated to St Peter and St John the Baptist, but on account of its location near the Porta Laurentina it was also known as S. Lorenzo.[287] The plan of this church (Fig. 15), which surpasses by far all other known churches at Ostia in its dimensions, seems to belong to the church which was dedicated jointly by the emperor Constantine and Flavius Gallicanus (*Liber pontificalis* 1.28.45ff),[288] and which was probably the seat of Ostia's bishop.[289] It has now been proposed that this basilica was Ostia's cathedral in late Antiquity.[290]

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[285] For an overview of Constantinian church architecture, see KRAUTHEIMER 1967 and 1975; ALEXANDER 1971 and 1973.

[286] In the bibliography of Pope Silvester in the *Liber Pontificalis* we read the following entry: *Eodem tempore fecit Constantinus Augustus basilicam in civitate Hostia, iuxta portum urbis Romae, beatorum apostolotum Petri et Pauli et Iohannis Baptistae, ubi et dona obtulit haec.* "Then the emperor Constantine built in the city of Ostia close to Portus Romanus the basilica of the blessed apostles Peter and Paul and of John the Baptist, where he presented the following gifts." The Basilica is also mentioned in the *Acts of Saint Gallicanus* (*Acta S. Gallicani*): *Hic primus in ostiensi urbe extruxit ecclesian et dedicavit official clericorum. Huic se sanctus levita Laurentius revelavit, adhortans eum, ut in eius nomine ecclesian fabricaret in porta, quae nunc usque Laurentia nuncupatur.* This is the very Flavius Galicanus who appears in the *Life of Silvester* as the joint benefactor (he assumed the consular garb in the year 330 and he must then have established himself in Ostia before he moved to Egypt under Julian before he became a martyr. Both texts, however, date to the sixth century.

[287] PAVOLINI 1988:243. BRENK 1998:525-526 proposes the converse explanation that the Porta Laurentina is so-called because it was located near the basilica dedicated to S. Lorenzo. According to him, the *Acta S. Gallicani martyris* refers to the fact that Gallicanus owned four houses at Ostia (this being the reason why he donated four gifts to the church). After dedicating the church to S. Lorenzo he would have then moved to Egypt where he died as a martyr.

[288] BAUER & HEINZELMANN 1999:345.

[289] BAUER & HEINZELMANN 2001:278.

[290] BAUER & HEINZELMANN 2001:278-282; PANNUZI 2006:371.

Pursuant to its discovery, stratigraphic excavations were conducted in 1998 and 1999 to confirm the basic plan. These excavations showed that the last phase of the building contained a three-aisle nave (79 m long) supported by fourteen columns on each side, an apse, and an *atrium* (24.8 m^2).[291] The 1999 excavations revealed a baptistery on the south side of the church, a small rectangular structure – probably built in the fifth century – with a horseshoe-shaped apse on the east side. The basilica, probably containing a stepped cross section, was superimposed on two earlier buildings, one of which is perhaps an *insula* with an interior court. The first phase of the basilical building can be dated to Constantine on account of the ceramic finds in Sector 2 in the right nave.[292] In fact, masonry analysis as well as the two (re-used) sarcophagi and the coins found in the basilica support a date in the reign of Constantine. The building underwent renovation in the sixth century, and possibly included a substantial rebuilding of the apse. From that period on, elaborate rebuilding took place at the eastern end of the structure while other parts were being abandoned and given over to domestic purposes. By the time Gregoriopolis was founded under Pope Gregory IV (827-844) to replace the ancient settlement,[293] the spoliation of the basilica suggests its final abandonment. Martin has also suggested that the area around the basilica was the center of the remaining "town" of Ostia in the eighth century, before the establishment of Gregoriopolis.

The excavations brought to light a batch of extremely dilapidated, almost illegible coins that can be dated from the second half of the fourth to the beginning of the seventh century.[294] Ten of these coins were struck at Rome,

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[291] According to BAUER & HEINZELMANN 2001:280, the church *naos* was 51.4 x 23.3 m long in its last phase. See also BRENK 1998:525-526.

[292] MARTIN & HEINZELMANN 2000a:278.

[293] *Aliam civitatem a fundamentis noviter, quoniam ea quae priori tempore aedificata fuerat, longo quassata senio, tota nunc viaetur esse diruta* (*Liber pontificalis* 2).

[294] The oldest coin is a sesterce of 248 struck by Philip I – found in the apse (Sector 1) among third and fourth century pottery, cf. SPAGNOLI 1999:332, n. 97, 334.

while Alexandria, Arelate, Thessalonica and Constantinople were represented with four coins each. Of course, the broad-based provenance of these coins is consistent with the cosmopolitan nature of Ostia's population. It is interesting, however, that thirty-two of these coins come from a small area in the west side of the south aisle (which the excavators call Sector 3). One of the sarcophagi found *in situ* belonged to the freedman (?) Sextus Avienius Zosimus who belonged to the guild of the *seviri Augustales* and to the guild of the *mensores frumentarii nauticarii* from Ostia,[295] of both of which he had been the President for five years.[296] The *gentilicium* Avienus is also found in two other late second-century epitaphs from Ostia. Their *cognomina* (Heraclida and Onesiphorus) seem to indicate that they were freedmen, and both belonging to the guild of the *lenuncularii*, *tabularii* and *auxiliarii* (cf. *C.I.L.* 14.251, 3.6 and 4.2). Although several inhumations once existed in the *atrium*, they suffered a great deal of spoliation prior to the discovery of the basilica.

The Chapel of St Cyriacus

Except for the Constantinian Basilica, the other Christian buildings at Ostia are poorly built, and lack any signs of wealth. This fact led Meiggs to conclude that "a large section of the upper classes remained pagan for much of the fourth century and that Christianity flourished mainly among the poor."[297] Although the date of an unimposing building places it slightly outside the scope

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[295] The other was a child's fragmentary marble sarcophagus or casket decorated with a male character wearing a Greek cloak (cf. EWALD 1999:337-338).
[296] A *tabula ansata* (sided by two columns with Corinthian capitals) in this strigilated sarcophagus bears the following inscription:

> SEX AVIENIO | ZOSIMO | SEVIRO AVG(ustali) IDEM | Q(uin)Q(uennali), ITEM Q(uin)Q(uennali) CORP(oris) | MENS(orum) NAVT(icariorum) OST(iensium) | AVIENIA ZOSIME | PATRI | DVLCISSIMO.

In this regard, see CECERE 1999:339.
[297] MEIGGS 1973:401.

of this chapter, we should briefly consider a small *martyrium* (Fig. 16) built partially on top of Nymphaeum ii.vii.7. Probably dedicated to a former bishop of Ostia and dating to the sixth – or maybe even the seventh – century, it was excavated near the theater at Ostia.[298] Vaglieri discovered a sarcophagus commemorating a certain Cyriacus among the several sarcophagi that he excavated from this site.[299] It bears a relief with the iconography of Orpheus as the Good Shepherd as well as an arguably Christian inscription that reads *HIC | QVIRIACVS | DORMIT · IN PACE* (*C.I.L. Supp.* 14.5232). Due to the late date and the location *intra muros* of this small building, there is no sense in seeing this sarcophagus as belonging to the martyr, but it offers some confirmation for the tradition of the martyrdom of Cyriacus, which may go all the way back to the third century. Its location in front of the theater corroborates the *Acta sanctorum*, which describes that very spot as a site where martyrs died.[300]

Although Paroli has established that the site was used for burials in late antiquity,[301] it is very difficult to ascertain whether these belonged to Christians. The chapel was visited for many centuries, and as late as 1162 votaries from Gregoriopolis went to the *ecclesia Sancti Ciriaci extra villam*, following the old via Ostiensis and Decumanus Maximus. But by then the tombs and buildings along the road were half-buried ruins. Perhaps the bones of Cyriacus were transferred to Rome by that time, and the chapel was finally forgotten and abandoned.

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[298] So dated by CALZA 1949-1951:124-125 on the basis of the higher level it occupies in relation to the surrounding buildings (1.5 m above the level of the Roman road). See also CALZA et al. 1953:162-163 and BRENK 1998:526-527.

[299] VAGLIERI 1910:134-139.

[300] The account is complex and confused: a bishop of Ostia, Cyriacus (Quiriacus), was executed in Ostia because of his religious conviction during the reign of Claudius II Gothicus, in 269 A.D. Cyriacus was executed in prison, but seventeen soldiers he converted were killed *ad arcum ante theatrum* ("near the arch in front of the Theatre"), clearly the Arch of Caracalla. The sarcophagus of Cyriacus was then transferred to the spot of the executions.

The Basilicas and the *Xenodocheion* at Portus

      Finally, before addressing the case of private buildings generally associated with Christianity at Ostia, we must briefly acknowledge the importance of a few Christian buildings at Portus.[302] Two basilicas deserve special mention on account of the antiquity of the tradition that associates them with the martyrs from Portus. The Basilica of Sant'Ippolito was built at Isola Sacra in the early fourth century, and dedicated to this martyr in the late fourth or early fifth century. It was a large basilica with three naves and a northern apse (Fig. 17).[303] In its last phase it boasted with a porticoed façade, a *schola cantorum* (the place reserved for the singers) in the main nave, a *presbyterium*, an Episcopal cathedra, and a baptistery. The basilica had been originally built with only one nave whose apse is still coaxially extant in an intermediary level between the Roman level and that of the later basilica. The profound depth of the depositions that were found in the baptistery and in the apse, excludes the possibility that they occurred after the basilica had been built.[304] It is more appropriate to suppose that the basilica was built after the area had already acquired a cemeterial character. A sarcophagus allegedly belonging to this S. Hippolytus was recovered from the *presbyterium* and attests to the early tradition according to which the basilica was the final resting place of his body.[305] The basilica was reconstructed under Pope Damasus (366-384) at a period roughly contemporaneous with the reconstruction of the

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[301] PAROLI 1993:168-169.

[302] For the recent archaeological work at Portus, see KEAY et al. 2005.

[303] The fact that the basilica was built at Isola Sacra suggests association with a tomb, which is circumstantially described in the story of St. Aurea (*Acta sanctorum*, Aug. iv. 506).

[304] ERMINI 1971:246.

[305] ERMINI 1971:244. In the story of St. Aurea (*Acta sanctorum*, Aug. iv. 506) and in Jerome's Martyrology Hippolytus of Portus is also called Nonnus or Nonosus. According to MEIGGS 1973:526-528, "the problem of Hippolytus is highly controversial. Various traditions have assigned him to Rome, Portus, Antioch, Arabia. The last two identifications arise from confusions that can be easily understood; the Roman and Portus traditions require more careful disentanglement. [...] the church of St. Hippolitus commemorates a martyr of Portus. The date of his death is unknown; the possibility that he was a bishop of Portus cannot be ruled out, but we need stronger evidence than the story of Aurea to confirm the title."

Isaeum of Portus, located in the vicinities of the basilica, under the *euergetism* of Sempronius Faustus. This suggests that until the late fourth century the two religions were competing for space, but in the Middle Ages this church had already become the main center of worship at Portus.

The burial grounds associated with this basilica are a rich source for Christian inscriptions. These inscriptions, which were mostly discovered between 1971 and 1979, consist typically of epitaphs, dedicatory and votive *stelai* written in Latin.[306] One of them refers to Eraclidas, a local bishop who resided at Portus under Pope Damasus (366-384), and under whose euergetism the basilica may have been built.[307]

The other Christian building at Portus mentioned by our sources is the Basilica of SS. Eutropius, Zosima and Bonosa. It lay in the necropolis known as "area funeraria di Capo Due Rami," also called the necropolis of Generosa,[308] and was once associated with *the titulus sancti Acontii,* generically mentioned by a tenth century document as being located *ad ripam*.[309] Jerome's Martyrology includes Eutropius, Zosima and Bonosa (Venosa) among the martyrs celebrated on July 15th *in porto Romano, hoc est in hiscla*. Although his account centers around the implausible story of Bonosa's death and makes no mention of Eutropius and Zosima, a long and elegant fourth century inscription (*C.I.L.* 14.1938) attests to the legend of a certain Zosima at Portus, martyred in A.D. 275,[310] and another inscription (*C.I.L.* 14.1937) – dated by Kauffmann to the late fourth century[311] – refers to the dedication of the Basilica to her and her fellow

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[306] MAZZOLENI 1983.
[307] ERMINI 1971:243-249; TESTINI 1979:35-46; TESTINI 1986:291-303; MAZZOLENI 2001:285-286.
[308] Cf. *infra*.
[309] ERMINI 1971:246.
[310] The style and tone of Inscription *C.I.L.* 14.1938 (THYLANDER 1952b, Inscription B 235) may reflect the activity of Pope Damasus (366-384) while the martyrdom is placed by the best manuscripts under Septimius Severus, cf. MEIGGS 1973:529, n. 4.
[311] THYLANDER 1952b:343.

martyrs by the inhabitants of the city. This inscription explicitly states that bishop Donatus (probably fourth century) had built the foundations of that basilica on behalf of the people who attended the meetings held by the tomb of the three local martyrs.[312] Tradition places their martyrdom in A.D. 275, but many of these martyrdoms are legendary, especially those claiming to be before Diocletian.[313] A strigilated sarcophagus recovered from the basilica shows that the area had an early association with Christian burials. The sarcophagus contains a *clypeus* bearing a short inscription:

> *IANV | RI IN PA | CE DOMI*
>
> Ianuarius in the peace of the Lord (*C.I.L.* 14.1962).

Another early inscription (*C.I.L.* 14.1949) retrieved from the basilica bears the formula *vivas in Christo*.

A third Christian building from Portus is more famous than the two basilicas. At the time of Theodosius (346-95),[314] the Roman senator Pammachius, a friend of Jerome and Augustine, had the generous idea of building a shelter (*xenodocheion*) at Portus for underprivileged travelers. It sheltered the poor coming from Rome while they waited for favorable winds in order to proceed with their journey, and also those who were coming to the Metropolis in search of a better life. Already in the third century Cyprian (*Epistula* 20.4) writes of the

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[312] *C.I.L.* 14.1937 (THYLANDER 1952b, Inscription B 234):

> *SANCTIS· MARTYRIBVS ET BEATIssimis | EVTROPIO· BONOSAE ET ZOSIMae | DONATVS EPISC(opus)· TVMVLVM ADOrnavit | SED ET BASILICAM· CONIvnCTAM tumulo | A FVNDAMENTIS· SANCTAE pleBI Dei construxit.*

[313] MUSURILLO 1999 [1954].
[314] It was only under Theodosius that Christianity was proclaimed the official religion of the Empire.

many Christians who came from Africa and found shelter in Portus.[315] According to Jerome (*Epistula* 77.10), the shelter attained worldwide fame. M. de Rossi, one of the founders of modern Christian archaeology, identified it among the ruins at Portus.[316] The rooms were built round an open court surrounded by a colonnade. A three-nave basilica was attached to it. The finely worked glass bowls and plates decorated with Christian scenes found in the building suggest wealthy patronage. This large resthouse provides us with evidence that Portus was probably won for Christianity more quickly and completely than Ostia. Meiggs points out, however, that "the evidence of the growth of Christianity by the harbours before Constantine is scarcely more satisfactory than for Ostia."[317]

The principal element that we can draw from the architectural context of the basilicas at Ostia and Portus yields two main patterns: first, that they were largely built in connection with the cult of the Christian martyrs from the two cities;[318] second, they are closely associated with existing cemeteries, where Christian burial continued. Early Christian tradition records a long list of martyrdoms at the harbors in the periods of persecution, in contrast with a comparatively lean archaeological record from Ostia. The reaction of Christians to persecution led – at least after Decius and Diocletian – to the development of a cult of the martyrs and a theology of martyrdom.[319] In fact, according to Rusch, "martyrdom was a second baptism… through which one who was not yet

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[315] For more details on the *xenodocheion* at Portus, see above apropos of the literary evidence for Ostia and Portus.

[316] DE ROSSI 1868:37.

[317] MEIGGS 1973:394.

[318] The Constantinian Bishop's Basilica seems to be the lone exception.

[319] Traditionally, Christian historians have listed ten primitive persecutions: under Nero (67), Domitian (81), Trajan and Hadrian, Marcus Aurelius (162), Severus, Maximinus (235), Decius (249), Valerian (257), Aurelian (274), and Diocletian (303). Modern scholars tend to reject the extent which Christians claim for these persecutions. According to SNYDER 1985:168, "the Christian conflict with the State has been overemphasized by later generations. There were persecutions, but the picture of early Christians cowering in the Colosseum or hiding in the catacombs better represents later martyrologies than it does any known archaeological data."

'perfected in Jesus Christ' could at last become a true disciple."[320] It is an odd thing therefore that, as far as I know, no such martyr has been named in association with the basilical complex of Pianabella, although – as we shall see – evidence suggests that this basilica was built especially because of a tomb that its builders wished to honor.

The Basilica of Pianabella

The Basilica Cimiteriale di Pianabella was casually discovered in 1976. As it had happened with the Basilica Cristiana sul Decumano, this building was thought – for long – to be the Constantinian Basilica at Ostia, which was discovered approximately twenty years later.[321] But the excavations undertaken in 1988-1989 showed that Pianabella was only a cemeterial basilica.[322] In fact, two of Ostia's cemeterial basilicas – Pianabella and S. Aurea – are located on the main access roads to the city, and probably belong to the fifth century. Since the Basilica of Pianabella is, of course, our primary concern, we shall reserve full discussion for later chapters.[323]

Supposedly Christian Private Buildings

Returning now to Ostia and the buildings of a more private nature, we find that they give us very little information regarding the people who utilized Christian worship places at Ostia and who certainly owned homes in the city. The reason is that none of these houses with the now likely exception of the "basilica" on the Decumanus, is clearly Christian. The difficulty in identifying such *domus* as belonging to Christians can be due either to the prevailing idea that Christianity

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[320] RUSCH 1982:5. Cf. also Tertullian, *On Baptism* 16.
[321] So, for instance, a decade after the discovery Pavolini still declared: "la basilica recentemente scoperta è in effetti non lontana dalla porta, e ciò (unitamente ai dati cronologici) potrebbe portare a identificarla con la fondazione costantiniana" (PAVOLINI 1988:243-244).
[322] PAROLI 1999:25.

arrived late at Ostia or to Christian disregard for ostensible Christian decoration.[324] Three private buildings have been generally cited as having some form of connection with the history of early Christianity at Ostia: an *aula* that probably functioned as a collegiate hall outside the Porta Marina, an elegant *domus* in Region Four (the so-called Domus dei Pesci), and the so-called Aula del Buon Pastore (Fig. 6). They do not present, however, indisputable verification for Christianity; they simply exemplify the kind of problems that one faces when trying to assess the evidence for Christianity.

The *Edificio con Opus Sectile* outside the Porta Marina (iii.vii.8) included an L-shaped portico and sumptuous rooms.[325] Although the building entrance, the entrance columns and the rest of the *piazzale* were built on the high level that corresponds to the late systematization of the Decumanus Maximus, the building itself and its *aula* lie 1.5 meters below that level. The archaeological evidence collected by Becatti attests to a dating in the late fourth century.[326] Only one room was decorated with *opus sectile*: a rectangular exedra that contained a portrait-like mosaic of a man (30 x 40 cm) on its sidewall (Fig. 18).[327] Becatti suggests that the building was Christian based on reading this portrait as the figure of Jesus, but the decorative syntax of the exedra is quite baffling and the identification of the man

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[323] See Chapter Three of this Dissertation.

[324] BRENK 1998:524 says, in this respect, that very seldom in antiquity did home owners make perceived efforts to advertise their religious beliefs by means of iconography or epigraphy.

[325] The fact that the doors to three of its rooms incorporated columns that prevented such doors from being shut, suggests that we are not dealing with a commercial establishment, whereas the absence of *cubicula* suggests that the building was not a suburban villa either (BRENK 2001:267 *contra* BECATTI 1967 and FRAZER 1971, respectively).

[326] Coins recovered from the building permit us to date its initial construction to the last quarter of the fourth century. A bronze coin from 385-8 CE found in one of the panels is a *terminus post quem* for the construction. The exceptional opulence of one of the rooms of the building makes it hard to imagine the edifice as being a private residence. Although such splendor is commonly presented as one of the main indications that the building was not constructed after the end of the fourth century, when Ostia had supposedly plunged into decline, this notion of a fifth century decline for the city of Ostia has now been argued against (cf. *supra*).

[327] For a detailed analysis of the aula and its decorative syntax, see: BECATTI 1967:78-81. On the restoration of the portrait by Bracale, see ROMANELLI 1962:317-319.

depicted on the sidewall mosaic as Christ is not without its problems.[328] A section of the *opus sectile* decoration imitates an *opus mixtum* wall with sealed windows. Another section depicts struggles between enormous lions and undersized horses. The bust on the sidewall of the exedra – framed by a rectangular field in porphyry – portrays a bearded man dressing a tunic and as if about to speak. The workmanship of the picture is rather inferior to that of the other depictions in the room. No other purported representations of Christ in the fourth or fifth centuries depict him either on a sidewall or in association with worldly motifs.[329] The argument that the portrait is Christ is supported by the *benedictio latina* gesture of his right hand, in which both the index finger and the middle finger take a vertical position.[330] Hence, Becatti assertively identifies him as Jesus: "l'immagine raffigura indubbiamente Cristo e viene ad occupare il punto centrale del fregio…"[331] A comparison of the Ostian Christ with the late-fourth-century

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[328] No authentic portrait of Christ has been preserved from antiquity. Very likely there never was one. The traditions of the painting of portraits of Jesus by St. Luke are of late origin and deserve no credit. In the sixth century, Evagrius (c. 536-600), a poor theologian and a credulous gatherer of legends, mentions a portrait of Jesus supposedly sent to Abgar, prince of Edessa, but this tradition is no trustworthier than those associated with St. Luke's portraits. Finally, Eusebius (c. 260-340) describes a statue of Jesus set up at Caesarea Philippi (*Historia ecclesiastica* 7.2, 18), and Lentulus (a reputed contemporary of Pontius Pilate) describes Christ's appearance in a letter to the Roman Senate. For recent assessments of the state of the art concerning early portraits of Jesus, see MANZI 2002 and JENSEN 2005.

[329] BRENK 2001:268. The presence, however, of what may be a gem-decorated cross in a central position on the frieze of the main wall, if true would fit the placement of the image of Christ on a sidewall (BECATTI 1967:169). On the other hand, the fragmentary nature of this cross has given room for challenges to its identification as such (BRENK 2001:268). There are also fishes, doves, octopuses and rams (all potential Christian symbols) among the elements randomly found in the exedra of this same building (BECATTI 1967:165 and Tav. LXXIII.4-5). For the evidence that such animals were common symbols for Christianity, see CHARBONNEAU-LASSAY 1991 [1940]. Pages 963-968 deal especially with the octopus as a resurrection symbol.

[330] This gesture is one of the aspects of the *maiestas Domini*, and is usually displayed when the Christ is depicted as a *didaskalos* or a *rhetor*. BECATTI 1967:140-141 presents a detailed description of the significance of the gesture. The traditional *benedictio graeca* differs from the Latin one insofar as the middle finger touches the annular.

[331] BECATTI 1967:80. The Christ fits well Stryzgowski's criteria for the identification of a Hellenistic or oriental bust of Christ: he is bearded, long-haired, naturalistic, and portrait-like (STRYZGOWSKI 1903). Art began to depict Jesus according to the Hellenistic ideal because of a lack of descriptions of Jesus in Christian literature. He was first shown with a youthful, beardless

bearded Christ in the tomb of St Marcellino and St Peter makes the identification almost irrefutable.[332] One should not, however, underestimate the complexity of the meaning of gestures in the Roman world.[333] Besides, even if the *opus sectile* decoration is Christian, it does not mean that the building was used for religious purposes. The large number of coins and inscriptions referring to the marble business found in the aula suggest that the building had a commercial nature. More recent discussions of this building are somewhat skeptical of its supposed Christian association. Recent scholarship points to the following elements as incompatible with a Christ portrait: the man's gesture suggesting unfulfilled address, the white *nimbus* set against a dark background, the slight inclination of head and body, the asymmetry of his look, his suntanned aspect, and the non-axial position of the portrait in relation to the other decoration present in the room.[334]

Apolline expression and curly hair, the bearded Christ being introduced in or after Constantinian times (WILPERT 1903:109ff, 253ff). It was once thought that no bearded image of Christ was earlier than the fifth century (SCHULTZE 1934:141); but Wilpert's study of the Roman catacombs in general and Ferrua's study on the Via Latina catacomb proved that idea wrong (FERRUA 1960). This catacomb (discovered in 1955) under property lying on the Via Latina in Rome is famous for the unique mix of Christian (Old and New Testament) and pagan subjects in its paintings.

[332] MARUCCHI 1933:332, fig. 114. See also BECATTI 1967, tav. xlix,3. L'immagine di Cristo posta al centro della parete laterale (Tav. LXXXVIII), ma non isolata come un'immagine di culto, bensì inserita in un fregio architettonico e decorativo della parete, sembra avere in quest'aula un valore di filatterio, di simbolo della nuova fede, di protezione, come lo erano state le immagini dei Lari nelle nicchie delle pareti della casa, le figure di divinità scolpite ad Ostia sui tegoloni di terracotta poste nei cortili e nelle facciate (BECATTI 1967:164). Becatti presents the *aula* as evidence for Christianity at Ostia as a late fourth century superimposition of Christianity over Roman religion – whether foreign or traditional. The Christ should then be seen as a kind of *Patronus Collegi*. The fact that pagan decoration is found in the same room is due to what he calls a "nuova mentalità cristiana," which had already been assimilated into the decorative Christian art (BECATTI 1967:165). Christianity was, according to his view, incorporating pagan decorative tradition, and Orpheus and Bellerophon were soon to become symbols of Christ (BECATTI 1967; BORDENACHE 1970:202).

[333] In this regard, see CORBEILL 2004; BRILLIANT 1963.

[334] BRENK 1998:530. Zanker, *contra* Becatti, thinks that this was a pagan building which was destroyed by Christians (ZANKER 1995:296ff). There is, in fact, evidence that the aula suffered violent destruction, and it is generally assumed that this was not due to an earthquake or a fire (BORDENACHE 1970:201-202). For BECATTI 1967, the building was destroyed by the pagans during a short revival of paganism at Ostia (maybe under Numerius Proiectus, a pagan *praefectus annonae* in 393). ZANKER 1995:296ff understands the portrait as a reference to a philosopher

Another supposedly private Christian building is the so-called Domus dei Pesci (iv.iii.3), an elegant house located in a block between the *Cardo Maximus* and the Forum, having the via della Caupona del Pavoni as its southern boundary (Fig. 6). Built on top of a third century residence,[335] it is a late-antique luxury habitation (Fig. 19) in which there were two mosaics with fish motifs (Fig. 20),[336] often claimed to be the first evidence that Christianity had penetrated the upper class at Ostia by the fourth or fifth century.[337] Of course, that depends whether we take these fish to be instantiations of Christian symbols or merely as a detached form of decoration that could have been chosen by anyone, even by a pagan owner.[338] The mosaic in the vestibule is a green, quadrangular mosaic depicting a fish inside a white *krater* (Fig. 20). Two other fish in red porphyry appear on the lower sides of the mosaic, framing the *krater* on the green background (Fig.

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(*Freizeit Intellektueller*), and sees the *clipeus* of a young man dressed in the *pallium*, which appears below and to the left of the portrait (but separated from it by several other decorative pieces), as a representation of a charismatic philosopher or *theios anēr* (see also BRENK 1998:530-531). Bisconti argues, however, that "l'eventualità di un filosofo nimbato" is "improponibile," and adduces similarities between the portrait and the representation of Christ in the so-called "cubiculo di Leone" in the catacomb of Commodilla (BISCONTI 1998:534).

[335] HERES 1982:85 dates the original building to 230-240.

[336] PAVOLINI 1996:258. For the transformations suffered by this house in late antiquity, see MUNTASSER 2003:128-138.

[337] PAVOLINI 1996:266. See also CALZA & NASH 1959:38.

[338] For detailed discussion of fish associated with the Christian iconography, see: DÖLGER 1928. See also: ENGELMANN 1968. The only fact that seems to corroborate the conjecture that this decoration had a Christian setting is that these mosaics seem to have been placed at strategic places in the house: one in the vestibule and another in the main dining room. It is often claimed that the mosaic was advantageously placed at the vestibule of the house in order to make a statement to whoever was coming in, that the house owner was a Christian. This of course does not warrant a Christian interpretation for this iconography. In fact, an odd thing about the mosaic in the vestibule is that it is upside-down in relation to the perspective of the person coming into the house. Calza dismisses this objection on the basis of ornamental coherence; if I understand him right he means that it would make no sense to have a decorative motif that could not be appreciated from within the house (CALZA 1949-1951:129). Several Italian archaeologists, however, see the mosaic as a Christian symbol set at a *domus* belonging to a Christian (CASTAGNOLI *et al*. 1972-1973:152).

20).[339] The other mosaic is a black and white depiction of two fish separated by a trident.[340] This image is markedly less appealing as evidence for Christianity and would certainly have not been mentioned in the literature were it not to be taken together with the krater-fish motif of the previous mosaic.[341] In addition to the two mosaics, a fish in relief on marble – now lost – was attached to a semicircular basin in the court.[342] It must be said, however, that the configuration of this house – with multiple dining rooms and even a heated dining room – does not suggest anything Christian. These are, in fact, common features of several late antique houses.[343]

A third building presents an even more controversial testimony (Figs. 6 and 21). The Aula del Buon Pastore (i.ii.4), located to the north-west of Ostia's Basilica (i.ii.3), limits its evidence to a column (h. 0.68 m) with a relief of the Good Shepherd (Fig. 22), holding a lamb on his shoulder, with two sheep at his feet.[344] Hermes, who was represented in pagan works of art as the protector of the

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[339] Calza sees the shape of the *krater* as comparable to ostensibly Christian chalices from Rome, and reminds us that Constantine himself is reported to have donated ten such silver chalices to his Basilica at Ostia (CALZA 1949-1951:127-128).

[340] Again we find the fish motif at a seemingly strategic place: the room in which it occurs – Room N in Becatti's description – is the most ostentatious in the house. It is a dining room with a spacious entry framed by two columns, and with remains of marble wall skirting as well as a splendid pavement in black and white mosaic, which includes forty-eight panels with several motifs, among which we find the fish-trident representation.

[341] Ostia was a harbor city and it is not surprising that sea creatures were often depicted in Ostian mosaics. In fact, a 1950 find from the Pianabella necropolis consists of a poorly-preserved mosaic showing two fish in chiastic distribution appearing together with an Oedipus and Sphinx theme, and belonging to a rectangular tomb (7.3 x 5.9 m) in *opus latericium* along the present railroad Roma-Lido di Ostia (CARBONARA, PANARITI & ZACCAGNINI 2000:234-235).

[342] BECATTI 1949:51 identifies it as a baptismal pool.

[343] Despite that, Meiggs contends that those who oppose a reference here to a Christian symbol (such as H. Schaal, e.g.) have not fully met Becatti's argument in favor of it (MEIGGS 1973:400n). He also suggests – although a little timidly – that the building was the house belonging to Hilarinus which Gallicanus renovated into a *xenodocheion*.

[344] The proposed date for this hall – on the basis of masonry analysis – is the mid fourth century (HERES 1982:116). Created by means of the addition of a wall in *opus vittatum* containing a large niche, there are remains on the floor of a white mosaic and reused marble as well as remains of plaster on the walls. A marble plaque (0.19 x 0.25 m.) was found in the aula in 1951. Dating to the

herds, the conductor of souls, and the reviver of the dead, would be readily acknowledged by the early Christians as a type of Christ, but there is no clear-cut indication that this sculpture was anything other than a depiction of Hermes Kriophoros. The shepherd's outfit (a short tunic or *exomis*) and attire (such as the shepherd's purse) do not necessarily suggest a Christian context,[345] and even if the representation is Christian it is possible that it was not found in its original setting.[346]

The Epigraphic Evidence

Scholars have tried hard to evaluate the Ostian inscriptions and to find data from which to theorize about the social context of early Christianity at Ostia, but they have not yet succeeded since the outcome of such efforts is heavily dependent on speculation and conjecture. A few cases exemplify the highly hypothetical nature of some of their conclusions. Meiggs, for instance, mentions the late-fourth-century lead pipe stamped with the word *aeclesiae*, and the fourth-century inscription on one of the columns at the west end of the Macellum (i.viii.1), which reads: *lege et intellige mutu loqui* (or *mutuloqui*) *ad macellu*. In

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reign of Gordianus III (A.D. 238-244), it was dedicated by the *lenuncularii traiectus Luculli*, a small ferry-service, as its text reveals:

IMP CAES M ANTO	"To the Emperor Caesar Marcus
NIO GORDIANO	Antonio Gordianus,
PIO FELICI AVG	Pious and Fortunate, Augustus
CORP TR LVCVL	by the guild at Lucullus' Crossing."

The finding of this inscription has led to the assumption that the supposed Christian members of this guild may have used the aula as a meeting hall (BAKKER 1994:177, n. 22; see also PARIBENI 1916:399-428).

[345] The long-standing idea that nudity was a characteristic feature of pagan Kriophori whereas a full drapery was to be found in the statues of the Christian Shepherd (BENNETT 1898:140-141) is no longer held. For a recent, brief study of the late Antique representations of the Christ, see MANZI 2002. See also MANZI 1991:113-134.

[346] MEIGGS 1973:396. Likewise, a fine Christian bowl was found in the House of the Porch (v.2.4-5), on the east side of the Semita dei Cippi, dating from the late fourth or early fifth century, which is described in MEIGGS 1973:400.

the first case, however, the lettering is poor, and no one knows where the artifact was found; and, in the second case, we cannot be sure whether its best translation would render it as to mean that there was much gossip in the market, or whether – less likely – it would refer to the recovery of speech by a dumb man in the market (a possible reference to a Christian miracle).[347] The bulk of Ostia's Christian inscriptions do not come from the city's urban context. In fact, only the inscriptions recovered from the so-called Basilica sul Decumano and from the so-called Oratorio delle Terme del Mitra were retrieved from architectural settings within the city.

According to Mazzoleni, Ostia is the only city in the environs of Rome – besides Portus – where epigraphic evidence for Christianity can be productively studied, and which offers us a good source for third- and fourth-century Christian inscriptions.[348] Approximately 34 percent of the *cognomina* found in these Christian inscriptions come from a linguistic context other than Latin (that is, 35 out of 104 *cognomina*).[349] These inscriptions tend to be cut conservatively, three of which include the *tria nomina* (*C.I.L.* 14.1901, 1919, 1923). Since the inscriptions associated with the architectural evidence were discussed in the previous section, we should now assess the epigraphic evidence from Ostia's funerary context. The inscriptions from Pianabella will not be included in this section, but will be discussed in Chapter Four.

Funerary inscriptions are our best candidates for informative Christian epigraphy from Ostia. But, when arguably Christian, few of them are datable; conversely, when they are incontrovertibly dated, they lack the elements that prove them to be Christian. Inscription *C.I.L.* 14.1900, for instance, contains the

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[347] The expression *lege et intellige* has been often associated to similar expressions in the Latin Bible: Matt. 24:15, Acts 8:30, and so on. In this regard, see MEIGGS 1973:394.
[348] MAZZOLENI 2001:283.

expression *si deus permiserit*, on account of which it is often considered to be Christian. If the M. Curtius Victorinus mentioned there is to be identified as the *lenuncularius* (an operator of tug-boats) of the same name who is listed in this guild roll of A.D. 192 (*C.I.L.* 14.251),[350] then he may be the earliest Christian that we know from Ostia.[351] That does not seem likely, however. This guild roll presents him as a *quinquennalis*; if the two inscriptions referred to the same person, then the funerary inscription should by all means have made mention of his *cursus honorum*. On the other hand, the Christian Curtius might be a later freedman of the same family. Another inscription from Ostia in the *C.I.L.* to have been indisputably dated is inscription 14.1880. It dates to 384, and reads,

> *innocENS ♥ | hic dorMIT QVI ♥ | vixit .... D XX· III ♥ DEPO |*
> *situs ... ricomERE ET CLIARCO.*

Unfortunately, this inscription is considered Christian merely on the basis of the occurrence of the phrase *hic dormit*. Although this phrase occurs very often in a Christian context, we cannot be entirely sure that every time it comes about we are dealing with a Christian inscription.[352] It is also possible to date another

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[349] LICORDARI 1977:240. Unfortunately, Licordari does not give us the actual number of Christian inscriptions that he included in his corpus. All he says is that his larger corpus included seven thousand Latin and Greek inscriptions.

[350] The inscription *C.I.L.* 14.1900 reads, *M. Curtius Victorinus et Plotia Marcella viventes fecerunt si deus permiserit sibi*.

[351] MEIGGS 1973:389.

[352] This expression occurs together with the formula *D.M.*, for instance, in *C.I.L.* 14.1908. We have to conclude either that the phrase *hic dormit* is not exclusively Christian or that the formula *D.M.* is not exclusively pagan, probably both. On this regard, see MARINUCCI 1991. According to him, the occurrence of the *D.M.* formula in a Christian context is not unheard of, as it is demonstrated by his inscription nº. 18, found at the synagogue. According to him (p. 96), "la dedica ai Mani compare anche in titoli cristiani soprattuto dal IV secolo. Retaggio di una tradizione plurisecolare, esse costituisce il segno distintivo di una iscrizione funeraria, sancendo lo stato di *res religiosa* – e quindi inviolabile – del sepolcro." Inscription 18 was reused on the pavement of the synagogue, and reads, *D(is) M(anibus) | MANDRASLO | FILIO DVLCIS(simo) | Q(ui) V(ixit) ANN(os) VIIII | M(enses) III, D(ies) XX, H(oras) VIII | AGAPE MATER | POSVIT | HIC DORMIt*. On this regard, see also CARLETTI 1986:148ff.

inscription (*C.I.L.* 14.1878) on account of its reference to a mint, which operated at Ostia from 309 to 313:

> *FELICA | IN PACE · | IN FIDE DEI | QVI VIXIX* [sic] *ANIIS | XXXIIII | PREPO | SITVS | MEDIAS | TINORUM ♥ DE MONETA ♥ OFICINA | PRIMA.*[353]

Although we are not certain that the phrase *in pace* was exclusively Christian, this inscription may attest to the existence of Christians at Ostia in the first years of the fourth century since the phrase "who lived thirty-four years in the faith of God" may give added support to the possibility that it is in fact Christian. A fourth inscription (*C.I.L. Suppl.* 14.5238) is explicitly dated to 376, but we are not entirely certain whether in fact it commemorates a Christian. It reads,

> *D//D · INNOCENTISSIMO PVERO | vixit aNN · XVIIII · M · VIII · D · XVI · DEP · PRID · NON · OCT | dd nn valenTE V ET VALENTINIANO · AAVVGG CONSS | infeliCISSIMVS PATER.*

Our only basis for ascribing it to a Christian context is the treatment of the deceased as an *innocentissimus puer*. Differently from what happens in *C.I.L.* 14.1880, the word *innocentissimus* does not appear, here, in the context of one of the Christian formulae associated with the sleep of death. Besides, the word is obviously not the name of the person being commemorated, but a soubriquet contrasting with the characterization of his father as *infelicissimus*.[354] Consequently, a definite Christian identity remains impossible. Finally, a fifth inscription – purportedly Christian – is dated to 391 on account of its reference to

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[353] The first line of the inscription actually read PELICA, which was corrected to FELICA. Minting activities at Ostia were indicated chronologically by references such as *m(oneta) (O)stiensis prima*, *secunda*, *tertia*, *quarta*, etc.

[354] For evidence concerning the Christian preference for the name Innocentius, see KAJANTO 1963:113-115.

the consulate of Tatianus and Symmachus.[355] So, our problem handling such inscriptions is that when we are certain of their date, we are unsure whether they commemorate Christians, and when we are relatively certain that they are Christian, we have no dates.[356]

Most of the likely Christian inscriptions from Ostia come from the necropolis associated with the S. Ercolano Basilica (Figs. 1 and 13). *C.I.L.* 14 and its supplement list about one hundred purportedly Christian inscriptions from Ostia and Portus,[357] most of them having been identified as Christian by their reference to the "sleep of death" using expressions such as *hic dormit*, *dormiunt (in pace)*, or, less often, by the expresssion *dormitione* (for *dormitioni*) followed by the genitive of the defunct's name (as in *C.I.L.* 14.1926), by phrases referring to the will of God (such as *cum Deus voluerit* and equivalent),[358] by formulae

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[355] Marinucci's inscription nᵒ. 26 (not included in the *C.I.L.* 14 or in its supplement) reads, *iN PACE QUI VIXSit [...] | [...]IDUS MAIAS TATIANO Et symmacho co(n)s(ulibus)*.

[356] Although dating the Christian inscriptions from Ostia has been a problem, the Christian inscriptions from Portus are easy to date because of their frequent allusion to the consuls in office. This is the case, for instance, of *C.I.L.* 14.231, 14.1945, 14.1947, 14.1948, 14.4166, etc. On the other hand, the inscriptions from Portus often undergo the same kind of controversy when one attempts to verify their Christian character. This is the case, for instance, of inscription *C.I.L.* 14.1828, which de Rossi deems as Christian (on the basis of its findspot near the Basilica of SS. Eutropius, Bonosa and Zosima, and the word *frugalitate*) and Thylander dismisses as pagan (on the basis of a possible reference to the *aerarium populi Romani*). Cf. THYLANDER 1952b:356-357.

[357] Inscriptions nᵒ. 1875-1975 and 5232-5241, respectively. The Supplement to *C.I.L.* 14 also lists inscriptions 4810, 4829, 5204 and 5312 as possibly Christian.

[358] Expressions such as *cum Deus permiserit* (*C.I.L.* 14. 1885), *si Deus permiserit* (1900), *cum Deus voluerit* (1915) and *quando Deus boluerit* (1893) although very common on Ostian epitaphs are not generally found at Rome's sepulchral *tituli*. Besides, according to MEIGGS 1973:394, "it may be significant that the Christian formula 'hic dormit in pace,' characteristic of Ostia but not found in this period at Rome, is shared by Portus, though each centre also has individual expressions which are not found in the other. Such phrases as 'cum deus voluerit,' 'cum deus permiserit,' are not found at Portus; 'in deo (*or* in domino) vivas,' common at Portus, is not found at Ostia. Examples of the *dormit in pace* formula at Rome are *I.C.V.R.* 1.3101; 3.9193; 7.20145, etc. Examples of the *in deo (or in domino) vivas* formula at Portus are *C.I.L.* 14.1949, 1950, 1966 and 1967. According to OGLE 1933:109-110, "it is to the third century that there belong the earliest examples of *dormit*, *hic dormit*… These formulae are especially common from the fourth century on at Ostia and neighboring disctricts, including Rome, but examples from other parts of the Roman world are later and rare."

alluding to the manner of burial (such as the word *depositus*, for instance),[359] by the reference to death as a journey to God,[360] by the Christian monogram,[361] by allusions to the New Testament,[362] and by other special characteristics.[363] Most such inscriptions date to the fourth or fifth centuries. Allegedly Christian inscriptions from Ostia and Portus, which have not been included in the *C.I.L.* or its supplement, can be found in Marinucci and Thylander, respectively.[364]

Christian inscriptions found at Ostia are rather few when compared to the thousands of pagan inscriptions recovered from the city. Scholars tend inadvertently to suppose that any of the criteria given above is, in fact, sufficient to identify an inscription as Christian, and then venture some conjecture about the

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[359] According to TOYNBEE & WARD-PERKINS 1957:57, the word *depositus* is "a formula of which there does not seem to be any record from a pagan epitaph." According to KIRSCHBAUM 1959:32-33, the unabbreviated form of the word points to the close of the third century while its abbreviated form indicates the fourth century. However, there is no incontrovertible evidence that the expression is exclusively Christian.

[360] *C.I.L.* 14.1889 is – as far as we know – the only Ostian inscription to bear the expression *migravit ad Dominum* as euphemism for death.

[361] The Christian monogram appears on inscription *C.I.L.* 14.1935 between the Greek letters A and Ω. The same thing happens also with inscriptions from Portus. This is the case of inscriptions *C.I.L.* 14.1945, 1946, 1974 and 1975. *C.I.L.* 14.1945 is dated to 366 because of its reference to the consuls then in office: Gratianus and Dacalaifus. *C.I.L.* 14.1946 is dated to 408 because of its reference to Flavius Anicius Auchenius Bassus and Flavius Felippus (*or* Philippus), the consuls of that year. C.I.L. 14.1974 bears a crosslike monogram, again between the two usual Greek letters. Another inscription (*C.I.L.* 14.1963) from Portus contains an isolated X that very likely refers to the name of Christ due to its use in conjunction with the expression *in pace*. An inscription (*C.I.L.* 14.5241, *Suppl.*) found in the theater at Ostia displays monograms at the end of its lines. Crosses appear on two inscriptions from Portus. *C.I.L.* 14.1953 is a metric inscription found in the Insula Tiberina at Rome in the seventeenth century, but probably belonging to the context of the S. Ippolito Basilica at Isola Sacra. It reads,

> *† VANDALICA RABIES HANC USSIT MARTYRIS AULAM | QUAM PETRUS ANTISTES CULTU MELIORE NOVATAm. C.I.L.* 14.5232 *Suppl.* reads, ✚ *HIC QVIESCIT ANAStasius | X KAL April* [columba palmae ramusculo insidens].

[362] Inscription *C.I.L.* 14.1938 alludes to 2 Tim 4:7-8: *cursum consummavi, fidem servavi… reposita est mihi corona iustitiae, quam reddet mihi dominus in illa die.*

[363] MARINUCCI 1991:99 points, for instance, to the fact that the change of grammatical case between *annis* and *dies* is a phenomenon common to Christian inscriptions. This is the main criterion he uses to classify his inscription nᵒ. 21, found near the Capitolium in 1915, as Christian.

[364] MARINUCCI 1991 and THYLANDER 1952b.

social status and the occupations held by these "Christians." Inscription 14.1877, for example, names a certain Callidromus, and calls him a *libertus Augusti*. [365] If really Christian, the inscription would suggest that there were connections between the Ostian Christians and the converts associated with the imperial bureaucracy (the *familia Caesaris*). The fact that Callidromus was a *dispensator* specifies that he was an imperial freedman of a certain status, and that slaves probably worked under him.

Another inscription, from Portus, set up by a certain Onesimus, apparently commemorates two Christians (Fabius Adeodatus and Fabius Crispinus) both ranking as centurions in the Roman cohorts stationed at Ostia. [366] Its Christian identity is confirmed by a chi-rho monogram at the end of the first line. It can be securely dated to 386 A.D., since the names of the two consuls are given: Flavius Honorius and Flavius Eubodius. Finally, if truly Christian, an inscription on white marble, whose exact findspot at Ostia is unknown, includes an *argentarius* among the Ostian Christians. [367] The Ostian bankers must have certainly played an important role in the development of the city. So much so that we find three Egrilii of freedman stock among the few bankers recorded at Ostia. [368] The Egrilii had probably derived their main wealth from trade and commerce, as it is strongly suggested by the wide distribution of the name in the trade guilds. Our Christian

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[365] The inscription reads,

> *CALLIDROMVS · EX · DISP · HIC · Dormit .... | SIGNO · LEVCADI · ANIMA · BONA · Qui vixit an .... | TIANVS · AVG · LIB · ADIVTOR · PROC · SVMmi choragi? ... | ET · SEIA · HEELPIS · FILI · DVLCISSIMI · ET · Valeria ...* [sic] | *CRESCENTINA · COIVX · EIVS ·*

[366] *C.I.L.* 14.231 reads,

> *FL(avio) · HONORIO · N(obilissimo) · P(uero) · ET · FL(avio) | EUBODIO · CONSULIBUS · FAVIIS | ADEODATO · CENT(urioni) COH(ortis) VII | ET · CRIspinO COH(ortis) II A CIVitate | OSTIA ON(esimus).*

[367] Marinucci's inscription nᵒ. 12 reads, *[...]VIO ARGentario [...] | [...]I HIC DOrmit in pace.*

argentarius may not have been an Egrilius, but he was certainly influential. These inscriptions suggest that – as early as the mid to late fourth century – there were prominent Christians at Ostia.

If truly Christian, inscription *C.I.L.* 14.4810 *Suppl.* presents us with an interesting case in which a pagan epitaph set up by a certain S. Baberius Scupinus commemorating his pagan daughters was reutilized for the commemoration of a Christian.[369] The marble stone was turned upside down and its new upper part was inscribed with the words AGAPE hIC DORMIT. The name Agape might be Christian. In any case, the engraver of this short inscription was only making use of a recycled stone. This may suggest a low economic stratum. Another important piece of information derived from the purportedly Christian inscriptions from Ostia is that they refer mainly to people of Eastern origin. Greek names are common: Basilides (14.1876), Callidromus (14.1877), Aphrodisia (14.1885), Artemidora (14.1886), Auxanianus (14.1889), Iunius Telesporianus (14.1890), Calligenia (14.1894), the sisters Agape and Irene (14.1897), Evangelia (14.1902), Mucia Irene (14.1903), Fronimus (14.1906), Ippolitus (14.1924), etc.[370] One of these is even written in Greek (although using Latin letters), and commemorates Elpidius and Irene (14.1901). Another is written in Latin but uses Greek letters.[371] Finally, another inscription is written in Latin but closes with an expression borrowed from the pagan formulary: [οὐδε]ὶς ἀθάνατος.[372] The Greek wording suggests that the commissioner of the stone was aware of the great number of

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[368] MEIGGS 1982, n. 9. See also ZEVI 1970.

[369] The pagan character of the original inscription is indicated by the reference to the *dis Manibus*.

[370] Marinucci's inscriptions, which are not included in the *C.I.L.* 14 or its supplement, contribute with a few novel *nomina* and *cognomina* to our corpus of Greek names associated with a Christian context at Ostia: Aphrodite (inscription n°. 1, whose two fragments were found in the Terme del Mitra and in the Horrea Epagathiana, in 1922), Eutychia (inscription n°. 11, found in 1939, on the via degli Augustali, in Regio V) and Polucratia (inscription n°. 14, whose exact findspot is unknown).

[371] Marinucci's inscription n°. 5 (not included in the *C.I.L.*), in white marble, reads, MAP[…] | ANOY[…] | HIC ΔOPμιτ.

[372] Marinucci's inscription n°. 11, found on the via degli Augustali, Regio V, in 1939.

foreigners in the city and that she may have wanted to address them for some reason. In this case, the mother – who had a Greek name: Eutychia – commemorates her husband and son.[373]

So, despite the fact that Greek names and/or Greek wording do not necessarily indicate low social status – many freedmen were in fact fairly wealthy and influential –, they signify that the people commemorated by them could not have belonged to the aristocratic echelon of Ostian society. The incidence of Greek names in the purportedly Christian inscriptions from Ostia is high. However, some names connected to the Italian nobility are also attested, such as an Egrilia Sabina (14.1888) on a sarcophagus, and a Plotia Marcella (14.1900). The best way to make sense of that is to imagine the Christians at Ostia as being a stratified community in which a few belonged to the top and many belonged to the lower layer of the social pyramid.[374]

Most of the allegedly Christian inscriptions from Portus come from a necropolis on the north side of Trajan's canal, near its junction with the Tiber (which probably developed in the third century). In fact, except for four inscriptions from Isola Sacra and a few others from the Torlonia estate, all other such inscriptions were found in this so-called "necropolis of Generosa," and are now kept in the Episcopio Portuense.[375] We have literary attestation for this Christian cemetery as early as the fifth century A.D. when the cosmographer

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[373] However, the basis for Marinucci's identification of inscription n°. 11 as Christian seems to be very fragile: probably only the occurrence of the word *innocentissimus*. This inscription, on white marble, reads,

> *[…] OA RIMA | […] inOCENTISSI | mo, qui vix(it) a(nnos) XXI, D(is) XXII |*
> *eVTYCHIA FILIO DULCISSI | mo et MARITO VIRGINIO | οὐδεὶΣ ΑΘΑΝΑΤΟΣ.*

[374] For a persuasive assessment of social class among the early Christians, see STARK 1996.
[375] According to THYLANDER 1952b:5, "l'histoire de fouilles et de découvertes à Portus, à droite du canal de l'empereur Trajan, est beaucoup plus vague que celle de l'Isola Sacra, les fouilles n'ayant souvent pas été entreprises dans un but scientifique et n'ayant pas été publiées d'une façon satisfaisante."

Ethicus referred to a *Praedium Missale* in that very location.[376] The inscriptions from that necropolis suggest that the presence of Christianity at Portus was stronger than at Ostia.[377] Inscription *C.I.L.* 14.1943 – whose present location is unknown – makes reference to a certain Aurelius Marcellinus and identifies him as a deacon, as well as to his son Aurelius Zinzius, an assistant deacon. This suggests that by the late fourth and early fifth centuries A.D. the Christians at Portus had attained a considerable level of ecclesiastical organization.[378] It also lets us know that church offices could be – and probably were – held by members of the same family, an indication of the kind of commitment that these families made to their faith,[379] and of the kind of prestige that had – by then – become associated with such offices. The high incidence of Greek names in the Christian inscriptions from Portus suggests that there, as well, the foreign element played an important role among the local believers.[380] Besides, by the mid fourth century

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[376] Besides, the *nomen* Generosa has an early epigraphic attestation at Ostia in a Christian context, which may indicate the popularity of a martyr so named: it occurs, for instance, on Marinucci's inscription n°. 10, whose findspot is unknown.

[377] The *locus classicus* for the study of the inscriptions from Portus is THYLANDER 1952b. Thylander includes a few inscriptions which appear neither in the *C.I.L.* 14 nor in its supplement: B 246, B 266, B 269?, B 270?, B 279?, B 280, B 284, and B 285.

[378] It reads,

> *auR · MARCELLINVS DIAconus | feCIT · AUR · ZINZIO SVBDiaco | no FILIO SVO*
> *QUI VIXIT An | nOS · XXV · DORMIT · IN PACe.*

Inscription *C.I.L.* 14.1944 also makes reference to the diaconate of a certain Felix, who sets up a marble inscription commemorating his wife Aurelia Geminia.

[379] A long and elegant inscription (*C.I.L.* 14.1938) attests to the early martyrdom of a certain Zosima (in A.D. 275) to whom the inhabitants of Portus dedicated a Basilica (cf. *C.I.L.* 14.1937). Kauffmann (*apud* THYLANDER 1952b:343) dates this inscription to the late fourth century. A strigilated sarcophagus recovered from the basilica shows that the area had an early association with Christian burials. The sarcophagus contains a *clypeus* bearing a short inscription: *IANV | RI IN PA | CE DOMI*, "Ianuarius in the peace of the Lord" (*C.I.L.* 14.1962). Another early inscription (*C.I.L.* 14.1949) retrieved from the basilica bears the formula *vivas in Christo*.

[380] So, *C.I.L.* 14.1956 is commissioned by a certain Dicaeus and commemorates a Chrysogonus and a Heliodora; inscription 14.1957 reads, *EPICTESIS | IN DEO VIBAS*; a magnificent inscription in marble (14.1958) commemorates a certain Euterpia; 14.231 is commissioned by a certain Onesimus, etc. The high occurrence of Greek names is common even among the very few

converts from Portus had already started to adopt names that pointed to their Christian faith. This is the case, for instance, of a certain Flavius Quodvultdeus commemorated by his wife on an inscription dating to 366.[381] A list of such names at Portus should include Anastasius (*C.I.L.* 14.5232 *Suppl.*), Restitutus and Restuta (*C.I.L.* 14.1064),[382] Quodvultdeus (14.1945),[383] and maybe Eunia.[384] This list could then be favorably compared to the only three names of Christian origin found at Ostia: Agape,[385] Cyriacus,[386] and Quodvultdeus.[387] Finally, the workmanship of the Christian inscriptions from Portus was slightly superior to that of the average Christian inscription from Ostia. Inscription *C.I.L.* 14.1969, which is now missing, not only displayed a superb execution but also attested to the active patronage of a certain Vonbia [*or* Rubonia?] Saturnina, who can be imagined as sponsoring Christian clients.[388] Therefore, on account of the epigraphic evidence for an elaborate ecclesiastic hierarchy at Portus, and on account of the fact that the Portus Christians were more inclined to adopt names that reflected their new faith, and on account of the superior workmanship of the

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Christian inscriptions from Isola Sacra: Critonius, Epaphroditus, Filete, Eunia, and Telesphorus. That is probably twice as many names as those of Latin origin in the same inscriptions.

[381] This inscription (*C.I.L.* 14.1945), with a monogram between the Greek letters A and Ω, reads,

MIRAE INTEGRitatis | ET FIDEI ATQVAE Constantiae | FL(avius) ⸱
QVODVVULTDEO qui vixit | ANN N XLV M VIII D dep | IN PACE D X KAL
DECembres | GRATIANO ET DACAlaifo conss | aTTIA FLORA FECIT COniugi.

[382] Christian names starting with *re-* often convey the idea of redemption: *Redemptus*, *Renatus*, *Renovatus*, *Reparatus*, *Refrigerius*, etc. Cf. KAJANTO 1963:112-113.

[383] This name was unknown in pagan or Jewish documents, which accordingly prove the Christianity of its bearers. Cf. KAJANTO 1963:116.

[384] Thylander's inscription A 285 from Isola Sacra (not included in the *C.I.L.*). According to him, Eunia "la bienveillante est un nom qui s'adapte très bien à une chrétienne." However, we lack any evidence that such a name would be identified as an indication that the girl who bore it was a Christian. That is, it is a good name for a Christian, but it is not necessarily a good Christian name.

[385] *C.I.L.* 14.1897, *C.I.L.*, *Suppl.* 14.4810, and Marinucci's inscriptions n°. 1 and 18.

[386] *C.I.L.*, *Supp.* 14.5232.

[387] Marinucci's inscription n°. 3, found at the so-called Basilica Cristiana sul Decumano in 1939.

[388] Inscription *C.I.L.* 14.1969 reads, ⸱ *VONBIA ⸱ | SATVRNINA | HIC DORMIT | PATRONE VE | NEMERENTI.*

Portus Christian inscriptions, one is entitled to say that in the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. the Christian community there was more dynamic than the one at Ostia.

We also know of four Christian inscriptions (only one of which appears in the *C.I.L.* supplement) and a Christian sarcophagus from the cemetery of Isola Sacra that belong to the late third and early fourth centuries.[389] Two of them are somewhat short and not very informative: one, which had been previously erased, commemorates a certain [M]onnica and includes the iconography of an anchor; the other – found out of context – reads *ANNA ✝ | ANN · P · L · M · cALENDAS | ANNOS XC.*[390] A third inscription is, however, reasonably telling. It reads *IVLIA EUNIA · TELESPHORO MARITO DIGNISSIMO FECIT · IN PACE*, and it includes a triple Christian iconographic representation (from left to right: a lamb, an anchor, and a dove).[391] Since this marble slab was found serving as a lid for a pagan burial pit, it suggests the practice of companionable burials. The fourth inscription (14.5234, *Suppl.*) is written in Latin, but adds the Greek phrase ΕΙΡΗΝΗ ΑΥΤΩ at the end.

Finally, a few Christian inscriptions have been recovered from the area of Pianabella. The ones recovered through systematic excavations are very fragmentary, with the exception of a single case, recovered in its entirety in April 1943. Such inscriptions are discussed in Chapter Four of this Dissertation. Ignoring the inscriptions from Pianabella, for the moment, we can summarize this section by saying that the alleged Christian inscriptions from Ostia generally fit the following profile: (a) they come from an extra-urban context (especially from S. Ercolano); (b) almost all of them are written in Latin; (c) they are conservatively cut (meaning that the Christian patrons wanted to emulate the

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[389] Cf. CALZA 1940a:264-265; CALZA 1949-1951:137; MEIGGS 1973:394.
[390] Thylander's inscription A 283, plate LXXXIII:2.
[391] Thylander's inscription A 285, plate LXXXIII:3.

pagan patrons and thus become part of the same nexus of social relations and status display); (d) they are difficult to date precisely, but seem to belong for the most part to the fourth and fifth centuries; (e) they are considered Christian often on the exclusive and rather inconclusive basis of their reference to the sleep of death; (f) they are comparatively few; (g) they do not suggest high social status; (h) they allow for the occasional reuse of *spolia*; and (i) they make reference to a large number of foreign names.

The fact that the assumed Christian inscriptions from Ostia and Portus come mainly from an extra-urban setting should not surprise us since they are for the most part funerary inscriptions and the *suburbium* is the natural environment for that kind of inscriptions. It does show, however, that up to the fourth and fifth centuries the Ostian Christians did not feel yet compelled to advertise their faith in a public milieu. Epigraphic and architectural evidence suggest, in fact, that the fourth and fifth centuries are crucial for a change of attitude in this regard. Perhaps on account of the formation – at that time – of a Christian *ghetto* in the area between the Constantinian Bishop's Basilica and the nearby Pianabella Basilica, the Ostian Christians became more self-assured and, therefore, more prepared to claim a higher social status than they had previously been able to.

The Iconographic Evidence

Christianity began as a religion of words, not images.[392] Whether for that reason or because Christians did not or could not develop elaborate iconography at Ostia, Christian iconography at Ostia was inconspicuously displayed in only four venues: buildings, sarcophagi, inscriptions (generally associated with either buildings or sarcophagi) and small objects. There is no iconography that is closely associated with a specific architectural context at Ostia, except for the very few items that we have already dealt with in our discussion of the architectural

evidence for Christianity at Ostia. These items include unassuming iconography such as the Christian monograms from the so-called Basilica Cristiana sul Decumano and from the *mithraeum* converted to Christian use (Fig. 23),[393] and the basin reliefs (Fig. 10) recovered from that same *mithraeum* (too bulky to be listed among small objects),[394] as well as more elaborate representations such as the putative depiction of Christ in *opus sectile* from the so-called Edificio dell'Opus Sectile (Fig. 18). In fact, early Christian iconography at Ostia comes mainly from sarcophagi, rings and lamps. Calza has labeled as Christian a sculpture in cipollino (on the shaft of a column), which bears the figure of a shepherd carrying a lamb over his shoulders (Fig. 22),[395] but that typology is too pervasive in both pagan and Christian iconography to allow any conclusive identification.

Even in the case of funerary sculpture such as the type commonly found on sarcophagi, we cannot be certain that it has any Christian background. A "Good Shepherd" scene on a sarcophagus from Isola Sacra, for instance, is often mentioned as Christian decoration (Fig. 24).[396] But just as with the "cipollino" sculpture, it bears no clear-cut indication that it is not a pagan sarcophagus with an ordinary bucolic scene. Despite that, Calza sees it as a pre-Constantinian Christian piece.[397] The representation is somewhat convoluted since it consists of three scenes, which Calza identifies as being those of Christ depicted as a good shepherd, of Christ portrayed as a shepherd in meditation, and of Peter's denial of

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[392] MORRIS 2001:1.
[393] According to CALZA 1949-1951:130, n. 11, four small marble columns were found at this *mithraeum*: a non-fragmentary column bearing a Christian monogram (1.3 x 0.2 x 0.12 m), a fragmentary column also bearing a Christian monogram (o.4 x 0.2 x 0.12 m), and two fragmentary columns bearing no decoration (0.94 x 0.32 x 0.18 and 0.93 x 0.25 x 0.13).
[394] Cf. *supra*.
[395] CALZA 1949-1951:131.
[396] CALZA 1940a:215.
[397] CALZA 1940a:216.

Jesus.[398] It is possible, however, to single out at least a couple of examples of Christian iconography on sarcophagi from Ostia. If truly Christian, one chest may bear pagan iconography used in a Christian context: a sarcophagus inscribed *HIC | QVIRIACVS | DORMIT · IN PACE* (*C.I.L. Supp.* 14.5232) was probably commissioned by someone who wanted to honor the memory of the third century martyr who was his namesake (Figs. 16 and 25).[399] It bears also the representation of Orpheus as *Pastor Bonus*, which – as we shall see below – became quite common as a type of Christ. Another chest bears perhaps the only explicitly Christian scene engraved on a sarcophagus from Ostia. It illustrates a very common motif in ancient Christian iconography: the resurrection of Lazarus (Fig. 26).[400] Despite its fragmentary state, this strigilated sarcophagus portrays, on one of its angles, the figure of Jesus when about to touch Lazarus's mummy, as it appears on the threshold of a tomb, while Mary – the dead man's sister – kneels before the Lord.

As far as the iconography associated with the epigraphic context is concerned, it seems that Christian inscriptions from Portus have been more telling than those from Ostia. A couple of inscriptions from Isola Sacra add a few Christian symbols to our repertory: a lamb, an anchor, and a dove,[401] as well as a cross.[402] Crosses appear on two other inscriptions from Portus, which do not come from Isola Sacra: *C.I.L.* 14.1953 and *C.I.L.* 14.5232 *Suppl*. The Christian inscriptions from Portus tend to go back to an earlier date than those from Ostia, and it is surprising to find the cross associated with a Christian tomb at Isola Sacra. However, the fact that this inscription was not found *in situ* does not allow us to speculate much further. The Christian chi-rho monogram appears between

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[398] CALZA 1940a:218.
[399] For the architectural context of this sarcophagus, see above.
[400] CALZA 1949-1951:132-133.
[401] Thylander's inscription A 285 (not included in the *C.I.L.*), plate LXXXIII:3.
[402] Thylander's inscription A 283 (not included in the *C.I.L.*), plate LXXXIII:2.

the Greek letters A and Ω on an inscription published in the *C.I.L.* (14.1935) and on another one published by Marinucci, and recovered near the Horrea di Hortensius.[403] The same happens with some inscriptions from Portus. This is the case of inscriptions *C.I.L.* 14.1945, 1946, 1974 and 1975. C.I.L. 14.1974 bears a crosslike monogram, again between the two usual Greek letters. Another inscription (*C.I.L.* 14.1963) from Portus contains an isolated X that very likely refers to the name of Christ since it is used in conjunction with the expression *in pace*. An inscription (*C.I.L.* 14.5241, *Suppl.*) found in the theater at Ostia displays the Christian chi-rho monogram at the end of its lines. The anchor is also found at Ostia. An inscription in grey marble – found in the headquarters of the *Augustales* in 1940 – includes the anchor iconography.[404] Dated to the third or fourth century on other grounds,[405] it confirms – if truly Christian – the antiquity of the anchor as a Christian symbol at Ostia, which is seen by some as a dissimulated cross.[406] One last Christian iconographic item relates to Ostia's epigraphic material. An inscription whose findspot is unknown bears the depiction of two baskets of bread.[407] This has been interpreted as a reference to the rite of the *refrigerium* or that of the Eucharist.

Small objects with Christian iconography come into view at Ostia from time to time. This is the case of three bronze rings, a lead frame for a hand mirror, and countless clay lamps from the fourth and fifth centuries, all with reliefs of Christian monograms. To these we may still add several other terracotta lamps, from the workshop of Annius Serapidorus, which bear the *Pastor Bonus* iconography.[408] Besides, sixteen fragments of a fine late-fourth or early-fifth

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[403] Marinucci's inscription nº. 31 (not included in the *C.I.L.*), fig. 31.
[404] Marinucci's inscription nº. 2 (not included in the *C.I.L.*), fig. 2 A.
[405] The dating of this inscription is based on two grounds: the *duo nomina* of the dedicators and the type of *ductus*. Cf. MARINUCCI 1991:79.
[406] GUARDUCCI 1958:61
[407] Marinucci's inscription nº. 19 (not included in the *C.I.L.*), fig. 19.
[408] CASTAGNOLI *et al*. 1972-1973:152.

century bowl – made of green, clear glass – were found in a drainage channel in the House of the Porch (v.ii.4-5).[409] This glass bowl, 0.18 m in diameter and 0.056 m in depth, bears a portrait of a victorious Christ holding a long cross and an open book, and sided by a palmtree and a basket with bread (Fig. 27),[410] and is similar to other finds from Portus.[411] Without wanting to stretch it too far, the presence of a Christian bowl may suggest that the house was actually bought by a Christian.[412]

The Anicii and the Christians of Ostia

No evidence comes forward from Ostia which suggests a violent takeover on the part of the growing Christian community. Pagan festivals were celebrated there until a late time. The worship of the Lares in private homes was declared illegal in 392, by a law never heard of again, and subsequently Jerome accepts such cult as still routinely performed. The Maiouma, a pagan festival, still flourished in sixth-century Ostia just as the Saturnalia of Dec. 16th-19th was still celebrated at Rome in Macrobius' day. Christianity did not immediately supplant these older traditions in the time of Constantine, or for two more centuries. A history of Christianity that exaggerates the success of the Christian religion in the Roman Empire has been responsible for establishing the idea of a complete overthrow of paganism soon after Constantine's conversion that in no way

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[409] This is the only one among the late-Roman domus at Ostia that is not discussed in full by BECATTI 1949. However, this splendid example of a late-Ostian *domus* received a detailed treatment in BOERSMA 1985, according to whom (p. 192), in its completed form the house presented the typical characteristics of a third-century Ostian mansion: axiality of plan, front with vestibule and shops, arcaded courtyard with basin and/or *nymphaeum*, hall, and separate upper apartments. See also HERES 1985:11-28.
[410] SQUARCIAPINO 1952:204.
[411] SQUARCIAPINO 1952-1954:255-269; CASTAGNOLI *et al.* 1972-1973:152.
[412] According to MEIGGS 1973:553, the name on the pediment over the doorway was inscribed after the previously existing inscription had been erased, and may indicate a change of ownership in the fifth century.

corresponds to non-literary evidence.[413] This same historical impropriety is responsible for the labeling of Ostia's incipient Christianity as a late phenomenon when, in actuality, it fits well the general image of Christianity's slow disarticulation of paganism, a phenomenon which pertains more properly to the end of the fourth century or later. Parlasca speaks of "the undoubtedly dominant role of paganism up to the end of state-permissible cults, i.e. up to the edicts of Theodosius the Great toward the end of the fourth century."[414]

Since Frévier's first attempt to describe the religious topography of Ostia and to connect it to its social life,[415] the history of Christianity at Ostia merits further study for its complex and controversial character. The kind of image that emerges from my assessment of the evidence for Ostia is a nuanced picture in which there is little room for a violent takeover. Christians were welcomed to Ostia, which was a very syncretistic and tolerant society. Scholars now know that Mithraism, for example, was not as secretive as first thought and probably not limited to soldiers, it was more like a social or neighborhood club which the city willingly embraced.[416] The incorporation of a foreign deity into the Roman pantheon was also a very common practice: Magna Mater could also be Ceres or the Earth,[417] and the Jewish God could also be Saturn.[418] It is an important characteristic feature of Roman religion that it persistently incorporated new deities.

When the Christians first arrive at Ostia, they simply fit in. They do not triumphantly turn everything upside down. They merely blend in. My suggestion

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[413] Even in Syria, whose capital Antioch was two-thirds Christian in the 390s, the surrounding countryside was quite different. There is evidence that there were big pagan temples drawing crowds at that time. DAUPHIN 1980:112-134. MACMULLEN 1984:157, n. 42.

[414] PARLASCA 1981:225-230. See also MACMULLEN 1984:156-157, n. 41.

[415] FRÉVIER 1958.

[416] VERMASEREN 1971; BECK 1984; MARTIN 1989b; STEUERNAGEL 2001:41-56.

[417] Lucretius, *De rerum natura* 2.581-628.

[418] Varro, Cardauns fr. 16; Augustine, *The Harmony of the Evangelists* 1.22.30. See also BEARD, NORTH & PRICE 1998:320.

is that just as the Caltilii unimpededly made use of the social tools available to them – including the confraternity that they found in the cult that they sponsored – in order to promote their own interests and to better their social status in the city, the first Christian converts from Ostia resorted to their social networks in order to create new webs of dependency with the double purposes of nurturing their religious faith and of supporting their political and social claims, either for the expansion of tentacular networks of connections already in existence at Rome or for building up a more socially creative vitality that worked so as to include those who had been thus far barred from such social exchanges. The Anicii, from Rome, were interested, on the one hand, in expanding their network of social relations so as to include the Christians from Ostia, as we will now see. The freedsmen of the Egrilii were, on the other hand, interested in gaining access to a new network which was forming at Pianabella, as we shall see later apropos of the discussion of the burgeoning Christian community that came into existence around the basilica built in that district later in the early fifth century. The first monumental Christian buildings constructed by Constantine at Rome were not located downtown where the Senate supervised new constructions in areas such as the Campidoglio, the Forum and the Curia, thus avoiding direct conflict with that society's pagan aristocracy. The Basilica of St John Lateran conceived as Rome's Christian cathedral and probably built *ex voto* to Christ for his aid in the battle against Maxentius was built in the Caelian hill just inside the walls. The Ostian Christians adopted the same strategy. Meeting initially in private houses and self-effacing domestic halls architecturally modified for that purpose, they began building public edifices in areas which were conspicuous locations but which did not attract undue attention from the non-Christian aristocracy which governed the city.

Since important families of Rome were able to exert a powerful influence upon the local aristocracy of Ostia, they might choose to sponsor a particular form

of religiosity. The role played by the Anicii in this regard shows how that that sort of sponsorship could have easily worked on behalf of the Christians from Ostia.[419] The prestige of this family increased so much by the late fourth century, that Anicia Faltonia Proba, probably a daughter of the consul of 334,[420] is called "wife, daughter and mother of consuls" and "the adornment of the Amnii, Pincii and Anicii" in an inscription, a clear indication that the Anicii had acquired the flair of the leading political figures at Rome.[421] This fact becomes even more

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[419] The Anicii came originally from Praeneste, and were closely connected with the Annii (MEIGGS 1973:212; ARNHEIM 1972:110). If compared to the old aristocratic families of Rome such as the Acilii, for instance, they were "parvenus". The *gens Acilia* was one of the noblest houses in the Empire. For details on the prosopography of this family, see ARNHEIM 1972:63ff. See also LANCIANI 1892. It was their business connections in Africa that led the Aniciii to take offices in that province. Accordinto to Cicero, *C. Anicius… negotiorum suorum causa legatus est in Africam legatione libera* (*Ad familiares* 12.21). By the early third century A.D. they had already reached high offices in the imperial administration, including legateships, governorships, and consulships (ARNHEIM 1972:109). According to Arnheim, the earliest known senatorial member of the family was C. Anicius Faustus, ordinary consul in 198, who had a notable career, beginning as legate of Numidia and after his consulship becoming governor of Moesia Superior (between 202 and 207). It is possible that the Anicius Faustus Paulinus who was legate of Moesia Inferior in 230 was his son or – at least – a close relative. Not only did the Anicii manage to secure these high positions, but quite active also did they become in consolidating their high status by promoting marriage links with other elite families. Sextus Cocceius Anicius Faustus Paulinus, proconsul of Africa in the third century A.D., married into the family of the proconsul of Asia, C. Asinius Nicomachus Julianus. ARNHEIM 1972:110 conjectures that the products of the marriage were M. Junius Caesonius Nicomachus Anicius Faustus Paulinus (whom he identifies as the ordinary consul in 298 and prefect of Rome in the following year) and M. Cocceius Anicius Faustus Flavianus (described in an inscription as "patricius, consularis"). He also thinks that Amnius Manius Caesonius Nicomachus Anicius Paulinus Honorius, ordinary consul in 334, may well have been a son of the consul of 298. For JONES, MARTINDALE & MORRIS 1971, M. Junius Caesonius Nicomachus Anicius Faustus Paulinus was the praetor urbanus of 321 and therefore the great grandson of Sextus Cocceius Anicius Faustus Paulinus. For all purposes here it does not really matter whether we take him as son or great grandson of the proconsul of Africa under Gallienus. The relevant fact is that Sextus Cocceius seems to have married into a family whose status was compatible with his ambitions.

[420] The identity of Proba's father is, in fact, a matter of dispute. ARNHEIM 1972 sees him as being Amnius Manius Caesonius Nicomachus Anicius Paulinus Honorius, ordinary consul of 334, but JONES, MARTINDALE & MORRIS 1971:640-642 as the Q. Clodius Hermogenianus Olybrius, consul in 379.

[421] The whole inscription (*C.I.L.* 6.1754) reads,

ANICIA FALTONIAE | PROBAE AMNIOS PINCIOS | ANIOSQVE
DECORANTI | CONSVLIS VXORI | CONSVLIS FILIAE | CONSVLVM MATRI

significant when we recall that from the time of Constantine nobles are once again prominent in public affairs, since the first Christian emperors were probably trying to reconcile the ardently pagan aristocracy by means of state appointments.[422]

As we shall see below, we know that the Anicii owned houses at Ostia, and the political importance of this Christian family is unquestionable. Inscriptions, as well as literary evidence, reveal to us that the sons of Anicia Faltona Proba were Anicius Hermogeanianus Olybrius and his brother Anicius Probinus, joint consuls in 395.[423] According to the inscription, the prestige of Anicia Faltona Proba sprang not only from the high status of her father and her progeny but also from that of her husband. Although her husband, Sextus Claudius Petronius Probus (proconsul of Africa in 358 and Urban Prefect in 371), evidently did not bear the *nomen* Anicius, he is described in an inscription as "Anicianae domus culmen."[424] This suggests that his mother was an Anicia.

| ANICIVS PROBINVS V.C. | QVAESTOR CANDIDATVS | FILII DEVINCTI | MATERNIS MERITIS | DEDICARVNT.

According to ARNHEIM 1972:110, "nothing is known on the Pincii, and the 'Amnii' are undoubtedly the same as the Annii."

[422] Arnheim dismisses Burckhardt's, Schwartz's, Alföldi's and Rostovtzeff's arguments according to which Constantine's conversion was the emperor's attempt to reckon with a more and more powerful Christian Church by invoking Baynes's low estimates for the Christian population of Constantine's times ("perhaps one-tenth"), and by looking at things from the opposite perspective. According to him, "the strength of the Church was not a cause but rather a result of Constantine's conversion, which is to be seen as an act of faith… Far from giving him a firm basis of support, Constantine's Christianity placed him in a weak position; hence the need to placate the rich, the influential and very pagan senatorial aristocracy." ARNHEIM 1972:73n.

[423] Claudian, *In Probini et Olybrii fratum consulatum panegyris*. The fourth-century court poet Claudian is generally considered to be the last important poet of Rome. For a relatively recent assessment of his poetry, see GRUZELIER 1990.

[424] ARNHEIM 1972:111. His family connections are mentioned in Ausonius, *Epistula* 16.2.32-34: *stirpis novator Anniae paribusque comit infulis Aniciorum stemmata*. Ausonius was a fourth-century Latin poet who enjoyed considerable prestige and success in his own time. Symmachus classed his poetry with Virgil's (*ego hoc tuum carmen libris Maronis adiungo, Epistula ad Ausonium*). Although modern critics do not share such an enthusiasm, NUGENT 1990 has recently championed this poet's cause.

Although Petronius Probus was a spectacular profiteer of the Christian Empire,[425] he was probably the strong hand that avoided crisis after the unexpected death of Emperor Valentinian.[426] He was the last layman to perform a major role in the politics of the Western Roman Empire.[427] So we see that the family of Anicia Faltona Proba's husband had been carefully chosen. His father Petronius Probinus – to whom the aristocratic orator Arusianus Messius dedicated his work written before 387 – was also prominent.[428] Perhaps a Christian,[429] he was ordinary consul in 341 and Urban Prefect in 344, and came from a line of eminent magistrates. His own father – the Petronius Probianus whom Avianius eulogized – was proconsul of Africa in 315-316,[430] ordinary consul in 322, Urban Prefect in

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[425] MATTHEWS 1975:196. Although a letter from Symmachus (*Epistula* 1.58, 61) seems to indicate that Probus was sometimes reluctant to take offices, this appears to be a case of false modesty, since – according to Ammianus Marcellinus 27.11.3 – he was a fish out of water when not holding office. In fact, he saw no conflict between his faith and the accretion of secular honors (SALZMAN 2002:123). The fourth and fifth lines of his epitaph (*C.I.L.* 6.1756) read, *dives opum clarusque genus praecelsus honore / Fascibus inlustris, consule dignus alvo* ("rich in assets, of noble family, exalted in honor, illustrious with the *fasces*, and worthy of a grandfather who is consul"). Another inscription (C.I.L. 6.1751) set up by his tenants from Istria depicts him thus: *nobilitatis culmini, litterarum et eloquentiae lumini, auctoritatis exemplo, provisionum ac dispositionum magistro, humanitatis auctori, moderationis patrono* ("crown of the nobility, light of letters and eloquence, paradigm of authority, master of planning and management, fountain of philanthropy, sponsor of moderation." Our Probus is thus remembered as a paragon of public honors and cultural achievements. The epitaph (from the late 380s) goes on to say that he rose above all of that when he accepted Christ. Well, he rose above these honors but never actually renounced any of them. According to SALZMAN 2002:202-203, "this monument [now set on marble panels attached to columns behind the altar of St. Peter's, abutting the outside wall of the apse] claimed the ongoing prestige not only of the man but of his family, as befit the conventions of aristocratic society. Probus' epitaph confidently states that his heavenly career will top even his earthly one, but the two were not at odds. Basically, Probus will enjoy honor in heaven much as he did on earth, but this honor will endure for eternity."

[426] MATTHEWS 1975:64, 98. For other male converts from his family, see Prudentius, *Contra Symmachum* 1.552ff.

[427] According to MATTHEWS 1975:197, after Petronius there was only a group of lesser-known personalities who fell within the ambit of Ambrose's influence at Milan.

[428] Arusianus Messius, *Exempla elocutionem ex Virgilio, Sallustio, Terentio, Cicerone digesta*.

[429] VON HAEHLING 1978:370-371.

[430] Augustine preserved the letter Constantine wrote Probianus when he took office in Africa: *Constantinus ad Probianum proconsulem Africae*, apud Augustine, *Epistula* 88.4. See also MANDOUZE 1982:922.

329-331, and probably also praetorian prefect under Constantine.[431] Their family went all the way back to T. Petronius Taurus Volusianus, the first known Petronius to rise from equestrian to senatorial rank.[432] There was, in fact, a close connection between the Petronii and the Anicii, as we can see in the case of Constantine's praetorian prefect Petronius Annianus.

We can further indicate the importance of Anicia Faltonia Proba for early Christianity by pointing to the facts that she also had close connections with John Chrysostom,[433] and that she donated the revenues from her large estates in Asia for the support of the clergy, of the poor and of Christian monasteries. Pope Caelestine mentions her commitment to the church in a letter to Theodosius II, dated March 15, A.D. 432: *illustris et sanctae recordationis Proba possessiones in Asia constituas longa a maioribus vetustate sic reliquit ut maiorem summan redituum clericis, pauperibus et monasteries annis singulis praeciperet erogandam*.[434] If Jones, Martingale and Morris are correct in naming Tyrrania Anicia Juliana (married to Quintus Clodius Hermogenianus Olybrius) as her mother,[435] this means that her grandmother was Faltonia Betitia Proba (married to Clodius Celsinus signo Adelphius).[436] Faltonia Betitia Proba was a Christian aristocratic poetess who wrote a now lost epic poem on the civil war between Magnentius and Constantius II, and a *cento* on the life of Christ, which Salzman

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[431] Symmachus, *Epistula* 1.2.6.
[432] He was praetorian prefect, ordinary consul in 261, and probably urban prefect in 267-268. Cf. ARNHEIM 1972:112.
[433] *John Chrysostom, Epistula* 169.
[434] *Acta Concilorum Oecumenicorum* 2.1.90. She was in Rome during the sack of 410, but soon afterwards fled to Africa, where Heraclianus treated her harshly, cf. Jerome *Epistula* 130.7. See also JONES, MARTINDALE & MORRIS 1971:732.
[435] JONES, MARTINDALE & MORRIS 1971:468. Ironically, Tyrrania may be related to an earlier namesake who dedicated a statue of Venus (cf. *C.I.L.* 6.5665). While her ancestors sponsored the traditional Roman religion through benefactions and patronage, her descendants are now willing to do the same on behalf of their Christian faith. In fact, "there is little reason to think that […] the role of Christian patron appear markedly different from that offered to pagan women" (SALZMAN 2002:175). See also CONSOLINO 1989.
[436] JONES, MARTINDALE & MORRIS 1971.

interprets as indicative of "the merging of once distinct pagan and Christian worlds."[437] In these Virgilianizing verses, Faltonia Betitia Proba combined conventional Roman aristocratic values such as filial affection, household harmony, and family reputation, with the message of Christianity.[438] In 357, she probably took part in a delegation of married aristocratic women who appeared before Constantius in order to plead with the Emperor on behalf of bishop Liberius.[439] By the early fifth century the Acilii and the Anicii finally became related by marriage. The Anicii were by then the richest and most Christian senatorial family,[440] and they continued to flourish down to the sixth century.[441]

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[437] SALZMAN 2002:136. According to SALZMAN 2002:160, an aristocratic Christian woman pursuing this kind of advanced study of scripture was quite exceptional.

[438] By stressing Mary's maternity, her emphasis falls not on celibacy or asceticism, but on family values (CLARK & HATCH 1981:111). In her account of the life of Christ, she makes a few astounding changes to the narrative. She distorts, for instance, the words of Christ to the rich young man so that he is no longer commanded to sell his estates and to give his money to the poor, but is urged instead to simply learn contempt for wealth (CLARK & HATCH 1981:118-121). Marital devotion is a recurrent theme, and she even describes the marriage of Adam and Eve in terms of a Roman wedding. According to SALZMAN 2002:163-164, "Proba's poem represents an articulate, mid-fourth-century woman's solution to the merging of traditional aristocratic values with Christianity. In my view, hers is the more typical response by aristocratic women who turned to Christianity. Perhaps a convert herself [it is uncertain whether she converted from paganism or from a disinterested Christianity to sincere belief], Proba wanted to hold on to her aristocratic family values and structures as she embraced Christianity. And if this *Cento* was used for didactic purposes, Proba's ideals may well have had a wide audience." "Faltonia sees no problem reconstructing the message of the Evangelists with the words of Virgil, no problem in subversively stressing the ancient Roman attitudes toward material riches, patronage, and vengeance over and against the fundamental Christian themes of self-abnegation, disinterested charity, and forgiveness… rare was the Roman who put down Virgil in order to take up Paul; exceptional was the aristocrat who left behind spouse, children, and home in order to follow Christ. Of course there were men like Augustine who abandoned a lucrative career for the sake of the Church, and there is no question about the dedication shown by such women as Melania and Paula, who left all behind to embrace virginity and poverty… however, accounts such as these provide a one-sided, overly ardent attitude to conversion and tend to distort what a typical member of Rome's upper circles experienced in coming to embrace Christianity" (MECONI 2003:430).

[439] Theodoret, *H.E.* 2.14.

[440] MATTHEWS 1975:257.

[441] JONES 1964:546.

The Anicii were among the first noble families of Rome to convert to Christianity,[442] and they came to develop an intricate network of social relations, which directly affected the Ostian Christians. A member of that family in fact may have owned the house where Augustine stayed during the time he spent at Ostia.[443] A property belonging to Beltitia Faltonia Proba has now been identified at Ostia in the area near the inner harbor.[444] The *fistula* (or waterpipe) that bears her name is an important piece of evidence because pipes were customized in the Roman Empire. Since they were often made on the very spot where they were supposed to be used, they bore irrefutable proof of ownership. Augustine often exchanged letters with this Christian lady,[445] and dedicated his *De bono uiduitatis* to another family member, Anicia Juliana, during her stay in Africa. Scholars have not been able to single out a house that might have been Augustine's temporary residence at Ostia. Raiza Calza and Ernest Nash, following Deliperi, suggest that the so-called Basilica Cristiana sul Decumano was the place where Monica's funeral service took place.[446] This suggestion seems less plausible now,

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[442] According to Prudentius, *Contra Symmachum* 1.558-560, *non Paulinorum non Bassorum dubitavit prompta fides dare se Christo, stirpemque superbam gentis patriciae venturo attollere saeclo*. Prudentius is a Christian poet especially known for his books of hymns and his writings against Symmachus, the defender of idolatry. According to VAN ASSENDELFT 1976:1, the assumption that the poet was born into a Christian family rests on an *argumentum ex silentio*: "a poet whose Christian belief is expressed so sincerely and cogently throughout his writings would not have left unsaid so essential a feature of his life as conversion from paganism to Christianity. For a relatively recent assessment of his poetry, see MALAMUD 1990.

[443] *Confessiones* 9.12.13. This is, for instance, the opinion of MATTHEWS 1975:222. See also 9.12.21: *cohibito ergo a fletu illo puero psalterium arribuit Euodius et cantare coepit psalmum… cui respondebamus omnis domus…* "when the boy, then, had been checked in his weeping, Evodius took up the book of Psalms and began to chant the psalm… and our whole household answered him." According to MEIGGS 1973:213n, other Ostian friends are suggested by 9.11.28: *audivi etiam postea quod iam cum Ostia essemus, cum quibusdam amicis meis maternal fiducia conloquebatur* [Monica]… "during the time we were at Ostia, she had talked, one day when I was absent, with maternal confidence to some of my friends." However, neither quote proves or disproves the possibility of Augustine having been hosted by the Anicii.

[444] GRANINO 2001.

[445] MANDOUZE 1982:921.

[446] DELIPERI 1951:372-373; CALZA & NASH 1959:100.

if the edifice was a house owned by a Christian rather than a religious edifice per se.

Finally, the names of Anicia Italica (to whose mother Augustine wrote two letters)[447] and her husband's – Valerius Faltonius – are found on another Ostian *fistula*, showing that she also owned a house in town.[448] That again shows the involvement of the Anicii with Christianity at Ostia. It is very probable that the family became patrons of the Ostian Christians. Statements of respect for the family such as the one with which Augustine closes one of his letters to lady Italica, should not be undervalued.[449] The Anicii had the physical means and the connections that made it possible for them to exert direct influence upon Ostia – even despite the fact that their foremost attention must have been probably directed towards the affairs at Rome and Africa, where they kept most of their business links.

This brief analysis of the evidence for the Christians living or interacting at Ostia immediately prior to or at the same time as the construction and first use of the Pianabella basilica shows that social relations at Ostia mirrored the same societal constraints observed at Rome thus playing an important role for pagans and Christians alike, and thus creating a merging of worlds by fully enforcing common values such as respect for patrons, pursuit of status enhancement, filial affection, household harmony, family reputation, and marriage for interest.

Conclusion

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[447] *Epistulae* 92 and 99.
[448] MEIGGS 1973:212-213. This is a different *fistula* than the one discussed above in regards to Betitia Faltonia Proba and found by the Deutschen archaeologischen Institus in 1999 (GRANINO 2001).
[449] *Epistula* 92.

A top-down model to explain Christianization expresses but one side of a vital relationship between emperors and aristocrats.[450] In reality, both parties had power and resources at their disposal since influence and honor did not flow in one only direction. Thus, Christianity did not spread in a smooth linear progression, but in an episodic fashion, depending on the overall situation created by the relationship between individual emperors and their aristocratic friends. Architectural, epigraphic, iconographic, literary and prosopographic evidence for Christianity at Ostia prior to the construction of the Pianabella basilica suggests that pagans and Christians generally co-existed peacefully and abode by the same set of social relations. Christians adopted many of the same strategies used by other foreign cults in order to make their presence felt in a positive way in the syncretistic environment of the city. They started small in the urban environment using buildings as they were and sometimes readapting them for their exclusive use. We will see in the next chapters that they slowly moved to the extra-urban environment probably not so much for fear of undue attention as has always been claimed but because they intentionally desired to create a district in which their visibility would be enhanced and a sense of community attained. Except for the basilica built by Constantine, there is, however, no evidence of a top-down process. The growth of Christianity at Ostia seems to have been reasonably

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[450] According to SALZMAN 2002:178-179, the problems of a top-down model include (a) its one-sidedness, (b) its downplay of a system of honor and patronage (that she calls "the aristocratic status culture"), (c) its downplay of the aristocratic status of the emperor, and (d) its consequent denial of the conventions that validated imperial authority. According to her (p. 188-197), several factors limited the use of imperial influence to force conversion and compelled the emperor to conform to aristocratic expectations: (a) the need for the emperor to respect education requirements in making appointments to offices, (b) the need for the emperor to foster literary culture, (c) the political interdependence created and maintained through marriage alliances, (d) the need for the emperor to exert generosity (*liberalitas*), (e) the need for the emperor to abide by patronage conventions, (f) pragmatic concerns that prompted the emperor to appoint the best man available for an office, (g) the need for the emperor to gather support for funding games and civic entertainments, (h) the need for military support, (i) and legal constraints that prevented the emperor from breaking the law.

natural with no late arrival, no forceful takeover, no radical exclusivity, and no sweeping opposition to paganism.

Late antiquity and the early Middle Ages were much more dynamic periods than they are generally supposed to have been. From the fifth century onward, what we now label as medieval culture began to come into view in Western Europe. Although the historical unity of this period is not difficult to demonstrate in regards to funerary practices, since this was an age when the dead breached the walls of the city of the living, and the living and the dead coexisted in close proximity, the practices of this period still consisted of a blend of funerary customs subordinated to the complex interface of the various traditions that fed into the cultural stream of Europe.[451] Late antiquity and the early Middle Ages were, in fact, periods in which the relationship between the living and the dead was especially noteworthy in defining pagan and Christian communities, as well as in shaping conceptions of the hereafter.[452] These epochs saw the Christianization of death.[453] In fact, funerary traditions did not undergo any especially dramatic changes after the fifth century as a consequence of the spread of Christianity to rural areas.[454] It is precisely in the beginning of this transitional phase, when most areas of religious life were characterized more by diversity than by uniformity, that a new Christian basilica was built at Ostia. The architects of this first semi-monumental Christian cemeterial building in the city made use of

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[451] ARIÈS 1981: 29-42.

[452] EFFROS 2002:1.

[453] This is a process which CANTINO WATAGHIN & LAMBERT 1998:108 call the "appopriazione della morte da parte della Chiesa."

[454] It is difficult, however, to determine whether this was precisely the case or whether we have not been capable yet to assess the whole of evidence for that period. PAXTON 1990:13 points to severe limitations that hinder our understanding of the period that pave the way for the dramatic changes seen in the funerary milieu of the ninth century and the so-called Carolingian reform (c. 750-850), including (a) codicological shortcomings; (b) overspecialization; and (c) excessive dependence on liturgiology (especially the tendency to equate antiquity with correctness or to regard the traditions of Rome and the Roman church as of overriding importance).

several elements of the Roman funerary tradition, but they did so in a selective way, as we shall see next.

Chapter Three: The Pianabella Basilica and the *Necropoleis* of Ostia/Portus

Ostia and Portus are sites where several important archaeological discoveries have offered us a rich source for funerary evidence (cf. Table 5). This chapter considers that evidence and provides the background against which the Basilica of Pianabella may be considered in greater detail.[455] At Rome and Ostia, the dead were buried in a variety of ways for the reason that these cities were susceptible to external influences in this regard.[456] So, when the larger picture of Ostia's cemeterial complexes is taken into consideration, the Basilica of Pianabella is but one of the several elements that make up the whole. It is not surprising that a city as important as Ostia should be provided with several burial grounds. What is striking in relation to Ostia, however, is that many such graveyards are so well preserved, and so richly endowed with inscriptions and iconography.[457] Taken together, these ancient cemeteries provide us with an invaluable picture of burial practices during Roman times, especially because, as has been shown in the previous chapters, Ostia was in an important sense a "miniature replica" not only of Rome itself but also of the very empire it controlled.

Aerial reconnaissance and ground surveys have determined the original dimensions and the topography of Ostia's cemeteries, aided by the unfortunately scarce notes from the nineteenth-century excavations undertaken there. At the

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[455] Isola Sacra offers us a remarkable instance in which the city of the dead corresponds closely to the city of the living. GRAHAM 2005:133 calls the Roman necropolis "a double of the city of the living" since tomb layout tend to reflect social organization. But he argues (p. 142), on the other hand, that "that the urban cemetery, located within the indefinable yet vibrant suburb, may initially appear to be a marginalized space inhabited by bones, dust and beggars, but it remained actively and intimately involved in the social sphere of the city itself. To describe these landscapes as 'cities of the dead' is to misunderstand their dynamic role in the 'cities of the living'."

[456] Greek and oriental influences were paramount even in Italy while local traditions also played an important role in the provinces.

[457] For overviews of the pagan necropoleis at Ostia and Portus and their burial rites, see PELLEGRINO 1984 and 1999.

same time, epigraphy, iconography and tomb remains have helped us make sense of this city's social context. While extramural burial grounds were the rule, towns were not inert; city growth and retrenchment due to population fluctuations caused by migratory movements, plagues, war or other factors triggered adjustments in the boundaries which separated the dead from the living. Harries believes that the occasional "movement of the burials inwards perhaps reflects a reluctance on the part of the mourners to venture too far from their defenses in uncertain times."[458] In fact, an interesting aspect of burial in Ostia is that *intra moenia* interments started early there. Scholars often point to burials found in the Caserma dei Vigili, the Terme di Nettuno, the area opposite the Quattro Tiempietti, the Terme Marittime, the Chapel of St Cyriacus, and the Terme dei Mitra as evidence for that.[459]

Closely associated with Portus, the cemetery of Isola Sacra is the most conspicuous example of the copious evidence coming from Ostia, but one should not downplay the importance of other sites such as the necropolis of the via Ostiensis (or Porta Romana),[460] and the necropolis of the via Laurentina, which included a hodgepodge of graves extending as far as Pianabella.[461] Other smaller

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[458] HARRIES 1992:57.

[459] PAROLI 1993:153-176.

[460] The via Ostiensis was the most important access road to Ostia Antica. This explains why the necropolis associated with the Porta Romana – the main entrance to the city – is the earliest and most notable of Ostia's burial grounds known to us. Visconti started the excavations of this necropolis in the mid nineteenth century, and Vaglieri concluded them in the early 1910s. Pottery and coins have made it possible for archaeologists to date the tombs in the lower stratum as being as early as the second century B.C., a period that precedes the construction of the city walls; but no tombs have been found in the area immediately surrounding the *castrum*. Several cremation tombs were built, however, along the via Ostiensis between the eastern gate of the *castrum* and the Porta Romana (HEINZELMANN 2001a:375). For a contemporary description of the discovery of the necropolis and the investigation of the area adjoining it, see: ASHBY 1912:165-169. See also SQUARCIAPINO 1955a. For a more recent assessment, see: HEINZELMANN 2000a.

[461] The so-called via Laurentina was a reasonably important road given that its gate was the main exit in the southeast of Ostia (Fig. 2). The name is modern and no ancient name for it has survived. The excavations, started by Visconti in the mid-nineteenth century and concluded by Calza in the early 1930s, revealed a necropolis whose tombs were utilized from the mid-first century B.C. to the fourth or fifth centuries AD, which modern scholars sometimes call "the tombs

graveyards include a necropolis which developed around a small cemeterial basilica dedicated to Aurea or Chryse, a young girl who, according to local legends, suffered martyrdom under Claudius Gothicus (268-270) and was buried at Ostia.[462]

The Necropolis of Pianabella

The stretch of land of about fifty hectares that makes up the area is now known as Pianabella. The area is dominated by two major roads leading to the southeast from Ostia. One is the Via Laurentina; the other is the Via Severiana, which runs along the coast. The two roads join approximately 2 km farther to the southeast of the city. These two roads are connected by the so-called via "basolata", which turns south from the Via Laurentina and runs toward the coat. It was along this extension of the Via Laurentina necropolis that new tombs were erected. The Pianabella area is not entirely flat, but displays slight undulations which slant about one meter from the salt banks to the ocean.[463] Archaeological surveys have shown that there is not a perfect correspondence between these crests and the sand line that covers the soil of the area.[464] Human intervention

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of the Claudii" (HEINZELMANN 2001a:373). In general, the tombs of this necropolis were located about 200 m from the city walls near the Porta Laurentina, and are more recent than those of the necropolis of the Porta Romana at the via Ostiensis. The dates for this necropolis are obtained mainly from the building techniques (predominantly *opus reticulatum*), building typology, inscriptions (predominantly cut on travertine), and construction levels that were utilized by the different patrons rather than from grave goods or coins, which are almost entirely absent from the evidence collected by the excavators (SQUARCIAPINO 1955d:109).

[462] Differently from what happens concerning the Basilica of S. Aurea, the many restorations that took place at the Pianabella Basilica during the same time are not recorded in the *Liber pontificalis*.

[463] CARBONARA, PELLEGRINO & ZACCAGNINI 2001:139.

[464] I am referring here, of course, to the sandy soil of the Roman area not to the sand dunes southwest of Pianabella, which are post-Roman. Even in the Roman period the amount of silt brought down to the mouth by the Tiber was noteworthy. So, Virgil writes, *multa flavus harena in mare prorumpit* (Aen. VII.31). However, in post Roman times the advance of the delta seems to have remained slow. BRADFORD 1957:246 relies on LE GALL 1953:22-27 to claim that it was through the Middle Ages and especially since the 16th century that the prodigious building-up of dunes accelerated with increasing speed.

seems to have produced these irregular ridges – probably on account of agricultural needs that may go way back to the late Republican period.[465] What we call, here, the necropolis of Pianabella is but a section or extension of the so-called necropolis of the via Laurentina. In fact, it was common in antiquity for a Christian cemetery to develop as part of an existing Roman necropolis. The first tombs in the area go back to the second half of the first century B.C., a period which is characterized by the development of five Roman roads lying on a north-south axis, where a sixth road crosses them.[466] It was the combined study of British wartime air photos and of ground prospection by Bradford and Meiggs that succeeded in identifying these field roads for the first time.[467] The longest of them is the so-called via Laurentina, which joins the line of the *Cardo Maximus*, at an oblique angle, at the point where the modern Autostrada and railway cut that line (Fig. 2).

The Installation and Use of Tombs

The period of installation of tombs coincides with the new importance the city took when Rome created a major harbor at the Tiber's mouth.[468] This initial expansion led to the construction of new buildings outside the walls of Ostia. Accordingly, the early tombs at Pianabella were placed along the five thoroughfares mentioned above – especially along the via Laurentina. Although

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[465] However, our sources speak of a *limitatio* (that divided the *ager Ostiensis* in strips and oblongs) only much later, at Flavian age (cf. an entry in the *Liber coloniarum* that reads, *in praecisuris, in lacineis et per strigas… colonis eorum adsignatus*).

[466] All these roads need not to be of the same date. Some may have an early origin. Cf. BRADFORD 1957:243.

[467] Cf. Fig. 23 and Plate 61 in BRADFORD 1957. Short sectors of these buried roads were in fact visible on an air photograph taken from a balloon as long ago as 1911 (cf. CALZA *et al.* 1953, Fig. 15).

[468] Ostia became not only the port for supplying Rome but also a focus of central Mediterranean commerce in its own right, cf. HEINZELMANN 2002:103-122.

the five roads were not equidistant they formed an orthogonal grid.[469] Pellegrino identifies one of them with an ancient street that runs under the railroad connecting Rome to Ostia/Lido and describes their interconnections as forming a "reticolo di strade cimiteriale."[470] In the early third century, perhaps as part of the same program as the via Severiana, the road on which the Pianabella basilica was to be built was paved. By the mid third century, the necropolis had become horizontally saturated, and there was a need for a vertical expansion.[471]

The Pianabella necropolis was in use until the fourth or fifth century, with occasional depositions happening in the area of the church of St. Ercolano until medieval times.[472] However, from the fifth century on, the cemeterial Basilica of Pianabella attracted most of the depositions. The long period of utilization of the necropolis was made possible by the persistence of two strategies – that of occupying most of the burial ground available for stratified entombment, and that

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[469] According to BRADFORD 1957:242, the intervals between them are not uniform but vary from *ca.* 500 to over 750 feet. Also, according to him, "in one case, the interval of c. 700 feet corresponds to 6 *actus*. These roads ran straight, and formed a practical ad hoc way of breaking-up this area of level ground. With further air photographs, and with excavation, it should be possible to discover the basis on which this irregular *limitatio* was founded. Its remains cannot be termed centuriation."

[470] CARBONARA, PELLEGRINO & ZACCAGNINI 2001:139.

[471] PAROLI 1993:153-176.

[472] Two recent excavation campaigns (1988 and 1989) revealed that the history of the necropolis near St. Ercolano included an initial period of deposition in the first and second centuries A.D., then a period of abandonment in the third century, and, finally, a new phase of occupation in the fourth and fifth centuries. After that, new depositions occur only in late medieval times. A striking characteristic of the depositions in this area is the absence of grave-goods throughout its different phases. However, the excavators were able to assess the different building techniques utilized in the different tombs, and they were able to present the evidence from St. Ercolano as corroboration for the results obtained from the cemeterial basilica of Pianabella that point to a greater relevance of Ostia in late antiquity than it has usually been supposed. According to PERGOLA 1990:176, "i risultati di questo scavo, ed in misura maggiore quelli conseguiti da Lidia Paroli sul sito di Pianabella, inducono ad una valutazione e ed una rilettura, non solo della fase tardo antica di Ostia, ma anche di quella altomedievale. Il ruolo della città in questo periodo, benché secondario rispetto a quello della vicina Porto, non era certamente privo di un certo rilievo."

of systematically raising the ground level. As a result, tombs often remained visible in Pianabella through the different phases of use of the necropolis.[473]

Development of the Necropolis and Main Features of Tombs

The basilica was not the only building to attract depositions to Pianabella. Sepulchral buildings are scattered far and wide in the area. As in Isola Sacra, the tombs were not built underground, although they now seem so because of the various levels of construction work belonging to the different periods. A recent discovery southwest of the modern cemetery at Pianabella uncovered six sepulchers, three of which were complete.[474] Based on the pottery recovered at the site, and the masonry technique utilized in the different phases of construction,[475] the excavators were able to date the beginning of the occupation of those buildings to the Augustan age, with later phases continuing into the late Empire. Initially, burials in these six buildings took the form of *busta*,[476] in which the remains of the deceased were kept in cinerary urns set in niches along the wall. One of the enclosures (2B) belonging to this phase contains a niche whose decoration is still visible, and refers to the spring of the "oltretomba" (Fig. 28).[477]

This sepulchral complex at Pianabella mirrors the general development of the via Laurentina and the Porta Romana necropoleis. Enclosure 1B, for example,

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[473] According to CARBONARA, PELLEGRINO & ZACCAGNINI 2001:140, the sites of many sepulchral buildings no longer visible today at Pianabella appear in different nineteenth century topographic plans of ancient and modern Ostia, such as the one published by C. Fea in 1804 (with drawings by C. Verani and V. Feoli).

[474] CARBONARA, PELLEGRINO & ZACCAGNINI 2001:140-142; PULCRI & DELLADIO 2006.

[475] According to the excavators, the six edifices display building techniques that are closely comparable to those of the necropolis along the via Laurentina (cf. CARBONARA, PELLEGRINO & ZACCAGNINI 2001:140).

[476] Simple enclosures in *opus reticulatum* with no openings and no protective roofs.

[477] Tomb 2B (with a quadrangular plan of 7.5 x 7.5 m) is the best preserved since, according to the excavators, the contiguous enclosure 2A was utilized during the Renaissance as a cistern, and that led to a better conservation of the complex.

takes the form of a *columbarium* by the middle of the first century (Fig. 28).[478]
Since space along the city's thoroughfares became an expensive commodity
during the Principate of Augustus, there was a general adoption of *columbaria*
outfitted with *ustrina* (cremation chambers) and *triclinia* (banqueting chambers).
These were a new type of rectangular tombs in which the *ollae* (terracotta urns)
were no longer deposited on the pavement, but in niches along the wall (as
mentioned above). This structure, which became the most common tomb form in
a second row of tombs at the Porta Romana,[479] was very functional: it helped to
save space, allowed for the epigraphic commemoration of all its residents, and
provided, in one building, all the furnishings which were necessary for the
funerary rites associated with cremation. *Columbaria* became especially popular
at the via Laurentina under Augustus, more so, in fact than they had been at the
via Ostiensis. This may suggest either family and guild preferences or land
speculation expanding as far as this less important suburban district.[480] Epigraphy
shows that other conspicuous shifts happened to Ostia's necropoleis under
Augustus: tomb construction became the prerogative of groups such as the many

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[478] In fact, the general makeup of the Pianabella necropolis is not very different even from that at
Isola Sacra. From the start, burial practices at Isola Sacra were shown to have been complex and
diverse, ranging from simple interments in the sand – with or without external indication of the
deposition – to monumental tombs outfitted to shelter multiple burials whether in *cineraria*, brick
boxes, wood caskets, terracotta sarcophagi, or *amphorae*. The tombs of the poor were often
marked by *amphorae* buried in the ground, or by tiles so placed as to form a roof over the burial.
The evidence for poor burials is important because one of the major problems in studying the
underprivileged in antiquity is the shortage of detailed evidence, "except where the lives of the
poor impinged on the concerns of the wealthy." PATTERSON 1992:16; WHITTAKER 1989:301-
333.
[479] SQUARCIAPINO 1955b:58.
[480] The earliest nucleus of the necropolis started by the time of Julius Caesar when a tomb was
built on the west side of a diverticulum (which Heinzelmann 2000a:44 calls Strasse XV)
connecting the necropolis of the Porta Romana to the via Laurentina. Several Augustan tombs
were then built around this sepulcher, forming a cluster of tombs which occupied most of the
northern side of the via Laurentina between the diverticulum from the Porta Romana and
Heinzelmann's Strasse X. Late Augustan tombs were also constructed along the western side of
Strasse XV across the via Laurentina.

guilds that existed at Ostia, and groups of tombs were for the first time built collectively.[481]

A few marble tags were recovered from the niches at Enclosure 1B although mostly out of context. Several did not contain any inscriptions, but one of them identified the owner of the tomb as a freedman from the family of the Volumnii. During this first period of occupation evidence was also found for inhumation, such as the two coffins found in Enclosure E (Fig. 28). The next phase (second and third centuries), however, is characterized by the prevalence of inhumation over cremation, as the marble and terracotta sarcophagi found in the *arcosolia* of enclosure 1B seem to indicate.[482] There is compelling evidence for the reutilization of the tombs for new inhumations; it include bone remains,[483] a general raising of the floor level, and new constructions inside the complex. This was also a common practice inside the Pianabella Basilica and in the via Laurentina necropolis more generally. The level of the tombs was raised at the via Laurentina in the third century A.D. to what is now the upper pavement level, and new tombs were built over the old ones. Dating the human remains found in Enclosure 1B was not difficult because the deceased were accompanied by the usual coin that Charon required as payment for one's crossing over the river Styx to the afterlife.[484] The coins come mostly from the time of Marcus Aurelius. That detail combined with the fact that this phase saw the overcrowding of the

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[481] HEINZELMANN 2001a:379.

[482] There is evidence for the coexistence for a while (end of the first and first half of the second centuries) of inhumation and cremation in tombs 1 and 4.

[483] Tomb 4 contains the burial of a woman. However, a clavicle and femur found *in situ* do not belong to her.

[484] The *viaticum* (i.e., the placing of a coin upon or in the mouth of the dead) was a surviving ancient custom that was frequently, if not invariably, practiced until the sixth century, after which it virtually disappeared. Cf. KOURKOUTIDOU-NICOLAIDOU 1997:129. This ancient practice was eventually assimilated into the reception of the Eucharist at death, a sign of the full membership of the recipient in the community of Christians. There was, in fact, a tendency to administer it even to corpses, a custom which PAXTON 1990:33 explains as a need for the comfort derived from a ritual action that maintained a connection with the practices of generations of men and women in antiquity.

sepulchral buildings with the consequent overflowing of depositions to the area surrounding the complex, is interpreted as tangible evidence for the plague that distressed Marcus Aurelius's reign.[485]

When inhumation became more popular, beginning in the second half of the first century A.D., newly-built tombs at Ostia displayed *arcosolia* along the wall where the corpses were either walled into the enclosure, or deposited in marble or terracotta sarcophagi (*arcae*). Cost-effective "tombe a cassone," entirely sealed up, and shaped like chests with semi-cylindrical roofs,[486] and "tombe a cappuccina" become common both at the via Ostiensis and the Isola Sacra. These tombs were usually equipped with libation pipes, a fact that shows the personal care that the family devoted to the deceased. The family paid frequent visits to the tombs for the purpose of banqueting and undertaking other social exchanges, to the point that Heinzelmann declares that

> avec les columbariums du début de l'époque impériale, la tombe perd sa fonction de moyen de communication qu'elle avait acquise dans la société extrêmement compétitive de la République tardive pour devenir un lieu de communication sociale. La raison de ce changement doit être cherchée dans la révolution politique et sociale fondamentale qui eut lieu au début de l'époque impériale et qui supprima la fonction de certains lieux de communication traditionels d'époque républicaine, en particulier celle du forum.[487]

It seems, therefore, that sepulchers and burial provisions at Pianabella do not depart significantly from the pool of possibilities seen at the other necropoleis at Ostia and Portus.

The earliest funerary monuments at Ostia, built at the Porta Romana in *opus quadratum* with tufa blocks, had a quadrangular plan. Some of them had *ustrina* (cremation chambers) attached to them. Others, whose access was only possible by means of wooden ladders, were closed on all sides, and the same

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[485] CARBONARA, PELLEGRINO & ZACCAGNINI 2001:142.
[486] VON HESBERG 1992:72-75.

space was used both for the cremation of the bodies and for the deposition of the ashes. According to Heinzelmann, from the time of Sulla, Roman tombs became more sophisticated than in the early Republic when the funerary procession was the focal setting for status display rather than the architectural layout.[488] Funerals attracted large crowds during Roman times. Fig. 29 shows that a good procession required a *designator* (to arrange for the cortège), *lictores* (to maintain the order), *tibicines* (or musicians), *praeficiae* (or professional mourners), *mimi* (or dancers), an *archimimus* (to personify the defunct), several people to bear the *imagines maiorum* (the wax masks that memorialized illustrious dead ancestors), a person to bear the tabula of deeds, people to carry the bier, *pileati* (or manumitted slaves), friends, heirs and relations.

By the early first century A.D., monumental tombs make their appearance, and Ostia's tomb typology broadens, including altar, circular, rectangular, and colonnaded tombs. Unfortunately, epigraphic commemoration remains lacunary. The typical sepulcher at Isola Sacra is the family, house tomb or chamber tomb with a square chamber – which sometimes included an anteroom.[489] It is in the second century that chamber tombs, mostly for inhumations, become the norm at Isola Sacra and the Porta Romana. A number of these were built by wealthy freedmen and observed the general structure of early-imperial *columbaria*.[490] The façades of chamber tombs were generally built in *opus latericium*, while the other sides of these sepulchers were constructed in *opus reticulatum*. As for the types of burial, the typical method at Isola Sacra in the second century A.D. is the so-

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[487] HEINZELMANN 2001a:381.

[488] HEINZELMANN 2001a:375.

[489] The term house tomb is common but now under debate. At Isola Sacra, the tombs lying closer to the road, on the west side, belong to the third century A.D. The oddity of having these more recent tombs closer to the road can be explained by the fact that they were built over a lower stratum that belongs to the end of the first century. The tombs on the east side of the road are less numerous and less well preserved.

[490] At the same time, several elaborately-decorated "podium tombs" with stylish façades are constructed which closely mimic religious architecture.

called "rito misto" in which there is a high niche for cremation and a low *arcosolium* for inhumation.[491] These are often supplemented by strata of *formae* with brick embankments, under the mosaic pavements, for more depositions. According to Pavolini, the builders made provision for these *formae* at the time of the construction of the tomb.[492] That required the mosaic pavements to be broken and repaired with each new entombment. From the third century A.D. on, only *arcosolia* were built, and by the fourth century only inhumations were current.[493]

At Isola Sacra, familial tombs often had chambers outfitted with brick couches (*klinai*), which were used for funeral banquets and burial. The high incidence of these couches at Isola Sacra contrasts with their relative absence from Rome.[494] The practice of funerary banquets also explains the presence of wells and ovens at the Isola Sacra tombs. While fear of death is surely present in ancient sources, it seems that the inhabitants of Ostia and Portus did not see the remembrance of their dead as a gloomy practice, since they made regular provision for the construction of these couches customarily used to celebrate

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[491] For a thorough discussion of burial rites at Isola Sacra, see ANGELUCCI *et al*. 1990:50-113.

[492] PAVOLINI 1988:262.

[493] The very poor who could not afford to build tombs at Isola Sacra interred their dead in the sand, leaving no other indication of the deposition but an amphora or a ring of amphorae. Elsewhere in the Roman world unmarked mass burials were common. Martial (*Epigrams* 8.75) stresses the anonymity and horror of a poor man's burial by describing a party of *vespillones* or corpse-bearers who carry a body to a cemetery receiving thousands of the same. On mass burials at Rome, see LE GALL 1980:148-152; PATTERSON 1992:16.

[494] In a short section that appears in ANGELUCCI *et al* 1990:62-70, Irene Bragantini gives a good summary on Isola Sacra *klinai*. According to her, they could be real couches (as in tomb 55, 69, 81, 92) or mere seats (*sedili*) abutting the façade (as in tombs 57, 86, 88, 90), the lateral walls (as in tomb 69) or the back wall (as in tomb 93), and they were mostly built outside the tombs (especially under Hadrian and Antoninus Pius), where round and square table supports are still extant. Because they generally abut the walls to which they are attached they were once thought to have been built after the construction of the tomb was complete, but archaeologists are now aware that was not the case. *Klinai* were generally not included in the tomb measurements given on the tomb inscriptions. Besides, they were seldom reused in a different tomb (as in tombs 55, 100). Finally, *klinai* were outwardly-oriented, which accounts for a great degree of reciprocal imitation as well as a considerable homogeneity among the tombs (especially at the Via Laurentina necropolis). But tombs at Isola Sacra were never made into trophies as it had been the case with some tombs from the Porta Romana necropolis (BOSCHUNG 1987), or as it would become customary in relation to the tombs of the Christian martyrs.

banquets for the dead, which happened at least three times a year.[495] The couches were generally placed in front of the tomb entrance together with benches for prayer and meditation, a practice which Baldassarre links to a common desire for ostentation.[496] There are remarkable differences between the Isola Sacra and the via Laurentina necropolis, especially regarding these provisions for banquets. A study recently conducted by Graham has shown that patrons at Isola Sacra used *biclinia* (double couches constructed outside the tombs), while those on the via Laurentina preferred *triclinia* (triple couches constructed inside the tombs).[497] According to Graham's analysis, since both *necropoleis* were mainly used by freedmen and their dependents, the positioning of the couches in the tombs would suggest that the Isola Sacra patrons may have been more ambitious than those from the necropolis on the via Laurentina, and therefore more inclined to outward displays of status.

The Absence of Funerary Couches and Grave Goods

At Pianabella, the only two features that differ markedly from the general picture of contemporary burials at other necropoleis at Ostia and Portus are, first, that there is a conspicuous absence of grave goods in the complex, and, secondly, that no couches for funeral banquets have been uncovered in the area. The absence of funerary couches at Pianabella does not signify, however, that funeral banquets did not take place at that necropolis. By the end of the second century, tombs at the other necropoleis of Ostia and Portus begin again to be geared towards the commemoration of individuals rather than groups, as funerary couches and hearths are no longer systematically built. Once more we see monumentality as a distinctive character just as it had been in Republican times,

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[495] "Giorni parentali o ferali nel febbraio, e la festa delle viole in marzo e aprile, e la festa delle rose nel giugno e luglio," CALZA 1940a:13.
[496] BALDASSARRE 2001:387; See also GRAHAM 2005:139-140.
[497] GRAHAM 2005:139-140.

and sarcophagi take on the character of show pieces. In the case of collective tombs, the most important burial is now placed where it can be noticeably displayed. All of this suggests that social hierarchy was once again strongly enforced even in the funerary realm. The family, which had been so important in the early Empire, seems to be losing its significance as a social group.[498] This tension between familial and broader forms of patronage will reappear by the time the Pianabella Basilica is built as we shall see in Chapter Five.

There is, however, another indication that the absence of funerary couches at the Pianabella necropolis does not mean that funerary banquets did not happen there. A recent study by Graham targeting masonry table supports from Isola Sacra (similar to those found in Pompeii) has shown that these had a different purpose from those from a domestic context, since their current location is beyond the reach of anyone reclining on the *biclinia*.[499] According to Graham, these masonry table supports worked as make-believe provisions to advertise banquets even where *biclinia* were missing and portable furniture were used instead. This suggests that permanent banquet provisions were being replaced by temporary or portable furniture.

Grave goods are few but they do exist. Quite close to the basilica, a square tomb lacking any pavement (which Morandi and Zaccagnini call Building 7)[500] recently revealed twenty-one inhumations mostly from the second century A.D.; they were arranged in a disorderly manner to take up all available space within the mausoleum (Fig. 30). Grave goods found *in situ* include a small urn, a jar made of very thin ceramic, a bone spatula, a lamp, a vase shaped like a piglet (associated with the cult of Hercules Victor, an important deity at Ostia), two second century coins, two terracotta figurines (one depicting the figure of a seated woman; and

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[498] HEINZELMANN 2000a:97ff; HEINZELMANN 2000b; HEINZELMANN 2001a:382.
[499] GRAHAM 2005:140-142.
[500] For a detailed description, see CARBONARA, PELLEGRINO & ZACCAGNINI 2001:144-145.

the other, a victorious charioteer), and, finally, a few funeral masks. Starting on the back wall of Building 7, another edifice – Building 6 – is worth mentioning on account of the several interments it contained (Fig. 31). These inhumations disrupted a beautiful floor pavement that included two black and white mosaics bearing Dionysiac and fish motifs.[501] Grave goods included coins from the time of Gallienus, bell-shaped objects (probably incensaries), and five turtle shells (probably dedications to Hermes-Mercury, deity responsible for guiding the souls to the afterlife).[502]

Social Level

Building 6 (Fig. 31) at the Pianabella necropolis is also important because an urn bearing an inscription (A 39) referring to the Egrilii, a prominent family at Ostia, was found in its Enclosure F in 1977.[503] Together with five other "Egrilian" fragments found in the basilica (A 37-38; 40-42) and two "Egrilian" *tituli* from the so-called Mausoleum L1 (Fig. 32),[504] it provides evidence for a higher social status for a few of the people buried in the necropolis or, at least lines of patronage to such families.[505] Burial was one of the privileges that patrons obtained for their clients. In fact, patrons used to build large tombs to house the remains not only of their natural families, but also of their household slaves, freedmen and their families. The tomb complex of the Statilii on the via

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[501] Dionysus riding a panther, and dolphins attacking an octopus, respectively.

[502] Cf. "Hymn to Hermes" 24ff.

[503] The inscription reads, *D(is) M(anibus) | EGRILIAE SPENI | PARENTES | FILIAE PIENTISSIMAE*. For a detailed analysis of the "Egrilian" inscriptions from Pianabella, see MORANDI 1982:70ff.

[504] For the *tituli* from Mausoleum L1, see MORANDI 1993:154. For inscription A 40, see also NUZZO 1996:50-51. For a discussion of the Egrilian inscriptions from Ostia, see BLOCH 1953:239-306.

[505] Patronage had its origin in the earliest days of the Republic and became an important means of gaining access to political power. In fact, the web of relations between patrons and clients – often defined as *amici* – generated a security-system that protected those involved in economic transactions and thus contributed to the smooth functioning of the economic system (cf. VERBOVEN 2002:226).

Praenestina – which contained the remains of over 700 people – illustrates how serious patrons were about offering their clients this benefit.[506] Patronage as a social relation was personal (not commercial), reciprocal, asymmetrical, and voluntary (that is, not legally enforced).[507] Patronage among Christians reflected the same concerns as it did among pagans and Jews: *collegia*, synagogues and Christian congregations performed the same duties of revering one or more deities, providing socialization by means of communal meals, and honoring one or more benefactors.[508] Thus, patronage for burials in the basilica suggests that the members of the Christian community at Pianabella were bound by the same social conventions as the ones binding the other Romans from Ostia.[509] Fictive kinship (defined by criteria distinct from those establishing blood or marriage relationships) was crucial for the maintenance of a patronage system throughout Roman history.[510] Fictive relationships serve to broaden mutual support networks, create a sense of community, and enhance social control.[511] The fact that the

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[506] PATTERSON 1992:18 doubts that the elite may have had a genuine concern for the decent burial of their dependents, and suggests that "an equally powerful motive may well have been the prestige to be obtained from the vast scale of the tomb (and by implication the master's household)." Conversely, GARNSEY & WOOLF 1989:153 think "that patronage played a crucial role" in the survival of the poor.

[507] SALLER 1982. See also GARNSEY & SALLER 1987.

[508] HARLAND 2003:177-212.

[509] Since Tacitus (*Histories* 1.4) implies that only a small proportion of the Roman *plebs* were closely tied to the great houses, PATTERSON 1992:19ff contends that although patronage and collective generosity may have been of vital importance in defining the position of the *plebs* at Rome, they were likely to have been of limited importance in providing burial, except where very close personal or legal ties bound together the patron and the deceased. According to him, *collegia* and the family were the two main forces behind burials. However, he also acknowledges the fact that the self-governing nature of *collegia* did not exclude them altogether from the structures of patronage. Many of the clubs appointed patrons, who reciprocated by giving the clubs benefactions (p. 21).

[510] JOHNSON & DANDEKER 1989:231.

[511] According to WAGNER 1995, fictive relationships may mimic the ties they copy, but they are defined in their own terms and may have a religious or economic component, be predicated on existing social networks, or manipulate reality to fill gaps in real kinship networks: in essence, it elaborates social networks and regularizes interactions with people otherwise outside the boundaries of family.

Christian community at Pianabella could be seen as a "family" provided the same kind of background against which patronage could easily thrive.[512]

The scarcity of grave goods from Pianabella suggests a much lower social status than we see at the other necropoleis at Ostia and Portus. The necropolis at the Porta Romana consisted of sepulchers outfitted with rich fittings, while the quality and quantity of grave goods betrayed the high status of the people to whom they belonged.[513] In the late Republic this necropolis was mainly comprised of two small clusters of tombs. The first one lay immediately adjacent to the city walls southeast of the city gate, while the other one was located east of the first cluster, with several depositions along the via Ostiensis separating them.[514] The social level of these graves is generally high. Isola Sacra, on the other hand, was a middle class cemetery occupied especially by artisans and specialists from the different trades; as the inscriptions and terracotta reliefs placed on the tomb façades inform us.[515] Even when the inscriptions betray a foreign or provincial origin for the deceased, they are written in Latin and often invoke Roman laws that prohibit the violation of the sepulchers.[516] If we look at

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[512] The challenge of distinguishing patronage from *amicitia* is a common one, particularly given the euphemistic use of *amicitia* to refer to a patron/client association among the elite (especially in the Republic), and very often a patron's *amici* were drawn from his family relations.

[513] Remains of the funerary couches (*lecti funebres*) on which corpses were carried to be burnt along with the shrouds that covered them were found in several of the Porta Romana tombs (HEINZELMANN 2001a:375).

[514] Cf. HEINZELMANN 2000a:34-36.

[515] CALZA 1940a gives an animated picture of Isola Sacra. According to him (p. 12), "è una città di umile gente laboriosa ed attiva. Più che la tragedia della Morte balza su da queste rovine la trama della vita d'ogni giorno della piccola borghesia e della plebe anonima a cui il diuturno lavoro non può dare immense ricchezze, ma un tranquillo benessere. Questi Portuensi sono piccoli armatori, modesti commercianti, bottegai, lavoratori del porto, comandanti di navi, funzionari dell'Annona addetti agli Uffici portuali, facchini, scaricatori, venuti d'ogni parte del mondo ormai tutto romano. È una piccola borghesia che vive qui la sua vita d'oltre tomba insieme con i suoi servi, i suoi liberti e le sue liberte in una concordia patriarcale che dura oltre l'esistenza terrena a onore e gloria della famiglia romana."

[516] In fact, Isola Sacra provides, together with the Vatican cemetery, the most comprehensive evidence for Roman middle-class burials. The details of the architecture and ornamentation of the tombs in the two *necropoleis* are roughly the same: doorways, window-types, polychrome intarsia, etc. However, the two cemeteries display some noteworthy differences: the Vatican tombs are

the evidence coming from the via Laurentina necropolis, we notice that the social level there is in step with that from the Isola Sacra or, maybe a little lower.[517] The via Laurentina is a necropolis reserved almost exclusively for *liberti*, especially those from prominent families, such as the Manlii, Iulii, Nonni and Volusii. In imperial times such *liberti* often amassed vast fortunes. For this reason it is not difficult to perceive how the tombs became more and more sophisticated as the years passed, starting as very modest tumuli whose funerary monument was contained by the sepulchral enclosure, and soon becoming more complex tombs, which included both *ustrina* and *busta*, that is, locations for cremation and deposition, respectively. The family *ustrinum* was removed from later family tombs, the body was no longer being cremated near its place of deposition, but some of the "Claudian" tombs at the via Laurentina still have them.[518] At Pianabella, however, the quality and number of grave goods as well as the epigraphic evidence from the necropolis suggest that it served individuals from the lower middle class – mainly freedmen and people of foreign stock. The only elements that seem to contradict such conclusion, as we shall see below, consist of the semi-monumental nature of the Pianabella Basilica and the presence, in the area of the basilica, of a great number of marble sarcophagi of very good craftsmanship and a few inscriptions (A 37-42) that make reference to the Egrilii.

I will argue that the construction of the Pianabella Basilica made the area in and around this necropolis into an important entrepôt for the Christians residing

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more compact in layout (on account of the constraints of limited space due to higher land values), their decoration is slightly more sophisticated, they lack the flanking benches that are common at Isola Sacra, and their preference is for cross-vaults instead of the barrel-vaults in general use in the Isola. Besides, tomb pediments are not extant in the Vatican cemetery.

[517] HEINZELMANN 2000a, the *locus classicus* for studies on the via Laurentina necropolis, has received strong criticism in regards to his reading of the epigraphic evidence. MOURITSEN 2004 has shown, for instance, that the freeborn population had little interest in the necropolis and that the epigraphic habit was a typical (although marginal) behavior of freedmen. Despite that limitation, Heinzelmann's assessment of the predominantly freedman character of the necropolis remains unchallenged.

[518] PAVOLINI 1988:238.

in the outskirts of Ostia whether in *villae* in close proximity to the ocean or in small farms, or making use of *thermae* and gardens. This commercial and leisure environment connected to a cemetery would not be out of the ordinary at all at Ostia since some scholars suppose that something similar may have happened at Isola Sacra. Although very little is known of how Isola Sacra was used while Ostia was flourishing, the artificial island must not have been restricted to cemeterial use. It would be strange if this fertile area on the doorstep of two towns had not been put to good use in helping to feed their populations.[519] Besides, commercial buildings found there in the 1960s confirm the possibility of alternative uses.[520] Excavations by Ricci (in 1961 and 1963) and Zevi (in 1968) revealed a whole commercial block south of the Isola (along the Fiumara Grande) – a sort of "Trastevere ostiense" – as well as a group of edifices for industrial use.[521] The buildings they found date to the first, second and third centuries A.D. and are contemporaneous with the earliest utilization of the necropolis. In fact, other excavators have confirmed this alternative use of Isola Sacra. Rinaldi's systematic exactions in the late 1960s disclosed there a large thermal complex associated with the Basilica of S. Ippolito, and showed the existence then of a bridge – the *Pons Matidiae* – and of port facilities with the same type of design as that of the Trajanic harbor complex.[522]

A Different Kind of Patronage

Since the presence of Christian burials is only marginally attested in the chief cemeteries of Ostia, this suggests that these cemeteries represented a

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[519] BRADFORD 1957:248.
[520] PAVOLINI 1988:258.
[521] ERMINI 1971:243; HEINZELMANN 2002:103-122. The new DAI satellite plans show, in fact, more "city" of Ostia on the Transtiberian side, i. e., on Isola Sacra.
[522] ERMINI 1971:243.

substratum in which Christianity was able to make little headway.[523] Or else, that the Christians buried there did not feel compelled or did not have the means to advertise their religious faith through epigraphy and iconography. This is especially true of the *necropoleis* of Isola Sacra and Pianabella. Isola Sacra housed the Basilica of S. Ippolito, the bishopric of Portus, and, for that reason, is often thought to have early become an important Christian district at Portus.[524] But since after the third century A.D., the tombs at Isola Sacra were simply reoccupied, very little remains to indicate any explicit Christian presence there, except for four inscriptions and a sarcophagus.[525] The same lack of evidence for Christian burials can be observed in early tombs at Pianabella.

From the third century on, new tombs in the traditional necropoleis at Ostia and Portus ceased to be built and old tombs began to fall in disuse. With the local growth of Christianity, churches tended to grow up near the traditional necropoleis, just as at Pianabella. In fact, the Basilica Sanctae Aureae was built just east of the necropolis at Porta Romana.[526] Christian burials developed in the fourth century A.D. over this pre-existing pagan cemetery, and became the burial grounds traditionally associated with St Aurea and St Monica. The inscription

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[523] This is not the same as arguing from silence, since the Christian clergy were soon to become "impresarios of ritual" (cf. PAXTON 1990:4).

[524] PAVOLINI 1988:258.

[525] A Christian sarcophagus was recovered from the east side of the road (which accommodates fewer tombs). It portrays Christ and the apostles, the latter being depicted as shepherds. As we can see, despite the fact that Isola Sacra is the most impressive burial grounds in the area of Ostia and Portus, it is by no means a significant source for Christian evidence at Portus. In fact, most of the Christian inscriptions from Portus come from a necropolis on the north side of Trajan's canal, near its junction with the Tiber. This Christian cemetery of Portus was discovered in the 1800s in an area which is now known as Capo Due Rami, and which has been traditionally associated with the Basilica of SS. Eutropius, Zosima and Bonosa. Since it has never been excavated, the history of the development of this necropolis is somewhat mysterious to us. It probably developed some time in the third or fourth century, since we have literary attestation for its existence as early as the fifth century A.D. when the cosmographer Ethicus referred to a *Praedium Missale* in that very location. As we have already seen, the abundance of Christian inscriptions from that necropolis suggests that the presence of Christianity at Portus was stronger than at Ostia. For more details regarding this necropolis, see PAVOLINI 1988:259.

[526] EPISCOPO 1980:228-232; see also FÉVRIER 1958:295-330; FROMMEL 1989:491-505.

CHRYSe HIC DORMit was retrieved from this funerary area in 1981 among a pile of marble slabs. It is not possible, however, to determine whether the Aurea mentioned in it is the Christian martyr or a homonymous lady who was buried there in the late third or early fourth century.[527] The necropolis of S. Aurea is closely associated, first, with the necropolis of the via Ostiensis from which it can hardly be told apart, and, also, with the Pianabella necropolis, which provides a link between that cemetery and the burial grounds near the via Laurentina.[528] In fact, the necropolis of the via Laurentina is so intimately connected with the necropolis of Pianabella, that together they form a metroplex for the dead. That explains why we also find Christian burials in the former although it is a predominantly pagan cemetery. Marinucci lists two Christian inscriptions that were recovered from the necropolis of the via Laurentina.[529] Unfortunately, they are fragments bearing very little information.

The Basilica of Pianabella

To date, the Pianabella basilica is our clearest evidence for Christianity at Ostia. Many of the other supposed pieces of evidence are circumstantial at best – as I discussed in Chapter Two – and give us no real evidence for how the Christians fit in the religious topography of the city. While the other newly discovered basilicas – such as the Constantinian basilica will eventually supply other, equally important data, to fill out this picture, they are as yet only barely excavated. Thus they cannot tell us as much yet. The Pianabella basilica is also very important, as I will show, for giving us evidence of the ways that emergent Christianity began to fit in, and eventually take over, Ostian society in the late

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[527] MAZZOLENI 2001:285.
[528] MARINUCCI 1991:76-77.
[529] Marinucci's inscriptions nº. 27 and 28. The former inscription is arguably Christian, since it reads, *foRTVNatus | HIC· DOrmit | · IN· PACE*, but the latter may be – for that matter – pagan. It displays no overtly Christian wording or iconography.

antique period, especially by means of its cooptation of an existing pagan necropolis and a delicate, creative balance of continuity and transformation. My thesis is that the Pianabella Basilica allowed Christians at Ostia to replicate many of the funerary and social functions commonly associated with the Roman family tombs, working simultaneously as a place for burial, for recalibrating social roles, and for creating community, as we shall see in Chapter Five.

Location and Topography

The Cemeterial Basilica of Pianabella occupied an area of the southern necropolis – that of the via Laurentina –, about 300 m from the Porta Laurentina and along a through street that crossed the necropolis from east to west and which merged again into the via Laurentina near the Claudian tombs (Fig. 1 and 2). The level of this street was raised several times from the mid fourth to the early seventh century.[530]

The edifice was erected in a period when there was still not much uniformity in the construction of Christian basilicas. Built at the end of the fourth or – more likely – in the beginning of the fifth century A.D., it belongs, in fact, to a period when that uniformity was starting to show, but it shows no evidence yet of any marked influence from St Peter's.[531] The theory according to which the history of western European church architecture could only be represented as a logical development from the models established in Rome by Constantine is now generally believed to be mistaken.[532] Fortunately, our understanding of this time

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[530] PAROLI 1993:153-176.

[531] So, we see no evidence, there, of the existence of a transept, a raised presbytery, or a *Confessio*. In fact, between the beginning of the fifth century and the last years of the eighth, there is not one single case of a church, either in Rome or somewhere else, which can be shown to have been imitative of the great fourth-century Basilicas of St Peter and St Paul. Cf. KRAUTHEIMER 1942:1-38; TOYNBEE & WARD-PERKINS 1957:241.

[532] TOYNBEE & WARD-PERKINS 1957:240 and the last chapter of this Dissertation.

period of basilica construction has increased considerably since the 1950s due to a significant number of new discoveries.[533]

The basilica lay alongside the roadway commonly known as via "basolata" connecting the via Laurentina to the via Severiana (Fig. 1 and 2). It was oriented on a west-east axis with its apse on the west end. The building was 43.3 m long (including the narthex) and 16.2 m wide; its apse projected 2.8 m from the exterior west wall (Fig. 32). A narrow quadrangular forecourt measuring 10 m in width extended 12 m farther to the east. The excavators noticed that a considerable difference in height existed between the foundations of the north and south walls of the building due to the slope of the terrain (1.92 m for the northern side, and 2.55 m for the southern side).[534] The architect of the basilica adjusted for this by constituting another level inside the *aula* by means of an earthen fill. That contrivance was very fortunate for us since not only did it spare the builders the labor of excavating the excess from the terrain, but also avoided the demolition of the *mausolea* that preexisted in the area as well as the wearisome removal of the debris that would result from such a task. Instead, according to common practice, the architect chose to build on top of the existing *mausolea* and subdivide the

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[533] According to TOLOTTI 1982:153-154, "le scoperte avvenute intorno al 1950 mutarono del tutto le nostre opinioni sulle basiliche romane della prima metà del IV secolo… Per contro, quasi a compensare questa perdita di uniformità, emersero cinque grandi basiliche con una stessa fisionomia molto singolare, o meglio, si individuarono quattro edifici assai somiglianti alla basilica di S. Sebastiano sulla via Appia, già conosciuta da tempo... Queste basiliche sono tutte suburbane, sicchè possiamo enumerarle secondo l'ordine in cui si incontrano ruotando lo sguardo intorno a Roma nel senso antiorario, a partire dalla via più famosa:
1. *Basilica Apostolorum* o di S. Sebastiano, sulla via Appia;
2. *Basilica ad duas lauros* o dei SS. Marcellino e Pietro, sulla via Labicana;
3. Basilica anonima, sulla via Prenestina;
4. Basilica di S. Lorenzo, sulla via Tiburtina;
5. Basilica di S. Agnese, sulla via Nomentana.
La loro caratteristica più appariscente è quella di possedere un deambulatorio che gira intorno all'abside, larga, esattamente o quasi, quanto la nave maggiore, e sono perciò denominate anche 'circiformi' o 'a esedra'."
[534] GIORDANI 1979:240; 1982:86, fig. 16.

terrain in order to attain more adhesion for the filling that he used to piece it together.

Excavation History

Official excavations in 1976 and 1977 unearthed the Basilica of Pianabella. This first campaign, directed by Alessandro Morandi, targeted the basilica – whose boundaries had practically been determined by previous surveys – and the surrounding necropolis. A second campaign, this time under the direction of R. Giordani and Morandi, focused on the basilica and the contiguous *mausolea*. The immediate reason for the second campaign was the need to restore and protect the structures brought to light by the first campaign.[535] Unfortunately, rigorous stratigraphic method was not observed during these two campaigns. As a result, they partially aided our understanding of the site but forever hindered our full comprehension of it. To be fair, even prior to these excavations widespread plundering had irremediably contaminated the site; however, the lack of a rigorous stratigraphy certainly made things worse. A third campaign, which comprised the interior and the exterior of the basilica, took place in 1981, but very little of it has yet been published. After this third season, clandestine excavations led to the spoliation of many ancient sarcophagi, which – at that time – still remained *in situ*. It is only possible to allocate them within the basilica because just the figured part of the sarcophagi was generally removed, while the remainder was left in place. Most of the damage happened inside the building, whose original stratigraphy was severely compromised.

A fourth campaign was then undertaken in 1988 and 1989 under the direction of Lidia Paroli in order to determine as much as possible the stratigraphy of the entire area. The campaign revealed a quadrangular structure outfitted with a well, which the excavators called an *atrium,* but which is in fact only a forecourt,

if we take Eusebius' definition of an *atrium* as being a structure occupying the space leading to the entrances in front of a church, and comprehending, first the court, then the porticoes on each side, and lastly the gates of the court (*Vita Const.* 3.39). So, for Eusebius, an *atrium* was a rectangular space, open to the sky, lying before the church, edged by porticoes on two to four sides and entered through a gateway placed on a longitudinal axis of church and *atrium*.[536]

Findings were not restricted to the context of the basilica. Lauro informs us of the discovery in Pianabella of a monumental tomb (Fig. 33) dating to the end of the second or the beginning of the third century A.D., which is very similar to those from the other *necropoleis* of Ostia.[537] This carefully-planned tomb was found by clandestine excavators between the via del Mare, the via di Castel Fusano and the Canale dello Stagno, but at a considerable distance from the necropolis proper. Its not-so-good state of preservation can be explained by the

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[535] MORANDI 1982:69.

[536] According to Eusebius (translated by McGiffert), "when one comes within the gates he [Paulinus, Bishop of Tyre] does not permit him to enter the sanctuary immediately, with impure and unwashed feet; but leaving as large a space as possible between the temple and the outer entrance, he has surrounded and adorned it with four transverse cloisters, making a quadrangular space with pillars rising on every side, which he has joined with lattice-work screens of wood, rising to a suitable height; and he has left an open space in the middle, so that the sky can be seen, and the free air bright in the rays of the sun. Here he has placed symbols of sacred purifications, setting up fountains opposite the temple which furnish an abundance of water wherewith those who come within the sanctuary may purify themselves. This is the first halting-place of those who enter; and it furnishes at the same time a beautiful and splendid scene to every one, and to those who still need elementary instruction a fitting station," *Panegyric on the Building of the Churches*, oration preserved in Eusebius' *Historia ecclesiastica* 10.4 and delivered at the dedication of Paulinus' new church in Tyre. However, the *atrium* was far from being a characteristic element of early Christian architecture. According to ALEXANDER 1973:3ff, we can only document seven instances of *atria* in the Constantinian period: at the double cathedrals of Trier and Constantinople, St Peter's at Rome, the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem, the Holy Sepulcher and the Eleona Basilica on the Mount of Olives at Jerusalem, and the cathedral of Tyre. An eighth possibility is the first St Paul Without the Walls at Rome. However, "scarce though the *atrium* appears to be in a statistical view, its presence is widespread. It is found in the East and the West, prefixing cathedrals (Trier, Constantinople, Jerusalem, and Bethlehem). It is found primarily in buildings of imperial patronage… the *atrium* was more common to Constantinian churches in the eastern half of the Empire, while its poor relative, the forecourt, may have appeared with greater frequency in Rome" (p. 34).

[537] LAURO 1983.

intense agricultural activity in the region. Many other tombs, however, are yet to be excavated north of the basilica – some of which lie under the modern railway.

New campaigns in 1996-1998 focused on the tombs north of the road, the southwest side of the necropolis, and the area of the basilica. These latest campaigns were brief interventions in order to recover grave-goods threatened by spoliation, and to collect topographic data to help us better our understanding of the site. Italian archaeologists call such efforts "campagne effettuati per motivi di emergenza e tutela."[538] The excavations under the direction of Lidia Paroli greatly improved our knowledge of the site's stratigraphy (estimated at being then at 30% of the original layout),[539] but she regrets the fact that the work of restoration failed to make better use of several details she then found as indicative of important features of the basilica.[540]

Description

The Pianabella Basilica had a simple structure but its conspicuous dimensions correspond to the coeval basilicas from Rome.[541] This large Christian basilica had a longitudinal plan, which included an aula or nave, a semicircular apse, a narthex or portico, and a forecourt (Fig. 32). *Opera latericia* from earlier tombs were utilized for the foundations while the walls were built in *opus listatum* with a pozzolana mortar of excellent quality.[542] The aula was its only part to have been entirely built *ex novo* in *opus listatum mixtum A*. This kind of masonry consisted of alternating oblong tufa courses and brick bands where the tufa blocks were usually rather well cut. This kind of *opus listatum* made its main appearance

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[538] For more details, see CARBONARA, PELLEGRINO & ZACCAGNINI 2001:140.
[539] Cf. COCCIA & PAROLI 1990:177.
[540] Cf. private conversation in 07/19/2003 at the Museo del Alto Medioevo, in Rome. Reconstruction of most of the basilica's south perimetric wall, for instance, would have been possible, because its original form could have been reclaimed from its collapsed remains. Cf. COCCIA & PAROLI 1990.
[541] PAROLI 1993:157.

in the third and fourth century, but was common from the early third century throughout late antiquity. Part of the narthex and the entire forecourt made use of previously existing structures.[543] The excavators found no evidence for the existence of a baptistery at Pianabella. Early Christian baptisteries were originally used only for the sacrament of baptism, and there was generally only one baptistery in a city, since the rite was administered only at the three great Christian festivals: Easter, Pentecost, and the Epiphany – for which reason baptisteries had to be of considerable size.[544] In view of the fact that the larger Basilica *intra Muros* at Ostia was equipped with a baptistery (Fig. 15),[545] it is not odd that Pianabella lacked one.[546] Besides, Pianabella was a cemeterial basilica and not a "regular church" where Eucharist and baptism were held.

The basilica's forecourt lacked porticoes proper, and its entryway was far from having a monumental character. The forecourt was relatively free of depositions, except for those that had happened in the mausolea that preceded the construction of the basilica and lay beneath it.[547] The basilica also lacked a precinct or a wall structure enveloping both the forecourt and the entire basilical complex, a feature that was far more common in early Christian architecture than the *atrium*.[548] Accordingly, Pianabella belongs to the category of churches that are outfitted with simple courts such as S. Sebastiano and S. Agnese in Rome.[549]

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[542] PAROLI 1993:153-176.
[543] COCCIA & PAROLI 1990:177.
[544] FLETCHER 1924:208.
[545] Cf. *supra*.
[546] Until the end of the sixth century baptisteries usually adjoined the atrium or forecourt of the church, but after that they were replaced by a font in the church vestibule.
[547] PAROLI 1993:153-176.
[548] A precinct is found in the Holy Sepulcher at Jerusalem, at the double cathedrals of Trier and Constantinople, at the Church at the Well of Abraham at Mamre, at St John in the Lateran (the so-called Basilica Constantiniana at Rome), at Church of the Holy Apostles at Constantinople and at the New Church (the so-called Golden Octagon) at Antioch, among others (cf. ALEXANDER 1971:284ff).
[549] The Pianabella Basilica does not even fit the conventional description of an early Christian basilica – often described as "an edifice consisting of a nave, and two or four aisles separated from

Most of the building's extant perimetric walls lie on a level inferior to that of the pavement. This means that the wall footings that remain were below the floor level, and explains why an entrance threshold has never been found, since it would probably be located on a higher plane than that of the remaining walls. The collapse of the aula's south wall did not entirely obliterate its original shape.[550] The excavators found at least half of it lying flat on the ground and were able to identify four of its windows.[551] Based on the wall footings, the length of the whole wall (including the narthex) can be determined. The collapsed south wall still retained 22 m of its original length (43.3 m). This wall also suggests that the building must have been at least 10 m high. Thus, even though the remaining standing walls are so low the architecture is clear – except for the roof.

Giordani supposes that faint traces of a threshold can be seen on the façade wall (*ca*. 6 m from the exterior edge of the northern perimetric wall).[552] The remains of the building's west wall suggest the existence of a secondary door on its northernmost section (Fig. 34). This west wall abuts a first or second-century-A.D. reticulate wall at the point where the apse projects the most (seen on the foreground of Fig. 35 and 36). The *opus reticulatum* certainly belonged to a pre-existing structure and was used to provide additional support for the semicircular wall of the apse. Since no excavations were undertaken west of the Basilica, it is not possible to hypothesize about the exact nature of the building to which the reticulate wall belonged except that it must have had a funerary function.

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one another by rows of columns, a transept and an apse" (KRAUTHEIMER 1939:127). In Pianabella, we find only two of the four elements present in Krautheimer's definition: the nave and the apse.

[550] The south wall collapsed outwardly, while the north wall collapsed inwardly.

[551] Cf. COCCIA & PAROLI 1990:177-181, fig. 5-6.

[552] GIORDANI 1979:240.

While substantial evidence for the original pavement has been recovered (most of which consists of reused material),[553] nothing seems to indicate either the existence of columns in the *aula* or its division in naves. But it is certain that the *aula* contained an outsized funerary enclosure measuring 12.15 m x 4.7 m – coaxial with the basilica – whose western, slightly curvilinear extremity coincided with the apse (Fig. 37). The perimetric walls of this enclosure – which lay on a slightly higher level than the rest of the *aula* – were 0.65 m thick while the walls of its internal divisions were 0.25 m thick. It contained four levels of twenty-five tombs, each measuring 1.8 m x 0.5 m. Several sarcophagi were placed along the perimetric walls inside the basilica, while the narthex is the area with the second highest incidence of tombs.[554] This was a common phenomenon in early Christianity, although no satisfactory explanations have yet been advanced to account for the fact.

Few tombs in the basilica date from a period later than the late sixth century. Most of these lay near the funerary enclosure or in the narthex. After the eighth century, continuous reuse of tombs becomes the norm. Thus, the density of early medieval burials is much higher than that for late antique interments, although late antique tombs are much more numerous than those built in early medieval times.

Masonry and Spoliation

As it was typical of the period throughout Ostia, all of the walls from the basilica were built with reused material, especially tufelli. No new bricks were

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[553] This includes three large, thick slabs placed from west to east near the façade, and other smaller, thinner slabs in close proximity (one of which is the fragment of a figured sarcophagus depicting the myth of Orpheus – found in a reversed position), cf. GIORDANI 1979:240-242. See also PAROLI 1993.

[554] COCCIA & PAROLI 1990:180.

found either in the extant structures or in the collapsed remains.[555] The foundations were the only part of the edifice to have been built in *opus latericium* because they were comprised of previously existing structures. Most of the walls were of an *opus listatum* with different types of inclusions. To deduce from the remains of the collapsed walls, the quality of the *opus listatum* decreased with height. That suggests that those commissioning the building were only preoccupied with better-quality masonry at eye level where low-quality masonry could be easily detected through inconsistencies in the revetment. The pavement in the basilica also comes from spoliation, especially marble taken from other buildings of Ostia. The inferior quality of the masonry on the upper walls and the prevalence of *spolia* in the pavement suggest that these Christians were making a remarkable effort in order to claim a higher social status than they actually enjoyed.

Brick samples taken from the area of the basilica included bricks from all occupation phases of the site, only some of which bear stamps.[556] Brickstamps occur mostly in the material serving as lids to the late-antique *formae* and "tombe a cappuccina".[557] These very fragmentary bricks, which came mainly from the spoliation of the earlier *mausolea*, are difficult to date because there seem to have been no criteria for their selection and reutilization. That means that the stamps are datable, but the period of their reuse is not. Less fragmentary bricks were used to face walls while more fragmentary ones were included in the mortar.[558] Their

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[555] TOMMASI 1999:327.

[556] However, "non è possibile dimostrare la presenza di laterizi medioevali," cf. TOMMASI 1999:327.

[557] Fifteen tile stamps come from the funerary enclosure; twelve brickstamps come from tombs in the *aula*, narthex, *atrium* or the so-called "strada basolata." Only six brickstamps come from the perimetric walls while other twenty-eight come from somewhere else, cf. TOMMASI 1999:335. This distribution is obviously fortuitous and can be explained with reference to the intense reutilization of bricks due to spoliation, especially because brickstamps tend to appear in the structures that demanded the use of bricks that were intact.

[558] Usually, it is not possible to determine whether these brick fragments come from *sesquipedales*, *bipedales* or *bessales*.

variation in color – from pink to orange or yellow – had no decorative purpose. In fact, the material from which these bricks were made was very homogeneous.[559] The same can be said of the tiles recovered from the area of the basilica. Coming mostly from the collapse of the roof of the building and from the structures covering the *formae*, they are as fragmentary and therefore as difficult to date, especially because they generally lack stamps or any other epigraphic contents. Typologically, they can be related to the average tiles used in Roman times, but no post-Constantinian material has yet been found in the site.[560]

Architectural Adaptations

The space inside the aula underwent considerable reorganization for liturgical and funerary purposes. Paroli ascribes these adaptations to the early fifth century, maybe as a second phase of the initial construction.[561] Whether we accept a construction date in the late fourth or early fifth century, it seems that the exterior shell was built in the first phase while the interior organization took place in the second phase. Another possibility is that a prominent person in the community died, and the funerary enclosure was built to incorporate his or her interment as a main burial in the apse. That person perhaps was the individual by whose benefaction the building was built. About one hundred *formae* gradually occupied the available slots during the fifth and sixth centuries. In fact, most of the burials inside the aula belong to this time period. They generally consist of *formae* for multiple burials, which had been plundered before the excavations in the late 1980s. A similar fate befell the sarcophagi once occupying the aula.

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[559] Inclusions were consistent with the shoddily depurated clay, and were used as weight-reducers, cf. TOMMASI 1999:332.

[560] According to TOMMASI 1999:330, "le maggior parte delle tegole rinvenute corrispondono al tipo classico noto in età romana, caratterizzato cioè dalle notevoli dimensioni, le alette alte e espesse, rifinite a mano nel profilo, il cui spessore va diminuendo verso uno dei lati corti della tegola; in prossimità del lato opposto invece le alette sono rifinite con una risega verticale che permetteva l'incastro delle tegole poste in opera."

To the later fifth century belongs also an inscription alluding to building activity undertaken by bishop Bellator, who is mentioned in a letter from Pope Gelasius (A.D. 494-495). Inscription A 184 reads, *in n(omine) do]M(i)N(i) N(ostri) BELLATOR EPISC · FECIT*. The inscription – found in 1988 – was broken into three fragments (two of which were found near the center of the aula), and has been linked to a small epistyle, but there is no evidence as to the extent of the renovation.[562]

All other renovations belong to medieval times.[563] The basilica's south wall received a new facing in the late sixth or early seventh century. This work is contemporaneous with a new enclosure built in the aula. At the same time or a little afterwards, the façade of the narthex received a new mosaic, and the apse was decorated with two colonnettes ornamented with frescoes. The colonnettes were found together with the fragments of a *mensa* in a pit for *spolia* flanking the main burial in the funerary enclosure.[564] The relation between the colonnettes and the apse can be established because of the remains of the structures used to embed the colonnettes in the upper part of the walls. The building was finally abandoned in the early half of the eleventh century but no new burials happen after the ninth century. This was probably due to the impending collapse of the building, as the attempts to buttress the wall structure by sealing the windows seem to suggest.

Pottery

Unfortunately, most of the pottery retrieved from the Pianabella Basilica and surrounding area belongs to medieval times. Based on stratigraphy and style,

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[561] PAROLI 1993:153-176.
[562] Inv. n. 47796.
[563] Cf. PAROLI 1993:153-176.
[564] SANTAGATA 1981:11; GIORDANI 1982:83; COCCIA & PAROLI 1990:181; PAROLI 1993:153-176. I use the term *spolia* broadly, as the reuse or recycling of objects. This definition derives from Kinney's important work on the problems of defining and understanding *spolia* (KINNEY 1995:53-67; KINNEY 1997:117-148). See also EISNER 2000:149-184.

Patterson has classified Pianabella's medieval pottery into three main groups.[565] The first group is comprised of sixty-seven fragments of seventh- to early eighth-century fine, African pottery found in the atrium. Most of these are achromic fragments with no decoration, among which we find a few fragments of transport amphorae, suggesting the existence of a small network for grain commerce in the Pianabella area. The second group includes 535 fragments from the late eighth century, found in the area surrounding the basilica. Most of these can be broadly identified as achromic Italian ware. The third group includes 1784 fragments (about 80% of which with no decoration) from the early ninth century. Achromic pottery still is the most representative type, whereas the construction of a local kiln may account for the large number of fragments from this period.[566]

Despite the fact that most of the Pianabella pottery come from medieval times, Ciarrochi has been able to study fragments of fine red-glaze pottery from Pianabella dating from the mid fifth to the early sixth century. This scholar's analysis included a corpus of 312 red-glaze kitchenware and tableware fragments. Eighty percent of these represented "closed ware," while thirteen percent represented "open ware" such as cups. The fragments attest to production in a local kiln, but a few fragments of pottery imported from Africa were also found.[567] Pottery with painted decoration also appears alongside fragments of slipped vessels from the sixth to seventh centuries.[568]

Conclusion

The Basilica of Pianabella and its accompanying necropolis formed a Christian burial environment which developed as a continuation of a Roman graveyard which we now know as the via Laurentina necropolis. Stratified

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[565] PATTERSON 1993:219-231.
[566] PATTERSON 1993:229.
[567] CHIARROCHI 1995:231-239.
[568] ARTHUR & PATTERSON 1994:409-441.

entombment and the systematic raising of the ground level facilitated the utilization of the site over a long period of time. The analysis of the archaeological remains of the basilica and of the detailed description provided in the *Scavi* allows us to reach several conclusions concerning the building and its archaeological context.[569] Firstly, there is much continuity between Pianabella and the via Laurentina necropolis. Secondly, the study of the site has been compromised by deficient stratigraphy and poor reconstruction. Thirdly, this Christian building and churchyard originated due to the intense spoliation of the older tombs and the reuse by the Pianabella Christians of funerary structures, sarcophagi and other material. Fourthly, the site underwent relentless plundering. Fifthly, the social level of depositions at Pianabella is generally lower than or equal to the level of depositions at the other necropoleis of Ostia.[570] Finally, the absence of funerary couches at Pianabella does not preclude patrons to have held funerary banquets at the necropolis.

The hierarchy of the six categories listed in these conclusions places them in either one of two dimensions, the first one referring to the conditions affecting the excavations (limiting factors) and the other one pertaining to the phenomenon under study (generalizing factors). Deficient stratigraphy, ancient/medieval spoliation, and modern plundering imposed limitations to the excavation process while continuity from Roman times, low social status, and alternative forms of funerary banquets are acceptable generalizations concerning the funerary evidence from Pianabella.

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[569] Thanks to the kind permission of the Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici di Ostia and the resources provided by Dr. Anna Gallina Zevi, Dr. Elizabeth Shepherd, Dr. Lidia Paroli and Dr. Simona Pannuzi (which included the provision of plans, photographs and staff support), I had the opportunity to carry on prospection and photographic work at the site in July 2003. My gratitude to Dr. Joanne Spurza from the Department of Classics and Oriental Studies at New York City University for providing me with invaluable guidance in this endeavor, to Mr. Marco Romani for accompanying us while we examined the site, and to the Ostia Masonry Analysis Project (OSMAP) for funding my work at Ostia.
[570] Obviously, the depositions at the Porta Romana necropolis have a much higher social status.

Chapter Four: Pianabella and Its Dead – The Evidence from Sarcophagi and Inscriptions

The Basilica of Pianabella shares with the Vatican basilica the characteristic that they were both built on top of and contiguous to pagan necropoleis. But differently from St Peter's, it was primarily built for funerary purposes and, for that reason, it offers us a rich corpus of sarcophagi and inscriptions. This chapter analyzes the evidence from the sarcophagi and inscriptions recovered from the area of the Pianabella necropolis.[571] It concentrates mainly on the phenomenon of the reutilization of sarcophagus marble as building material and on the reuse of sarcophagi for new burials. It also assesses the contexts of new burials in Pianabella in an effort to correlate the high frequency of strigilated sarcophagi with a growing Christian preference for this particular style. In turn this data is correlated with the evidence of inscriptions associated with some burials.

Through their history, but especially with the growing preference for inhumation, the ancient Romans often used sarcophagi in order to bury their dead. Most sarcophagi were expensive to manufacture, and some designs were undoubtedly intended to capitalize on their appeal to the consumer.[572] The very presence of sarcophagi at Pianabella hints to the fact that those who made use of the necropolis had a higher social status than it might have been expected for the incipient Christian community at Ostia. This observation is further confirmed by the fact that the Pianabella sarcophagi were of high quality and by the fact that they were exclusively made of marble. But it is not only social rank that we can assess by studying these sarcophagi. In fact, the iconography and the inscriptions

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[571] A *locus classicus* for the study of the sarcophagi from Ostia – other than the pieces from Pianabella – is DEICHMANN, BOVINI & BRANDENBURG 1967. For Roman sarcophagi in general, see ZANKER & EWALD 2004.
[572] HUSKINSON 1997:342.

associated with them shed much light on the tastes, beliefs, expectations, and worldview of those who first commissioned them, and those who chose to reutilize them in a certain way. The purpose of this chapter is to look into the ways that the *corpora* of sarcophagi and inscriptions from the excavations of Pianabella can tell us who the Christians that built the basilica and first made use of it were, and how their religious beliefs affected the way they related to the circumstances of burial.

Before addressing the evidence coming from the Pianabella sarcophagi, brief mention must be made to the fact that the funerary altars and the cinerary urns retrieved from the basilica and the necropolis form a small corpus comprised mainly of *spolia*. The altars have been well conserved, but the urns are in a very fragmentary state of preservation.[573] With the exception of the two Antonine cinerary urns belonging to L. Licinius Probus and his wife Sempronia Rufina, which bear Meleager scenes (C11 and 10),[574] most other pieces display iconography associated with an urban style of sculpture not very different from pieces recovered from the other *necropoleis* at Ostia, especially those bearing garlands, festoons and plant decoration. The main importance of these items is that they reflect earlier pagan burial practices at Pianabella.

The Evidence from Sarcophagus Placement

Wood caskets (*capuli*) or sarcophagi (*arcae*) were often utilized for the disposal of the remains of the dead, while cinerary urns (*ollae*) were used in the case of cremation. Underprivileged people often buried their dead in the bare soil, protecting the body of the deceased with tiles (*tegulae* and *imbrices*) or in amphorae. It seems, however, that a most convenient way to protect the dead

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[573] ARAVANTINOS 1999:303.
[574] Both in excellent condition and found in 1976 at *columbarium* 1.

body was by means of terracotta or stone sarcophagi.[575] Up to the beginning of the second century A.D., sarcophagi were less common in Roman practice; the large sarcophagus of Cornelius Scipio Barbatus (now in the Vatican) being a well-known example from that period. With the move towards inhumation, sarcophagi became more and more common, and "show" sarcophagi developed to be exhibited in the open air along roadsides or within funerary enclosures, for the double purpose of gratifying the departed and impressing the living.[576] Christian sarcophagi from the third to the sixth centuries were chiefly produced in Italy and Gaul, using their pagan counterparts as models.[577] With the success of Dionysiac themes in the third century,[578] strigilated sarcophagi gained so much popularity that they were used even among Christians. The décor of this kind of sarcophagus frequently included heads of lions as well as medallions with the portrait of the deceased. The excavators account for this high incidence of strigilated sarcophagi at the Pianabella necropolis exclusively on the basis of the hazards of artifact survival vis-à-vis plundering activities undertaken in modern times.[579] After carefully studying the plates provided by the *Scavi* catalogue and giving the strigilated sarcophagi a statistical treatment, I examined the pictures of all Pianabella sarcophagi from the excavation files at the Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici di Ostia in July 2003. My conclusion, as I shall now show, is that

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[575] Terracotta sarcophagi were quite common among the Etruscans but they lost momentum in Roman times (PRIEUR 1986:69).

[576] TOYNBEE 1996:270.

[577] For a short overview on the main features of early Christian sarcophagi, see TOYNBEE 1996:273-274. According to her, three were the main specialties of the workshops that produced Christian pieces: (a) the introduction of two superimposed friezes, mainly of biblical scenes; (b) the occasional appearance of columned sarcophagi; and (c) the so-called "city-gate" sarcophagi, "on which biblical and other scenes are enacted against a backdrop of elaborate architectural elements."

[578] However, portraits on Dionysiac sarcophagi remained uncommon since they implied drunkenness, which did not conform well to the dignified image of a Roman citizen (ZANKER & EWALD 2004).

[579] AGNOLI 1999:206-207.

the Pianabella Christians conscientiously preferred the strigilated décor rather than other kinds of pagan iconography for reasons I shall now explain.

Marble Spoliation at Pianabella

The construction of the Pianabella basilica relied heavily on spoliation at Ostia.[580] Despite Kinney's contention that "*spolia* are a practice without a theory, insofar as we have no contemporary texts from which to extract a rationale for their employment in medieval buildings and works of art,"[581] the practice spread. There is, in fact, a double ideology behind spoliation: a conscious desire to appropriate the symbolic power one ascribes to the object or structure which he or she chooses to use again,[582] and a pragmatic reutilization of what was seen at the time as inexpensive (or higher class but acquirable) construction material.[583] The

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[580] The simplest kinds of spoliation were (a) the straight conversion of an antique building into a late-antique or medieval one, and (b) the re-use of antique foundations for new buildings, cf. ESCH 1969:9ff; HERES 1982:77-78; GREENHALGH 1989:150-151. According to the latter (p. 151), complete foundations were often grubbed up. The extraction of building materials from an antique edifice and its re-use in an entirely different architectural context was, however, more common and – when that material was heftily recycled – was more deleterious to the preservation of archaeological evidence. Thus, the Colosseum was for the most part gone for lime. Likewise, the production of lime from antique material was usual at the twilight of Ostia.

[581] KINNEY 1995:53.

[582] LENZI 1998:247. According to KINNEY 1995:53, "spoils by definition signal a victor, and the user of artistic *spolia* can readily be understood as intending to communicate his triumph, or in pacific situations his legitimate succession vis-à-vis the era, culture or honorand for which the reused artifacts originally were created."

[583] Even in Roman times, "pilferage of antiquities was rife" (GREENHALGH 1989:146). This author (p. 153) cites Rodocanachi's famous quote that most people marvel that so much of Rome has survived while they should marvel at how much has disappeared. According to SETTIS 1984, the whole subject of *spolia* needs much more study. Sometimes the material has been better preserved than would have been the case had the original monument been left standing but that is far from the rule. The majority of *spolia* came from disused buildings, but constructions still in use were sometimes at risk as well. Private individuals robbed even funerary monuments for the construction of their ordinary homes. At times, even Roman officials indulged in the practice of looting antique monuments, especially after the edict of 364 forbid them from constructing new buildings within Rome without Imperial authorization, but allowed them to renovate those buildings which had fallen into unattractive ruins (cf. *Codex Theodosianus* 15.1). There was almost no deterrent for widespread spoliation in Roman times. In fact, spoliation of monuments even before the time of Justinian must not have met with much more than the imposition of fines. Besides, the *Liber pontificalis* and the great Christian basilicas testify that the popes were as active

latter practical reason seems to have governed the use of *spolia* at Pianabella. This was the prevailing rule for Ostia as a whole, where funerary monuments provided high quality building materials,[584] and the reutilization of funerary inscriptions as building material became customary.

Patterns of spoliation at Ostia included the reuse of building materials in a new edifice, reuse of non-architectural fragments – such as inscriptions, including funerary epitaphs – as building materials or floor pavement, and the burning of limestone (and other *spolia*) to make lime for use in building as mortar. Spoliation at Ostia was not only aimed at recovering material easily available, but also included coordinated efforts towards retrieving material from the very substructure of monuments, as the remains of tunnels excavated for that purpose seem to suggest.[585] At Pianabella, sarcophagi and marble slabs also suffered a great deal of destructive activity by marble plunderers acting in the area from the tenth century to a time immediately before the 1988-1989 excavation campaign. The most notorious example from Pianabella is the case of a sarcophagus of

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in despoiling ancient monuments as the emperors. And this enthusiasm did not fade away in later times.

[584] This abuse was frequently complained about by emperors who under the Late Empire topped up existing penalties with fines of various amounts, cf. HARRIES 1992:62. These emperors saw tomb spoliation as despoiling the dead and polluting the living (cf. Constantius II, *Codex Theodosianus*). According to KINNEY 1995:54, neither *spolia* nor the practice of reuse were the target of this and other imperial proscriptions, but the process of denudement (*spoliatio*) by which reusable elements could be procured: *spolia* (signs of triumph) were good; *spoliatio* (denudement or even maybe rape) was bad, cf. Cicero, *In C. Verrem* 1.5.14; 2.1.20.50; 2.3.41.96; 2.5.47.125; 2.5.72.184-186; *Ad Herennium* 4.14.20-21; 4.21.29.

[585] Such tunnels have been identified especially at places near the center of the ancient city in the area around the Forum. LENZI 1998:247 mentions, for instance, the galleries found in the environment of the Casette Repubblicane and of the Caseggiato del Larario. For a relatively recent appraisal of the construction history of the Caseggiato del Larario, see SCOCCA 1994. The practice of tunneling for *spolia* was not restricted to Ostia. According to GREENHALGH 1989:147, "complete excavation was frequently unnecessary in the search for *spolia*: mere tunnels would suffice – as seen in the fifteenth-century views of the antiquities of Rome which show a mound outside the walls, a tunnel leading into it, and the legend 'beneath this mound there is a temple' […] references to 'grotte' in mediaeval documents could well indicate ruins where building materials were to be found […] Recent excavations on the Palatine have revealed alarming gaps in travertine foundation courses: the material has been robbed out, presumably by recklessly dangerous tunnelling."

Proconnesian marble with a depiction of scenes of the Iliad (B 8), which was taken from Mausoleum L1 (Figs. 32 and 40) in the south side of the necropolis in a clandestine excavation in 1976, and whose chest and lid (Fig. 38) were sold in the art market to Berlin's Antikenmuseum. Since the base of the sarcophagus was left *in situ* it was possible for the Soprintendenza Archeologica di Ostia Antica to detect the plunder and to recover the item, now in the Ostia Museum.[586]

The sarcophagi and marble slabs from Pianabella were – for the most part – recovered from the pagan tombs in the substratum of the Christian basilica during the 1988-1989 excavation campaign. These pieces belonged to the earlier mausolea beneath it, but had already been reused by Christians in the basilica in late antiquity. Such material was reutilized either as building material or for new tombs inside the basilica. Their state of conservation is very fragmentary. Since one of the distinctive aspects of the use of *spolia* at Ostia was the fact that marble blocks migrated from one part of the city to another, marble slabs from the same sarcophagus have been recovered from different points in the city. Thus, for example, fragments of a lid of a sarcophagus depicting a Dionysiac banquet (B 5) have been recovered in different places in different periods: the first and second fragments in the Terme di Nettuno in 1909, the third fragment near the theater approximately thirty years later, and, finally, the fourth fragment in Pianabella in 1953. Thus, the construction of the Pianabella basilica and the widespread reuse of funerary material in and around the basilica were no exception to the fact that spoliation was a common practice in late antiquity. By that time and later, generally speaking, where there is marble there are *spolia*.[587]

Main Features of the Sarcophagi from Pianabella

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[586] ZEVI 1993.
[587] KINNEY 2001:145.

In the *Scavi di Ostia*, the task of reporting on the sarcophagi recovered from the Basilica fell to Nadia Agnoli. She adroitly summarized the main characteristics of the Pianabella sarcophagi to suggest that they form a homogeneous group. According to her, they also fit a broad chronological spectrum which goes from the end of the second to the end of the fourth century A.D.[588] Some of them are the product of a local atelier,[589] and a few are made of imported marble, especially from the quarries in Thasos (such as B 44, for instance) and Proconnesos (such as B 8, 9, 20, 28, 43, 74 and 75).[590] Only five terracotta sarcophagi (T1-5) were found at Pianabella, all of them being reused as building material. Since terracotta sarcophagi are generally categorized as *opus doliare* because they were produced in the same *figlinae* that manufactured bricks, they are briefly described by Tommasi in the chapter dedicated to bricks and tiles in the *Scavi* rather than by Agnoli.[591]

Agnoli's report is not exhaustive in that it refers mainly to the sarcophagi recovered in the 1976-1977 and 1988-1989 excavation campaigns. Only sporadically does she refer to pieces found in other circumstances, such as those that the Aldobrandini family haphazardly recovered from their estate near the necropolis, or those excavated by cardinal Pacca from 1827 and 1834. Another

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[588] This was the most important period of development of the pagan necropolis.

[589] Agnoli's assumption is based mainly on the fact that at least one of the sarcophagi recovered in the basilica was not a finished product. According to her (p. 203), "questo stadio di lavorazione, infatti, fa supporre l'esistenza nella zona di un'officina che serviva la necropolis; tale ipotesi sarebbe confermata dalle stringenti affinità che accomunano alcuni dei sarcophagi rinvenuti nell'area di Pianabella. Se non si possono più avere dubbi sull'attività di marmorari che a Ostia come a Porto fabbricavano urne, sarcofagi e lastre di chiusura di loculo, resta ancora da individuare il rapporto di queste officine con le necropoli. Con tutta probabilità le botteghe dovevano travarsi non lontano dai luoghi in cui erano utilizzati i loro prodotti."

[590] Marble blocks were brought by sea to Portus and stored near the wharfs – ready to be taken to Rome, or else to be worked on at that very spot or in ateliers at Ostia, cf. PENSABENE 1994. See also PENSABENE & BRUNO 1996.

[591] According to TOMMASI 1999:334-335, the full dimensions of these sarcophagi from Pianabella remain unvarying: 2 x 0.4 x 0.3 m – however, four of them are in a fragmentary state. All belong to the high Empire, three of them having been found *in situ* in tombs 39 and 41 (in the *atrium*) and tomb 70 (inside the basilica).

handicap of the treatment both Agnoli and Tommasi give the Pianabella sarcophagi is that these scholars show very little interest in the archaeological context of these sarcophagi. Agnoli's viewpoint is clearly and exclusively that of an art historian. A full catalogue of the sarcophagi analyzed by Agnoli and Tommasi, and discussed below may be found in Table 6.

The dating of sarcophagi from Pianabella reveals some interesting aspects. Although the fragments of strigilated chests are the most common category in the corpus, the excavators were able to date only a few of them.[592] The dating of the figured chests was done more easily, because scholars could rely on a greater number of stylistic aspects in which to base their conclusions. In fact, the *Scavi* catalogue includes only fifty-five chests or chest fragments (a small percentage of the amount recovered from Pianabella) and suggests dates for no more than forty-one of those. As far as this small sample allows us to determine, the fragments of figured chests from Pianabella cover a large time span (about 170 years), while the distribution of non-fragmentary chests of the same kind cover a period of only fifty years, as shown in Fig. 39. This pattern is the exact opposite to the distribution of strigilated chests. In this latter case, the fragments cover only a period of approximately forty years, while the non-fragmentary chests span almost two hundred years. This may merely reflect the fact that it is considerably more difficult to date fragments of strigilated chests than of figured ones. However, both kinds of fragments display a more homogeneous distribution than the two kinds of non-fragmentary chests (which include a few outliers in the

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[592] I am sorry to use an all-inclusive category here. I am well aware that "strigilated" is too broad a class, since it appears in conjunction with other decorative elements (such as festoons, *clipei* born by *nikai* or *eroti*, drops, rosettes, palmettes, lunettes, fillets, *cornucopiae*, etc) that could help us subdivide this type into less inclusive categories. A clear example of this type of accompanying decoration associated to strigilated sarcophagi is the case of *eroti* bearing torches so as to show the way to the next world (or in allusion to the funerary ceremony), which – although quite common in strigilated sarcophagi – is somewhat rare in cinerary urns (cf. ARAVANTINOS 1999:311-312; SCHAUENBURG 1980:157, n. 68; TOYNBEE 1996:46, 50). So, despite this large variety of

graph). Since both categories (strigilated and figured chests) are well represented (either through fragments or through whole units) in the chronological distribution of the chests, we may regard this as evidence for the unswerving popularity of these two types at the cemetery underlying the Pianabella basilica.

Consistency in the physical dimensions of these sarcophagi may also suggest the activity of local workshops. There is a strong correlation between the length and the height (0.84) of the fifteen non-fragmentary sarcophagus chests that are well preserved.[593] But the correlation between width and length (0.59) is less suggestive, and that between height and width (0.30) is not meaningful at all. The corpus includes two non-fragmentary sarcophagi for infant use (B 7 and 20). Children were generally treated differently in respect to burial, either in form or location, or both. In fact, children received different treatment in several other respects: in literary sources, for example, they are often characterized as being nearer to the world of the gods, being able to utter prophecies or themselves serve as omens; they could participate at public executions and they received special protection under the law until the age of seven. But as a matter of fact, conflicting views existed regarding the death of children. Although epigraphic evidence suggests otherwise, Cicero asserts that the death of infants deserves no grief (*Tusc.* 1.39.93). The consolatory nature of philosophical teaching tried to drive people away from excessive grief. This also explains why Cicero thought that the death of old people was fully in accord with nature (*Cato maior* 71). Interestingly, the deaths of elderly people seem to have attracted more attention than those of others. They are overrepresented in epitaphs, whereas infants rarely receive their own inscriptions.[594]

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accompanying motifs, I saw no harm in simplifying the typology since the resulting decorative syntax is often no more than a stereotype.
[593] B 7, 8, 9, 20, 28, 29, 38, 39, 42, 43, 44, 45, 66, 74 and 75.
[594] For a good summary on the commemoration of infants on Roman funerary inscriptions, see KING 2000.

High Incidence of Strigilated Sarcophagi

Statistically speaking one cannot explain why the distribution of figured and strigilated sarcophagi varies as it does at Pianabella unless this variation is due to something more than mere chance. Not counting the many marble fragments that cannot be identified with reasonable certainty either as belonging to the chest of a sarcophagus (instead of to a lid or to a "lastra di chiusura") or as belonging to a sarcophagus at all, the Pianabella corpus[595] includes four complete figured chests,[596] fragments of twenty-four identifiable figured chests,[597] nine complete (or almost complete) strigilated chests,[598] fragments of seventy identifiable strigilated chests,[599] two complete chests of blank sarcophagi,[600] and the fragment of one unfinished sarcophagus.[601]

The degree of freedom (v) for the χ^2 statistic of an analysis of complete/fragmentary figured chests, strigilated chests, and blank chests from Pianabella is 2 since the number of variables (κ) is three; accordingly, the expected χ^2 statistic for this degree of freedom at the selected level of significance of $\alpha = 0.05$ is 5.99.[602] The χ^2 statistic obtained in the analysis of this corpus is 7.79. Since $\chi^2_{calc} > \chi^2_{\alpha}$, a null hypothesis ($H_o$) must be rejected at this level. That is, it is unlikely that our data distribution may have resulted from pure chance. There is a case to answer. An explanation is necessary for this particular

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[595] Cf. inventory in AGNOLI 1999.

[596] B 7, 8, 9, 66.

[597] B 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 23, 25, 41, 46, 53, 55, 62, 63, 64, 65, 67, 72, 73, and I48840.

[598] B 20, 28, 29, 38, 39, 42, 43, 44, 45.

[599] Too numerous to list (basically the sarcophagi that are not included in the other groups).

[600] B 74 and 75.

[601] B 71.

[602] The question that χ^2 statistic attempts to answer is, are the differences so great that the probability of their being the result of chance variation is acceptably low? Cf. SHENNAN 1997:106. When we select a significance level of 0.05 it means that we have decided to accept the null hypothesis as true unless our data are so unusual that they would occur only 5 times in 100 or less. Cf. SHENNAN 1997:53-54.

distribution.[603] The prevalence of strigilated sarcophagi in the Pianabella corpus must result therefore from an interfering factor that increased their probabilities for survival.

Three main reasons can be suggested to account for the high survival rates of strigilated decoration in the sarcophagi found in Pianabella. Such significant survival indices may result simply from the higher economic value attached to the figured chests, which certainly led many of the ancient commissioners to opt for the less expensive strigilated chests. They may result as well from plunder: strigilated sarcophagi were less attractive for tomb robbers, but the systematic plundering of sarcophagus chests in search of figured scenes mutilated many figured sarcophagi, leaving only fragments of their decoration – the same cannot be said, however, of spoliation activities for the production of lime since these apparently targeted both types of chests indiscriminately.[604] Finally, the excavators have determined that most of the sarcophagi reutilized for burials within the basilica – rather than as building material – were of the strigilated type.[605] This may suggest a dislike for pagan iconography at Pianabella. Although it has been sufficiently documented that Christians would at

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[603] However χ[2] statistic has what could be called drawbacks, shortcomings, or potentially misleading aspects. It only tells us that a certain relationship is statistically significant, but it does not tell us anything about the way in which the variables are related, or about the strength of that relationship. That is, χ[2] statistic simply tells us about the probability that a relationship exists. Because it is dependent on sample size we cannot use it, for instance, to state that a result significant at the 0.01 level suggests a stronger relationship than one significant at the 0.05 level. Accordingly, a very slight relationship may be real and still not matter. Cf. SHENNAN 1997:113-118.

[604] This may be the case of B 10, B 11, B 14-15. According to AGNOLI 1999:206-207, "ad una prima analisi appare assai scarso il numero di sarcofagi figurati, in favore degli esemplari strigilati, dei quali restano numerosissimi frammenti. Questo tipo di decorazione è spesso preferita, almeno dal III secolo d. C., perchè più economica rispetto ai sarcofagi figurati. Tuttavia a Pianabella la maggiore presenza di esemplari strigilati non può essere attribuita solo alla volontà della committenza antica, quanto piuttosto alla presenza degli scavatori clandestini per le casse figurati, certamente più preziose e ricercate sul mercato antiquario rispetto a quelle strigilate. Per lo stesso motivo spesso venivano asportate dalle casse solo le parti figurate, lasciando o disperdendo le basi e le parti strigilate (B8)."

[605] AGNOLI 1999:207.

times utilize pagan iconography that could take on Christian connotations, this high incidence of strigilated sarcophagi suggest that figured scenes were generally avoided at Pianabella. Of course, the dividing line between what was insufferably "pagan" and what was conventional and part of the traditions common to all Romans was not easily defined.[606] So, although it seems that strigilated sarcophagi were first used in a Dionysiac context,[607] they thus seem to have attracted Christian preference on account of their apparently "neutral" design. It seems that Christian commissioners did not yet feel entirely free to decide for an overtly Christian iconography – they would rather take their stand by simply avoiding a decorative syntax that was explicitly pagan. It may also mean that the Pianabella Christians had no access to more elaborate forms of distinctively Christian figural iconography. This fact might suggest that such workshops were more limited at Ostia (by contrast to Rome or elsewhere). Or it may suggest that the Pianabella Christians were not as able to afford these new Christian commodities.

The high incidence of strigilated sarcophagi suggests that the Pianabella Christians tended to avoid pagan iconography in their burials. Sarcophagi bearing pagan themes were rare and the Pianabella Christians took great pains in order to avoid the actual display of their iconography. A conspicuous case is that of sarcophagus B 8 (Fig. 38), as we shall see below. Of course my claim about Christian preference for strigilated sarcophagi would be much stronger if I could show that these sarcophagi were still being used or reused by Christians for actual burials. Unfortunately, the excavators did not provide us with a detailed description of the archaeological context in which the Pianabella sarcophagi were found. Agnoli only incidentally mentions whether a sarcophagus was being actually used for a new burial or simply as building material. Rarely does she give

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[606] HARRIES 1992:56.
[607] Cf. above.

us precise information concerning reuse (cf. Table 6). She mentions only three sarcophagi decorated with mythological themes (B 3, 7 and 8) which still bore human remains and two other "semi-figural" sarcophagi which – although not decorated with mythological themes – were also used for new burials.[608] But not all of these were being reused for new burials. According to numismatic evidence, B 7 was used for a primary deposition that took place at a time previous to the construction of the basilica. On the other hand, Agnoli lists seven figural or "semi-figural" sarcophagi (B 5, 19, 46, 48, 69, 80 and 92) which were used as building materials, five strigilated sarcophagi used for new burials (B 29, 30, 35, 38 and 39), and only two strigilated sarcophagi (B 20 and 21) used as building material. Since the *Scavi* catalogue lists ninety-seven sarcophagi, it is unfortunate that we have information concerning the reuse of only nineteen of them. This explains why – regrettably – I had to make use of absolute numbers instead of focusing on those sarcophagi which were unmistakably reused for new burials. If more strigilated decoration was used at Pianabella than any other single type of decoration, then it is likely that the Pianabella Christians were favoring this type of decoration for their burials. Another impediment to my analysis is that fragmentary sarcophagi could have been rejected for reasons other than iconography. The Pianabella Christians may have reused them as building materials precisely because they were already broken and had therefore become useless for new burials. Despite these limitations, I hope my treatment of specific cases will strengthen my claim that the Pianabella Christians favored strigilated decoration for their sarcophagi.

The Pianabella Sarcophagi

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[608] One of these sarcophagi displays a *lustratio* scene (B 72) while the other one bears an architectural motif (B 87).

Due to the intense spoliation of marble pieces in Pianabella, it is very difficult to link a sarcophagus from the area to a precise context. In a few cases, however, it is possible to approximate such a context through reconstruction. Such is the case, for instance, of sarcophagus B 8 (Fig. 38) which we mentioned above in the discussion of recent looting at Pianabella. Mausoleum L1 (Figs. 32 and 40), from which the sarcophagus comes, can be dated to the first half of the second century A.D., and comprises two rooms, which underwent many alterations in the course of the second and third centuries. The sarcophagus was placed in a grave-recess built along the north wall of the first room during one of the last phases of the restructuring of the mausoleum, dating to the third century.

The mausoleum was not located inside the basilica but across the street from the forecourt in a sepulcher of trapezoidal plan built along a curve of the road (Fig. 32). Morandi claims that it was a funerary complex owned by the Egrilii, an important family at Ostia, on the basis of two remarkable funerary *tituli* found in the area by Giordani in 1976 and 1977.[609] The installation of the sarcophagus required the demolition of part of the *formae*, and the construction of a new pavement level. The most telling aspect of the context of this sarcophagus is the fact that its chest was placed beneath the new pavement level where its decoration was not visible. This suggests that the sarcophagus was being reused and that it had probably been carved much earlier than the last phase of the architectural adaptation of the sepulcher. Its reutilization is further suggested by the erasure of the inscription on its lid. The sarcophagus depicts well-executed scenes from the *Iliad*, including Patroclos's funeral and the equipping of Achilles's chariot (on the front of the sarcophagus), and the dragging of Hector's body around Patroclos's tomb and the return of his body to Priam (on the lid). Gallina Zevi places the date of the sarcophagus around 160 A.D., and claims that

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[609] MORANDI 1993:154.

it is a *unicum* in Roman art.[610] Its decorative syntax is comparable only to sarcophagi of Attic provenience. Given that the sarcophagus seems to have been produced in a local workshop, Agnoli posits the existence of an original Attic sarcophagus at Ostia from which it must have been copied.[611]

It is very hard to understand why someone would reuse a sarcophagus with such an original and ornate decoration, and not feel inclined to display it in a conspicuous manner rather than hide it away. The excavators of the mausoleum did not venture an explanation for this oddity, but it seems that the only alternative is to imagine that Christians were making use of the tomb and were deliberately downplaying the value of myth. The tomb of the Egrilii thus suggests a mitigated reuse of pagan iconography by the Pianabella Christians, and becomes important for our understanding of the growth of this necropolis. It suggests further that at least some members of the Egrilii, who had held magistracies at Ostia since the first century A.D., had become had become Christian by the late third century. We shall return to this issue in the next chapter.

According to Paroli, sarcophagus iconography was meant to be displayed mainly during the funerary procession, but that subsequent display after deposition did not have much significance.[612] Recent scholarship remains unconvinced that much imagery in these works reflects specific attitudes towards the afterlife of the deceased. Zanker and Ewald, for example, think that viewers of Judaeo-Christian backgrounds have projected such readings improperly onto pre-

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[610] According to her, "il programma decorativo trova confronti solo con sarcofagi di produzione attica rispetto ai quali il Maestro del sarcofago di Pianabella introduce numerose variazioni che ne fanno un'opera originale. Essa si colloca in una fase di vivace sperimentazione dell'arte romana di età imperiale documentando un momento di quel processo, ancora poco noto, di assimilazione nella cultura artistica di Roma di composizioni o di singoli motivi dell'arte attica e microasiatica." ZEVI 1993:152-153.

[611] AGNOLI 1999:221.

[612] Cf. private conversation in 07/19/2003 at the Museo del Alto Medioevo, in Rome. Against that view, see GREENHALGH 1989:184, "Antiquity… displayed sarcophagi above ground." For a recent analysis of the architectural structures in which sarcophagi were found and the rituals that dictated how and when viewers saw them, see ZANKER & EWALD 2004.

Christian monuments.[613] Although this seems to be true, the fact that these early Christians paid close attention to the iconographic motifs of other decorative media suggests that they were not any less careful about the iconography displayed on sarcophagi. So, for instance, a decorated disc of perishable material substituted for the chariot of Helios on the central medallion of the vault in the tomb of Fannia Redempta in the Vatican cemetery, a device "that was more in keeping with the beliefs of the later owners of the tomb."[614]

Accordingly, because it is difficult to determine the iconographic context of the Pianabella sarcophagi in view of the fact that marble plunderers removed the decoration from them, leaving only the bases of the chests of these sarcophagi *in situ*, Agnoli simply assumes that tendencies observed in other Christian cemeteries should also be expected at Pianabella. Based mainly on an early study by Gütschow on the catacombs of Praetextatus,[615] she came to the conclusion that the sarcophagi of Pianabella tended to avoid mythological themes. In fact, differently from the catacombs of Praetextatus and from the Basilica of S. Gavino in Porto Torres, not even those themes which were easily adaptable for Christian teaching – such as that of Orpheus – are found in the chests of sarcophagi utilized for new burials at Pianabella. The only example of a chest decorated with the Orpheus theme (B 19, late third century) was found in a context that suggests its reutilization as building material. The piece was found reversed as a pavement block in the narthex of the basilica (Fig. 32). It may have been the case that B 19 had had its decoration reversed simply because those who were using it saw it as an average piece of marble being utilized as part of the pavement of the *narthex*.[616]

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[613] ZANKER & EWALD 2004.
[614] TOYNBEE & WARD-PERKINS 1957:43-44.
[615] GÜTSCHOW 1938.
[616] As GREENHALGH 1989:155 has aptly put, "we cannot ignore motives, and might therefore speculate whether the prominence of some re-used pieces in walls (tombstones and inscriptions) or

Despite the well-known difficulty of assessing intention, we have archaeological evidence that the concealment of iconography and/or inscriptions was deliberate in late antiquity. In fact, frequently the re-use required hiding the original inscription or iconography by using the other side of the slab. This is the case of the bizarre fifth century tympanum to the Porte Papale in the Cathedral at Le Puy, the now concealed verso of which bears a dedication not only to the Emperor, but also to Adidon, a local pagan god.[617] The reversal of the slab in this case is accompanied by the addition of a cross to the verso of the inscription as if to make it safe for Christian use.[618] In other cases, paleochristian sarcophagi were partially re-cut, presumably to improve their appearance but also to do away with pagan iconography. Re-working on third-century sarcophagi was common during the sixth century: such is the case with the sarcophagus of Seda, dated 541, in Ravenna, from which the second sculptor chopped off bits of pagan decoration.[619]

Another aspect that attests to a certain difficulty on the part of the Pianabella Christians to deal with pagan iconography is the presence of unfinished pieces in the site.[620] Sometimes re-used sarcophagi were re-cut and purposely left plain, especially in late antiquity and in the Middle Ages. It is notoriously difficult, however, to determine whether unfinished pieces were imported rough-dressed from the quarries or whether they were the product of re-cutting, and, in the latter case, it is as hard to ascertain what their original condition was.[621] So, although sarcophagi were simply too valuable and prestigious to be avoided simply because they were pagan, it seems certain that

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as lintels (ornamented sarcophagus sides) does not carry the implication of approval or even pride." Using the same logic, we might speculate whether the hiding of specific contents has identifiable motivation. Of course, we have to balance against this the recurring re-use of marble in foundations where strength not visibility is of consequence.

[617] GREENHALGH 1989:175ff.

[618] BRÉHIER 1945:63ff.

[619] GREENHALGH 1989:196.

[620] This is the case of sarcophagus B 71.

[621] GREENHALGH 1989:196ff.

the Christian community at Pianabella was not completely at ease with the reuse of pagan pieces. My hypothesis here is that the disposition and type of sarcophagus in the basilica and adjacent tombs reflect conscious decisions and preferences on the part of these Christians.

It would therefore be too difficult to explain why sarcophagus B 19 was found in a fragmentary state so early in the history of the building unless the builders had discarded it in order to avoid the use of pagan decoration in the context of the basilica (Fig. 32). If that is the case, it suggests that Christians were not so willing to incorporate pagan iconography into their burial practices as it has been recently advocated. Even a recurrent icon such as Orpheus, which was promptly absorbed by Christians elsewhere, was not considered fit for display in the context of the basilica. On the other hand, no single example of explicitly Christian decoration is found at Pianabella. For new burials, patrons favored strigilated decoration on the chest of the sarcophagus and sea scenes on its lid.[622]

It is not difficult, however, to ascertain whether a sarcophagus was intended for adult or child use. Even so, the *Scavi* report lists only four of the extant sarcophagi as being intended for child use: B 46 (a sarcophagus decorated with a sea scene), B 7 (bearing a Psyche-and-Cupid/*eroti* scene)[623] and B 20-21 (of the strigilated type).[624] Three of these were being reused as building material in the basilica while B 7 was found *in situ* near the eastern wall of Columbarium n°. 1 (Figs. 32 e 41). It still contained the remains of an infant among whose bones was also found a bronze coin of Antoninus Pius. Columbarium n°. 1 is, in fact, very important for the determination of the context of the burials at Pianabella. It contained several inscriptions that allowed the excavators to identify

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[622] Since several sarcophagi in our corpus date to the early fourth century, it is not impossible that they were used in a primary context (AGNOLI 1999:207).
[623] Cf. MORANDI 1982:58.
[624] The very fragmentary nature of sarcophagi B 46 and B 21 excluded them from the corpus utilized here to determine the dimensions of a typical sarcophagus from Pianabella.

it as belonging to the Popilii, a family of freedmen of modest social rank. There is also epigraphic evidence that the family ended up leasing part of the building to the Licinii. These social linkages will be discussed further in the next chapter.

All the chests reused for new burials were intended for adult use. These are mainly of the strigilated type. So, we can draw an important conclusion from our brief analysis of the contexts for the use of sarcophagi at Pianabella: early Pianabella Christians may not have been so daring as to publicly commemorate their faith through funerary iconography, but neither did they allow pagan iconography to be imposed on the commemoration of their dead. This can be observed in the way they seem to have deliberately avoided mythological scenes or any open expressions of religiosity for that matter. They seemed to have tried hard to accommodate the difficulty by selecting a more neutral iconographic syntax, such as the one provided by the strigilated design.

The Evidence from Sarcophagus Iconography

Sarcophagus iconography is a complex issue. In the case of the sarcophagi from Pianabella, complicating factors are, first, that we often deal with fragments, and, second, that there is not a close correspondence between the iconographic representation found on the chests and that found on their lids. Furthermore, if we want a clearer picture of the trends influencing the iconographic choices in the necropolis, we have to take into account another element, which is not a part of the sarcophagus *per se*, but which is associated with it: a marble slab used to close the site of a loculus burial. That is what the literature calls "lastra di chiusura di loculo" or "loculus closure/cover slabs." In fact, the *necropoleis* of Ostia and Portus have given us a large number of marble slabs utilized for closing *loculi*, which imitate – in all respects – the iconography found on the sarcophagi placed in the same tomb, thus creating a new genre that mimics sarcophagus iconography closely. The distribution of such "lastre" in Ostia was widespread, since all the

main *necropoleis* in the city – as well as in Portus – have offered us a number of examples totaling one hundred so far.[625] These span the time from the early Antonine period to the late third century.[626] At Ostia, the *corpora* from the *necropoleis* of Pianabella, Porta Laurentina and Porta Romana have been especially significant.

So, in order for one to assess the iconographic syntax of a given tomb, it is necessary to take at least three components into consideration: chest iconography, the representations found on its lid, and any additional depictions visible on the closure slabs on other burials within the tomb. The Pianabella corpus includes nineteen of these closure slabs, sixteen of which display strigilated decoration (B 100-109 and 111-116).

Chests

The single most important decorative element of a sarcophagus is that found on the main side of its chest. As far as the decoration of the chest is concerned, the Pianabella figured sarcophagi can be divided into four main groups: mythological sarcophagi, sarcophagi with winged figures, sarcophagi with sea scenes, and sarcophagi decorated with garlands. Of course, as it has been noted above, sarcophagi with strigilated chests are by far the most numerous, appearing in practically all the types that this category offers at Rome and Ostia up to the end of antiquity. There is in fact a close correspondence between Pianabella and both Rome and Ostia in this regard.[627]

Chests with mythological themes are – for the reasons discussed above – poorly attested at Pianabella. There remain, however, two valuable mythological sarcophagi – one with a scene from the *Iliad* (B 8, Fig. 38) and another one with a

[625] AGNOLI 1995:130.
[626] AGNOLI 1995:136.
[627] AGNOLI 1999:204.

centauromachy (B 9), as well as a few fragments with mythological scenes which depict Maenads (B 4), the Meleager (B 1-3), and the Endymion (B 6) myths. In early Christian burial context, this latter myth was often extrapolated from the social matrix and associated with Christian representations – such as the Jonah cycle, for instance – in order to signal peace at the time of death, peace in an alien environment, or peace in an ultimate paradisiacal sense.[628]

The findings at Pianabella include very few chests of sarcophagi containing winged figures (mostly the Nikai of B 66-67), sea scenes and garlands with fruit (B 63). Occasional findings of fragments of decorative pomegranate-trees have made Agnoli suppose that sarcophagi with decorative garlands may have been more common than their survival suggests.[629] The nearly total absence of sarcophagi containing sea scenes is rather odd given Ostia's close association with the ocean. In fact, very few examples remain, such as B 46, for instance.

Lids

The lid is another important element for the determination of the decorative syntax of a sarcophagus. As far as their fragmentary state allows us to appraise, lids with marine motifs seem to accompany strigilated sarcophagi at Pianabella. Unfortunately, such lids present a quite careless and stereotyped style. Other than that combination of themes, the decorative motifs of the lids of the Pianabella sarcophagi either enrich or add new types to the repertory found on chests. Sea motifs are common – Ostia was a harbor, after all. Among them we

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[628] SNYDER 1985:46-47. According to HUSKINSON 1997:341, the myth of Endymion was an obvious choice for the decoration of sarcophagi as it deals with themes of eternal rest and of the enduring power of love. According to SNYDER 1985:47, "Endymion occurs frequently on non-Christian sarcophagi, reclining nearly nude and apparently put to sleep by Night, a winged woman, and attended by Selene, the moon goddess. She can be identified by a veil billowing over her head. Sometimes her apparel also covers the lower part of Endymion's body. Presumably Endymion is resting from a rather vigorous relationship with Selene. Often the Endymion scene has a pastoral quality to it." See also LAWRENCE 1961; ZANKER & EWALD 2004.

find dolphins, sea rams, sea lions, etc (B 47-54). A lid depicting a Dionysiac scene (B 5), which portrays Maenads, Satiri and Sileni, enrich the mythological type. Similarly, two fragments (B 68-69) add to the type decorated with winged figures. In fact, some lids contain even themes not yet found on the chests of the Pianabella sarcophagi. So, despite the fact that we have no examples of chests with seasonal decoration from Pianabella (otherwise very common at Ostia),[630] a few cases of that decorative motif appear on lids (B 56-61, B 90-93, for instance). Bucolic and hunting scenes are attested as well (B 16-18, B 89).[631] On the other hand, strigilated decoration – widely attested on the chests of the Pianabella sarcophagi – is poorly represented on lids (B 96-97).

Loculus Closure Slabs

A third element that is of major importance for the study of the iconography of the Pianabella Basilica is the "lastra di chiusura di loculo."[632] As stated above, this is a distinct category. It relates, however, to the decorative syntax of sarcophagi in general, since the decoration on sarcophagi often inspires that on "lastre."[633] Because these closure slabs attempt to imitate sarcophagi, it is

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[629] Besides, AGNOLI 1999:206 mentions a slab fragment used as a closing device which preserves a whole laurel festoon with *Eroti* bearing garlands (B 98).
[630] The god Bacchus and the Seasons are two of the most popular subjects in the decoration of Roman sarcophagi (especially in the third century). Together they express ideas of renewal and rebirth into the richness of life through union with the god, cf. HUSKINSON 1997:342.
[631] According to HUSKINSON 1997:344, the chase is a popular theme on sarcophagi, the qualities of courage and magnanimity which it extols in earthly life being given a new context in man's battle with death. Ancient Christians (among which we may count the emperor Gratian, Synesius, bishop of Ptolemais in Cyrene, and the Gallic nobles of the fifth century) seem to have derived as much pleasure from the chase as did contemporary pagans, cf. STEVENSON 1978:160.
[632] Fortunately Agnoli included, in her report on the *Scavi*, a quite satisfactory analysis of the *lastre* from Pianabella, an element that has been often neglected by other excavators at Ostia.
[633] According to AGNOLI 1999:208, "si deve immaginare che la lastra murata sul loculo assumesse l'aspetto della fronte di un vero e proprio sarcofago, com minore impiego di spazio e di marmo." To corroborate her assertion, she refers to examples found *in situ* in the necropolis of Isola Sacra, at Ostia (p. 266, n. 26). She mentions two *lastre* from Isola Sacra studied by TATA 1998, whose decoration presents a close correspondence to the decoration of the front of two sarcophagi.

sometimes difficult to decide whether a fragment belongs to a sarcophagus or to a "lastra". In a few cases, however, even the front of the "lastra" can bring some indication that it was not intended for use on a sarcophagus. This is especially true of the way *acroteria* are not displayed in the same way on sarcophagi and loculus closure slabs.[634] But the main differences between the two are more visible on a comparison of their backsides and of the thickness of their walls.[635] Although no example was found *in situ* at Pianabella, we know from Isola Sacra that "lastre" had to be either walled into their *loculi* or placed on the pavement, closing the *arcosolia* and forming – together with two side slabs and a lid – a make-shift sarcophagus. Another element that aids the differentiation of fragments of "lastre" from the fragments of sarcophagi found in Pianabella is that the scenes on the former are generally cut in lower relief than those found on the latter. Finally, "lastre" tend to be smooth on their back, a technique that made their attachment to the mortar easier.

By examining the Pianabella "lastre" one can more confidently advance the theory of local ateliers in the area, since the decorative syntax found on these marble slabs is quite different from the common decoration of other "lastre" of the same period from Ostia itself.[636] The main affinity of the Pianabella "lastre" with other examples from Ostia is their ornamental vivacity; such as it is seen in B 100, 101, 110, which display strigilated decoration associated with architectural motifs, torches, *clipei* and *tabulae ansatae*. Otherwise, the Pianabella "lastre" differ considerably from their counterparts from Ostia proper and Portus. The

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[634] AGNOLI 1995:132.

[635] However, in a few cases, "lastre" can be thicker than the front of a sarcophagus. According to AGNOLI 1995:130, "questo [lo espessore] è di regola inferiore a quello della fronti di un sarcofago, in media è compreso tra i 4 e i 7 cm, ma in alcuni casi si raggiungono spessori maggiori, fino a 11/12 cm, o minori, anche solo 3.5 cm." It seems that the decoration is very important for determining the thickness of a "lastra". This tends to be smaller when we are dealing with strigilated "lastre".

Pianabella "lastre" lack, for instance, the Christian motifs of the good shepherd, the *orans* and the Jonah cycle found elsewhere at Ostia as well as at Portus. A marble "lastra" found in the Church of S. Martino ai Monti – possibly from Ostia – bears several iconographic representations of the good shepherd associated with an inscription that may be Christian:

> RABIrIVS ONESIMVS / MARCIANE COIVX / EIVS SIBI ET FILIIS / FECERUNT / B(ene) D(ormiant).[637]

Another "lastra" from Portus includes the motifs of the good shepherd, the *orans* and the Jonah cycle.[638]

Funerary Portraiture

Most of the "lastre" from Pianabella bear a strigilated decoration (such as B 102, for instance, cf. Fig. 50). A few examples include *clipei*, portraits of the deceased. So, since portraiture in the context of the Basilica of Pianabella occurs mainly in strigilated sarcophagi and in "lastre" that imitate this kind of decorative makeup, it is proper to discuss briefly here the way these representations fit the broader scope of funerary portraiture at Ostia. In this respect, Pianabella follows closely the style of its counterparts in Ostia proper. Portraits recovered from Pianabella are characterized by verism (B 99, 101, for example, cf. Fig. 42 and 51, respectively), that is, the tendency to depict the deceased as realistically as possible. Almost all of them are datable to the Severan period, and are characterized by supernaturalism. That means that they were not originally

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[636] According to AGNOLI 1999:209, "l'esame delle lastre… ha potuto dunque dimostrare una varietà tipologica e iconografica che conforta l'idea di un'affermata produzione locale di lastre di chiusura di loculi, una classe di materiali autonoma."

[637] *Repertorium I*, n°. 72, Taf. 22.

[638] *Repertorium I*, n°. 914,Taf. 144.

intended for Christian burials in the basilica. One of them is even reused as building material on the pavement of the basilica.

B 99, dating to the mid second century A.D., displays a figured scene worth mentioning (Fig. 42). It depicts a symposiastic scene in which the deceased – rendered in heroic nudity – appears on a couch beside his mother and father.[639] On the one hand, the high quality of the depiction and the originality of the details make the "lastra" into a *unicum*. On the other hand, the depiction reveals the same taste for verism and for realism that is typical of Ostian portraiture. The poignancy of death is enhanced by the presence of the dog of the deceased and the veristic portrayal of his parents. The iconography underscores the theme of the funerary banquet made explicit by the table in front of the couch, as well as by the basket and bottle beside it. Agnoli notes that the representation of two successive generations on this "lastra" does in fact bear a striking resemblance to the sarcophagus of C. Iunius Euhodos and Melite Acte from Ostia.[640] Besides, the details of the table and the objects associated with it, as well as the heroic nudity of its young personage, remind us of a similar "lastra" from Isola Sacra.[641] This latter "lastra" belonged to a trader in grains who was commemorated through a symposiastic scene that included Mercury and Ceres, the protectors of Ostia's grain commerce. The inescapable conclusion is that funerary portraiture at Pianabella does fit the Ostian matrix, and that its originality is not so much depending on iconographic motifs as on decorative details.

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[639] Both the young man and his father resemble a portrait of Lucius Verus, while the coiffure of the mother clearly belongs to the type associated with Faustina Minor, dating to 151-152 A.D. Cf. AGNOLI 1995:135.
[640] AGNOLI 1995:135.
[641] Taf. 69.5 in AGNOLI 1995.

Conclusion

The iconography recovered from Pianabella's sarcophagi and their lids covers three main themes: Dionysiac scenes (including bucolic and symposiastic topics), seasonal themes and marine scenes. The Dionysiac group refers mainly to one's hope of happiness in the afterlife, as this is put forth in mystery cults. Seasonal themes make reference to one's regeneration – just like that which is witnessed in nature day by day. The laurel appears often in such a context, being emblematic of one's victory over death. The third and last group alludes to one's journey to the hereafter.

The iconography found in Pianabella is common to the funerary repertoire of that period. It refers mainly to one's desire to be remembered after one's demise (immortality through fame), or underscores the belief in one's existence in the next world. That is why references to the virtues of the deceased are quite widespread both at Pianabella and at Ostia proper: *virtus* and c*oncordia* for men, and *pietas*, *castitas* and *pulchritudo* for women. Specifically at Pianabella, we find frequent references to the professional activities of the deceased as well as the depiction of the chase as an *exemplum virtutis*.

As far as the utilization of loculus closure slabs ("lastre") is concerned, I propose that they were not commissioned as cost-cutting measures, as it is generally supposed, but for the enhancement of a person's social status. Their use was less expensive than that of the monolithic chests, but what a person could save because of the reduced quantity of marble required for the "lastre" was generally spent on improving the quality of the decoration. This shows that the use of "lastre" was not predicated on the need to spare money, but on the desire to get the best out of a commissioner's purse. In fact, because of their lavish decoration – a "lastra" could cost no less than a strigilated chest.[642] This suggests the presence of ambitious patrons who were not content to commission the more

common, inexpensive strigilated chests that they could afford, but who strove to give displays of status beyond their actual social level. It also means that fifth century Christians at Pianabella behaved like everybody else in making status claims while burying their dead. So, contrary to the widespread opinion among non-specialists, Christian burials were not impervious to class distinctions.

The Evidence from Inscriptions

The excavators recovered a large number of inscriptions from Pianabella, which have been published in a catalogue in the twelfth volume of the *Scavi* as well as in the *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana* and *Vetera Christianorum*.[643] The *Scavi* catalogue includes about 350 inscriptions – mostly in Latin – from the basilica and the surrounding necropolis. About 54% of them come from the 1976-1977 campaigns, 11% from the 1981 campaign, 30% from the 1988-1989 campaigns, and 5% from casual finds. As far as the typology of these inscriptions is concerned, they are, as a rule, funerary epitaphs. Although most tombs in the basilica date to the fifth century (as do the inscriptions associated with them), most inscriptions from Pianabella belong, instead, to the neighboring *mausolea*, which date to a period spanning the second half of the first century, the second century and most of the third.[644] This epigraphic material is characterized by the use of marble and by a preference for formulaic phrasing.[645] Quite a few of these inscriptions make mention of public offices (A 5, 6, 28, 37, 48, 73, 246), while others flaunt an essentially urban character which is clearly perceived in the way

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[642] AGNOLI 1995:136.

[643] MARINUCCI 1991; NUZZO 1996, respectively.

[644] Such *mausolea* have been dated to this period by MORANDI 1982:57-76.

[645] However, a few inscriptions stand out. A 167 and 168 were inscribed in travertine rather than in marble (NUZZO 1999:35 suggests that they may not have belonged to the Pianabella necropolis). Inscriptions A 22, 59 and 133 contained intersyllabic punctuation. Finally, A 332 is a *tabula lusoria* and escapes the general typology of the Pianabella inscriptions.

they refer to the city's guilds (A 4, 9-17). The latter group had its original display venue somewhere in the city proper.

Christian Inscriptions from Pianabella

Only a small number of Christian inscriptions were recovered from the Pianabella area, and most of these are fragmentary (cf. Table 7).[646] The only complete Christian inscription recovered from that area was found long before systematic excavations started in the site. Its discovery was due to military activity not far from the Pianabella necropolis in 1943. A small marble slab (0.41 x 0.30 m) was retrieved bearing the inscription *CELERINUS | HIC POSITUS | EST IN PACE | ♥* (no. 20).[647] Possibly Christian inscriptions from Pianabella present a remarkable homogeneity. They generally include only one nominal element as well as the formula *dormit in pace*. A 331 (no. 12) is the only one in Greek,[648] whereas A 185 and 186 (nos. 9 and 10) are the only ones written in verse. The formula *hic dormit/dormiunt (in pace)*, of widespread use after the early fourth century A.D., is characteristic of the central stretch of Latium's coast,[649] having been documented in Pianabella since the 1940s.[650] In fact, an early fourth-century fragment found in Pianabella in 1941 may represent the earliest attestation of the expression *(re)quiescit in pace* at Ostia.[651] This suggests that Christians were buried in this cemetery several years before the Pianabella Basilica was first built. It is thus likely that the basilica was built in this district precisely because this cemetery was already attracting Christian depositions.

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[646] In this section, I will give the numbers of the inscriptions as listed in Table 7 as well as their bibliographic sources for quick reference.

[647] CALZA 1949-1951:137. It has been published as Marinucci's inscription no. 24.

[648] Identified as such by the equivalent formula ἐντθάδε κοιμάτε.

[649] Cf., for instance, *C.I.L.* 15.1876-1877, 1883-1884, 1886-1889, 1891-1893, 1895, 1897, 1901-1904, 1907-1910, 1912-1916, 1918, 1920-1924, 1927-1932, 5232-5233, 5236-5237, 5239 and 5340.

[650] MARINUCCI 1991:81. This is the case, for instance, of Marinucci's inscriptions no. 6 found in Pianabella in 1941.

Two inscriptions datable to the second half of the fourth century bear the Christian Chi-Rho monogram: A 202 and 203 (nos. 17 and 1). Another inscription (no. 18) displays a "T" (in the word *vixit*) that has been shaped into a cross.[652] Inscription A 203 (no. 1) is important for our purposes here because it seems to be rather early (mid fourth century) and may represent an honorific inscription for a group of prominent Christian citizens. Ornamented with a palm branch and a Christian monogram, it is a list of *cognomina*. Unfortunately, due to the fragmentary condition of the marble slab, which was mutilated on both sides, only the endings of the nominative of such names remain. The letter Q standing alone at the end of lines 3, 5 and 6 is crucial for the interpretation of this inscription. If taken as the relative pronoun *qui*, it may simply indicate a funerary inscription (containing the common formula *qui vixit*), but if taken as the enclitic *que*, it may indeed be a sign of an honorific list.[653] If that is the case, then Christians at Ostia may have been more organized and may have enjoyed a higher status in the fourth century than it is generally assumed. However, that should not be stretched too far, since strong evidence suggests that the Pianabella Christians still enjoyed a low status in the fifth century. Their funerary inscriptions are quite ordinary and there is evidence for a strong foreign element among the Pianabella Christians in that period.

Epigraphic Evidence for the Status of the Christian Community at Pianabella

Prosopography, demography and social history are all subjects which make widespread use of epigraphic information from a funerary context and conditioned by the traditions of commemoration. The isolation, however, of one

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[651] Marinucci's inscription n°. 16.
[652] Marinucci's inscription n°. 6 (fig. 6 A), in grey marble, reads, *[...] ERMA [...] | [...] VIXIT·Ann(os) | [...] VII ♥ [...]*, but the crosslike "T" may be instead due to the elision of the "I" that precedes it.
[653] Cf. NUZZO 1999:86.

aspect of the inscription can create false impressions of Roman society: "an inscription is only one aspect, often indeed the final aspect, of a whole series of events."[654] For this reason, the study of the epigraphic evidence from Pianabella can be very useful since some of the Pianabella inscriptions were still found *in situ*.

An interesting inscription (A 188 – no. 14 in Table 7) – in white marble mutilated on its left side – commemorated a certain Sextilia, and was commissioned by her parents.[655] Although it was reutilized as revetment for a burial pit dating to the eighth or ninth centuries, its original context was probably a pavimental tomb inside the basilica.[656] The spelling is irregular and makes no distinction between the letters "L" and "I". Besides, even though the mother had the Latin name Magna, it is rendered with the genitive ending common to Greek names. This suggests that the commissioners were of Greek origin. Probably of freedmen stock, they had adopted new Latin names. Another inscription (A 191 – no. 4 in Table 7) possibly bears the Greek cognomen Stratonicus, which is attested also in a Christian inscription found in Ostia in 1825 (*C.I.L.* 14.1922).

The fact that many of these inscriptions were carved in a slapdash fashion may attest to the prevalence of an economically underprivileged community.[657] Inscription A 202 (no. 17), for instance, presents several features that indicate

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[654] HOPE 2000:157. According to her (p. 159), "*CIL* is in many ways a depressing sight since it is a product and an instrument in this process of disassociation; thousands of epitaphs are listed with little information provided on monument type, décor or circumstances of discovery… although it may not always be possible to reconstruct the Roman cemetery it is still essential to optimize the information which is available, even if this is limited to reassociating inscription and monument."
[655] The inscription reads, *[Locus?] PROCLI ET MAG | neS QVORVM FILIA | dorMIT IN PACE SEXTILIA | annORVM VI · M(ensium) · X | ET D(ierum) · XXV.*
[656] Cf. NUZZO 1996:108; 1999:34.
[657] Sloppy workmanship characterizes the following Christian inscriptions from Pianabella: A 188, 192, 195, 197, and 202. Poor execution is obviously not a prerogative of Pianabella's Christian inscriptions. Christian inscriptions from Ostia also share this circumstance. Marinucci's inscription n°. 26 (whose exact findspot is not given), for instance, displays very poor execution: irregular letters, uncertain *ductus*, and the elision of a few letters. Besides, the carving of the "A" is done in such a careless way that it occasionally appears as "Λ".

deplorable workmanship: irregular *ductus*, letters of different sizes, and uneven depth.[658] Another piece of evidence that betrays a low economic provenance for the Christian inscriptions of Pianabella is the occurrence of elided letters, which may indicate that the stone commissioned was too small for the text that the commissioner intended to have engraved on it.[659] A few inscriptions, however, attest to a more privileged echelon.[660] The three fragments of a monumental architrave in white marble, which contains a panel with lateral wings, or *tabula ansata*, with crosses within the *ansa* form an elegant inscription (A 184 or no. 13 in Table 7) honoring the *euergetism* of bishop Bellator at Pianabella, in the fifth-century. The inscription reads, *in n(omine) do]M(i)N(i) N(ostri) BELLATOR EPISC · FECIT*, "bishop Bellator built this in the name of our Lord." A similar monumental character can be seen as well in inscription A 185 (no. 9), which dates to 420 or 446, depending on whether we take the fragmentary consular notion of the last line to refer to Flavius Constantius (consul in 420) or to Flavius Aetius (consul in 446). This funerary inscription – also in white marble, and also broken into three fragments – was written in hexameters, and has additional importance because it probably bore a reference to the martyr or saint to whom the basilica had been dedicated. Inscription A 185 (no. 9) reads,

> *[…] aEDE SACRATA […] | […]LI CRIMEN NO[…] | […] SENSIT ET A […] | […]VRIDA BVLT[…] SVB V[…] | […] DECERPITVR AevO NON HVNC | […]O[…] AB SVCCESSORE LEGENDVM […] | […]VM S[…]NC RAPTVS CITIVS VESTIGIA CHRistI | […] mERVIT SE […]NIS SVBITIS NATA INCREMENTA VIDEMVS | […]S VELOX MO[…]E INMORTALIS HoNOREM IB(it) P(ridie) NON(as) | nov(embres) […] D(epositus) NON(is) NOV(embribus) […]IO III ConS(ulibus).*

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[658] The two fragments that remain from the inscription contain only a few letters. The Christian character of the inscription is indicated by the presence of the Christian monogram.
[659] An example of an inscription bearing elided letters is Marinucci's inscription n⁰. 6 A.
[660] This is the case of A 184, 185, 194, and 199?.

Unfortunately, its fragmentary condition makes the reconstruction of the whole text difficult.[661] We do not have the name of the person it commemorates, but the expression *aede sacrata*, which stands alone at the beginning of fragment *b*, certainly belongs to a context like that of an inscription from Rome that reads, *MARTYRIS IN STEPHANI VENERABILIS AEDE SACRATA*, "in the sacred shrine of the venerable martyr Stephen."[662] That we should expect some sort of association between the Pianabella basilica and the veneration of a martyr is further confirmed by the fact that an inscription found at Portus assumes such a form of connection for the Basilica of SS. Eutropius, Bonosa and Zosima. It explicitly states that bishop Donatus had built the foundations of that basilica on behalf of the people who attended the meetings held by the tomb of the three local martyrs killed in A.D. 275.[663]

Although the Christian inscriptions at Pianabella are quite ordinary, they suggest a desire for social improvement. This is the case with A 186 (no. 10), a marble slab now broken in six pieces.[664] The striking thing about this fifth-century funerary inscription is that it bears a metric epitaph (in hexameters and pentameters) that imitates those that Pope Damasus (366-384 A.D.) wrote for the Roman martyrs.[665] The eulogy was intended for a female figure (as the words *virginis castae* indicate), and the acclamation that she receives is similar to that of

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[661] This white marble inscription consists of three fragments only two of which are contiguous.

[662] *I.C.V.R.* II, p.152, n. 23.

[663] *C.I.L.* 14.1937: *SANCTIS· MARTYRIBVS ET BEATIssimis | EVTROPIO· BONOSAE ET ZOSIMe | DONATVS EPISC· TVMVLVM ADOrnavit | SED ET BASILICAM· CONIvnCTAM tumulo | A FVNDAMENTIS· SANCTAE pleBI Dei construxit.*

[664] Inscription A 186 reads, *viRGINIS Castae [...] MEMBRA sepvlCHRUM | eXPLEVIT Vitae [...] cvRRICVLVM | REDDIDIT H[...] MERITVMQ(ue) PVDOREM | SERVAT OVaNS DOMinO corpOrE DEPOSITO | haNC IVSTI QVAERUNt PROCERES HANC TVRBA PIORVM | crediTE QVID POSSIT CASTVS AMOR FIDEI. [...] | dEP(osita) III KAL(endas) AVG(ustas).*

[665] Cf. NUZZO 1999:35-36. In fact, Damasus's pontificate signals the triumph of the veneration of the Roman martyrs near their tombs as an essential requirement and a moment of paramount importance for the liturgy of the Christian community in Italy. Damasus placed the metric epitaphs that he wrote for the martyrs in the sanctuaries consecrated to them. He had his calligrapher Furius

the great heroes of Hebrews 11-12.[666] The fact that this epitaph mirrors those written by Pope Damasus shows that the Christian community at Ostia was sensitive to the main events in the history of Christianity at Rome. Ostian Christians reacted to them and tried to make use of them for their immediate purposes. In this case, those commissioning the inscription appropriated a formula that had become common in Rome for the exaltation of the Christian faith, and used it to enhance their own status.

Six inscription fragments (A 37-42) making reference to the Egrilii were found in the basilica or in the surrounding area, all predating the construction of the basilical structure and none overtly Christian.[667] These so-called "Egrilian" inscriptions provide evidence for a higher social status of a few of the people buried in the necropolis or – at least – their patronage.[668] A poorly-cut inscription (A 39) found, in 1977, in Enclosure F of Building 6 on a cinerary urn dating from the second half of the first century, reads, *D(is) M(anibus) | EGRILIAE SPENI | PARENTES | FILIAE PIENTISSIMAE*, "to the divine shades of Egrilia Spes, a most devoted daughter, by her parents." In fact, it is odd that the parents of Egrilia Spes made her such a stern urn. Except for a flower-patterned decorative element, and a crown on the lid, there is not much to indicate that she belonged to such an illustrious family.

Dionisius Filocalus cut out his verses on monumental marble slabs, thirty of which have survived. Twenty other epitaphs are known through medieval copies. Cf. PERGOLA 2002:25.

[666] The expression *turba piorum* of the inscription echoes *tantam nubem testium* of Heb 12:1 (Vulgate). And the verb form *ovans* certainly adds to a victorious mood to a certain extent compatible to that of the *certamen* in Heb 12:1.

[667] Four of them are studied by MORANDI 1982:70ff.

[668] The Egrilii quickly ascended to power in the second century A.D. During the first half of that century they gave Rome three consuls (PAVOLINI 2006:35). We find approximately 250 Egrilii in Ostia, several of whom are found among the local nobility, the earliest attested in the time of Augustus (MEIGGS 1973:196-198; 502-507). Besides them, we find numerous freedmen and descendants of freedmen who had successful careers, including *seviri Augustales* and Roman knights (cf. SALOMIES 2002:154).

Another inscription (A 37) of a better quality than that of the one just mentioned, found on a "lastra" also in 1977, evokes an Egrilius as a member of the guild of the *seviri augustales* originally associated with the imperial cult:

SEVIRO A[VG(ustali) IDEM Q(uinq)Q(uennali)] | ET EGR[ILIAE ---] | CONIVG[I ET LIBERTIS LI] | BERTAB(usque) PO[STERIS(que) EORUM], | QVOT EST [---] | AB SEX. [---] | INTRA[NTIBVS ---].

A third inscription (A 38) found in 1981 and dating from the second century displays well-cut letters, but reads simply:

[D(is) M(anibus). | [EG]RILI[AE] | [---] ITA[TI].

A fourth inscription (A 40) dating from the second half of the third century and found in 1976 makes reference to a descendant from a freedman of the Egrilii who belonged to the tribe Palatina instead of the tribe Voturia to which most of the Egrilii belonged.[669] This well-cut funerary inscription reads,

D(is) M(anibus). A. EGRILIO A. F(ilio) PAL(atina) | HILARIANO.

Two other people with the same name are said to have belonged to the *ordo corporatorum qui pecuniam ad ampliandum templum contulerunt* (cf. *C.I.L.* 14.246). Another funerary inscription from Pianabella (A 41), dating from the second century, may make reference to a woman belonging to the Egrilian family, although its fragmentary condition does not allow us to ascertain that for sure:

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[669] Two other Egrilii are known to have belonged to tribes other than the Voturia, cf. *C.I.L.* 14.949 and 4899. See also MEIGGS 1973:190-191 and CEBEILLAC 1971:97, N. 1.

E[---], | Q[VAE VIXIT ---].[670]

The fragment of a cinerary urn (C 15) dating from the mid-second century and bearing a candlestick decoration found at Pianabella in 1968 displays an inscription that reads,

[D(is)] M(anibus) | [A. EG]RILI THALLI | [VIVI]RI AUGUSTAL(is) | [IDE]M QVINQ(uennalis) | [ ] OBELLIUS | [T]ROPHIMVS | [A]MICO OPTIMO.[671]

Egrilius Thallus was no doubt a freedman of the Egrilii and a namesake of a man mentioned among the members of an Ostian guild in 140 A.D. (cf. *C.I.L.* 14.246).

Christian vs Pagan Inscriptions

The corpus of 334 pagan inscriptions from the mausolea surrounding the basilica or used as building material in the basilica is considerably more numerous and more heterogeneous than that of the twenty-two Christian inscriptions, although their identification as such is not absolutely certain. Pagan inscriptions from Pianabella tend to display the formula D.M., while Christian inscriptions occasionally bear the Christian Chi-Rho monogram. Both corpora depended heavily on marble and included formulaic lettering, but pagan inscriptions (except A 44, 88, 184 and 188) used the *tria nomina*, while Christian inscriptions tended to display only one nominal element. These names were for the most part typical to Ostia, including the large number of foreign *cognomina* (mostly Greek) which they comprised. The corpus of Christian epigraphs includes two inscriptions written in verse, both in an explicit religious context (A 185 and 186), while there is only one pagan inscription in verse (A 326). Very few inscriptions from our

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[670] NUZZO 1999:51 sees it as belonging to a woman because of the absence of the person's *praenomen*.
[671] ARAVANTINOS 1999:310.

corpus (A 28, 65, 87 136, 177 and 243) bear any explicit iconography, which – with the exception of palm branches, doves and monograms – is almost entirely absent from the Christian inscriptions.

Several pagan inscriptions from Pianabella make mention of public offices in the *cursus honorum* (A 5, 6, 28, 37, 48, 73 and 246), but no Christian inscription does. On the other hand, religious offices are referred to in both corpora (A 7 and 184). Overt references to patronage and *amicitia* occur in the pagan inscriptions (A 30, 90, 92), but not in the Christian inscriptions, which refer only exceptionally to religious euergetism (A 184). The obsessive concern for the integrity of the funerary property which is witnessed in regards to the tombs at Isola Sacra is entirely absent from Pianabella Christian inscriptions, but a few pagan inscriptions (A 8, 167-175 and 268?) betray that preoccupation. While several pagan inscriptions in our corpus make reference to familial relationships, only two Christian inscriptions refer to them: A 331 (no. 12) and A 188 (no. 14). In both cases the parents built a tomb for a daughter. The Christian emphasis on religious euergetism, the family's little concern for the integrity of the tomb, and the fact that familial ties are no longer emphasized in death, all of this suggests that the institutional church was edging out the family from a prominent role in the patronage conventions related to funerary practices. The Christian inscriptions from Pianabella ostensibly downplay the importance of traditional patronage and familial relationships; they also illustrate the carefree attitude on the part of patrons toward the integrity of one's tomb, and they shift emphasis from family responsibilities to ecclesiastical euergetism, suggesting that the church – not the family – was now burying the dead, and providing ongoing care and security for their tombs.

Conclusion

Despite the fact that the iconographic specimens recovered from Pianabella do not suggest any breaks with the common funerary repertoire found in Ostia and everywhere else in the Roman Empire at the time when Christianity was emerging and consolidating its influence, the marble sarcophagi utilized in this context and a certain penchant for using marble slabs to close the sites of deposition (the so-called "lastre di chiusura di loculi") attest to the presence in the area of ambitious patrons who strove to give displays of status beyond their actual level. That suggests that the early Christians were not immune to the social pressures of their age, but were self-consciously trying to satisfy the demands of a social matrix which they did not and could not push away. That the early Christians were somehow affected by patronage conventions is a fact that has long been acknowledged.[672] The use of the word προιστάμενοι and its derivatives to depict the first Christian leaders in Romans 8:12; 16:2 and in 1 Thessalonians 5:12 was clear indication of that practice.[673] Contemporary Christian authors, however, were not always inclined to put that into plain words. The situation at Pianabella provides, then, important corroboration for the fact that patronage was indeed a commonplace aspect of Christian life under Roman rule.

The abundant epigraphic material from Pianabella (much of which was found *in situ*), not surprisingly, suggests a Christian presence even before the construction of the basilica whose date the inscriptions and architectural remains

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[672] LINDSAY 1903:83.

[673] According to LINDSAY 1903:83, n. 335: "the term προστάτης was used technically in Greek city life (and Thessalonica in Paul's time was a Greek city which had been permitted by the Romans to retain its ancient Greek constitution) to denote those citizens who undertook to care for and rule over the μέτοικοι, or persons who had no civic rights. It denoted technically the Roman relation of patron and client and what corresponded thereto in Greek social life. The word was used by Plutarch to translate the Latin *patronus* (Plutarch, *Rom.* 13; *Mar.* 5). Clement, in his *Epistle to the Corinthians*, applies the word in three different places to denote our Lord: 'the Patron and Helper of our weakness' (xxxvi. 1); 'the Highpriest and Patron of our souls' (lxi. 3; lxiv.)."

place around the end of the fourth or the beginning of the fifth century. Unfortunately, the inscriptions dating from this early period (n. 1-8 in Table 7) are too fragmentary to allow any important conclusions. All of them display either the Christian monogram or one variant of the formula *requiescit in pace*. Other inscriptions show that the collapse and abandonment of the basilica and its adjacent buildings happened no earlier than the tenth century.

Christian inscriptions from Pianabella comprise only about ten percent of the corpus recovered from the basilica and surrounding necropolis. Although Christian material is scarce, it is easily recognizable. It points to the presence of a strong foreign element in the incipient Christian community at Pianabella,[674] and it is quite ordinary. Workmanship and wording of the Pianabella inscriptions denote that these early Christians belonged to a low social stratum which they were reluctant to conform to, and finally that they conscientiously followed the most important events in the metropolis as they related to Christianity. The presence of a small number of important personalities among them – probably acting as patrons (such as the well-known Egrilian clan) – motivated them to build a cemeterial basilica and to dedicate it to a nameless martyr. The next chapter will show how this endeavor impacted the nascent Christian community at Pianabella.

Although earlier studies indicated that Christians were exclusive in death and in life, setting aside special plots for their own use, and dictating the use of particular burial rites,[675] recent studies point to the fact that at least up to the

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[674] Greek *cognomina* alone comprise more than forty-five percent of the total number of inscriptions from Pianabella.

[675] GREEN 1977:46. PRIEUR 1986:63 sees the catacombs as an ideal means through which the early Christians were supposedly able to attain exclusiveness: "elles facilitent le rite de l'inhumation et assurent une sepulture séparée de celle des païens." See also NORTHCOTE & BROWNLOW 1879:1.94-98.

fourth century "companionable" or "mixed burials" were tolerated.[676] Unfortunately, sarcophagus iconography of the burials in and around the basilica tended to be of the strigilated type while several of the burials did not contain any identifying inscriptions. For that reason, it is not possible to make any clear statements about whether the Pianabella Christians were, in fact, exclusive in burial, although it is very likely that no pagans were buried inside the basilica. At the same time, the Pianabella inscriptions suggest that the institutional church was becoming more and more involved in Christian burials, thus gradually edging out both the family and secular patrons from that process.

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[676] Cf., for instance, JOHNSON 1997:37; PERGOLA 2002:92; REBILLARD 2003 and SPERA 2003:26.

Chapter Five: The Social World of the Pianabella Christians

In its negative significance, death is often seen as the final malfunctioning of the body. Yet, in its positive significance, death can be seen as a creative force capable of constructing community. Even the fact that tombs become old, undergo different levels of neglect and finally disintegrate has a social meaning: ancestral status is ultimately realized through the abandonment and breakdown of these tombs, the exposed grey concrete materially reuniting the deceased with the land.[677] At the same time, our very concern for the tomb helps us do away with our worries about what happens after death and, as a consequence, more demanding anxieties are sublimated.[678] People come together when death occurs or when there is a possibility for it to take place. The fact that a group of Christians came together in the context of a cemeterial basilica at Pianabella is meaningful because it shows how early Christians from different backgrounds and social classes could make a joint effort to establish a community based on common beliefs and fears. By focusing on the archaeological event of the construction of a cemeterial basilica at Pianabella, I hope to enter a particular past, which may then be reconstructed interpretively.

In Chapter Three, I discussed how the absence of grave goods and permanent funerary couches for communal meals suggests a low social level for the patrons choosing burial at the Pianabella necropolis. In Chapter Four, I discussed how these same patrons made a conspicuous effort in order to make the best out of their purses while commissioning marble closing slabs instead of the expensive sarcophagi commonly used in the other necropoleis of Ostia. I also showed how the poor workmanship of the Pianabella inscriptions as well as their

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[677] HORST 2004.
[678] According to ROUCHE 1989:543, "la tombe miraculeuse éclipse l'intérrogation sur la vie d'outre tombe et l'au delà."

low-quality lettering and abundant foreign names further suggest that the Pianabella community belonged to a low social stratum. This last chapter will focus on the strategies used by this underprivileged but growing Christian community at Ostia in order to attain social visibility and the process through which the death of a nameless, but prominent woman triggered a sense of community at Pianabella. It will show how the presence of the dead and the performance of ritual underlined continuity from traditional Roman society and helped develop and sustain community, showing that – contrary to previous assumptions – early and late-Antique Christianity was never intent on doing away with traditional ritual.[679] I will also argue that the Pianabella Basilica can be seen as a type of family tomb, one that was able to bring the family of God together in order to memorialize death and to celebrate life.

Social Visibility through Building Activity at a Conspicuous Location

The construction of the Pianabella Basilica in such close proximity to the Constantinian basilica *intra muros* is a remarkable fact, since it suggests that the section near the Porta Laurentina had become an area where a high concentration of Christians existed.[680] Thus, this building made it possible for the Christian community occupying the southeastern section of Ostia to become more socially visible. The basilical structure provided a most advantageous space for funerary banquets and religious gatherings, while its optimal location exposed the basilica to those commuting from the *litus Laurentinum* to Ostia or vice-versa. Recent studies conducted by Purcell show in fact that many Romans – who acquired in imperial times a penchant for the countryside – spent considerable time

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[679] For the current scholarship on the relationship between Christianity and traditional ritual, see AUFFARTH 2006:63-80 and HENDERSON 2006:81-100.
[680] In this regard, see BRENK 1998:526-527.

commuting between urban and suburban environments.[681] Besides, the originality and semi-monumentality of the building show that the Christian community at Ostia had attained a considerable degree of organization by the late fourth and early fifth century.[682]

The crowd attending the funerary procession increasingly called attention to the Pianabella Basilica, thus putting it in the public view.[683] This is especially true because this area had perhaps turned into a conceptually separate entity from Ostia, a small *suburbium* or *proastion*,[684] as the building history surrounding the basilica suggests. The basilica belonged to the larger context of the via Laurentina necropolis (whose earliest burials date from 50 B.C.).[685] This important thoroughfare leading southeast from Ostia was flanked with a diversity of tombs

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[681] That explains why they were willing to go to great lengths in order to change the urban landscape and make it look more like the countryside by tampering with the sea, by creating waterways and artificial altitude, and by creating cavelike environments. A part of the intention of all of this was to provide a vantage point in which the mutual connections between town and country could be appreciated. They also strove for outward display and a sense of permanence (PURCELL 1987b:186-203). In this regard, please see PURCELL 1995:151-179; PURCELL 1998:11-33. One of Purcell's main theses is that several people who lived downtown used the *viae* to pay periodic visits to their suburban estates where they grew vegetables which were often sold to pay for any funerary expenses they might incur in. He calls this kind of property a *cepotaphion* or a garden-tomb (PURCELL 1987a:35).

[682] Only two other known buildings of the Roman world had points of contact with the Pianabella basilica: the Basilica of S. Agapito in Palestrina (GIORDANI 1979:242) and that of S. Tommaso in Cimitile (BRENK 1998:527), especially in connection with the funerary enclosure. In 274, Agapito died a martyr's death in the amphitheater of Palestrina. He was, then, buried in a basilica constructed for that purpose on the road that leads to Valmontone. For this basilica's discovery and excavation, see: SCOGNAMIGLIO 1865; MARUCCHI 1899. This is not the same basilica that was dedicated to him in the fifth century – reutilizing the structure of a pagan temple dedicated to Jupiter, a shrine probably dedicated to Isis, and a Serapeum – and to which his remains were supposedly translated in the late ninth century. This latter basilica retained its original layout until the twelfth century when Bishop Conone built two secondary naves, an apse (which encroached upon a Roman basilica which was adjacent to the temple of Jupiter) and a tower.

[683] See above for a discussion of Roman funerary processions (cf. Fig. 29).

[684] A *suburbium* was a district on the periphery of the urbs with well-defined funerary and religious associations, which contributed to the self-esteem of a city, its defining elements including cult sites, monuments, cultivated green spaces and tombs (cf. GEE 2003:98). For Detailed studies on the litus Laurentinum in its close association with Ostia, see: PURCELL 1998:11-32 and LAURO & CLARIDGE 1998:39-62.

[685] PAVOLINI 1988:238; HEINZELMANN 2000a:51-75.

(many of which are not yet excavated), and was proximate to extra urban bath complexes, inconspicuous houses, a synagogue, suburban *villae*, and a small forum east of the road.[686] The Roman suburb was in fact a place of ambiguity where a considerable tension existed between marginal landscapes and *loci* for social negotiation and identity creation.[687]

The so-called Tomb 18 – belonging to the last decades of the first century B.C. – is worth mentioning because it not only is architecturally prominent but also pertinent for a better understanding of the social context of the via Laurentina/Pianabella *proastion*.[688] Also known as "Tomba della Sacerdotessa Isiaca" on account of a painting decorating an external niche on the wall facing the via Laurentina, it displays a wall painting showing a female figure holding a *sistrum*, an item traditionally associated with the Egyptian cult of Isis (Fig. 46). Pavolini understands this representation as an expression of religious sentiment, especially because there is another painting on the north wall, depicting a maenad (Fig. 47).[689] If that is the case, then we are permitted to suppose that the area adjacent to Pianabella very early formed a multicultural, syncretistic environment not at all different from that of Ostia proper.

Pianabella's social fabric needs also to be understood against the backdrop of its relationship to Procoio Vecchio farther south along the Laurentian coast. Here luxury *villae* such as the ones now known as Villa di Plinio, La Chiesola (or

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[686] The small forum east of the via Laurentina consisted of an expansion of the early necropolis which housed reticulate tombs as well as cylindrical and quadrangular pinnacles that find *comparanda* in Ventimiglia and Pompeii, southeast of which we find large *mausolea*, cf. PAVOLINI 1988:241.

[687] The Roman necropoleis were not the preserve of the dead. According to GRAHAM 2005:133-134, the necropolis and its environs served various social and economic functions: (a) humble and luxurious housing, (b) *horti* and market gardens, (c) a location for noxious or hazardous industries, (d) a place crossed by aqueducts and busy highways, which allowed for increased interaction with strangers, and (e) a place for tombs and monuments, which allowed for increased visibility and status display.

[688] The tomb includes both inhumation and cremation burials, and it is a very early attestation of a chamber *columbarium*.

[689] PAVOLINI 1988:240-241.

Villa del Confine), Vicus Augustanus, and Villa Magna (or Grotte di Piastra),[690] among others, developed – starting in the second century – along the shore about 500 m south of the basilica along the coast towards Lavinium (Fig. 48). The Pianabella basilica was set halfway between downtown Ostia and Procoio Vecchio. These architectural complexes situated in a primarily agricultural district included – while thriving – elaborate *thermae* and *nymphaea*, and a unique reticulate wall 127 m long, whose original function is yet to be determined.[691] There is compelling reason to believe that Christians lived in or near these *villae* when the Pianabella basilica was in use. There is evidence for a small (no more than 14 x 9 m) Christian basilica in Castel Fusano (Fig. 49). Built in the late fourth or early fifth century, this small basilica consisted of an apse and only one nave.[692] The excavators also found fragments of its altar and part of the original marble pavement.[693] A sarcophagus and a tomb found just outside the basilica suggest that the church was first built in a pre-existing funerary area.[694] Another villa, now known as "la Chiesuola," was also once unwarrantably thought to have been a Christian building,[695] on account of its *triclinium* which was built in *opus latericium* with an *opus listatum* apse.

People could, in fact, effortlessly walk from Procoio Vecchio or the other neighboring *villae* to the Pianabella Basilica since the villa was served by the via Severiana that led to both the synagogue and the basilica (Fig. 47). Although the Porta Marina was the shortest way to the heart of Ostia for those coming from these *villae*, the Porta Laurentina represented a good alternative for those on their

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[690] RICOTTI 1983:229-251; RICOTTI 1985:45-56; LAURO & CLARIDGE 1998:39-61.
[691] PAVOLINI 1988:244.
[692] LAURO & CLARIDGE 1998:41.
[693] RAMIERI 1994:471ff.
[694] LAURO & CLARIDGE 1998:41.
[695] PAVOLINI 1988:247 calls it "una piccola basilica cristiana."

way to the theater or to the Constantinian Basilica.[696] The architectural make-up of this luxury house-complex by the beach makes us suppose that its inhabitants were the kind of people that would be willing to pay frequent visits to the theater either by carriage or on horseback, especially after it was renovated by Ragonius Vincentius Celsus in the late fourth century and the possibility to house water shows was added.[697] That coincided with the period when the basilica was built.

The advantageous location of the Pianabella Basilica gave the Pianabella Christians increased social visibility. In the late fourth century, people coming from Ostia for the usual commemorations in the via Laurentina/Pianabella tombs or from Procoio Vecchio to the city would not fail to take notice that the Christian community had recently built two monumental structures in close relationship: a magnificent basilica *intra moenia* just east of the Porta Laurentina and a relatively impressive funerary structure just outside the Porta Laurentina. And the passersby would not come solely from Procoio Vecchio. Lanciani identified nine other luxury *villae* farther down the Laurentian coast (along the via Severiana),[698] and Pliny the Younger tells us that the dining-room of his Laurentine *villa* commanded an "extensive look-out on to the sea, a long stretch of seashore, and beautiful *villae*": *latissimum mare, longissimum litus, villas amoenissimas* (*Epistula* 2.17).[699] Those living in such *villae* would consider relinquishing their tranquility in order to make a trip to the city on account of necessities,

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[696] There was, however, a secondary gate to the Constantinian Basílica near the so-called Via del Sabazeo, but even the entrance through that secondary gate required that the passerby crossed the Pianabella *proastion*.
[697] PAVOLINI 1988:66.
[698] PAVOLINI 1988:247, who says that this area was a "zona residenziale di lusso".
[699] Pliny's estate is traditionally identified as the so-called "La Palombara" *villa* next to Procoio Vecchio. King Victor Emmanuel, when undertaking, near the end of 1874, some excavations on his hunting estate of Castel Porziano, between Ostia and Torre Paterno, discovered the forum of a village, named Vicus Augustanum Laurentium, mentioned by Pliny the younger as adjacent to his famous Laurentine villa. Cf. LANCIANI 1898. See also RIGGSBY 2003.

entertainment, and amenities.[700] According to Pliny, *suggerunt adfatim ligna proximae silvae; ceteras copias Ostiensis colonia ministrat*, "the neighbouring woods supply us with all the fuel we require, the other necessaries Ostia furnishes". Accordingly, my suggestion is that the *suburbia* surrounding both the Porta Laurentina and the Porta Marina were becoming *entrepôts* for the wealthy Romans that owned luxury estates along the seashore.[701] Pianabella was, therefore, an optimal site for the construction of a building intended for the commemoration of the Christian dead around which a Christian community could gravitate visibly. The Pianabella district was, in fact, a much more important region than it is generally recognized by Ostia scholars.[702]

Social Visibility through the Patronage of a Saint and a Bishop

The fact that the Pianabella basilica was built on top of a pagan necropolis necessitates that some extraordinary motivation existed for its placement. Most likely it was built where a prominent Christian had been buried. The tombs in the funerary enclosure gravitated around a main sepulcher laid longitudinally at the western end of the building complex, which Coccia and Paroli call "un reliquiario".[703] Other entombments of the same type were also identified under the pavement of the apse. However, most of the tombs were, in fact, placed in this

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[700] The presence of three baths to which one might have access by means of a modest fee (*balinea meritoria*) in the Vicus Augustanus Laurentium is evidence that those living in these *villae* made frequent use of amenities other than those available to them in their own estates. According to PAVOLINI 1988:249, "terme a pagamento" were "molto utili quando si arrivava d'improvviso nella 'casa al mare' e non si trovavano in funzione le terme private." Besides, the Domus delle Gorgoni, just opposite the Porta Laurentina, is supposed to have been a brothel and may have attracted a few visitors (BAKKER 1994:174).

[701] Although the word *suburbium* is a rather rare word, recent studies have shown that Roman *suburbia* were real and particular entities with their own social and religious identity (PURCELL 1987a; PURCELL 1987b; GEE 2003). Being less a place and more of a state of mind (CHAMPLIN 1982:97-117), *suburbia* became places for relaxation, recreation, burials and festivals.

[702] In a recent article, the Pianabella Basilica is simply said to have been located "in zone abbastanza decentrate" (PANNUZI 2006:370).

funerary enclosure in all probability consecrated to a martyr or saint. This is easy to understand since the early Christians believed that they would have a better chance to be saved if they were resurrected in close proximity to a martyr or saint.[704] In fact, it is said that the combination of the role played by the empty tomb of Jesus in Christian tradition and that played by the cult of relics and martyrs (especially in the case of the tomb of St Peter's) constitute the Christian conceptualization of the relationship between the living and the dead, which is one of mutual impact and optimistic outlook.[705] We find in this conceptualization a dynamic tension between what is present and what is absent.

The saint to whom the basilica was probably dedicated has not yet been identified. Three important Christian women died shortly before the basilica was built, to one of which the basilica could have been dedicated: Monica the mother of Saint Augustine (*Confessiones* 9.8.17b), a young noblewoman by the name of Aurea (*Acta sanctorum*, Aug. iv. 755-761), and Lea, the head of a religious society at Rome (Jerome, *Epistula* 23 – also known as *Ad Marcellam* or *De exitu Leae*).[706] Of the three, only Lea did not receive a known funerary monument at Ostia, and may be a good candidate for being the patron saint of this nameless basilica.[707] Augustine handed down to us a detailed account of his mother's death

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[703] COCCIA & PAROLI 1990:178.

[704] BROWN 1981. So prevalent was this belief, that St. Gregory of Nyssa remarked in the fourth century that the dust from the martyred body of St. Theodore had been carried away as if it were gold (*De sancto Theodoro* 46.740.10). See also BENTLEY 1985.

[705] HARRISON 2003. See also BROWN 1981.

[706] Ostia is also the recorded burial-place of the martyrs Flora and Lucilla. However, the date ascribed to their deaths is quite early – the second half of the second century – while the tradition linking the two virgins to Ostia is quite late – later than the ninth century (*Acta sanctorum*, Jul. vii. 30).

[707] Lea formed with the the noble and wealthy lady Paula (the heiress of the Aemilian clan), Marcella, Principia, Asella, Furia, Titiana, Marcellina, Felicitias and Fabiola – all of them belonging to the highest Roman families – an ascetic circle who sought a safe haven from the promiscuity and immorality of the wealthy Roman families. They met at Marcella's house on the Aventine where they prayed and sang psalms in the Hebrew, which they had learned for that end, and read the Scriptures under the guidance of Jerome, and whose writings they committed to memory (*Epistulae* 23-46).

and burial from which we can perceive no relationship between Monica and Pianabella. Aurea, described as *virgo sacratissima, nobile genere orta, imperatorum filia et cunabulis Christiana*, lived *foras muros Hostiae civitatis in loco, qui vocatur Euparisti in praedio suo*. Her story underwent, however, too much conflation with other narratives as well as extensive embellishment, and only a kernel of truth remains to it.[708] Besides, the Ostian Christians dedicated a church to Aurea, which is clearly of early origin, and was the main center of Christian worship in Ostia during the Middle Ages. Since she became the center of legend and attracted so many different traditions to the city, if the Pianabella Basilica had been consecrated to her, we would likely know that.

The later date ascribed to Lea's death (and thus closer to the time when the basilica was first built) and a few other pieces of evidence favor this important Roman lady.[709] The news of Lea's death had first reached her friend Marcella when she was engaged with Jerome in the study of Psalm 73 in A.D. 384. While they were still conversing together, a second message informed them that Lea's remains had been already conveyed to Ostia. On this same day Jerome writes Marcella a letter in which, after extolling Lea, he contrasts her end with that of the consul-elect, Vettius Agorius Praetextatus, a man of great talent, who he declares had been condemned to hell. Jerome describes Lea as a true mother to the virgins in the monastery that she managed.[710] According to him, she wore coarse

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[708] MEIGGS 1973:518-521.

[709] Lea's death is, for that matter, contemporary to Monica's. The latter died in 387 and the former in 384.

[710] Women were often seen as deficient men in the Greco-Roman world, and they may have seen in asceticism a possibility to attain a higher status than was otherwise available to them. For a brief but sensitive reference to the debate over the degree to which female asceticism reflected a liberation of women in early Christianity, see LIEU 2004. On the other hand, VAN DAM 2003 proposes that the "seclusion" of the ascetic life caused women to lose their gender. However, that was really no different from the seclusion of any fourth- or fifth-century Christian woman within her own household. Christian women certainly exerted themselves quite considerably within their household. The social responsibilities of running a household, of mothering those of the household, and the daily work defined by gender did not cease, despite their vow of celibacy.

sackcloth instead of soft raiment, passed sleepless nights in prayer, and instructed her companions even more by example than by precept. She was careless of her dress, neglected her hair, and ate only the coarsest food. Still, in all that she did, she avoided ostentation. Inscription A 186 dating to the fifth century may in fact have commemorated this saintly woman. There is no doubt that the eulogy contained in it was intended for a female figure although she remains nameless due to the fragmentary nature of the inscription. It reads,

> viRGINIS Castae [...] MEMBRA sepvlCHRUM | eXPLEVIT Vitae [...] cvRRICVLVM | REDDIDIT H[...] MERITVMQ(ue) PVDOREM | SERVAT OVaNS DOMinO corpOrE DEPOSITO | haNC IVSTI QVAERUNt PROCERES HANC TVRBA PIORVM | crediTE QVID POSSIT CASTVS AMOR FIDEI. [...] | dEP(osita) III KAL(endas) AVG(ustas).

Based on the comparison of this inscription with the text of the Vulgate for Hebrews 11-12, the sepulchral inscriptions written by Damasus for himself and his family, and Jerome's epistolary references to Lea, I conjecture that this inscription commemorates the nameless woman to whom the basilica was dedicated, and that this woman was Lea. The woman commemorated by the inscription is highly praised – being compared to the great heroes of Hebrews 11-12. The expression *turba piorum* of the inscription echoes *tantam nubem testium* in the Latin (Vulgate) text of Heb 12:1. And the verb form *ovans* certainly adds to a victorious mood to a certain extent compatible to that of the *certamen* in Heb 12:1. An interesting thing about Jerome's eulogy on Lea is that he compares her funeral to the triumph of the consul-elect, Vettius Agorius Praetextatus, who had recently died. Talking about them, he contrasts the applause Praetextatus received during his triumph with the simplicity of Lea's death. The inscription also bears a metric epitaph (in hexameters and pentameters) strikingly similar to the ones written by Pope Damasus (366-384) and placed by him in the sanctuaries that he

consecrated to the Roman martyrs, thirty of which still survive.[711] In a second letter written by Jerome two or three days after the first letter (*Epistula* 24), the cleric refers to Lea's "blessed memory," a fact which suggests that the Ostian Christians intended to honor her memory by erecting a basilica to be dedicated to her. Against my suggestion stands the fact that in this same letter (*Epistula* 24) Jerome refers to Lea as being a *widow* rather than a *virgin* (which is the descriptive word appearing in Inscription A 186). But would it be out of place for those desirous to honor a saintly woman who had dedicated most of her life to instruct the young Christian virgins, to commemorate her as such? *Epistula* 23 calls her, in fact, "the mother of virgins".

Fourth- and fifth-century Christians became more and more intent on being buried near church leaders, saints, and martyrs. Originally thought to please the dead, the highly structured and joyful commemoration of the Christian martyrs, saints and charitable women was introduced in order to draw the common people away from the feasts of the gods and to substitute for pagan feasts in honor of the dead.[712] This was an effective way by which the Church was able "to conquer form by way of content," and to create and maintain community.[713] This practice then hints at the status of unidentified special graves which become *foci* within Christian cemeteries.[714] The arrangement of the funerary enclosure in Pianabella leaves no doubt that the main burial belonged to a particularly important person. Perhaps Lea herself had contributed in order to make the area where the basilica would be constructed into a graveyard for the Ostian poor. That was a period when the Christians became particularly interested in the poor. Such a generous contribution would make her a prominent Christian

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[711] NUZZO 1999:35-36; PERGOLA 2002:25.
[712] QUASTEN 1983:175.
[713] QUASTEN 1983:171. See below for the rapport between burial rituals and the creation of community.
[714] GREEN 1977:46.

leader in the community, and put her in the same situation as the rich woman mentioned in an early fourth-century inscription from the Via Appia close to Velletri as donating *hoc coemeterium* to her fellow Christians, *huic religioni* (*ILCV* 3681A).

No incontrovertible piece of evidence as to the martyrial status of the main burial was found. No traces of graffiti were found that could attest to the religious importance of the person buried there. Graffiti such as *in mente habete* ("keep us in mind") were very common at the tombs of the martyrs.[715] In that case, pilgrims used to also scribble their names and the name of the local martyr. Since the Jerome text does not seem to suggest that Lea was a martyr, this strengthens my case.

On the other hand, inscription A 185, which reads,

[...] aEDE SACRATA [...] | [...]LI CRIMEN NO[...] | [...] SENSIT ET A [...] | [...]VRIDA BVLT[...] SVB V[...] | [...] DECERPITVR AevO NON HVNC | [...]O[...] AB SVCCESSORE LEGENDVM [...] | [...]VM S[...]NC RAPTVS CITIVS VESTIGIA CHRistI | [...] mERVIT SE [...]NIS SVBITIS NATA INCREMENTA VIDEMVS | [...]S VELOX MO[...]E INMORTALIS HoNOREM IB(it) P(ridie) NON(as) | nov(embres) [...] D(eposita) NON(is) NOV(embribus) [...]IO III ConS(ulibus)

is – based on internal evidence – our best candidate for an epitaph commemorating the person to whom the Basilica of Pianabella was dedicated.[716] Unfortunately, we do not have the name of the person it commemorates, but the expression *aede sacrata*, which stands alone at the beginning of fragment *b*, certainly belongs to a context like that of an inscription from Rome that reads,

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[715] MARUCCHI 1935:109.
[716] MAZZOLENI 2001:285 also sees this inscription as a reference to the person to whom the basilica was dedicated: "un poème fragmentaire composé en l'honneur d'un défunt, où se trouvait une probable référence à la dédicace de la basilique, datée de 420 ou de 446 par une indication consulaire malheureusement incomplète."

MARTYRIS IN STEPHANI VENERABILIS AEDE SACRATA.[717]

Inscription A 185 has the peculiarity of mentioning that – contrary to the norm – the deceased was not buried on the same day of her demise. The passing away occurred on November 4th, which is indicated by the use of the verb *ire*, "to depart": *IB(it) P(ridie) NON(as) | nov(embres)*, but the deposition was delayed until the next day: *D(eposita) NON(is) NOV(embribus)*. This seems to indicate that the deceased was of considerable importance, and thus the Christian community needed additional time to mourn her (or him), to make arrangements suitable to her special status, and also to transport her to Ostia.

In any case, A 185 and 186 can not refer to the same person since the deposition dates are not the same (November 4th and June 30th, respectively). Besides, both inscriptions were cut at least twenty-five years after the date (A.D. 384) given by Jerome to Lea's death. The two inscriptions suggest, however, that by the early fifth century the Christian community at Pianabella enjoyed good relations with important people. These people were prominent enough to deserve commemoration by means of conspicuous burials in a unique funerary enclosure and flattering inscriptions.

Despite the major importance of Inscription A 185 and 186, nothing proves conclusively that the Pianabella Basilica was dedicated to a woman. A few Christian men could also have been the recipient of such honor. As far as Ostia's most illustrious male martyr, Flavius Gallicanus, is concerned, that does not seem to have been the case.[718] He was a suitor to the hand of Constantia, the emperor's

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[717] *I.C.V.R.* II, p.152, n. 23.
[718] Pavolini once claimed that the Basilica of Pianabella had been dedicated to Gallicanus, but he did that at a time when he was still convinced that the Basilica of Pianabella was the basilica that Constantine had built near the Porta Laurentina (PAVOLINI 1988:243).

daughter.[719] According to the legend, this noble man – who climbed Rome's social ladder all the way to the very top – moved to Ostia when he was no longer a consul after becoming a Christian. There he paid for the renovation of a private house into a *xenodocheion* and the construction of a basilica *in porta, quae nunc usque Laurentia nuncupatur*.[720] But it is unlikely that this man who died under Julian after refusing to sacrifice to the gods (*Acta sanctorum*, Feb. iii. 67-68; Aldelmus of Sherborne, *De virginitate*) could be associated with Pianabella since a Gallicanus is reported to have added very generous endowments to the basilica presented to Ostia by Constantine (*Liber pontificalis* 1.28.45ff; 1.183; Anastasius, *Life of Pope Silvester*) and to the Lateran Basilica in Rome (*Liber pontificalis* 1.184). Although arguments from silence are problematic, we can be confident that in case the Pianabella Christians had decided to commemorate this famed man by dedicating a basilica to him, we would have heard of that. The fact is that Monica, Aurea and Gallicanus were all eminent enough to deserve the dedication but too famous for it to have happened without a noticeable repercussion. Lea is a better candidate because a church could have easily been built for her without raising too much attention. On the other hand, two facts work against her: while the Pianabella Basilica has only semi-monumental dimensions, the careful arrangement of the funerary enclosure does point to a quite illustrious defunct; and secondly, there is no evidence that she died a martyr's death. The latter objection is not irrefutable, however, since the Ostian Christians built Monica a shrine despite the fact that she did not die as a martyr, either.

The account of another – but less important – martyrdom at Ostia combines the stories of Daniel in the lion's den with that of the three Hebrews in

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[719] There were two renowned Gallicani in the reign of Constantine: Ovinius Gallicanus, consul in 317, and Flavius Gallicanus, consul in 330. The latter fits the context better, but we know very little of his career from other sources.

[720] MEIGGS 1973:535 timidly ventures the suggestion that this house should be identified as the elegant Domus dei Pesci (iv.3.3).

the fiery furnace. Asterius and his Christian followers were condemned, according to tradition, to die in the amphitheater (under Claudius Gothicus, 268-270),[721] but miraculously eluded wild beasts and death by fire. When their executioner – a judge named Gelasius – did not succeed in securing them an urban death, the martyrs were then led outside the walls of Ostia and executed.[722] Their bodies were buried and a church was built at the site. Legend has it that by the late fourth century a basilica was built in honor of an Asterius outside the walls of Ostia. Damasus (c. 366-384) arrested Macarius, a certain priest who had rebelled against him, and sent him to Ostia, where he died shortly afterwards (*Libellus precum* 22). Florentius, the bishop of Ostia, had a high opinion of Macarius and supposedly transferred his body to the basilica of Asterius. Furthermore, a later account informs us that the bones of S. Asterius and twelve other martyrs were translated in the twelfth century – presumably from his basilica – to the church of S. Aurea (*Acta sanctorum*, Maii. i.485). The identification of the Pianabella Basilica as the Basilica of S. Asterius is probably more appealing than seeing it as the Basilica of S. Lea – references to which we find nowhere. But, as discussed above, I am still inclined to see the fifth-century inscription A 186 as a strong case for a female martyr as the person to whom Pianabella was dedicated. On another fragmentary inscription from Pianabella (no. 22 on Table 7), we find the contraction for the word "sancta" and that gives us further evidence for the presence of a saintly woman buried in the basilica. The inscription reads simply *S(an)C(ta)E*, a contraction commonly used after the fifth century, and attested on

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[721] They were led *ad locum qui appellatur Ursariae iuxta fanum aureum, quia ibi ferae nutriebantur* (*Acta sanctorum*, Jan. ii.218).

[722] According to MEIGGS 1973:524, "Gelasius is stationed at Ostia and might be the *praefectus annonae*: that he is not otherwise known is not damaging, for there are many gaps in the list of known holders of the office."

a list of saints found in Portus.[723] The fragmentary nature of the inscription does not allow us, however, to make any further assessment.[724]

Despite the uncertainties concerning the basilica's patron saint, we can be sure that the cult of this nameless saint must have changed the religious landscape in this southern sector of Ostia in significant ways. As often happened in extramural cemeteries where martyrs or saints had been buried, the Christian liturgical year, and with it the entire community's sense of time, was constructed around the periodic visits that Christians paid to these sites on set days. The Romans considered it more healthful to spend their time outside the city than within its walls (cf. Plutarch, *Quaest. rom.* 94), and it is possible that these visits to extramural tombs were seen as outlets to the stress associated with their hectic pursuits in the city.

Since the religious life of the whole community must have centered on this noteworthy tomb, the construction of the basilica can be said to illustrate how Christianity spread "like pools of water on a drying surface" around the shrines of the saints.[725] Inscription A 184 – dated to the mid fifth century – attests to some renovation under bishop Bellator, who is mentioned in a letter from Pope Gelasius (A.D. 494-495).[726] The inscription was broken into three fragments (two of which were found near the center of the aula), and has been linked to a small epistyle, but there is no evidence as to the extent of the renovation. But it shows a certain concern on the part of the institutional church to support the Pianabella community and the activities taking place in the basilica, by expanding the social

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[723] NUZZO 1996:103, n. 79. See also NYBERG 1988:265.
[724] The inscription measures 11 x 23 x 2 cm. According to NUZZO 1996:103, the fact that the letter S is inverted in the inscription is a common phenomenon due to carelessness on the part of the person carving the inscription.
[725] BROWN 1981:124.
[726] Inscription A 184 reads, *in n(omine) do]M(i)N(i) N(ostri) BELLATOR EPISC· FECIT.*

and communal appeal of the basilica.[727] We have evidence that by then the Christian community at Pianabella had attained a social standing that entitled them to make dynamic attempts to elevate the status of their religion.[728] That could in fact be effectively done by calling the city's attention to this noteworthy martyr to whom they built a semimonumental building and in whose honor they tried to embellish it. Besides, by socializing death and by joining heaven and earth at the grave of a saint, the cemeterial basilica provided a safe passage from the living to the dead and the means for the incorporation of the living back in the community. Death rituals lay emphasis on liminality more than other rites of passage because death is the most powerful and baffling of the changes of state that intersperse the human life cycle.[729] The "otherness" of the dead and the fact that some believe that the dead continue their own existence separate and distinct from that of the physically living, may be sociologically recognized by the interactions that the community of the living more often than not comes to develop with the community of the dead.[730]

Social Visibility through Ritual

Even if we try not to succumb to the tendency to exaggerate the theme of the presence of the dead, the fact is that rituals do things because they are participatory activities that engage the community – even if for no other reason than the hope that the dead and the living can continue to communicate through ritual. In fact, portraits of the deceased appearing on the lids of sarcophagi, as figures reclining on banquet couches, probably alluded to the belief that the dead

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[727] By the fifth century the Christian church had developed into an institution. For a detailed description of the processes and modes of its institutionalization, see WHITE 2005:366-373.
[728] Inscription A 203 (discussed in the previous chapter), ornamented with a palm branch and a Christian monogram, can be taken as a mid fourth century list of *cognomina* honoring a group of prominent Christian citizens.
[729] VAN GENNEP 1960 [1909].
[730] HELMS 1998:24-27; FELDHERR 2000.

could join their living relatives at the festivities in their own honor.[731] Banquets and food are among the most popular subjects in Roman art, and the Totenmahl theme was prominent even in the catacombs,[732] a fact that demonstrates the narrowness of the line between the banqueting-couch and the funeral bier. This is the case of three sarcophagi from the area of the Basilica of Pianabella (B 5, 76 and 99), which depict the deceased or mythological characters reclining for a meal. Likewise, the underlying nexus between grief and human vocalization has led to the speculation that the origin of the human voice lay in songs of joy and grief.[733] So, rituals can shape the way in which changes are met and even modify the relations among members of the society in which they are acted out. With the creation of a basilica dedicated to a saint, the social topography of Pianabella was certainly transformed, the basilica becoming the focus of a new sense of community, radiating from the prominent dead to include the whole community, especially those most often excluded from ritual care, the powerless and the poor.[734] The "holy space" dedicated to the saint had a significant new role in the organization of the *suburbium*: the transformation of a cemetery into a basilica and the creation of an ecclesiastical property.

Banqueting was an essential element in Roman and early Christian funerary ritual. The fact that no permanent funerary couches were ever found in the Pianabella necropolis needs to be explained. In Chapter Three, reference was made to evidence showing that family hierarchy was losing significance in the other necropoleis of Ostia and how this was affecting funerary banqueting in those burial areas. Now I want to address this same issue from the internal

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[731] ZANKER & EWALD 2004.
[732] This iconography worked as a *memento mori*, a reminder to the living to enjoy the pleasures of life while they still could. According to DUNBABIN 2003, most instances in the catacombs are simpler than their pagan counterparts, and more decorous, the absence of servants suggesting that the main interest is in conviviality rather than ostentation.
[733] HARRISON 2003:62.
[734] PAXTON 1990:25.

perspective of the Pianabella necropolis. During the first campaign at Pianabella the excavators found an important object in a small niche on the highest part of one of the short walls separating the cubicles within the enclosure in the *aula*. A round, fragmentary *mensa* of an almost translucent marble was enclosed by two slabs of plastered tufa and therefore concealed from sight (Fig. 43).[735] The *mensa* displays a shallow and continuous groove along its outer circumference (1.3 m in diameter) forming an alveolate design of thirteen lobes (each approximately 0.2 m in diameter) on its top side, which is limited by the edge of the table on the external side and by a concentric circumference on the internal side. The bottom side is plain and flat with no indications of sockets for legs, the thickness of the *mensa* varying from 0.01 to 0.04 m. In its original use, the table was probably a portable device which could be moved without difficulty from one environment to the other, then made to rest on an appropriate support. The slabs of plastered tufa, which enclosed the *mensa* in the funerary enclosure, were jointly decorated with a painted cross, and were associated with the side of the *mensa* facing the apse of the basilica. The cross displayed triple spokes at the point where the beams crossed, as well as spheres at its extremities. Phytomorphic shoots sprang from the lower sphere – a technique commonly found in metal crosses.

Since there was a certain tendency in the fourth through the sixth centuries to bury corpses as close as possible to an altar in the attempt to associate the dead with the Eucharist, it has been proposed that this *mensa* had a Eucharistic function.[736] According to this theory, the *mensa* had probably been reused from a different structure in the basilica. The staff of the Soprintendenza Archeologica di Ostia had no problem reconstructing the entire *mensa* under the guidance of D.ssa Valnea Scrinari Santa Maria, but scholars remain at a loss concerning its original

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[735] SANTAGATA 1981.

[736] SANTAGATA 1981. According to PAXTON 1990:33, the Eucharist was, in fact, administered to the dead as a *viaticum*. Death had an impact on liturgy, and it was customary for the dead to be wrapped in liturgical cloths, or buried near the place where the Eucharist was administered.

liturgical function.[737] The fact that the *mensa* bears no iconography but the more common alveolate design, makes it more difficult for us to ascertain whether it belonged to a liturgical context. Unfortunately, this kind of *mensa* is generally found in a fragmentary state, and is not independently dated. While Santagata traces the diffusion of *mensae sigmatae* to the late fourth century and links it to a response to the Docetic heresy by reinforcing the importance of the utensils connected to the Eucharist, she considers the fact that the Pianabella *mensa* was found in a funerary enclosure – which was obviously the most important space in the basilica – as an indication that the Pianabella Christians had succumbed to the common superstition of revering church altars and their sacred objects.[738] She doubts, however, that this *mensa* was ever part of the altar of the basilica, which she hesitates to describe as being either a square or a round structure.[739] As an explanation for the entombment of the *mensa*, she proposes that was a way to prevent a relic (which had somehow been defiled) from ever being used again, as it was advised by Jacob of Edessa (*c.* 640-708), a Monophysite Syrian monk and exegete.[740] If Santagata's theory is correct, the superstitious veneration of sacred objects may suggest that the Pianabella Christians had already attained that stage in which the Christian religion had again become a thing of the people and was no longer under the strict control of the aristocracy that had gradually embraced it

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[737] SANTAGATA 1981:5. Differently from what happens concerning rectangular tables, little is known regarding the liturgical role of round and sigma-shaped *mensae*, cf. SANTAGATA 1981:12, n. 2. Our best *comparanda* come from, among others, a semi-circular *mensa* from Antiochia sull'Oronte placed under a fifth century mosaic, a fifth (or sixth century) semi-circular *mensa* from the Thessalian Thebes, and a fragment supposedly belonging to a fifth century round *mensa* from a cemeterial context at Marusinać in Salona (cf. SANTAGATA 1981:13, n. 11-14).

[738] SANTAGATA 1981:7-8.

[739] According to her (p. 12), "sembrerebbe potersi ragionevolmente dubitare che in origine la tavola di Pianabella potesse essere stata utilizzata come altare."

[740] According to Iacobi Edesseni, *tabula, super qua manducaverunt ethnici, abluantur, et sit in usum domus diaconii. Et si parva fuerit, frangatur, et difodiator in terra; similiter et altaria, quae fracta fuerit ab hostibus. Tabula, quae tempore fugae conditur in terra, lavetur, et offeratur super ipsa, nec iterum ungatur.*

after the conversion of Constantine.[741] Over time, however, Christians align more and more with the State.[742]

Despite Santagata's strong case for a liturgical background for the table, we must bear in mind that although *mensae* are generally thought of as being altars, this is an oversimplification,[743] since their original function was to be used as tables for funerary banquets.[744] Only when the feasts at the tombs of the martyrs ceased, were *mensae* over or near their graves turned into altars. With the rapid growth of the cult of the saints in the early fourth century, the needs of festival observance began to exceed the capacity of the early banquet hall, especially at the catacombs, so new architectural needs provided the opportunity for the creation of more monumentalized spaces.[745] The construction of Pianabella was probably a response to this kind of need. Although this *mensa* could have been used during funerals to hold the utensils which were utilized to give the *viaticum* to the dead (a practice which was strongly opposed by the Council of Hippo in 393), with the increasing demands of the growing Christian community, it is more likely that it was used as a regular table for funerary banquets. We now know that funerary banquets could be celebrated without making use of *klinai*. Portable accouterments had, in fact, a more widespread use in funerary banquets than permanent apparatus such as *klinai*.[746]

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[741] So, according to SANTAGATA 1981:9, "tale concezione di una religiosità popolare, nel senso di cultura di un intero popolo e non più religione riservata ad una élite, che nel VI secolo è appena formulate, è, per taluni aspetti, caratterizzata da una nuova fedeltà alle cose sacre, indice della necessità di legarsi a memorie durevoli – mentre l'uomo commune viveva e se ne andava – in un mondo che precariamente viveva in attesa di un evento che superava di gran lunga la soma totale dell'esistenza umana: l'idea del giudizio universale, alla diffusione della quale aveva largamente partecipato il movimento monastico."
[742] Rome's topography shows, for instance, that churches spread rapidly after Constantine's conversion, cf. CECCHELLI 2000:179-183.
[743] KRAUTHEIMER 1960:35. In pagan Rome every *curia* had an altar, which was called *mensa*, sacred to Juno Curitis.
[744] For a recent study on Christian *mensae*, see CHALKIA 1991.
[745] DAVIS 1999.
[746] VON HESBERG 1987:58; ANGELUCCI *et al*. 1990:62.

Another piece of evidence favoring the celebration of funerary banquets at Pianabella is the accessibility of water. Several of the tombs along and across the via "basolata" made use of running water, as the presence of water pipes *in situ* still attests (Fig. 44). A well was also found in the forecourt of the Pianabella basilica. *Atria* and forecourts were often provided with fountains, and Paulinus mentions only one feature of the design of the *atrium* at St Peter's: in its midst was a fountain at which the faithful might wash their hands and lips.[747] In the sermon that Eusebius delivered in 316-317 apropos of the dedication of the church built by Paulinus at Tyre, he says that in the middle of its *atrium*, open to the sky, were fountains, symbols of sacred purification, which served the practical purpose of providing refreshment (*Historia ecclesiastica* 10.4.37-40).[748] The *atrium* served too as the station of the unbaptized, especially after their dismissal from the sanctuary before the Mass of the faithful began (Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 10.4.63).

The funerary churches of Rome used their courts as well as their halls for burial and banqueting, and although there are no examples of masonry *biclinia* attached to the tombs in the Vatican necropolis, it is generally believed that the well in Tomb H's forecourt suggests that the owner made provision for the visitors to engage in dining and to make offerings (Fig. 45).[749] So, the well is a reminder that the Pianabella community was committed to the ritual commemoration of their dead, and although couches and ovens are absent from the basilica and the nearby tombs, that does not mean that the Pianabella Christians did not promote funerary banquets. They just chose an alternative way

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[747] *Ubi cantharum ministra minibus et oribus nostris fluenta ructantem, fastigatus solido aere tholus ornate et inumbrat, non sine mystica specie quatuor columnis salientes aquas ambiens*, *Epistula* 13.13. The existence of this fountain is confirmed a century later in the biography of Pope Symachus (498-514): *ad cantharum beati Petri cum quadriporticum ex opera marmoribus ornavit et ex musivo agnos et cruces et palmas ornavit. Ipsum vero atrium omnem compaginavit.*

[748] In this sermon, Eusebius admirably developed an allegory comparing the structures of the basilica to the stations of the faithful in an early Christian church.

to do that rather than adhering to a common Christian practice of using built-in fixtures. Both pagan and Christian commemorations had in view the interests of the dead. In Christianity this preoccupation was drastically intensified, given the fact that the Eucharistic meal, with its higher significance, and the agape meal were eventually substituted for the funerary banquet.[750]

As it did among the ancient Romans, death could dislocate not only the Christian dead but also those who mourned them from their fixed place in the social structure.[751] It is not that, as Origen claimed, the Christian assembly had become a double church (διπλῆ ἐκκλησία), literally attended by men and angels,[752] but the commemoration of a saint (or, for that matter, the commemoration of any dead) linked the eternal and the temporal and brought the past into the present, thus creating community, communication, and participation.[753] The Christian cemetery stood at a margin between the church of the living and that of those who have passed on, the heavenly *ecclesia*. Thus, Pianabella was a place where social differences could be momentarily leveled out and where the early Ostian Christians could create their own identity.[754]

Besides, the fact that the living were praying on behalf of the dead and expected the latter to reciprocate by granting them special protection from natural and supernatural powers tied the whole community together in a way as to include both the dead and the living in a complex web in which mutual trust and reciprocity played important roles. That does not mean, however, that this reciprocity was always looked upon in the best of terms. Since the hereafter was often conceived as a symmetrical equivalent to the *hic et nunc*, death was

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[749] GEE 2003:57. See also VON HERBERG 1987.
[750] QUASTEN 1983:167.
[751] SCHEID 1984:118-119; MAURIN 1984; FELDHERR 2000:211.
[752] Origen (*fl. ca*. 203-254), *De oratione* 31.5-6.
[753] CONSTABLE 2000:169.
[754] For a broad discussion of the way Christian identity was created in antiquity, see LIEU 2004.

sometimes understood as the abandonment or desertion of loved ones.[755] Ultimately, however, the way that the late-antique Christians came into contact with death, that is, the death of others, certainly made them more humane.

Social Visibility through a Revised Concept of Family

But who might have built the Pianabella basilica? Did the institutional church build it? If the edifice was built with the donations from a prominent family, the Anicii or the Egrilii would be good candidates for the honor. If it was built by the benefaction of a single patron, then that person could be Lea. Whoever that person was, he or she certainly obtained clerical approval in order to secure appropriate grounds for a semimonumental cemeterial building for Ostia's suburban Christians. Although Christianity was more often than not a city-oriented movement, after the so-called "Peace of the Church" it felt the need to accommodate the differences arising from a growing tension between institutional, historical authority and a certain need to conform to the social matrix. So, Ostian Christians probably felt the need to reach the countryside in a more effective way since the extra-urban environment still provided sanctuary for recalcitrant pagans and a constant source of strong social sanctions on the part of the rural Christians. The construction of a cemeterial basilica gave them a unique opportunity to gain control over the suburbs insomuch as the church could edge out the rivals it found in individual patrons and competing religious leaders that posed unrestricted sanctions to urban Christianity while promoting at the same time more flexibility in relation to the social matrix by emphasizing ritual and community. The Pianabella Basilica had little or no overtly evangelistic purpose, but it was a "Christianization" of this key social ritual arena of burial.

The Christian Basilica as a Family Tomb

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[755] SERRA 2002:81.

The responsibility to bury people seems to have rested traditionally on the family. In the absence of an extended family network many people relied on burial guilds or on religious associations.[756] But what we see at Pianabella is the institutional church already edging out familial prerogatives or individual patrons and setting the stage for the role it would so adamantly play in the Middle Ages.[757] This is in key, for instance, with earlier attempts on the part of the church to make sure that Christians would dissolve the connections that they maintained with the guilds to which they belonged prior to their conversion. So, Cyprian urges the church to excommunicate bishop Martialis on the grounds that he and his family still belonged to pagan *collegia* (*Epistula* 67.6). For the Christian, there was now room for only one type of confraternity, that of the church.[758]

My suggestion is that the basilica of Pianabella took on the role, symbolically and socially, of the family tomb – one belonging to a new kind of family: the family of God. My perspective on the early Christian church as

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[756] Interestingly, guilds used to replicate the functions of the private house. Their headquarters generally contained a sanctuary, water supply, banquet space, and cooking facilities, providing room for regular meetings, banqueting, and distribution of *sportulae* (donations). *Tabernae* on the west side of the Themistocles Complex on the via degli Augustali at Ostia are interconnected; HERMANSEN 1981:55-206 sees this as typical of guild properties. Guild members were analogous to a family, and behind the doors to the street all spaces were accessible to the "family."

[757] A similar phenomenon has been identified as having taken place in regards to the cult of the martyrs in the Roman catacombs (BROWN 1981; DAVIS 1999). BROWN 1981:34-36 sees the criticism often directed against the widespread cult of the saints in the late fourth century as the political conflict between rich families and bishops, that is, between aristocratic attempts to privatize funerary practices and clerical efforts to win ecclesiastic control over burial provisions. Conversely, DAVIES 1999 sees patronage as the bridging of social divisions. According to this scholar, the fact that the Roman Christians chose a banker named Callistus to succeed Zephyrinus as the bishop of Rome proves that funerary patronage was an important means for one to advance socially. Callistus in fact advanced from being the head of the Christian cemetery now known as the catacomb of St Callistus to becoming the most powerful Christian in Rome.

[758] That the chuch was then seen as a confraternity is evident from the facts that Pliny the Younger wrote to Trajan that he had meant to proceed against the Christians of Bithynia as belonging to an illegal confraternity (*Epistulae* 96/97) and that Tertullian plainly pleads for the recognition of the Christian churches as lawful confraternities (*Apology*).

possessing a household structure is not original.[759] My contribution is limited to bringing that understanding into the context of Christian funeral practices of this later, trasitional period. My suggestion is that the shift from house churches to *domus ecclesiae* and then to basilicas was a complex process that took advantage not only of the pressures exerted by an architectural program imposed by Constantine but also of the many possibilities that the remarkably rich architectural environment of the Roman world offered. Taking this judicious eclecticism into consideration, and valuing the contribution that previous scholars gave to a typological understanding of the adoption of the basilica by the Christians I want to explore the possibility that an additional motivation for the early Christians to adopt the basilica as their favorite architectural form was certain social and functional similarity it obtained with the familial tombs of Roman cemeteries: it provided institutional Christianity with an outpost in the environment of the Roman suburbs by claiming for the institutional church the prerogative of burying the dead thus edging out individual patrons and the family from the process of creating community.[760] In fact, few archaeological problems have been more extensively and less conclusively discussed than that of the origins of the Christian basilica,[761] but that the Christian basilicas kept close connections with funerary buildings is perceived because they were early built for sepulchral purposes and by the cruciform plan of some of them. According to some scholars, cruciform plans derived from funerary buildings constructed as

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[759] So, for instance, the household structure of the early Christian church has been recently discussed by VARGHESE 2005 in a Biblical and sociocultural study, including a comparison of the Greco-Roman model with that which was developed by the early Christians (p. 98-138).
[760] Some tension existed between urban and rural settings in Roman times. For that reason, some scholars present a differentiation between rural and urban communities on the one hand and Christian and pagan groups on the other as the most promising explanation for the structuring of Late Roman cemeteries (QUENSEL-VON-KALBEN 2000:228, talking specifically about Britain).
[761] WARD-PERKINS 1954:69. The great difficulty of the subject is due to the fewness of surviving monuments from the first three centuries and the scanty references to it in the writings of the early Christians.

early as the time of Constantine.[762] Besides – even before Christian times – the traditional Roman basilica was sometimes used for the lying in state of eminent dead people. So, Augustus' corpse is said to have been publicly exhibited in the basilicas and temples of the towns where the cortège spent the night on its way from Nola to Rome (Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 100).

Christian cemeterial basilicas were able to play – in several important ways – the vital role of creating community thus incorporating the social and ritual functions once performed by familial tombs. This was especially useful since, as von Hesberg has recently indicated, the attention paid to the interior decoration of family tombs beginning in the second century suggested a gradual withdrawal from the street.[763] The Christian basilica took over the traditional roles of performing the theatrical elements associated with socializing death, and put forward effective ways of re-calibrating social roles and family ties, which were in fact as successful as those previously provided by familial tombs.[764] It supplied fourth- and fifth-century Christians with refreshment and purification as well as with opportunities for communal meals and the feeding of the poor. The Pianabella Basilica shows, besides, that fifth-century Christians were not impervious at all to the practice of euergetism, which was a valuable strategy for self-promotion. In fact, cemeterial basilicas provided Christians with a powerful

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[762] FLETCHER 1924:203.

[763] VON HESBERG 1992:2-3. Gee contends, however, that "rather than simply a transfer of content from an exterior to an interior space, it would be more accurate to say that there was an elaboration of function, a presentation of information for two potential audiences" (GEE 2003:197).

[764] Gee has recently demonstrated how familial tombs could perform ritual and social functions that resulted in the successful formation of a family, a new and improved social identity, and re-calibrated social roles, by showing the significance of "chamber tombs" for freedpeople. She links this type of tomb directly to the different processes of negotiating away from a servile past (GEE 2003:53f). According to her (p. 68ff), the desire to watch and be watched at the family tomb was related to (a) the idea of *memoria*; (b) the display of the overall stability of the community; (c) the co-ordination of experience and the creation of communality; and (d) the calibration of the concerns of the community to those of the family and vice-versa. For a relatively recent

aggregating force: they countered the threats posed by the monastic movement and its ensuing brain drain.

Early Christian churches did not attain an imposing character of their own because they differed in purpose (when compared to the monumental pagan temples of that time) and lacked originality.[765] The Church early showed itself ready to take on and twist to its own use those elements of pagan practice that it found functional. When time elapsed, Christian patrons started to repair abandoned pagan temples in order to put them to secular use, and to convert them into transitory churches in the mid fifth century.[766] Even so, the conventional pagan temple was architecturally quite inappropriate to the needs of Christian worship.[767] Christian Eucharistic celebrations and other liturgical occasions that involved the presence of the Christian community in large numbers called for a different form of architecture.

Meanwhile, the monumentalization of the small chapels – the so-called *fabricae* – found above ground near the catacombs led to the invention of the cemeterial basilicas. Fabianus had ordered, in 238, the construction of these small buildings placed near to, or over the entrance to the catacombs, which were used as oratories and for the celebration of the Eucharist. They were very modest at

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assessment of the ways ancient Greco-Roman society was performative and spectacular, see: BERGMANN & KONDOLEON 1999.

[765] "All these Christian churches were different from pagan temples in that they were primarily places to gather rather than houses for the god. But they shared certain characteristics with their non-Christian predecessors and contemporaries. They served the needs of religious ritual, of course, but they also served as community centers for social, charitable and educational purposes, and they served to define the group, to protect it from outside interference and to make a political statement to believers of the need to exult in their common identity and to be ready to die in witness to their common faith" (STAMBAUGH 1978:605). See also: VALENTI 2003:203-248.

[766] Temple conversions were sporadic and regional and did not play a significant role in the development of early Christian architecture, cf. BAYLISS 2004.

[767] There is no way to deny that the pagan temple was a poor model for the Christian church, despite a contention by Porphyry, a student of the philosopher Plotinus at Rome (*ca*. 262-263), according to which the Christians were inconsistent and unreasonable because they protested against pagan temples but erected great buildings of their own, imitating the construction of temples (*Adversos Christianos*, frag. 76).

first, consisting of unpretentious structures whose floor was kept underground – in close proximity to the dead – while their upper parts emerged from the ground. Krautheimer thinks that these buildings evolved from the model provided by smaller underground chapels,[768] but there is no evidence for such chapels prior to Constantine. By 400 the basilica was becoming normative in and around Rome. Thus, the pre-Constantinian development is mostly irrelevant.

The basilica had approximately five hundred years of history behind it when it was finally adopted by the Christian church. The Roman basilica was not an exclusively secular edifice since in imperial times it became closely associated with the imperial cult and other religious functions. Vitruvius describes a shrine dedicated to Augustus, which he placed at the center of the wall surface of his basilica at Fanum (*De architectura* 5.1). There was, besides, a distinct connection between the basilicas of military camps and the sanctuaries associated with them. A less compelling indication that there existed a strong link between the Roman basilica and the imperial cult is the fact that when the early Christians underwent trials in these basilicas they were compelled to swear by the emperor's genius and to sacrifice to his statue, which was probably present at that very spot, before the eyes of the judge. For all these reasons, Krautheimer came to the conclusion that "a religious or semi-religious element was connected with the conception of the civic basilica."[769]

By adopting a structure which was common in the audience halls of the imperial palaces,[770] Christian builders compared God to the emperor, and the clergy to the high officials that attended him.[771] The Roman basilica thus became a natural candidate for a Christian building since it provided an effective means

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[768] KRAUTHEIMER 1939:137ff.
[769] KRAUTHEIMER 1939:140ff.
[770] So, the Church of Sta Croce in Rome – founded about 350 A.D. – originally formed a part of the Sessorian palace.
[771] KRAUTHEIMER 1939:135-136.

for the identification of God with an authoritative and powerful figure – that of the Roman emperor.[772] This model has been recently challenged, however, on various grounds, but if the identification of God with the emperor is not sufficient to account for the adoption of the basilical plan for the Christian church, it remains a good explanation for its post-Constantinian consolidation as a Christian form.[773]

The shift from house churches to basilicas also marked a moment in an ongoing process of change in which Christianity made a move away from sectarian character to a state religion and in which worship, theology, ethics and organization became crystallized.[774] This shift was accompanied by an increased aesthetic dimension in which iconographic architecture developed theological elements. Some saw the newly-acquired monumental character of Christian architecture as the culmination of a divine plan, or – at least – a concrete symbol of the triumph of the Christian Church.[775] Among other things, the early Christian basilicas sought to back the claim that the success of Christ's religion was now beyond doubt. So, colossal size was an important characteristic of the first basilical structures built *extra moenia* at Rome, such as San Sebastiano, San Lorenzo, SS Marcelino e Pietro, and Sant' Agnese, all or which were over eighty meters long.[776]

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[772] KRAUTHEIMER 1980.

[773] WHITE 1996 [1990] suggests that the transition of Christian architecture into the Christian basilica was driven more by liturgical needs than by an attempt to coordinate Christ and the Emperor; CHIAT 1995:406-426 has suggested that the introduction of the Christian basilica has more to do with Christianity's relationship with Judaism than its assumption of Roman symbols. MATTHEWS 1993 attempts to provide evidence that early representations of Christ are set in a way which is totally incompatible with the political and cultural concept of the emperor, the images being in some instances an outright challenge to imperial authority. For more details, see: CUTRONE 1996.

[774] WHITE 1996 [1990]:5.

[775] WHITE 1997a:8-9.

[776] According to KRAUTHEIMER 1960:19-24, these four basilicas had many features in common besides colossal size and early construction dates: all four were equipped (a) with an ambulatory around the apse; (b) with a continuous roof covering nave and aisles; (c) with mausolea leaning

The Familial Tomb and the House of God

Despite the remarkable diversity of funerary architecture in the Roman world, my main concern here is with chamber tombs.[777] This kind of funerary architecture, which appeared in the late Republic and matured under the Antonines, is common at the Isola Sacra and the via Laurentina *necropoleis*, at Ostia, as well as in the Vatican necropolis.[778] Chamber tombs were generally small rectangular (or, less often, square), vaulted structures (ten by ten, ten by twelve, and twenty by twenty Roman feet), built in reticulate or brick. Cremation burials were placed in *aediculae* or semicircular niches in the upper portions of the *cellae*, while inhumations were placed in *arcosolia* or in free-standing sarcophagi. Whether they stand alone or are set contiguously in rows or terraces,

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against their outer walls; (d) with tomb-paved floors; and (e) with steps leading to a martyr's tomb sheltered by a catacomb. San Sebastiano differed, however, in that (a) its martyrium was situated right in the middle of the structure, rather than close to it; (b) despite its early date, it did not occur in the Constantinian or later donation lists in the *Liber pontificalis*; and (c) it did not have as short a life span as the other three basilicas. Masonry analysis suggests that the basilica of San Sebastiano was probably first built under Maxentius between 305-310 (HERES 1982:101-106), while San Lorenzo and SS Marcelino e Pietro belong to the Constantinian period (p. 107-115), and Sant' Agnese was built between 340-370 (p. 116-124).

[777] Regina Gee, trying to move away from loaded modern terms, has recently argued against the term "house-tomb." She acknowledges that the term is appropriate for four main reasons: first, the resemblance of house-tombs to modern block housing units; second, the similarity of their decoration to that of the ancient *domus*; third, the presence of benches, wells, kitchens, terraces, and other fixtures which we also find in the *domus*; and, last, the designation as conceptually accurate since the house-tomb is, indeed, a "home" for those within. Even so, she contends that the term should be discarded in favor of a more neutral designation for three main reasons: first, their decoration was not peculiar to the *domus* only, but was also found in baths and shops; second, their furniture relate directly to the activities of the living rather than for the use of the dead; last, there is no evidence that other funerary monuments were any less a "home" for the dead. According to her, "it does seem important... to disentangle assumptions concerning what the Romans were thinking about when they built these tombs from what the physical evidence and social context is able to tell" (GEE 2003:44). Besides, the decoration of chamber tombs rests upon ornamental principles which differ considerably from those of contemporary houses and its execution is rarely remarkable, cf. BALDASSARRE 2001:389.

[778] The popularity of this tomb type is supported by examples found within many of the necropoleis skirting Rome, including those near the Via Taranto, Via Salaria, Via Ostiense, Via Appia, Via Latina, Porta Capena, Porta Portuense and the Circonvallazione Gianicolense while

their subtypes indicate minor, but nuanced deviations from a general fashion. In the second-century A.D., multi-storey chamber tombs at the third milestone of the via Latina contained, as a rule, an underground burial-chamber and rooms above ground for the worship of the dead and for social meetings.[779] The chamber tombs under the Basilica of San Sebastiano (also from the second century) displayed massive rectangular attics above their pediments. The mid-imperial, one-storey chamber tombs of Isola Sacra were equipped with wells, ovens and kitchens (*culinae*), and included lateral reliefs presenting scenes from the professional lives of the deceased, as well as black-and-white or polychrome mosaic pavements – all pointing to bliss in a hereafter that was earned by hard work during life. Although the chamber tombs under St. Peter's display the same kind of façade as those of Isola Sacra, they lack the triangular pediments and the roomy precincts of some tombs of the latter.[780] To compensate for that, they put on show some of the most refined decoration ever seen in a Roman cemetery.[781]

Despite the importance of chamber tombs, family sepulchers at Ostia were in many cases *columbaria* style – containing sepulchral chambers where cinerary urns were exclusively stored in pigeonholes (*loculi*) – or reflected a mix of inhumation and cinerary niches in the same tomb. The tombs of the Claudii and the Caecilii in the necropolis of the via Laurentina are good examples of *columbaria* at Ostia. Just like it happened with chamber tombs, these *columbaria*

Isola Sacra has the largest number of surviving chamber tombs, with well-preserved examples spanning from the Trajanic to the Severan (GEE 2003:33).

[779] This same subtype can be found elsewhere. Examples include the so-called "Sedia del Diavolo" on the via Nomentana, and the gable-roofed tomb of Annia Regilla by the via della Caffarella, south of the *Domine Quo Vadis?* church. Cf. TOYNBEE 1996:133.

[780] Traces of a triangular pediment are found, however, on the so-called Tomb of the Steward (G). According to TOYNBEE 1996:139, "the builders of Constantine's church would have destroyed the rest."

[781] An example of that is the mausoleum of the Valerii under St Peter's. It is perhaps the most informative document of how a family chamber tomb could express, by its decoration and furnishings the honours due to the departed, the cult of the deities on whom they and their survivors relied, their need beyond the grave of familiar objects, and their hope for happiness in the hereafter. TOYNBEE 1996:143.

were equipped with couches for banqueting.[782] Ultimately, *columbaria* were chamber tombs equipped with a number of niches with which they were provided in order to accomodate cremation burials. They were the architectural response to the problem of reconciling the high expenditure associated with burial with the desire to involve oneself in status displays at funerals, a desire that by the late republic had spread to include classes not generally associated with patronage and funerary architecture.[783]

I use here the term "familial tomb" in order to emphasize the family ownership of and involvement with chamber tombs and *columbaria*. It concerns more social than architectural aspects. Funerary architecture is a product of a living society and – because of that – it often reflects the social organization of that society. Studies of the chamber tombs of Isola Sacra conducted by Valerie

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[782] *Columbaria* appear originally in Etruria (DENNIS 1985 [1883]), but are a feature of large Roman slave and freedman groups attached to given households. The most striking examples at Rome are the *columbaria* of the Empress Livia (containing some 3,000 urns), that of Pomponius Hylas, those of Vigna Codini, the "Columbario Grande" and the *Columbarium* of Scribonius Menofilus, from the necropolis of the Villa Doria Pamphili. A noteworthy example from Ostia is the so-called "Tomba della Sacerdotessa Isiaca" in the via Laurentina necropolis, one of the earliest examples of chamber *columbaria* that accommodated both cremation and inhumation burials (PAVOLINI 1988:240-241).

[783] GEE 2003:22. They were large tombs intended to receive great numbers of urns (*ollae*), usually partly underground – though in many cases an upper story existed –, rectangular in form, where most niches ran in regular rows horizontally (*gradus*) and vertically (*ordines*). In the larger columbaria provision was made for as many as a thousand urns. Above or below each niche was fastened to the wall a piece of marble (*titulus*) on which was cut the name of the proprietor. If a person necessitated for his family a group of four or six niches, it was usual to mark them off from the others by wall decorations – to show that they formed a unit – by erecting pillars (*aediculae*) at the sides so as to give the appearance of the façade of a temple. If the height of the building was great enough to allow it, wooden galleries ran around the walls. Access to the room was given by a stairway and light was provided by small windows near the ceiling. *Columbaria* were often equipped with a podium, on which were placed the sarcophagi of those whose remains had not been burned, and sometimes chambers were excavated beneath the floor for the same purpose. *Columbaria* functioned in fact as surrogates for chamber tombs (of which they are often seen as antecedents), especially in the case of imperial freedmen or burial societies, that is, for those who could not normally afford an exclusive family tomb (NIELSEN 1996: 35-60; GEE 2003:32). So, Blake explains the appearance of *columbaria* in Rome in the late first century B.C. as a consequence of the closure of the large burial area in the Esquiline for the creation of the Horti Maecenatiani, and suggests that their construction was a dignified way of dealing with burial

Hope have shown that they produce social evidence that is very similar to that from domestic architecture.[784] They mimicked the functions of domestic units, displayed status, generated social visibility, and reflected family structure.[785] Familial tombs are also important because they are communal tombs, thus revealing the communities of death.[786] In fact, a striking feature of the chamber tombs from Isola Sacra is that they make the group more visible but not necessarily at the expense of the individual, since a hierarchy of space is often created.[787] Thus, despite the objection that chamber tombs and *columbaria* should not be architecturally identified with domestic abodes, we do not have to forfeit the familial aspects of these funerary spaces. I argue, here, for an inclusive concept of "familial tombs" that sees them eminently as family product. For this, I invoke the concept of house in Lévi-Strauss, which refers not to the building per se but to a delimited social unit, or shared organization, that is, a core group of people linked or integrated by an assortment of real or fictive ties of kinship or alliance and possessing an estate or sphere of influence consisting of material and immaterial (including supernaturally derived) assets or honors that is perpetuated over time by transmission of its name, wealth, and titles down the generations.[788] The symbolically laden architectural and aesthetic entity forms a unit with the people it contains. In a way, social life at the tomb was probably more intense

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among the very poor (BLAKE 1947:262). Gee (2003:21) contends, however, that it is very unlikely that spaces within *columbaria* were accessible to the poorest Romans.

[784] HOPE 1997:69-88.

[785] The titular inscriptions often found in chamber tombs suggest that the Roman households were numerically flexible. They generally mention only the dead and the commemorators, but they suggest that tombs were not organized around the family but around the household. Slaves, freedmen and their descendants are rarely named although often mentioned as categories. Children, siblings, in-laws and other relatives are seldom mentioned. Nevertheless, the countless unnamed persons buried in these tombs suggest that Roman households were considerably large.

[786] Hope specifically explores the commonality of death by focusing on the communal nature of chamber or house tombs, *collegia*, and patronage geared towards burial (HOPE 1997:71-73).

[787] HOPE 1997:81; ECK 1986:68-71.

[788] LÉVI-STRAUSS 1982:174-187; 1987:150-152; Cf. HELMS 1998:15.

than it was in the *domus*.[789] That means that the material form of the house as dwelling may become a veritable microcosm reflecting in its smallest details an image of the universe and of the whole system of social relations.[790] The family house becomes a conceptual unit opposed to the wild, the dangerous and the unsocial – which is the realm of animals, hunting and fighting, acquisition of raw materials, and death.[791] A house is symbolically a box, a container, whose experiences can be extended past the immediacy of the here-and-now, strictly defined, into the wider space-time of the outside supernatural realm.[792] It is not surprising, therefore, that the Romans – by building familial tombs – thus domesticated the wild realm of death. The familial tomb is, therefore, an ideal form for the representation of the unremitting tension between the world of the living and that of the dead.

That there existed some conflict between Christianity and the Roman family is clear from early accounts telling us of the almost insurmountable difficulties, which individual Christians had to overcome in order to be ever accepted by other non-Christian family members.[793] On the other hand, I have shown in my study on social networks that in the fourth century many of the wealthy Roman families were mixed. I mentioned in Chapter Two the conspicuous case of the Anicii and the families into which they married. Faltonia

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[789] According to BALDASSARRE 2001:389, "c'est la tombe, bien plus que la maison, qui est le lieu privilégié où se manifestent les réalités sociales et se révèlent les référents idéologiques."

[790] LÉVI-STRAUSS 1987:156; HELMS 1998:15.

[791] HODDER 1990:38-39, 69, 84-85; HELMS 1998:16.

[792] SEGUIN 1986:483; HELMS 1998:18.

[793] See, for instance, the *Passion of Perpetua*, an early third-century account, possibly edited by Tertullian, of Perpetua's visions and martyrdom. Perpetua was a married lady, of about twenty-two years, who was stripped, thrown to a mad bull, and then executed with a sword in the year 205. A relatively intense edging out of family relations is in key with some gospel passages such as Mt 10:37; 19:29; Mr 10:29-30; Lk 12:53; 14:26. For the way early Christian families were constructed, see: MOXNES 1997; OSIEK & BALCH 1997; OSIEK & BALCH 2000. For late antiquity, see: NATHAN 2000. For an up-to-date evaluation of recent scholarship on the Roman family, see: RAWSON 2003.

Betitia Proba, for instance, now epitomizes the merging of Christian and pagan values and ideals.

By the fourth century, the Christian Church was imposing regulations that promoted a more monogamous and restricted concept of family by means of rules that prohibited close marriages, discouraged adoption, and condemned polygyny, divorce, and remarriage.[794] Goody has suggested that the Church was striving to obtain the property left by couples lacking legitimate male heirs, and that the result was that the family thus limited became the main form of kinship organization, with almost no corporate suprafamilial kinship entities.[795] The endogamy of Christians and the centrality of patriarchal authority counterbalanced, however, any social disincentive to family gatherings for Christian religious activities.[796] The fact is that the early Christians did not eschew accommodation to the social matrix, and never ceased promoting values such as the necessity of historicalness, the importance of institutions, the significance of the family,[797] and community caring.[798] They were therefore willing to abide by family protocol as long as it did not interfere with their commitment to numerical growth. But the Church soon realized that in order to give the communities of faith and their ministers more control over the rites of death – first and foremost – it was important to celebrate funerals in church

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[794] KOROTAYEV 2003:135. For a discussion of the way asceticism could influence Christian families, see VAN DAM 2003.

[795] GOODY 1983:44-46. SHAW 1987:3-51 implies that a "nuclear" family was the core of the Roman familial structure in late Antiquity but contends that even during that time the family could branch out to include many other members.

[796] SALZMAN 2002:162. For an interesting picture of the importance of the family and of the private sphere in the relationship between living and dead in late antiquity, see REBILLARD 2003.

[797] Thus, CHAWDWICK 1988:467 speaks of an early Christian ethic which demanded, among other things, "stable family life."

[798] SNYDER 1985:163-164. According to him (p. 164), "the presence of the original genius of Christianity and the ability of Christianity to attract intellectual leaders surely set the stage for the universal acceptance of the Church, but it was the rapid accommodation to and alteration of the social matrix that enabled Christianity to become a universally practiced religion."

buildings rather than in homes or regular familial tombs.[799] Brown sees the controversy surrounding the widespread cult of the saints in the late fourth century as the result of a political struggle between wealthy families and bishops – between aristocratic attempts to "privatize" burial practice and episcopal attempts to maintain public control over burial and ritual.[800]

The custom of burying the dead in churches was practiced for almost a thousand years in the Christian West. The Council of Nantes in 658, in permitting burial in the church atrium or outside a church, but not in the church itself, was presumably bowing before a practice already popular.[801] So, from its beginnings, the Christian church formed a community of living and dead. For Ragon, "burying the dead in the church was to bury them in the common house, the great dwelling of the ancestors."[802] The custom started by Constantine apropos of his burial in the forecourt of a church at Constantinople was widely imitated by the Christians, to the point that corpses surrounded Christian worshipers everywhere. The faithful had corpses both under their feet and over their heads (in the church attics), almost as if saying with Virgil, *circumstant animae dextra laevaque frequentes*, "souls stand around on the right hand and on the left hand, in great numbers" (*Aeneid* 6.486). For that reason, Jerome called the church "the basilica of the dead" (*Against Vigilantius* 8).[803] It has been suggested, in fact, that the

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[799] This is, in fact, a prerogative that the Church is not willing to relinquish even to this day, cf. SENN 1997:672; RUTHERFORD 1990; SLOYAN 1990.

[800] BROWN 1981:34-36.

[801] GREENHALGH 1989:188.

[802] In fact, when, from the fifteenth century, the first graves appeared in cemeteries outside the church, some reproduced in miniature the church of which they had been deprived. Cf. RAGON 1983:37.

[803] Likewise, Jerome praises a presbyter, in his letter to Heliodorus (the so-called *Epitaphium Nepotiani*), who was concerned with the construction and beautification of the basilicas of the Church and "the halls of the martyrs:" "accordingly among the Greeks we hear of a philosopher who used to boast that everything he wore down to his cloak and ring was made by himself. We may pass the same eulogy on our friend, for he adorned both the basilicas of the church and the halls of the martyrs with sketches of flowers, foliage, and vine-tendrils, so that everything attractive in the church, whether made so by its position or by its appearance, bore witness to the

foundation of the wealth and power of the church is due to the incorporation of the martyr-grave in the church.[804]

This image of the tomb as a familial realm of the dead together with the archaeological evidence for a close continuity between Roman and Christian burial practices, the epigraphic evidence coming from burial rites, property and inheritance formulae (such as can be seen in legal formulae related to tomb perimeter), and evidence coming from legal statements about dining, point to the Basilica of Pianabella, our case study here, as a grandeur version of the same idea. That is, church ownership of a cemeterial basilica may have simply been a more pretentious instantiation of the corporate ownership of a tomb.

How a Cemeterial Basilica Could Perform the Social Functions of a Family Tomb

Funerals are often seen as contexts for instantiating the hazy relationships between the living and the dead. I use the word "ritual," here, following the definition proposed by Zuesse, according to which, rituals are "those conscious and voluntary, repetitious and stylized symbolic bodily actions that are centered on cosmic structures and/or sacred presences."[805] But more than instantiating relationships, cosmic structures, and sacred presences, the familial tomb has been found to be a record of existence for a group of people, preserving the social hierarchy of familial relationships and becoming staging areas for building memory and displaying status.[806] A cemeterial basilica could, in fact, perform the same social and ritual functions that the family tomb did in a conventional Roman cemetery. It provided social and physical visibility, it created and enhanced social

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labour and zeal of the presbyter set over it" (*qui basilicas Ecclesiae, et Martyrum Conciliabula, diversis floribus et arborum comis, vitiumque pampinis adumbrarit, Epistula* 60.12, translated by Fremantle).
[804] GREENHALGH 1989:189.
[805] ZUESSE 1979.
[806] GEE 2003:44-45. Gee (p. 48-49) briefly analyses the main ways chamber tombs drew the gaze in the pursuit of memory: sheer size, decoration, uniqueness of design, and *titulus*.

identity, it advertised social and spatial hierarchization, it provided a suitable environment for epigraphic commemoration, it allowed room for banqueting and acting charitably, it provided the occasion for the establishment of patronage and/or fictive kin ties, and finally it provided means for the domestication of the *suburbium* and of the wild realm of death.

The Creation of Group Identity

Recent studies suggest that the Roman family tomb was a key element in the definition of a community, being responsible for providing its members with a broader identity since shared ritual action was, in fact, responsible for a common concern with the health and stability of the society.[807] Facing the prospective boost in status and community cohesiveness springing from the funerary (rural) environment and the domestic (urban) setting,[808] fourth- and fifth-century Christians did not eschew from making use of all available resources to improve their social condition. They were especially predisposed to identity shifts since the post-Constantinian Christian dominance of the Roman Empire necessitated a redefinition of Christian identity from an oppressed minority to an imperial

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[807] GEE 2003:47-48. An interesting study on how cultural strategies, including rituals, could be effectively used in Roman (and other) times in order to create and maintain community is WEITZMAN 2005. According to him, the art of cultural persistence is "the ability to maneuver between the real and the imagined, to respond to and operate within the constraints of reality but also to transcend them" (p. 161). The study explores – although not from an archaeological viewpoint – the struggle for cultural survival of ancient Judaism, their efforts to maintain religious traditions and the strategies that early Jewish culture utilized to deal with intractable, sometimes hostile realities. For that, the author points to three main tactics of operation in the context of Jewish lack of power: (a) appeasement and symbiosis; (b) resistance; and (c) flight, concealment or deflection.

[808] At the same time, many senators – in Late Antique Rome – tried to stress the potential of their houses as symbols of family continuity by inventing a memory of their ancestors' ownership, through the medium of epigraphy thereby gaining prestige as members of a wider, albeit often fictional, *gens*, and defining their houses as landmarks of urban social life (cf. HILLNER 2003:129-145).

authority, the holy land becoming the discursive *locus* for mapping an imperial Rome on to an imperial Christianity.[809]

The performance of ritual at the Pianabella Basilica suggests that those Christians used funeral practices to re-enact their identity, and thus the Christian basilica incorporated – for that purpose – important aspects of the social role previously played by the familial tomb. The Pianabella Basilica allowed the Christian community inhabiting Ostia's southern district to find a landmark that pointed to their importance as a group. The renovations undertaken in the aula soon after this church was built show that the community took pride in the building and wanted it to retain its pristine condition. Architectural adaptations are attested by the basilica's physical remains as well as by epigraphic commemoration. The high quality – but scarce – fifth-century ware found in the basilica suggests that the community was either making collective investments or was benefiting from patronage – maybe both – in order to display expensive utensils during rituals.[810] These joint efforts suggest that the basilica actually made it possible for the Pianabella community to enjoy a common identity.

The Domestication of the Suburbium

Fixed offices such as bishops, elders, and deacons replaced charismatic authority during the institutionalization of Christianity.[811] The Christian community at Pianabella was overseen by a bishop, and that shows that it was sensitive to the requirements of a larger community in which it sought membership: the institutional Church. The performance of ritual was crucial for

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[809] Rather than explore Late Antique multiculturalism, Jacobs prefers to apply postcolonial analysis in order to look into the relationship between language, power and inbuilt instability in the fourth century A.D. (JACOBS 2004:7-9). However, since martyrdom texts and cults became gradually more popular after Constantine, it is complicated to accept Jacobs' claim (p. 23) that Christians moved from considering themselves as "suffering" subjects to authoritative personae.
[810] These architectural adaptations and pottery finds are described in detail in Chapter Three.
[811] WHITE 2005:368.

the creation and maintenance of the Pianabella community in a period when the activities of the Church mainly affected the towns.[812] The fact that a Christian *suburbium* was developing just outside Ostia's southern walls demonstrates that the Church was putting a Christian stamp on a place traditionally associated with festivals, burials, the arts, and military exercises. Thus, the Church was becoming more interested in the countryside, despite the increased risk of Barbarian invasions after 407. Spera has recently argued that when one assesses the evidence for the extra-urban areas of Rome between the third and seventh centuries, "the picture that emerges from the evidence is of a suburban landscape profoundly changed as a direct result of the Christianization of the urban core."[813] According to her, such changes imply a predilection for a burial space where Christians, reflecting an emergent sense of community, could celebrate funerary rites, experience death as a preparation for the resurrection, and act charitably. Here, one should also take into consideration the fact that funerary banquets could perform the social task of feeding the poor, a duty that could be accomplished even with recourse to the use of the tithe.[814]

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[812] HILLGARTH 1969:52. Although commonly maintained that shared rituals and common religion create a strong sense of community, BOYER 2001:285-287 warns us that appearances may be deceptive. According to him (p. 286), we should not overstress a simplistic link between common religion and community. Despite this proviso, the fact that Christianity could spread so effectively under the conditions which existed then makes us believe that – at least in that case – common religion did mean a strong sense of community. For a discussion of how burial rituals create community, see: MORRIS 1992.

[813] SPERA 2003:23. For an assessment of the late-antique influences of Christianity (as well as of military insecurity, barbarian settlements, and shrinking markets) over other rural areas in the western Roman world, see: CHRISTIE 2004. Conversely, for a recent introduction to ecclesiastic attempts to Christianize the late fourth century Roman city, see: HARTNEY 2004.

[814] According to Tertullian (*fl. ca*. 193-220), *haec quasi deposita pietatis sunt. quippe non epulis inde nec potaculis nec ingratis voratrinis dispensatur, sed egenis alendis humandisque*, "these [funds] are, as it were, a deposit of piety. For they are spent neither on banquets nor drinking parties nor on thankless eating houses, but to feed and bury the poor," *Apologeticum* 39 (transl. by White). According to STEVENSON 1978:163-164, "at its simplest, the refrigerium can be experienced in this world as the solace brought to the poor in an actual meal." For a recent assessment on how the early Christians and contemporaneous Jews depended on communal meals of a non funerary nature in order to regulate fellowship, see WHITE 2001:177-205.

Despite the fact that there is no evidence that regular Mass was conducted in the Pianabella Basilica, its proximity to the Constantinian Basilica that lay just inside the walls may suggest that the Pianabella Basilica was intended to become a community center for those who lived just outside the walls – besides providing a suitable burial place for the urban dead. The semi-monumental dimensions of the basilica may also be an indication that the building was designed to provide accommodation for Pianabella's suburban worshippers while the richly-endowed Constantinian Basilica was accommodating Ostia's urban converts. The latter would regularly join the former for the commemoration of the saint to whom the Basilica had been dedicated, and to bury and memorialize their own dead.

We can even imagine that the kind of rivalry between urban and rural Christians visualized by Snyder for the period from A.D. 180 to A.D. 313 had existed at Pianabella for some time.[815] But we should not suppose that by the time the Pianabella Basilica was inaugurated there still remained significant differences between the liturgies of the urban basilica and its cemeterial counterpart. The latter had attained by then as high a status as that of the urban house of God as suggested by its monumental character, elegant ware and good quality *loculus* closing slabs. In fact, just before the basilica was built Christianity in general was showing explicit disquiet concerning the deterioration of their urban congregations vis-à-vis the emergence of the monastic movement, which was driving men and women to become hermits or to join communities of

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[815] "One group, the urban group, placed more emphasis upon the growing tradition of the Christian faith and at the same time held a more flexible attitude toward personal and social ethics. On the other side was an extra-urban group that identified strongly with the social matrix, but held a very inflexible attitude toward personal morality and state policies" (SNYDER 1985:164). According to him (p. 165), the decision to move the relics of the saints into the city was part of the battle waged by the urban Christians against "cemetery" Christianity in order to have the tradition of memory and recall melded with the tradition of fellowship in the social matrix.

ascetics.[816] According to Chadwick, "the fourth-century church experienced the movement as a shock to its system."[817] The movement resulted in "brain drain," since some of the church's most dedicated members were leaving their congregations for an ascetic type of life in monasteries. So, the creation of an extra-urban environment where there could be some renunciation of the world and a relatively effectual detachment from the secular seemed desirable, especially when that was done under the banner of Christian togetherness and mystical fellowship in a space turned sacred by the company of the dead. Referring to the cult of the saints and its effect, Jerome remarked that "the city has changed address" (*movetur urbs sedibus suis* (*Epistula* 107.1). Just as the catacombs and the martyr shrines had become a point of cultural contact between the urban residents of Rome and the population in the countryside just outside the city,[818] Pianabella became a focal point for the two-way flow of pilgrimage in and out of Ostia.

Soon after the Basilica of Pianabella was built, the death penalty was imposed on those who insisted in worshiping the ancient pagan gods (435). Previous imperial legislation against paganism had been ineffective in the countryside. At Trento, in 397, furious farmers had actually murdered the Christian priests who tried to prevent them from celebrating the ancient fertility rites in honor of Ceres. The countryside was plagued by asceticism, monasticism, paganism and the barbarian invasions. Much pressure was put upon Christianity, which was expected to disband the heretics, convert the pagans and pacify the barbarians. As the West Roman Empire gradually plunged into an irreparable decline, the Christian clergy held on to the belief that that Empire was

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[816] For a vivid – but sometimes far-fetched – discussion of fourth-century asceticism among Christians, see: VAN DAM 2003 (especially the last chapter: "Was God the Father Married? Virginity and Social Extinction"). See also: HILLGARTH 1969.
[817] CHADWICK 1988:469.
[818] DAVIS 1999.

instrumental to the realization of God's plan to convert the world. Ambrose of Milan (c. 339-397),[819] Paulinus of Nola (c. 353-431),[820] Claudian (*floruit* 395-404),[821] and Jerome (c. 342-430),[822] among others, resorted to Christian patriotism and trust in the martyrs in order to persuade both the clergy and the common people to vigorously oppose heresy and the barbarians. Cohesion in the countryside needed to be attained in order for the Christians to become more effectual in the accomplishment of those tasks. The efforts that led to the creation of a predominantly Christian space in the Ostian *suburbium* were no doubt connected to this need to add force to the Christian presence around Roman urban centers.

The Domestication of the Realm of Death

A point that I want to stress, here, is that basilicas like San Sebastiano, San Lorenzo, SS Marcelino e Pietro, and Sant' Agnese at Rome, and the Pianabella Basilica at Ostia were not ordinary churches such as those built *intra moenia* and which were intended to serve the religious assemblies of the faithful on Sundays or on major feast days. In fact, no permanent clergy seem to have been assigned to them prior to the fifth century or maybe even later. They were overseen and serviced by the staff of one of the city churches. However, these four basilicas from Rome differed from the Pianabella Basilica because they were "huge covered burial grounds" (*coemeteria subteglata* or *coemeteria cooperta*),[823] with *mausolea* built against their outer walls. In their case, the label "basilica" was colorless: it meant an assembly-hall where the memorial services (vigils and

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[819] *De officiis ministrorum* 1.27.129. This is a treatise in which Ambrose mirrors Cicero's homonymous work in order to suggest how the Christian clergy could be organized in order to counter the barbarian threat.

[820] *Carmen* 26.246-259.

[821] *Carmina minora* 50 (77).

[822] *Epistula* 127.12. This is a letter in which Jerome reacts against the sack or Rome by the barbarians in 410.

night-long prayers) took place preceding the anniversary of the martyr or founder, an auxiliary shelter for those attending the *martyrium* on the anniversary proper when the main festivities took place.[824] Pianabella, on the other hand, was a cemeterial basilica (*basilica ad corpus*). This kind of basilica was commonly built from the latter part of the fourth century through the sixth century to enclose a martyr's body at the level of an underground gallery – as happened with S. Ermete, S. Generosa, S. Ippolito, etc – or above ground, and it often adopted the plan of an ordinary basilica *intra moenia*, with nave, aisles and apse, the latter housing the martyr's grave.[825] In this case, the number of depositions inside the basilica proper was less numerous, its *atrium* and the cemetery nearby attracting most burials.

The Establishment of Patronage and/or Fictive Kin Ties

The duty to honor dead relatives was known as *parentalia* (Ovid, *Fasti* 2.549-556) and the act of fulfilling that obligation, *parentare* (Cicero, *De legibus* 2.26; Varro, *De lingua latina* 6.13).[826] It was a kin business, since the Romans usually did not allow an unfamiliar person to be buried in the tomb belonging to a *familia*: *iam tanta religio est sepulchrorum, ut extra sacra et gentem inferri fas negent esse* (Cicero, *De legibus* 2.22).[827] The Christian practice of building basilicas for religious use was closely tied to the requirements of burial customs. In terms of their origin and structure, the churches of Rome until the sixth century

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[823] KRAUTHEIMER 1960:28.

[824] Cf. a famous passage in the Latin version of the life of Melania the Younger (*Vita S. Melaniae Iunioris*) regarding the late fourth century celebrations at San Lorenzo.

[825] KRAUTHEIMER 1960:2831.

[826] According to FELDHERR 2000:213, funerals were not the only context for the Romans to instantiate the ambiguous relationship between the living and the dead. The nine-day rituals performed in February to honor the dead were also known as *Parentalia* and reveal the same tension as seen in funerals.

[827] See also: Ovid, *Tristia* 4.3.45; Suetonius, *Vita Neronis* 50; *Vita Tiberi* 1; Cicero, *Tusc. Disput.* 1.7).

may be divided into six categories,[828] some of which were found in a cemeterial context: those originating from the *domus ecclesiae*, banqueting halls in public cemeteries later transformed into places of worship, oratories built over the tomb of the martyrs,[829] *martyria*,[830] pagan buildings transformed into chapels, and *memoriae*. Just as chamber tombs reflected domestic architecture and a domestic dimension for the cult of the dead, the Christian basilica incorporated the familial nature of the *domus* and the social dimensions of community-enhancing family tombs. The Roman definition of both *familia* and *domus* seems to have been "deliberately fluid," and there is no need to consider that the Christians behaved differently in this regard.[831]

So, it is not difficult to imagine that the early Christians gradually began to envisage God or the bishop as taking on the responsibilities of the *paterfamilias* while the Christian basilica became – at the same time – a house for the living and a house-tomb for the dead. In fact, these two architectural structures came to instantiate the family in several and similar ways: they were places where the family met, shared meals, created ancestral status, and recalibrated social roles, among other things.

The Celebration of Funerary Banquets

Anthropologically, funerary banquets have sometimes been explained as a contract which is established between the living and the dead by which the living make the commitment to provide nourishment for the dead but demand fertility in

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[828] The close association between some of these classes of Christian churches and cemeteries is a belief which archaeologists have held for long (cf. BENNETT 1898:172).

[829] According to BENNETT 1898:172, "buildings of this class, necessarily outside the city limits, were the origin of some of the grandest structures of Christian Rome."

[830] According to FLEMING, HONOUR & PEVSNER 1991 [v. *martyrium*], in early Christian architecture *martyria* were usually circular whereas churches proper were rectangular. The cleric in charge of a *martyrium* was sometimes known as the *martyrarius*, cf. CROSS 1974 [v. *martyrium*].

[831] SALLER 1994:74-88; GEE 2003:30-31.

return.[832] Furthermore, feeding the dead as a liminal condition that stresses the possibility of being quick-while-dead is the cultural counterpart of another liminal condition stressing the possibility of being dead-while-alive.[833] Both mechanisms ensure that the transition from life to death can come about without threats to the established order.

The early Christians inherited several of the common practices of the ancient Romans regarding burials, including the duty to celebrate banquets honoring the deceased in close proximity to the place where they buried them. In early Christianity, the celebrations of the Eucharist, the holding of meals at the grave and the singing of psalms served as a substitute for the pagan practices of the sacrifice of the dead, the meal of the dead, dancing and the singing of dirges and lamentations.[834] I want to suggest that funerary banquets were one more instance in which the early Christians could celebrate the spectacle of *memoria*. Just as the Greeks and the Romans of earlier times had done,[835] the Pianabella Christians took advantage of the socially engaged setting of communal meals in order to advance their claims to their rights to enduring individual memory and long-lasting camaraderie. Besides, funerary banquets helped reinforce the social

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[832] According to LINDSAY 2001:70, "there are two underlying expectations in the process of feeding the dead. Firstly, that they will be transformed into beneficial ancestors and secondly, that a process of exchange is underway. Corpse and survivor are mutually dependent, and each expects a service from the other."

[833] HELMS 1998:24-27. According to her (p. 25), "achievement of the final conditions and of the state of being that identify the deceased as truly dead often necessitates complex transitional processes culturally constructed to evidence that the Otherness of the dead takes the form of being 'like us but different.' This transformation frequently entails recognition that the passage or conjunction between the living and the dead constitutes not a sharp break but a continuum." This transition is facilitated then by mechanisms such as (i) secluding the sick; (ii) institutionalizing the decrepit elderly; (iii) interpreting loss of consciousness (whether caused by drunkenness, religious trance, serious illness, or grave wounds) as death; (iv) socially excluding mourners following a death, handicapped people, or unsuccessful individuals.

[834] QUASTEN 1983:169.

[835] According to Demetrius, a fourth-century-B.C. writer, what the cook accomplishes with his art, no play-actor could ever accomplish at all (*Athen. Deipnosophistai* 9.405-406). According to FELDMAN 2004:1, ancient food had "a strong spiritual and social dimension that helped the ancient to understand life and human relations."

differences existing among early Christians, thus establishing hierarchy and order in the community.[836] So, just as Roman chamber tombs were outfitted with spaces specially designed for such commemoration, so the funerary banquets promoted by the early Christians would require a covered space.[837] That explains the existence of one so-called *basilica tricliarum* at Carthage, a basilica known for its strong associations with the practice of celebrating funerary banquets.[838] However, when the floors of the basilical *coemeteria subteglata* were all covered with graves in the course of the late fifth and sixth centuries, no room was left for the celebration of banquets, and they lost their purpose. At the same time, *basilicae ad corpus* became popular, and the original function of the first basilicas was forgotten. That is precisely what happened to the Basilica of Pianabella. We find no evidence for the existence of benches, tables or the other accouterments of funerary banquets at the site. The respect for the martyr or founder associated with it had become paramount, and the most important function of the building was to serve as an assembly-hall. The *mensa* found in its funerary enclosure confirms the supposition that the Pianabella Christians no longer met inside the basilica exclusively to commemorate their dead through funerary banquets. Portable devices were required because they could be removed in order to make more room when necessary. The basilica had therefore become a meeting-place for the Christians rather than a major burial space. The Christian building had

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[836] That may be one of the reasons why the Church fathers tolerated funerary banquets despite the fact that they were often associated with drunkenness, thus sometimes threatening established order. According to FÉVRIER 1977:29-45, the fact that funerary banquets enforced social differences was one of the main reasons why it became a popular iconographic theme in the catacombs. See also ANGELUCCI *et al.* 1990:69-70.

[837] KRAUTHEIMER 1960:33-34.

[838] The so-called Basilica of Bishop Alexander in Tipasa is a remarkable example of a basilica adequately outfitted for funerary banquets. There we find masonry couches, *mensae*, wells and inscriptions associated with convivial practices. The building attests to the continuity of these practices at least into the sixth century and suggests how funerary banquets could be closely associated with euergetism and the care for the poor – to the point that Février (1977:42) sees euergetism as a straight path to Christian perfection comparable to martyrdom.

finally evolved into the house of God: *basilica facta est, id est dominicum* (*Anonymi itinerarium a Burdigala Hierusalem uisque* 594).

Conclusion

It was common practice in late antique Italy for basilicas to be built near suburban areas traditionally occupied by tombs, especially those belonging to martyrs or renowned clergymen. Thus, the Ambrosian Basilica and the Basilica Apostolorum at Milan were both constructed in the city's suburbs, the former dedicated to five martyrs (Nabore, Felix, Victor, Gervasius and Protasius) and the latter, to four former bishops of the city.[839] The monumentalization of suburban areas shows the increasing importance of the *suburbium* for the religious topography of the late antique city. The construction and management of cemeterial basilicas implied the reorganization of funerary space whose monumentalization thus became a dimension in which community life in the suburbs worked as a complement to urban life. It also shows that – in a sense – the primary focus of mortuary provision was ultimately on the living, for the monumentalization of funerary space and the elaborate precautions associated with it were as much a way of denying the finality of death as of ensuring a continuation of existence through conventional ritual and community.[840] Precisely because funerary traditions could effectively perform the important function of guaranteeing continuity and security even in perplexing situations, it should not surprise us that these practices showed themselves to be so resilient over time.

In the funerary realm at least, the early Christians used what they had in order to attain what they wanted. Not always was that a well thought-out plan. In fact, they seem to have been quite willing to contemporize. That was the case with the basilica. Although seen at first as just a natural solution for the need that the

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[839] CANTINO WATAGHIN & LAMBERT 1998:94-96.
[840] BAINES & LACOVARA 2002:27-28.

early Christians felt to meet together, the Roman basilica acquired a special theological and social significance when they devised ways to subordinate the whole building to the altar of the Lord and to make the congregation subservient to the clergy. For that reason, the formation of the Christian basilica should be seen as a variant on rather than a derivative of its secular counterpart.[841] The Christian building was not like any other basilica – it developed into the house of God: the *basilica, dominicum domus Dei*.

Cemeterial basilicas became important meeting places for the Christian community, and took on much of the ritual and social creativity that had belonged to the family tomb where reunion in death did away with a good deal of death's sting and where the Christians found solace for their grief because they felt that the necessary requirement of being members of a community in order to attain a peaceful hereafter was met. Christian basilicas also gradually replaced familial tombs as a sphere in which Christians could benefit from the spectacle of status display and social theatricality in the funerary realm,[842] and where they could look to God as a new and improved type of *paterfamilias*.

Just like any ordinary familial tomb, the Pianabella Basilica lay on a street in close proximity to other family tombs. Just like a familial tomb, it had a rectangular (although slightly more complex) plan, including a façade mimicking domestic architecture. Just like a familial tomb, it displayed a hierarchy of funerary space which provided visibility to the group but not at the expense of the

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[841] According to KRAUTHEIMER 1939:141f, "it would be entirely fallacious to assume that the architects of Constantine simply took over the type of the secular basilica. That type was only a working basis on which something new had to be created, and the Early Christian basilica, instead of being a derivative from the secular basilica, had better be considered as a free variant on the old theme... Thus the early Christian basilica is certainly not a copy of the secular, nor is it directly derived from it. It is a new creation based on a traditional type, and adapted to a new function"

[842] By doing that, they were simply utilizing strategies that were available to them from their Roman background. The Romans had traditionally made use of funerals in a theatrical setting, cf. BODEL 1999. According to BALDASSARRE 2001:387, "le tomb... dans sa conception première, semble proposer et privilégier un modèle scénographique et décoratif qui paraît même parfois sans relation et difficelement conciliable avec sa fonction de conteneur des dépouilles du défunt."

individual. Just like a familial tomb, it displayed an austere exterior concealing a more ornate interior, it contained a well and water pipes, and it provided room for funerary banquets. It also provided epigraphic commemoration for the family under the patronage of the *paterfamilias*, thus creating fictive ties of kinship and/or momentarily altering social status. Just like the familial tomb, it was conceptualized as the abode of the dead and/or the ancestors.

Thus, the construction of the Pianabella Basilica as a family tomb for Ostia's suburban Christians probably meant that a considerable degree of social integration had already been attained by them. For all its social functions, the Pianabella Basilica played an important role in shaping the community it served, which was striving towards an ideal of unity and concord. By the fifth century, the Christian church in general had embodied this ideal in concrete ways, and Christian voices audibly and optimistically announced that the house of God had become a place of safety akin to paradise itself.[843] In the words of Gregory of Nyssa (*c*. 330-395), what seemed to be just a house, revealed itself to be a magnificent basilica.[844]

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[843] So, according to Severian (*fl. c.* 400), κῆπος γὰρ ὡς ἀληθῶς κεκλεισμένος καὶ παράδεισος ἡ Ἐκκλησία τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος. παράδεισον δὲ λέγω οὐ κατὰ τὸν ἀρχαῖον ἐκεῖνον, ἀλλὰ πολὺ ἐκείνου ἀνώτερον. Ἐκεῖ μὲν γὰρ ἐβασίλευσεν ὄφις, ἐνθαῦτα δὲ βασιλεύει ὁ Χριστός, "the Church of the living God can be truly called a garden. Yet, I do not mean a garden like that old one, but a much superior one. For the serpent ruled there, while Christ rules here" (*De caeco nato*).

[844] Οἶκον γὰρ ἐνεδείκνυτο ἡμῖν ἡ εἴσοδος, ἀλλ' ἐντὸς τῆς θύρας γενομένους ἡμᾶς οὐχὶ οἶκος ἀλλὰ στοὰ διεδέξατο, "we were shown an entrance to the house, but when we passed through the door, not a house, but a basilica appeared before our eyes" (*Epistula* 20.16.2).

Conclusions

This assessment of burial practices in late antiquity and the continuity it has shown between Roman and Christian practices provides evidence concerning both the religious institutions and the socio-cultural context of the early Christians. In an area of study in which most of what we know pertains to the ruling classes and in which we cannot hope to elucidate almost anything other than aristocratic customs,[845] the choice of a suburban Basilica and its cemetery located at a not particularly wealthy environment provided us with an opportunity to look into Christian burial practices from the perspective of a hard-up Christian community who made consistent efforts to present itself as more socially advanced than it really was.

Despite the inevitable transformations that occurred during the transition from late antiquity to the Middle Ages, burial practices of the medieval world were greatly influenced by late-antique ones.[846] The physical characteristics of Christian burial were in the main acquired through a – not very rigorous – sieving out of pagan mortuary practices. As a matter of fact, Christian stress on the obligation of the family regarding burials was no more than a continuation of Roman practice, according to which burial or cremation of a body was the responsibility of the relatives. Early Christians were so comfortable with Roman practices that the Church for a very long time never felt the need to organize the domain of burial customs, intervening only where it was compelled to correct some abuse that threatened to weigh down its authority. Except for negligible, immaterial objections from the Christian clergy, the funerary beliefs and practices

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[845] BELAYCHE 1995:156.

[846] ALEXANDRE-BIDON 1998:15ff. Accordingly, "bien qu'essentiellement chrétien, le Moyen Age occidental n'est pas coupe des temps antiques [p. 32]… Le christianisme medieval n'a pas réussi à faire disparaître les sentiments funéraires traditionnels et le souvenir de l'Antiquité ressurgit jusque sous la pelle des fossoyeurs [p. 33]."

of the Christian Church in the west can be said to have evolved by adjusting to cultural assumptions, which Christians and pagans shared. Nevertheless, though evidently continuous in so many ways with a very ancient past, the imaginative landscape of Christianity in late antiquity was changing.[847] All-encompassing and ingenious structures still profoundly rooted in the ancient world were silently losing their power. Thus, patronage was being redefined so as to grant the church the leading role in providing an environment for social advancement.

Ostian society was open to familial influences, and, there, even foreigners could become engaged in the small politics connected to patronage. The important families of Rome were thus able to exert a powerful influence upon the local aristocracy of Ostia, and – if they so wanted – they could choose to lay emphasis on certain aspects of the city's religious make-up. The Anicii and the Egrilii stood out in the way they supported Christianity at Ostia, and their interests may have involved a certain patronage of the community responsible for erecting the city's first semi-monumental cemeterial building: the Basilica of Pianabella. Besides, there is evidence for the presence in the area of ambitious patrons who strove to give displays of status beyond their actual level. The monumentalization of Pianabella shows the increasing importance of the *suburbium* for the religious topography of the late antique city. After the basilica was built, Ostia's *suburbium* became a crossroad for a two-way flow of pilgrimage in and out of the city, thus expanding the city's boundaries. This topographical shift with its ensuing reallocation of resources opened the way to the establishment of a Christian community residing on the outskirts of the city, thus starting a movement from sporadic celebrations to communal religious services of a more habitual nature. The monumentalization of Pianabella also implies the reorganization of funerary space so as to show that – in a sense – the primary focus of mortuary provision

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[847] For an assessment of broader ways in which Christianity was changing in late antiquity, see MARKUS 1990.

was ultimately on the living. Christians, as everyone else, could always choose to be buried with their respective families, but they could choose also to be buried in the burial place of the community, a choice which was in all probability and for the most part attractive to poor people. What Mary Boatwright has recently said of the Romans is no less true of the Pianabella Christians: "of our life passages, death is the most private, undignified, and annihilating... given the means, Romans persistently and characteristically defied these certainties."[848] The monumentalization of Pianabella denies the finality of death and ensures a continuation of existence through conventional ritual and community. By doing that, the institutional church benefited from local patronage only to make sure that this practice would come under its absolute control. The cult of a martyr – probably a woman who remains nameless – and the fact that the church – rather than the family – was now responsible for burials call attention to a new role to be played by the institutional church, that of an intermediary between the munificence of the rich and the requests of the poor. For all its social functions, the Pianabella Basilica played an important role in shaping the community it served. It thus became a house for the new Christian family at Pianabella, the family of God.

Thus, this investigation shows that the Pianabella Christians favored social continuity over social rupture and – whenever possible – coopted pagan customs by embracing them and changing them in ways so as to suit their own needs. The Basilica of Pianabella, my study case here, can be seen as a grandiose version of the traditional Roman familial tomb where religious rituals, status displays and funerary banquets took place under the patronage of the well-to-do, and where social roles were negotiated and recalibrated. This has been documented by the presence – in the basilica – of good quality ware, a portable table for funerary banquets, wells and pipes, inscriptions referring to the patronage by wealthy

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[848] BOATWRIGHT 2004:135.

Christians and church officers, and by the sheer size of the building and its privileged location in a *proastion*. Although the identification of the basilica's dedicatee as Lea is an original suggestion, it remains hypothetical.

The archaeological record is often incomplete because of intangible, unpreserved, and undiscovered behaviors.[849] Society reflects itself in its burials and funerary buildings, but it is not possible to reconstruct the society directly and deductively from the burials and buildings alone. "The way from 'burial to society' is... a tortuous path."[850] My description, here, admittedly goes beyond the evidence, is imperfect and open to amendment, but it is intended to be one of the possible renderings of the ways by which the Pianabella Christians negotiated life – and death – through variable social contexts.

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[849] HÄRKE 1997:19-27; SILVERMAN 2002:2.
[850] NIELSEN 1997:110. See also: SILVERMAN 2000:3.

Tables and Figures

Table 1

List of Inscriptions Mentioning the *Caltilii*

Nº.	Freeborn Individuals	Liberti and Libertae
F.O. 127	1 Caltilius P. (dedicated Ostia's serapeum), h. of 13?	
VI.14254	2 L. Caltilius, p of 3, [6 & 7?]	3 L. Caltilius L. l. An(?), l of 2
VI.14255	4 A. Caltilius, p of 5	5 A. Caltilius A. l. Eros, l of 4
VI.14256	2 L. Caltilius, p of [3?], 6 & 7	6 L. Caltilius L. l. Lepidus, l of 2
		7 L. [Cal]tilius L. l. Lysi(machus), l of 2
VI.14257	8 L. Caltilius Salutaris, p of 9 & 10	9 Caltilia Politice, la of 8
		10 (L. Caltilius?) Sabinus, l of 8
VI.14258	11 Caltilia Chrysis	
VI.14259	12 Caltilia Moschis	
XIV.21	13 Caltil(ia) Diodora Bubastiaca, w. of 1?	
XIV.251	14 L. Caltilius Blastianus, lenuncularius	
	15 L. Caltilius Eutychian(us), lenuncularius, s of 16	
XIV.266	16 [L.] [Cal]tilius Eutyche[s], f of 15	
XIV.310		17 L. Caltilius C(aiae) l. Hilarus, Augustalis, p of 18 & 19
		18 L. Caltilius L. l. Stephanus, l of 17
		19 Caltilia L. l. Felicula [Avia], la of 17
XIV.311		20 [L.] Caltilius Celer, b of 17
		17 L. Caltilius Hila[rus], p of 18 & 19
XIV.311 add		19 [Cal]tilia Fe[li]cula Avia, la of 17
XIV.332	21 Caltilia Tyche	
XIV.621	22 Caltilia Epithymete	
XIV.741	23 [C]altilius Epictetus	
XIV.761	24 Caltilia Felicitosa	
XIV.1154	25 Caltilia Isidora	
AE 1988:205		26 L. Caltilius Epagathus, *Augustalis* and *quinquennalis*

l = libertus   h = husband
la = liberta   w = wife
p = patronus   s = son
f = father   b = brother

Table 2

Important Developments in Roman and Christian Funerary Practice

C5 B.C.   the so-called "Law of the Twelve Tables" written
C2 B.C.   cremation increasingly becomes the norm at Rome
C1 B.C.   the standard of dying rises among non-elite Romans
          monumental tombs make their appearance in the via Ostiensis necropolis at Ostia
          introduction of *columbaria* in Rome
          beginnings of the Vatican necropolis
          night funerals no longer normal
C1   demographic pressures lead to underground depositions
          Vigna Codini *columbaria* built in an area between the Via Appia and the Via Latina.
          tomb inscriptions begin to attach the personal name or names of the departed to the long-
          established formula of collectivity, *dis Manibus*
C2   urn cremation accepted throughout most of the western empire
          some elite begin adopting inhumation
          chamber tombs become a common form of funerary architecture in and near Rome
          sarcophagi become fashionable among the Romans
C2-3   early pagan and Christian *hypogea*
          the graffito *Petr(os)* in the so-called "Tomb of the Apostle" in the Vatican necropolis
C3   inhumation increasingly the norm throughout the empire
          organization of the first Christian cemeteries by the Church
          crystallization of an elaborate system of martyr cult
          it becomes a crime to damage the body, not only the tomb as in previous legislation
C3-4   catacombs become predominantly Christian
          sarcophagi commonly used in Christian burials
          plaster burials become a recurrent feature in Christian cemeteries outside Italy
C4   some Christian clergy adopt a "modèle minimal" of burial which prescribes the choice of
          an unknown place for their interment
          the abbreviated form of the word *deposito* begins to appear in Christian epitaphs
          west-east alignment of graves sporadically adopted by the Christians after Constantine
          viaticum to be given to the dying but not to the dead
mid-C4   Christians start using open air cemeteries (*areae*)
C4-5   the earliest Christian ritual for death and burial (the *ordo defunctorum*) emerges
          burials *retro sanctos*
C4-6   construction of cemeterial basilicas (*basilicae ad corpus*)
          the dead buried as close as possible to an altar
C5   catacombs cease to be used for burial
          cremation entirely superseded by inhumation as the preferred Roman burial form
C5-6   first urban burials?
C5-7   grave-goods conspicuously found in Christian burials
C7   the *Curia Senatus* converted into the Church of S. Adriano
C6-9   martyrial sanctuaries built in the environs of Rome
C8   grave goods no longer deposited in Christian tombs

Table 3

Important Pre-Constantinian Dates

184 B.C.	first recorded use of the word "basilica" in Latin literature (Plautus, *Curculio* 472)
212 B.C.	Rome decides to store the grain coming from Sardinia at Ostia
c. 65	Martyrdom of St. Peter
c. 67	Martyrdom of St. Paul
123	the use of dated stamps abandoned by most brick-yard owners
126	Hadrian elected *duo vir* of Ostia
230	Christians granted by Alexander Severus the privilege to organize *collegia funeraticia*
238	Fabianus orders the construction of *fabricae*
256	Dura-Europos destroyed by the Saussanians
258	Felicissimus and Agapitus supposedly buried in the catacombs of Praetextatus
258	Peter and Paul's remains allegedly removed to San Sebastiano
269	Cyriacus, bishop of Ostia, executed
c. 270	celebrations of Mass at martyrs' tombs begin
	Aurea dies at Ostia
309	Maxentius builds a mint at Ostia
311	Galerius's Edict of Toleration
312	inauguration of the so-called "Peace of the Church"

Table 4

Important Post-Constantinian Dates

313   Constantine's Edict of Milan
314   Constantine transfers Ostia's municipal rights to Portus
316   Eusebius dedicates the basilica built by Paulinus at Tyre
318   The arch of Constantine set up at Rome, to commemorate his presence there.
325   the First Council of Nicaea, with Constantine as President, authorizes the giving of the *viaticum* to the dying
326   Christ's cross supposedly discovered by Helena, Constantine's mother
          execution of the empress Fausta and the emperor's son Crispus
320s   the church of Santa Croce built in Jerusalem and the basilica of St John Lateran built in the Caelian hill just inside the walls
330   Constantinople becomes the co-capital of the Empire
330s   the basilica of San Lorenzo built in the via Tiburtina, Sant'Agnese built in the via Nomentana, SS Pietro e Marcellino built in the via Labicana, San sebastiano built in the via Appia, and St Peter's built in the Orti Neroniani
336   Peter and Paul's remains allegedly returned to the Vatican
337   baptism of Constantine and his death (May 22nd)
          Constantine becomes the first known Roman Emperor to have been interred
354   death of Constantina, Constantine's daughter
359   Proba writes her *Cento*
361   Julian enters Constantinople as Emperor (Dec. 11th) and re-establishes heathen cults
362   Julian reportedly ascribes the triumph of Christianity to this religion's care for the graves of the dead
363   new Emperor Jovian re-establishes Christianity
364   edict forbidding the construction of new buildings within Rome without Imperial authorization
367   Damasian epigrams carved on the tombs of the martyrs
370   the Volusiani receive a *taurobolium*
379   Emperor Gratian refuses the title of *pontifex maximus*
          Theodosius becomes emperor and opposes Arianism
380   Edict of Thessalonica (Theodosius proclaims Christianity the sole state religion)
          orthodox Christians to be called Catholics
381   the council of Aquileia sanctions the defeat of Arianism in the the West
          the law forbidding burial within the city restated in a decree issued by Gratian
382   embassy to Gratian led by Symmachus
382   Emperor Gratian withdraws the funds that maintained the public cults of the Roman state
          the Altar of Victory removed from the Senate
384   Lea is buried at Ostia
386   Augustine converts
387   death of St Monica at Ostia
388   Augustine returns to Africa
390   Santa Pudenziana built by Pope Siricius
          Theodosius slays 7,000 inhabitants of Thessalonica and Ambrose compels him to admit his guilt publicly

	the Volusiani dedicate an altar in the Phrygianum at Rome
391	pagan cults forbidden by imperial legislation
	worship of the Lares is declared illegal and the Serapeion at Alexandria is destroyed
	Augustine ordained priest
393	the Council of Hippo bans the practice of giving the *viaticum* to the dead
408	Julian, a *vir clarissimus* from Hippo Regius, yields his house for ecclesiastic use
408	bishops reportedly allowed to destroy pagan images which were still receiving adoration
c. 410	catacombs cease being used for burial
410	Alaric sacks Italy and Rome itself
434	Agrypnius Volusianus converts to Christianity
435	capital punishment approved for those involved in pagan cults
438	*Codex Theodosianus* published
442	the Basilica Iulia and the Colosseum damaged by an earthquake
449	St Hilary dies and is allegedly buried in a sarcophagus with pagan iconography
452	Attila marches on Italy but pope Leo the Great stops him
455	Gaiseric, king of the Vandals, occupies Rome
472	Ricimer sacks Rome
494	Pope Gelasius I (492-496) outraged by the celebration of the Lupercalia at Rome
c. 496	Clovis converts
511	Clovis and his wife buried in the Basilica of Peter and Paul on the Mons Lucotitius, following the example set by Constantine
533	the Council of Marseille allows criminals to be buried in Christian cemeteries
536	Belisarius occupies Rome
537	Goths besiege Rome
540	Procopius laments the fact that the Tiber is now empty of ships
546	Totila captures Rome
549	Goths retake Rome
580	the Senate of Rome is mentioned for the last time
585	the Council of Macon rules against sarcophagus re-use
599	last reference to the *praefectus urbis*
603	last reference to the Roman Senate
640	Jerusalem falls to the muslims
658	the Council of Nantes allows burial in the church atrium, but not in the church proper
787	the Second Council of Nicaea requires that new churches be consecrated with relics

Table 5

Important Archaeological Dates Regarding Ostia and Christian Burials

1485   Albert proposes that the Christian basilica was a close imitation of the Roman pagan basilicas (*De re aedificatoria*)

1568   the Catholic Church becomes again interested in the catacombs because of Panvinio's publication of *De ritu sepelendi mortuos*

1593   catacombs first explored archaeologically by Antonio Bosio

1602   Antonio Bosio discovers the Jewish catacombs

1632   Antonio Bosio's *Roma sotterranea* published posthumously

1774   beginning of the first documented investigation of Ostia by Gavin Hamilton

1783   excavations at Ostia by the Portuguese diplomat De Noronha

1794   excavations at Ostia by the British consul Robert Fagan

1801   private excavations at Ostia prohibited
        official excavations at Ostia begun by Giuseppe Petrini

1831   Pietro Campana employed by Cardinal Pacca in order to excavate in the suburbs of Ostia

1838   tomb of the baker Eurysaces discovered

1848   tomb of the Haterii discovered on the via Labicana three miles away from Rome

1849   catacombs first explored by G. B. de Rossi

1855   relatively scientific investigations at Ostia begun by Pietro Visconti

1880   Ostia's theater cleared by Rudolfo Lanciani

1917   the so-called Underground Basilica discovered at Rome

1925   Isola Sacra discovered

1936   B. Mazar begins excavations at Beth Shearim

1939   L. Kaas discovers the Vatican necropolis

1940   Guido Calza discovers the so-called Basilica Cristiana at Ostia

1945   epitaph of St Monica found at the Basilica Sanctae Aureae

1955   the Via Latina Catacomb, famous for the unique mix of Christian and pagan iconography, discovered

1960s   first challenges to the theory that the catacombs originated in a Christian milieu

1976   the Basilica of Pianabella discovered

1996   the G.A.I.R. discovers the Constantinian Basilica at Ostia

Table 6

Sarcophagi from Pianabella (after AGNOLI 1999)

Type I – Figural

item #	measurements	find spot	motif	type of reuse
B1	49 x 50 x 9	narthex of the basilica	mythological	n/a
B2	68 x 94 x 18.5	basilica	mythological	n/a
B3	25 x 25 x 13	basilica	mythological	new burial
B4	37 x 48 x 9	Pianabella	mythological	n/a
B5	4 fragments	various	mythological	building material
B6	108 x 77 x 33	Pianabella	mythological	n/a
B7	35 x 120 x 43	columbarium 1	mythological	burial
B8	54.5 x 195 x 62	mausoleum L1	mythological	new burial
B9	61 x 220 x 66.5	Pianabella	mythological	n/a
B10	12.5 x 9 x 3.5	basilica	mythological	n/a
B11	25 x 19 x 4	atrium of the basilica	mythological	n/a
B12	79 x 78 x 14.5	basilica	mythological?	n/a
B13	25 x 19 x 7	basilica	mythological?	n/a
B14	11 x 150 x 86	Pianabella	mythological	n/a
B15	11 x 42 x 30	Pianabella	mythological	n/a
B16	10 x 13 x 6	basilica	hunt scene	n/a
B17	10 x 13 x 6	atrium of the basilica	hunt scene	n/a
B18	8.5 x 11.5 x 2.5	basilica	hunt scene	n/a
B19	79 x 60 x 8	quadrant E11 (narthex)	mythological	building material
B23	24 x 16 x 9	atrium of the basilica	lions	n/a
B71	90 x 35 x 22	Pianabella	fisherman	n/a
B76	24.5 x 113	Procoio, Monticelli	symposiastic	n/a

Type II – Strigilated

item #	measurements	find spot	motif	type of reuse
B20	26 x 97 x 27	area esterna S (basilica)	+ Gorgons	building material
B21	22 x 15 x 6	Pianabella	+ sea motif	building material
B22	42 x 72 x 6.5	narthex of the basilica	+ clipeus & lions	n/a
B24	25.5 x 45 x 8.5	basilica	+ clipeus	n/a
B25	30 x 70 x 8	Pianabella	+ clipeus	n/a
B26	29.5 x 36.5 x 3	basilica	+ Erotes & torches	n/a
B27	13 x 28 x 11.5	Pianabella	+ Erotes	n/a
B28	48 x 192 x 53	narthex of the basilica	+ clipeus & *genii*	n/a
B29	50 x 201 x 59	tomb 85 in the basilica	+ architectural motif	new burial
B30	48 x 204 x 8	tomb 79 in the basilica	+ architectural motif	new burial
B31	28 x 26 x 43	Pianabella	+ architectural motif	n/a
B32	16 x 11 x 20	basilica	+ architectural motif	n/a
B33	2 fragments	basilica	+ architectural motif	n/a
B34	40 x 57 x 9.7	atrium of the basilica	+ clipeus?	n/a
B35	40 x 143 x 51.5	basilica	+ *tabula inscriptionis*	new burial

B36	8 x 40 x 25	basilica	+ Lesbian kyma	n/a
B37	30 x 42 x 9	Pianabella	+ *tabula inscriptionis*	n/a
B38	62 x 208 x 66	enclosure H (basilica)	+ *tabula inscriptionis*	new burial
B39	44 x 200 x 49	enclosure H (basilica)	+ *tabula inscriptionis*	new burial
B40	51 x 204 x 39	enclosure H (basilica)	+ shield decoration	n/a
B41	47 x 72 x 8.5	narthex of the basilica	+ *tabula inscriptionis*	n/a
B42	55.3 x 224 x 62.5	Porta Laurentina/Procoio	+ *tabula inscriptionis*	n/a
B43	60 x 219 x 60	Porta Laurentina	+ *tabula inscriptionis*	n/a
B44	67 x 196 x 12.5	Pianabella	+ *tabula inscriptionis*	n/a
B45	58 x 221 x 74	Aldobrandini tomb	+ torch & animal motif	n/a
B96	19.8 x 99.5 x 70	columbarium 1	+ acroteria & floral motif	n/a
B97	9.5 x 84.5 x 37	Pianabella	+ acroteria & floral motif	n/a

Type III – Semi-figural

B46	39 x 110 x 31	Pianabella	thiasos & sea motif	building material
B47	22 x 27.5 x 5	basilica	sea motif	n/a
B48	21 x 32 x 4	basilica	sea motif	building material
B49	6.5 x 18.5 x 5	just outside the south wall	sea motif	no reuse
B50	7 x 14 x 7	area esterna S (basilica)	sea motif	n/a
B51	8 x 25 x 18	just outside the south wall	sea motif	no reuse
B52	25 x 35 x 4.5	basilica	sea motif	n/a
B53	10 x 14 x 5	Pianabella	sea motif	n/a
B54	18.5 x 13 x 4	basilica	sea motif	n/a
B55	22 x 19 x 9	Pianabella	thiasos & sea motif	n/a
B56	14 x 33 x 10	basilica	seasonal motif	n/a
B57	10 x 15 x 7.5	basilica	seasonal motif	n/a
B58	10 x 8.8 x 4	basilica	seasonal motif	n/a
B59	8.5 x 12.5 x 6.5	basilica	seasonal motif	n/a
B60	12 x 10.5 x 6	Pianabella	seasonal motif	n/a
B61	11 x 8 x 2.5	just outside the south wall	seasonal motif	n/a
B62	52.5 x 28 x 58.5	Pianabella	seasonal motif	n/a
B63	7 x 14 x 7	area esterna S (basilica)	floral motif	n/a
B64	12 x 100 x 60	basilica	floral motif	n/a
B65	8 x 60 x 23	basilica	floral motif	n/a
B66	38 x 181 x 52.5	Pianabella/Procoio Nuovo	Nikai	n/a
B67	13 x 50 x 12	area esterna S (basilica)	Nikai	n/a
B68	16 x 47 x 31	Pianabella	tabula ansata + Nikai?	n/a
B69	16 x 54 x 4	Pianabella/Procoio	Eroti	building material
B70	15.5 x 53 x 4.3	columbarium 1	Eroti	n/a
B72	36 x 150 x 150	tomb 83 in the basilica	*lustratio* scene	new burial
B73	3 fragments	Pianabella	griffin motif?	n/a
B77	17 x 27 x 7	basilica	acroterial face	n/a
B78	28 x 46 x 4	Pianabella	acroterial face	n/a
B79	7,5 x 12,5 x 5	basilica	acroterial face	n/a
B80	21 x 26 x 24	basilica	acroterial face	building material
B81	8.5 x 9 x 5.4	basilica	acroterial face	n/a
B82	14 x 80 x 62	basilica	acr. face + sea motif	n/a
B83	6 x 63 x 55	basilica	acr. face + torch	n/a

B84	6 x 39 x 12	basilica	torch	n/a
B85	5 x 19 x 17.5	basilica	torch	n/a
B86	12 x 46.5 x 38.5	Pianabella	architectural motif	n/a
B87	13 x 93 x 43.5	basilica narthex	architectural motif	new burial
B88	27.5 x 85 x 58	Pianabella	architectural motif	n/a
B89	13 x 12 x 4	basilica	putti/Erotes	n/a
B90	9.5 x 177.5 x 61	Pianabella	acr. face + floral motif	n/a
B91	13 x 40 x 29	basilica	architectural motif	n/a
B92	10 x 80 x 40	basilica pavement	architectural motif	building material
B93	14 x 199 x 35	Pianabella	architectural motif	n/a
B94	17 x 57 x 28	Pianabella	candelabra + floral	n/a
B95	10 x 32 x 15	basilica	floral motif	n/a

Type IV – No decoration

B74	52 x 202.5 x 72	columbarium 1	(*tabula inscriptionis*)	n/a
B75	59 x 220 x 62	Procoio	geometric designs	n/a
T1	40 x 200 x 30?	basilica	n/a (terracotta)	building material
T2	n/a	tomb 39 in the atrium	n/a (terracotta)	building material
T3	n/a	tomb 41 in the atrium	n/a (terracotta)	building material
T4	n/a	tomb 70 in the aula	n/a (terracotta)	building material
T5	several fragments	n/a	n/a (terracotta)	building material

Table 7

Chronological List of Christian and Possibly Christian Inscriptions from Pianabella

#	A.D.	Text	Reference
1	early IV	*[...]* *[...]AN[...]* *[...]ATIVS [...]* *[...] X Q(...) [...]* *[...]VS (palm branch) [...]* *[...]S Q(...) [...]* *[...]IVS Q(...) [...]* *[...] (Christian monogram, A and Ω) [...]* *[...]*	*Scavi* A 203 Nuzzo, p. 102
2	early IV	*[...] requieSCIT IN PACe*	Marinucci 16
3	IV	*[...]RA [...] dormit in* *pacE QVI VIxit annos* *[...] VII MENses [...] dies [...]*	*Scavi* A 195 *AE* 1996:305b Nuzzo, p. 88
4	late IV	*[...]* *[...] Dormit [...]* *[...] STRatonicus* *[...]*	*Scavi* A 191 Nuzzo, p. 99
5	late IV	*[...]* *locus eusEBII DORmit [...]* *[...] V [...]* *[...]*	*Scavi* A 192 *AE* 1996:314 Nuzzo, p. 97
6	late IV	*[...]IANVS* *[...] dORMIT* *[...] LOC(us)* *[...]*	*Scavi* A 194
7	late IV	*[...] dORMIT* *[...] FEBR(uarias)* *[...]*	*Scavi* A 197 *AE* 1996:316 Nuzzo, p. 98

|			
8	late IV	*hic reqVIESCit in pACE [...]* *qu- vixiT ANN(is) [...]* *[...]*	*Scavi* A 198

9	1ˢᵗ half of V	*[...] aEDE SACRATA [...]*
		[...]LI CRIMEN NO[...]
		[...] SENSIT ET A [...]
		[...]VRIDA BVLT[...] SVB V[...]
		[...] DECERPITVR AevO NON HVNC
		[...]O[...] AB SVCCESSORE LEGENDVM [...]
		[...]VM S[...]NC RAPTVS CITIVS VESTIGIA CHRistI
		[...] mERVIT SE [...]NIS SVBITIS NATA INCREMENTA VIDEMVS
		[...]S VELOX MO[...]E INMORTALIS HoNOREM IB(it)
		     P(ridie) NON(as)
		nov(embres) [...] D(epositus) NON(is) NOV(embribus) [...]IO
		     III ConS(ulibus)
			Scavi A 185
			AE 1996:312
			Nuzzo, p. 94

10	V	*viRGINIS Castae [...] MEMBRA sepulCHRUM* *eXPLEVIT Vitae [...] cuRRICVLVM* *REDDIDIT H[...] MERITVMQ(ue) PVDOREM* *SERVAT OVaNS DOMinO corpOrE DEPOSITO* *haNC IVSTI QVAERVNt PROCERES HANC TVRBA PIORVM* *crediTE QVID POSSIT CASTVS AMOR FIDEI. [...]* *dEP(osita) III KAL(endas) AVG(ustas)*	*Scavi* A 186 *AE* 1996:313 Nuzzo, p. 96
11	V	*[...]* *[...] VI [...]* *[...] doRMIT [...]* *[...] M(enses) IIII D(is) X[...]*	*Scavi* A 196 *AE* 1996:315 Nuzzo, p. 98
12	V	*[...]C γλυκύτατος* *[... ἐ]νθάδε [κο] ιμᾶτε* *[...]να θυγάτηρ ἐτῶν κη'*	*Scavi* A 331 *AE* 1996:321 Nuzzo, p. 104
13	late V	*in n(omine) do]M(i)N(i) N(ostri) BELLATOR* *EPISC· FECIT*	*Scavi* A 184 *AE* 1996:320 Nuzzo, p. 103
14	late V, reused in an 8ᵗʰ century tomb	*loc(us) PROCLI ET MAG* *neS QVORUM FILIA* *dorMIT IN PACE SEXTILIA* *annORVM VI, M(ensium) X* *ET D(ierum) XXV*	*Scavi* A 188 *AE* 1996:325 Nuzzo, p. 108

15	V	*Hic dormit* *[...]*	*Scavi* A 199 Nuzzo, p. 99
16	n/a	*[...]* *[...]* *[...] iN PACe [...]*	*Scavi* A 200
17	n/a	*[...]VS (Christian monogram)* *[...] carissiME* *[...]OS* *[...] consulIBVS*	*Scavi* A 202
18	n/a	*[...] ERMA [...]* *[...] VIXIT· Annos* *[...] VII ♥ [...]*	Marinucci 6A
19	n/a	*[...]S IVLIO [...]* *[...] coGNATO Bene merenti* *[...] XXVI SEM[...]* *[...]VS HIC DOrmit*	Marinucci 6B
20	n/a	*CELERINVS* *HIC POSITVS* *EST IN PACE* ♥	Marinucci 24
21	n/a	*[...]IANVS* *[...] hic Dormit* *[...]OC(?)* *[...]*	Marinucci 34
22	VI	*[...]?* *[...] S(an)C(ta)E [...]* *[...]*	*Scavi* A 204 Nuzzo, p. 102

References:

AE = L'Année Épigraphique
Marinucci = Marinucci 1991
Scavi = Nuzzo 1999
Nuzzo = Nuzzo 1996
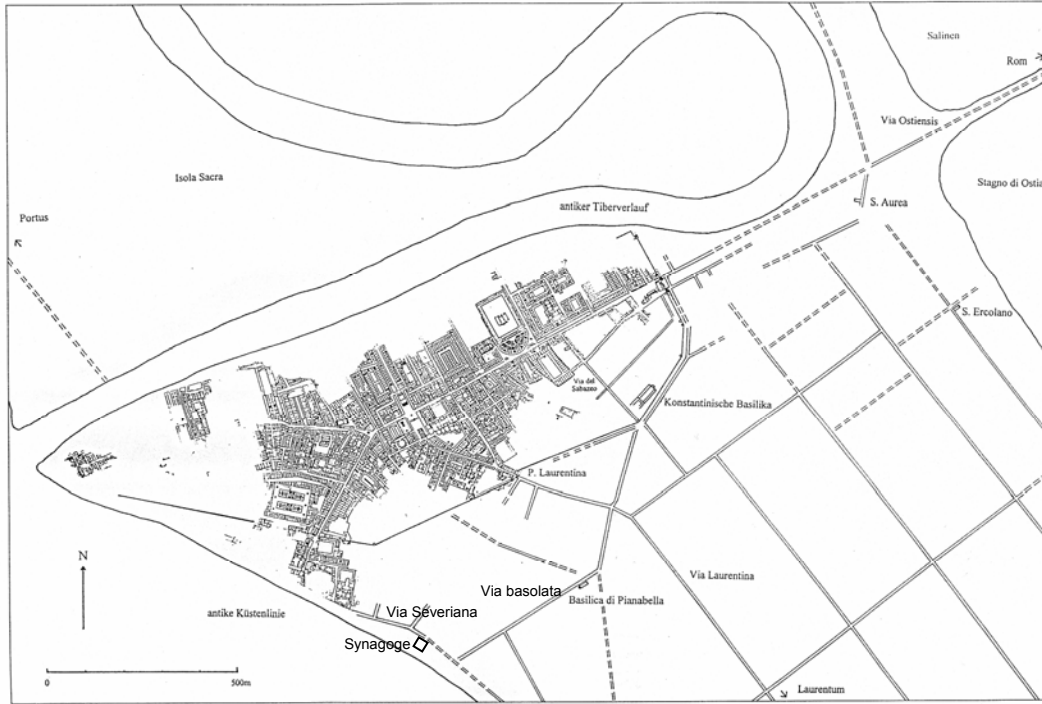
Figure 1

Location of the the Pianabella Basilica

After BAUER 1999
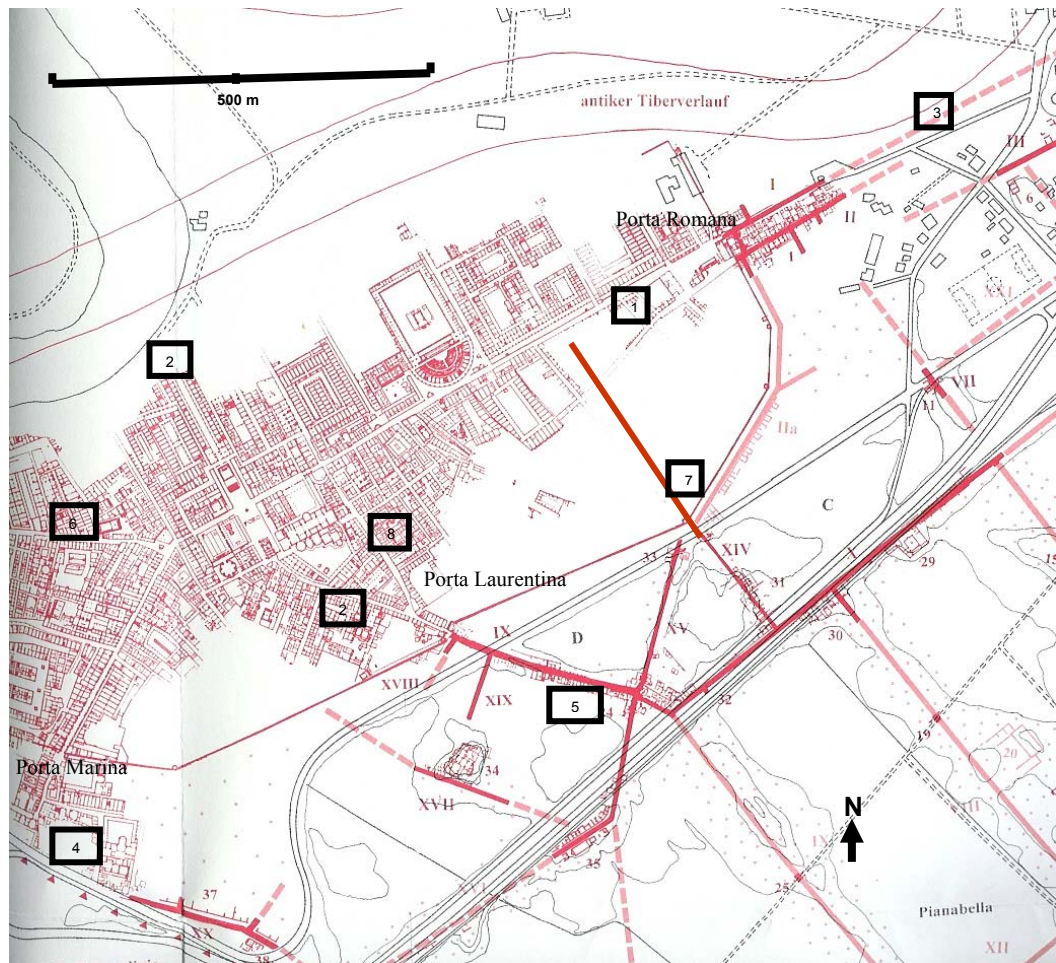
1 Decumanus Maximus   2 Cardo Maximus
3 Via Ostiensis   4 Via Severiana
5 Via Laurentina   6 Via della Foce
7 Via del Sabazeo   8 Semita dei Cippi

Figure 2

Ostia's Main Arteries

After HEINZELMANN 1998
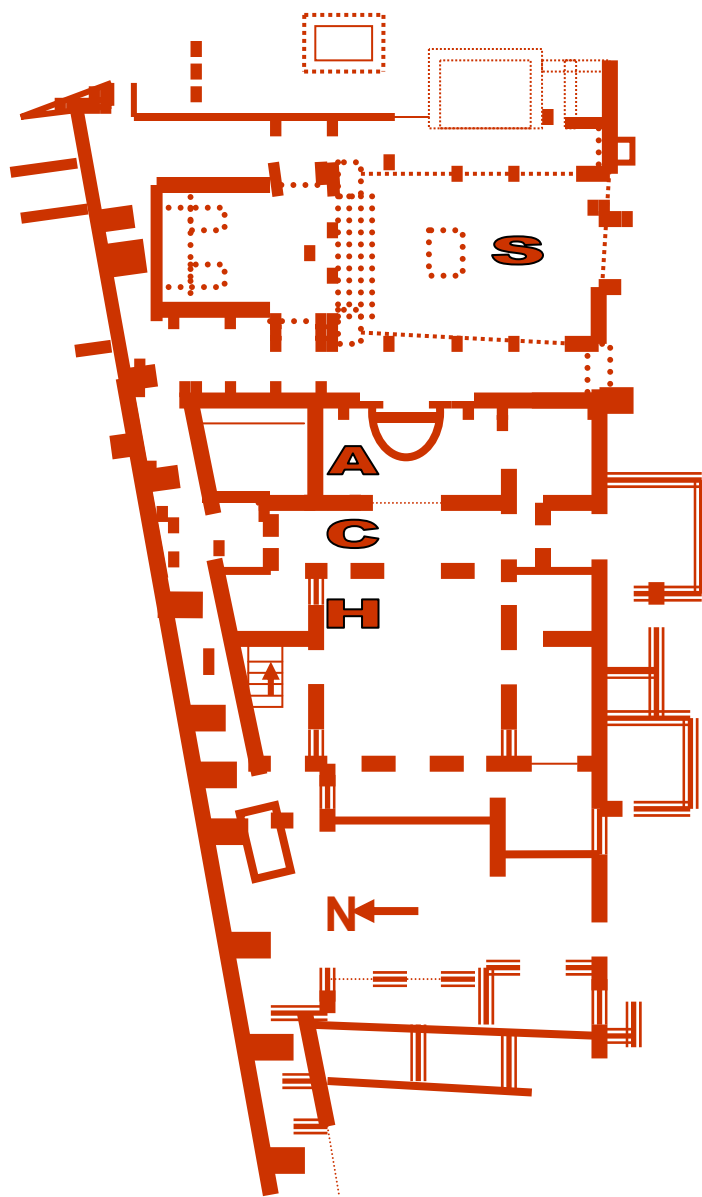
S = Serapeum   A = antechamber

C = corridor   H = main hall

Figure 3

Serapeum (iii.xvii.4) and the Domus del Serapeo (iii.xvii.3)

After www.ostia-antica.org

Figure 4

Serapeum seen from the east, shortly after the excavation
Photograph: Sopr. Arch. di Ostia, neg. D 1598
http://www.ostia-antica.org

Figure 5
Portraits of Caltilia Moschis and Caltilia Felicula
From CALZA 1964

1 Macellum inscription (4th century) 2 Basilica of Constantine (4th century)
3 The so-called basilica cristiana (late 4th century) 4 Synagogue (1st to 4th century)
5 Basilica of Pianabella (late 4th or early 5th century) 6 Edificio dell'Opus Sectile (4th century)
7 Mithraeum converted to Christian use (4th century) 8 Domus dei Pesci (4th or 5th century)
9 Aula del Buon Pastore (early 4th century) 10 Baths of Porta Marina (early-3rd-
century mention in the *Octavius*)

Figure 6

Evidence Generally Adduced for Christianity at Ostia
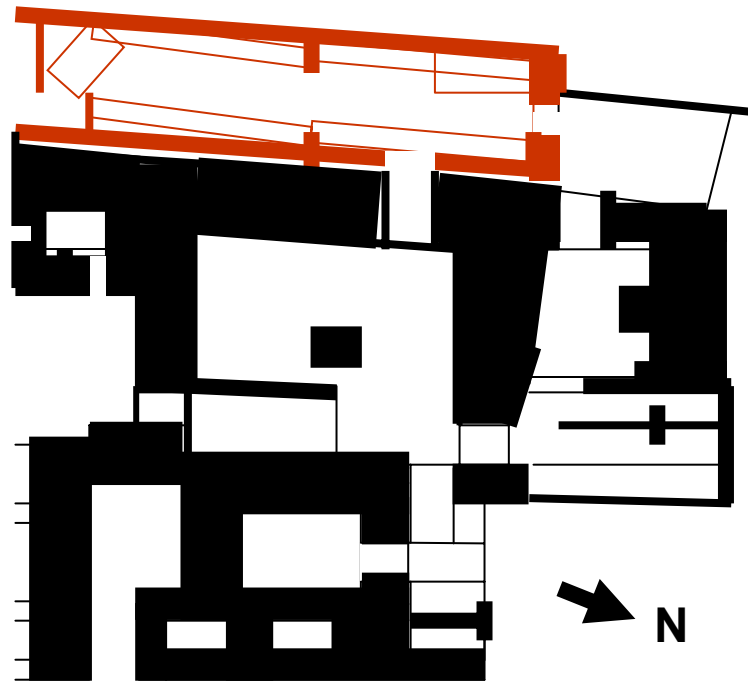
After HEINZELMANN 1998

271
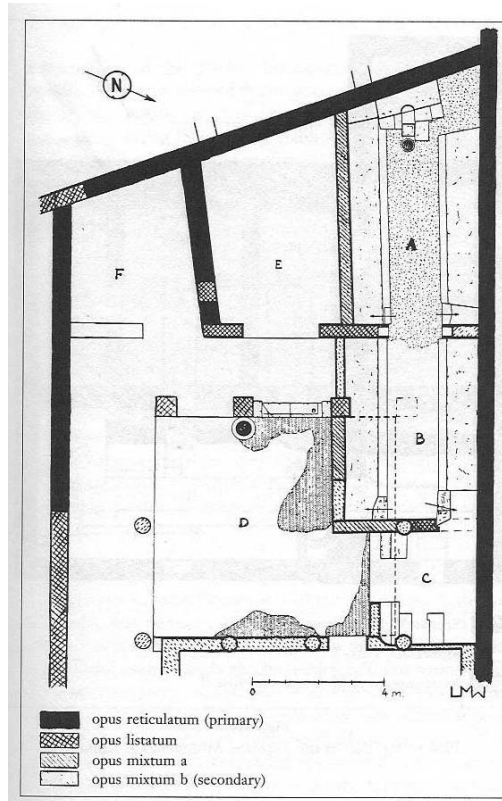
Figure 7

Mithraeum of the Painted Walls at Ostia

From WHITE 1996 [1990]
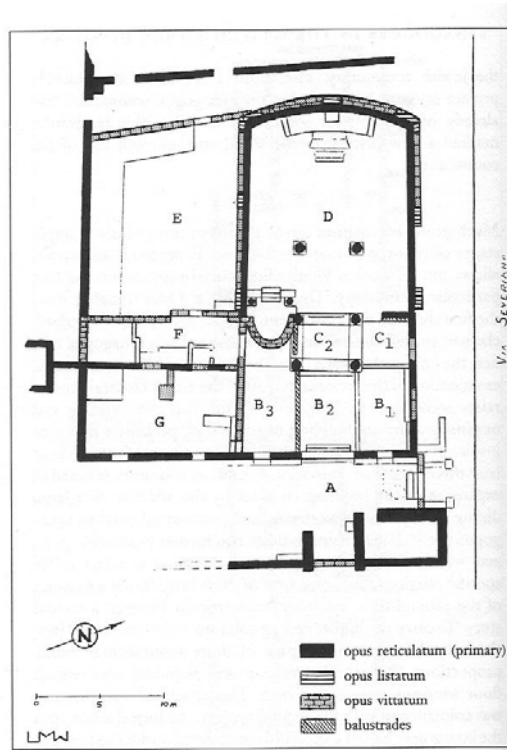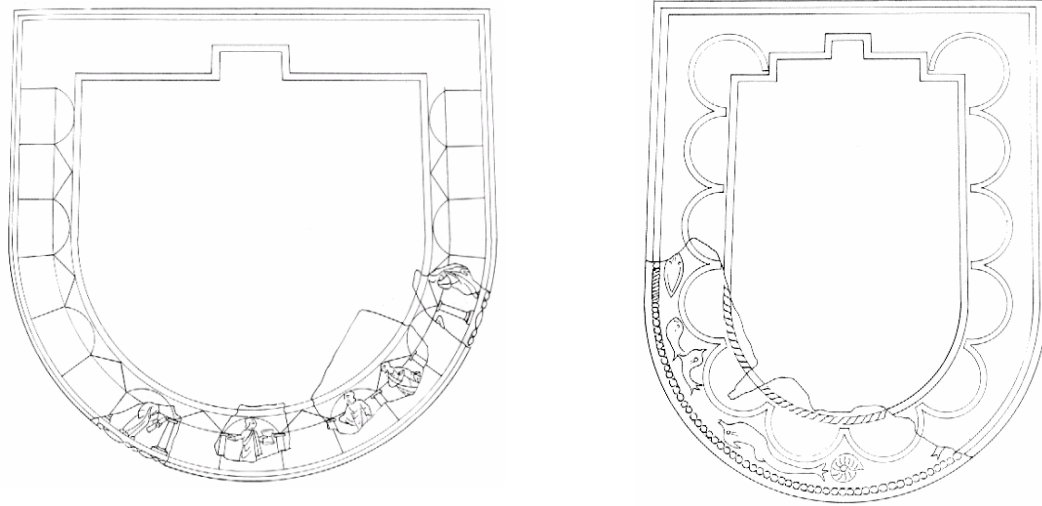
Figure 8

Ostia's Synagogue

From WHITE 1996 [1990]

Figure 9

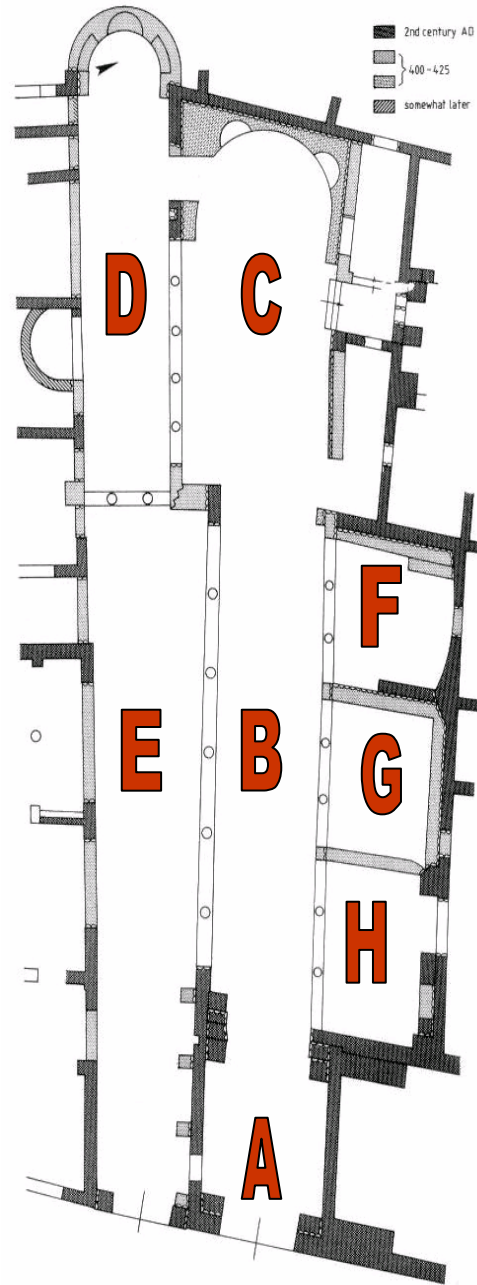Mithraeum of the Baths of Mithras (i.xvii.2)

After www.ostia-antica.org

Mithraeum in red, adjacent, selected rooms in the Baths of Mithras in black

Figure 10

Tables found near the Mithraeum of the Baths of Mithras

CALZA 1964-1965 (also available at www.ostia-antica.org)

Figure 11

Plan of the so-called Basilica Cristiana (iii.i.4)

After HERES 1982

Figure 12

The so-called Basilica Cristiana

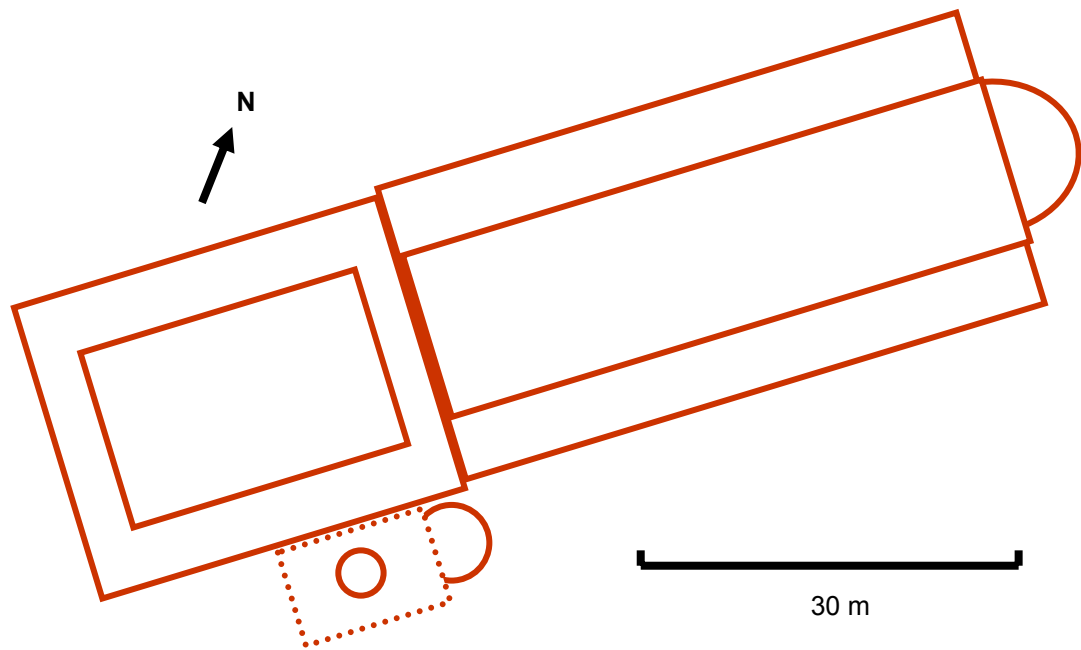Southwest apse with architrave and inscription in the foreground

Photograph by Milton Torres

Figure 13
The Church of S. Ercolano and cemetery in 1926
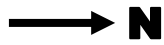From: www.ostia-antica.org

Figure 14
The modern Church of St. Aurea
Photograph by Milton Torres

Figure 15

The Constantinian Basilica at Ostia

After HEINZELMANN 1999

Figure 16

Martyrium of St. Cyriacus (ii.vii.7)

Photograph by Milton Torres
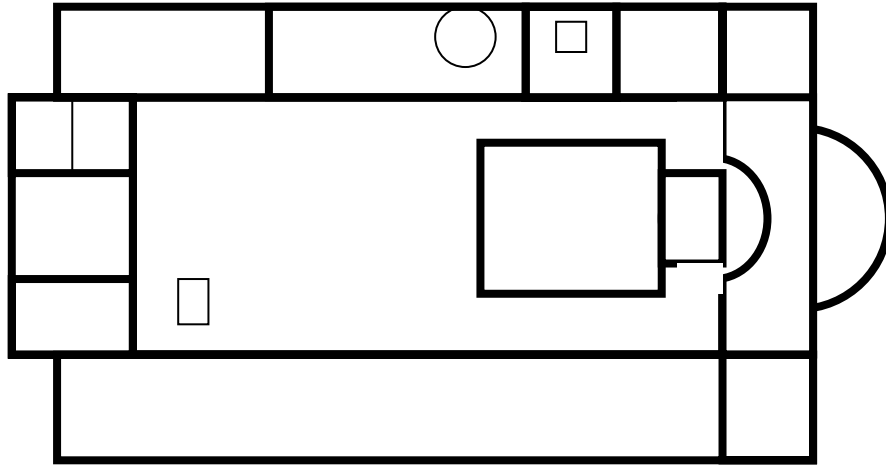
Figure 17

Basilica di Sant'Ippolito

Plan by Milton Torres

Figure 18
Mosaic from the so-called *Edificio con Opus Sectile* (iii.vii.8)
From: www.ostia-antica.org
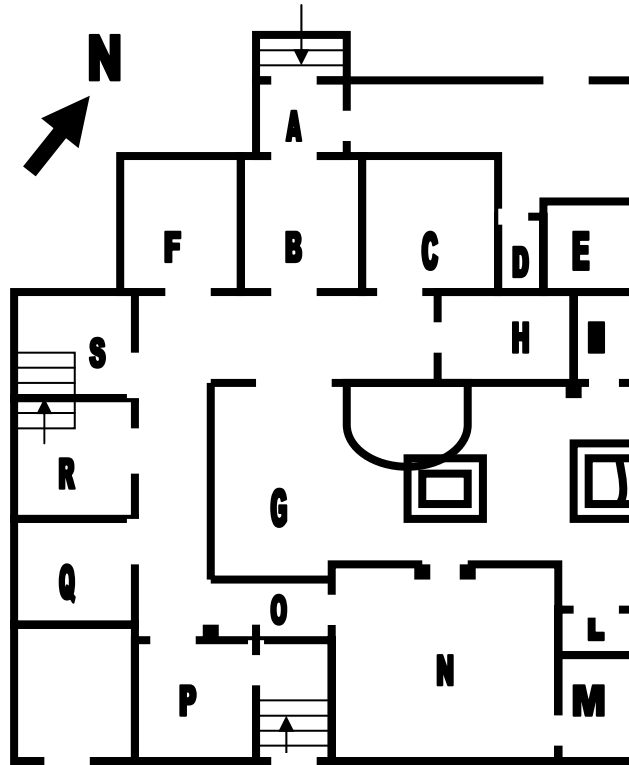
Figure 19

Plan of the *Domus dei Pesci* (iv.iii.3)

After CALZA 1949

Figure 20

Fish Mosaics from the *Domus dei Pesci*

Photographs by Milton Torres
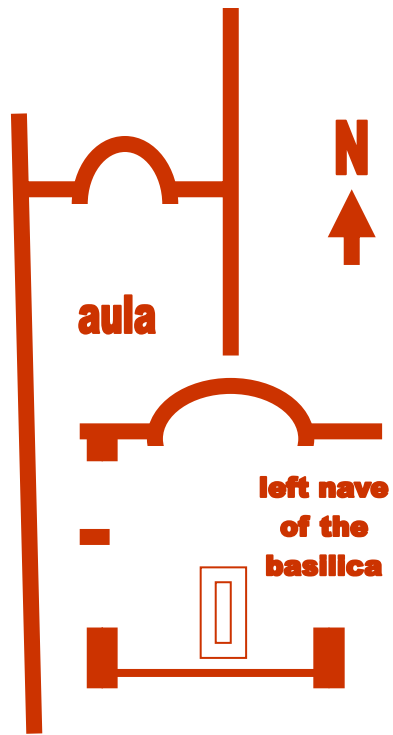
Figure 21

The Aula del Buon Pastore (i.ii.4)

After www.ostia-antica.org

Figure 22
The Good Shepherd Relief
From CALZA 1916

Figure 23
Monogram iconography from the *mithraeum* converted to Christian use
From CALZA 1949-1951

Figure 24
Sarcophagus from Isola Sacra bearing supposedly Christian iconography
From CALZA 1949-1951

Figure 25

Orpheus iconography on a Christian sarcophagus from Ostia

Photograph by Milton Torres
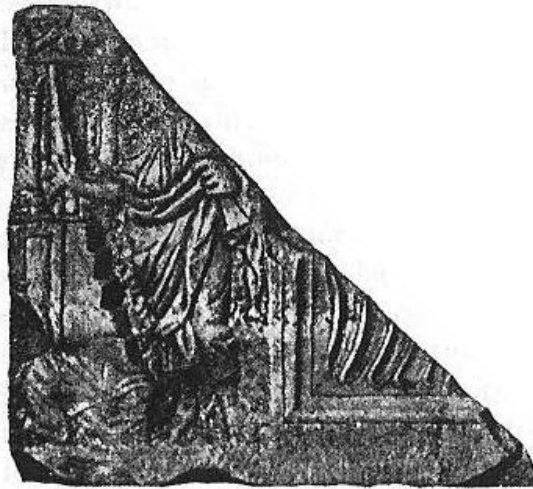
Figure 26

The resurrection of Lazarus on a Christian sarcophagus from Ostia

From CALZA 1949-1951

Figure 27

Drawing of a glass bowl with Christian iconography from the House of the Porch

From SQUARCIAPINO 1952
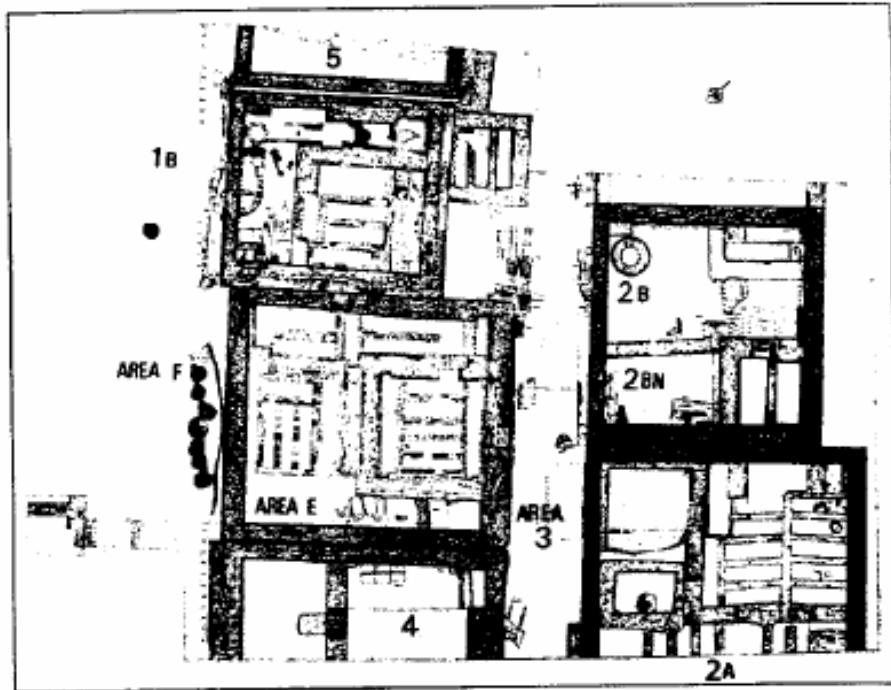
Figure 28

Sepulchral Complex at the Pianabella necropolis

From CARBONARA, PELLEGRINO & ZACCAGNINI 2001
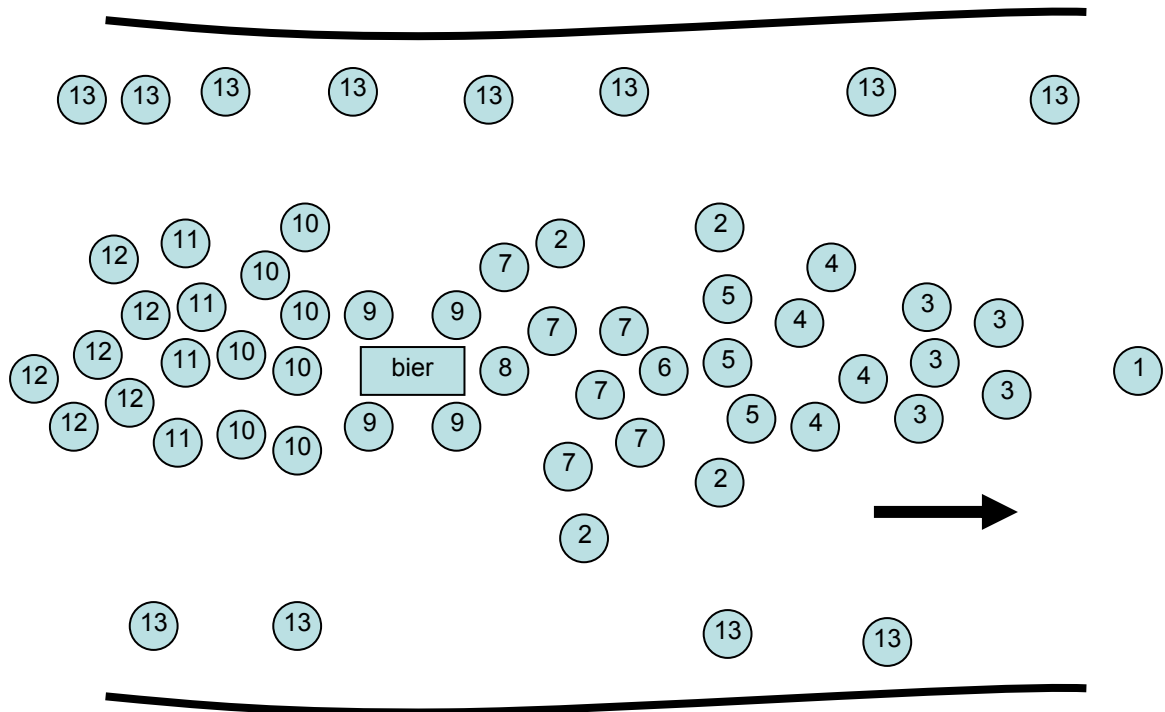
Figure 29

Organization of a Roman Funerary Procession

Drawing by Milton Torres

1 a *designator* (to arrange for the procession)
2 *lictores* (to maintain order)
3 *tibicines* (musicians)
4 *praeficiae* (professional mourners)
5 *mimi* (dancers)
6 an *archimimus* (to personify the defunct)
7 the *imagines maiorum*

8 the tabula of deeds
9 bier bearers
10 heirs and relations
11 *pileati* (manumitted slaves)
12 friends
13 passers-by

Figure 30

Building 7 at the Pianabella necropolis (seen from the north)

From CARBONARA, PELLEGRINO & ZACCAGNINI 2001
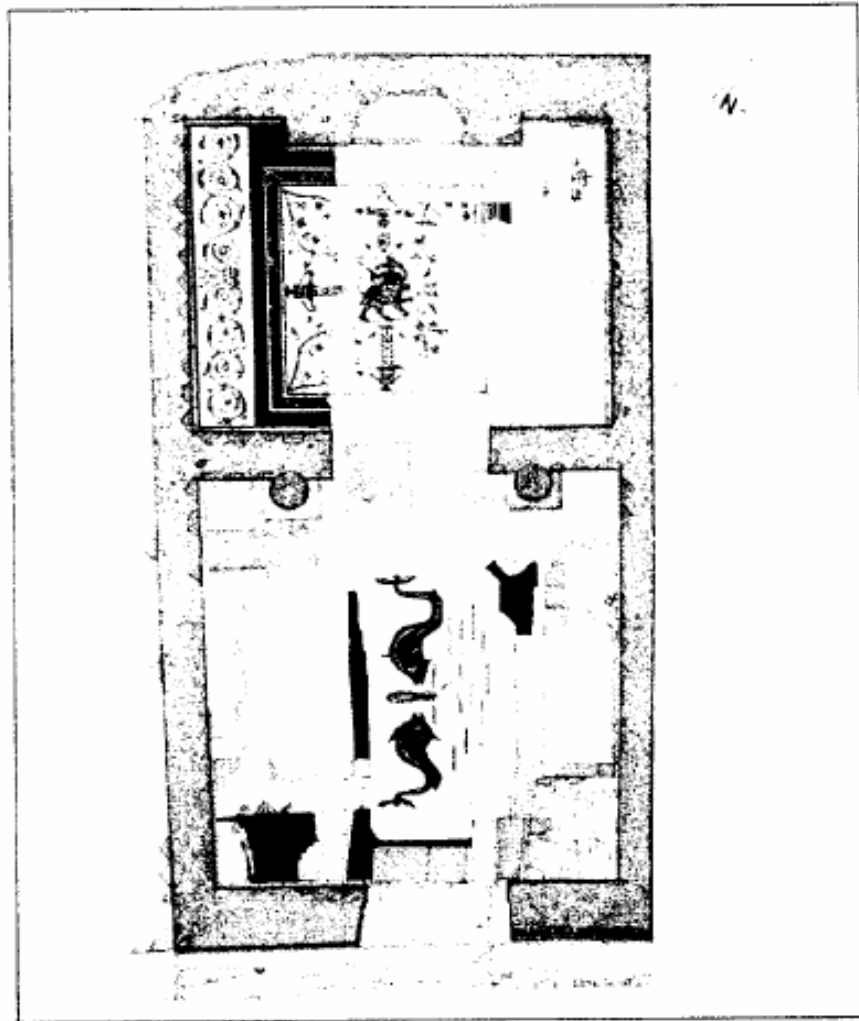
Figure 31

Building 6 at the Pianabella necropolis

From CARBONARA, PELLEGRINO & ZACCAGNINI 2001

apse
(sarcophagus B 19)

ancient Roman road

nave or
aula

columbarium of the
Popilii (Mausoleum 1)

narthex

atrium

mausoleum (L1) of the
Egrilii (sarcophagus B
8)
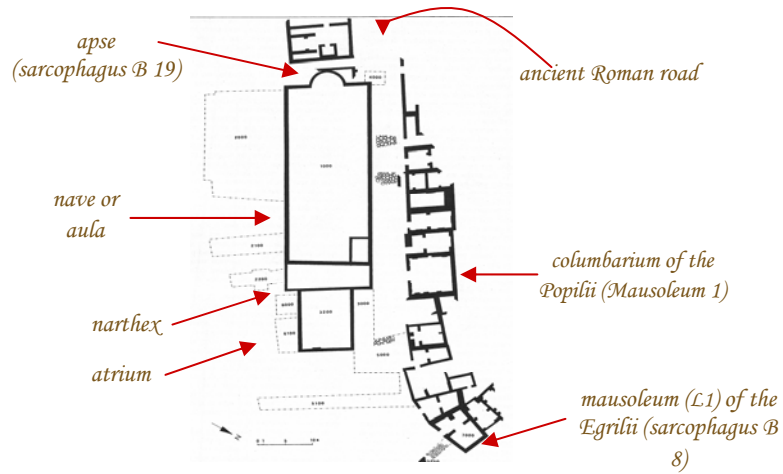
Figure 32

Plan from the 1988-1989 Excavation Campaign at Pianabella

After PAROLLI 1999

a arcosolia
b pit burials
c trees
d non-excavated area

10 m
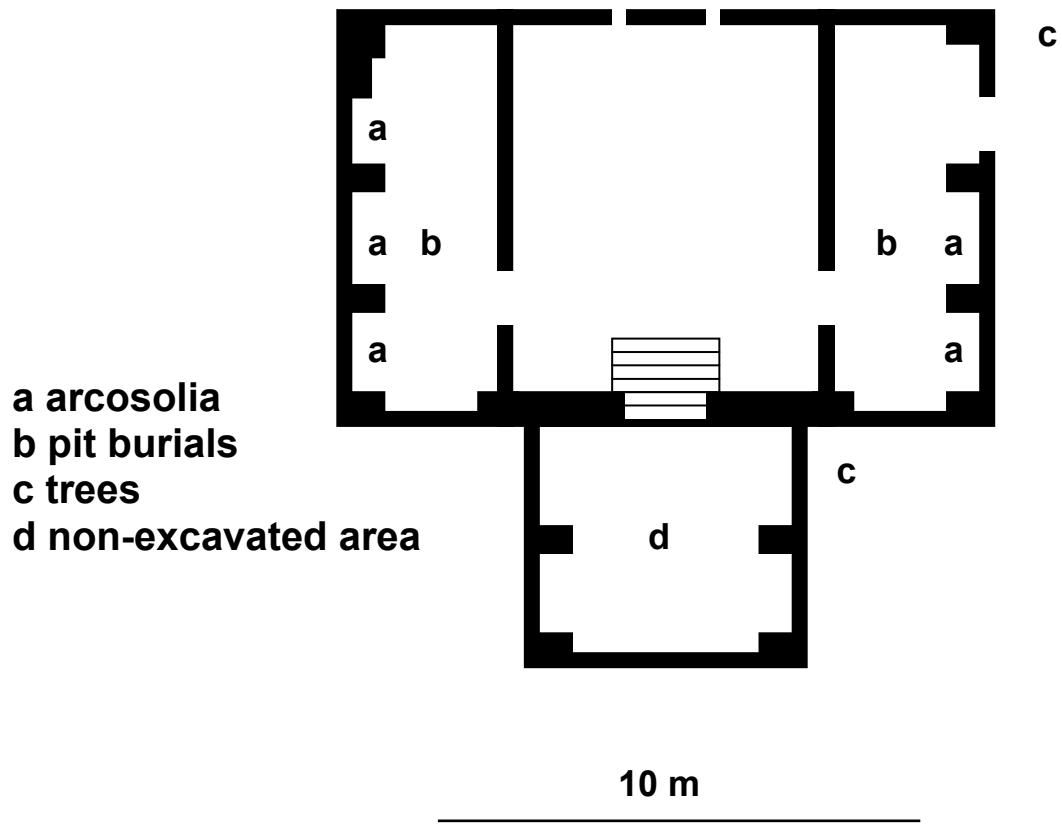
Figure 33

Monumental Tomb in Pianabella

After LAURO 1983

Figure 34

Door on the West Wall with Reticulate Wall on the Foreground
Photograph by Milton Torres

Figure 35

Junction of Apse and Reticulate Wall seen from the East
Photograph by Milton Torres

Figure 36

Pianabella Basilica seen from the West with Reticulate Wall on the Foreground
Photograph by Milton Torres

Figure 37

Funerary Enclosure seen from the East
Photograph by Milton Torres
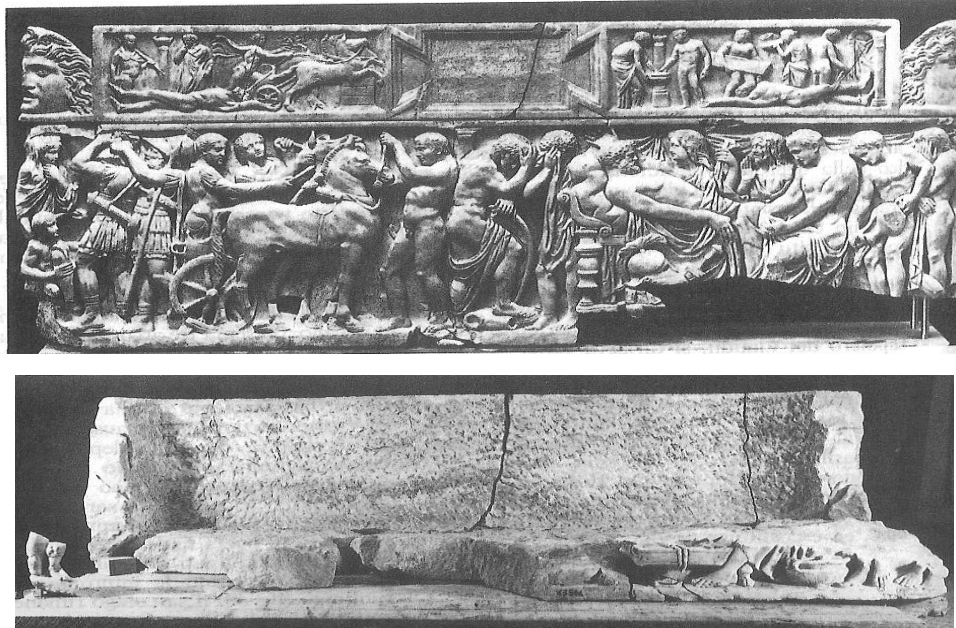
Figure 38

Chest and Base of Sarcophagus B 8
From ZEVI 1993
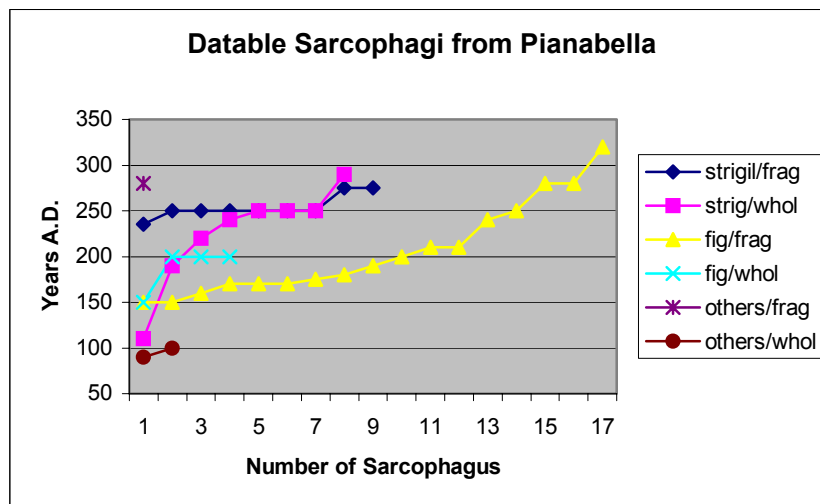
Figure 39

Descriptive Statistics for Height, Length and Width of the Pianabella Sarcophagi
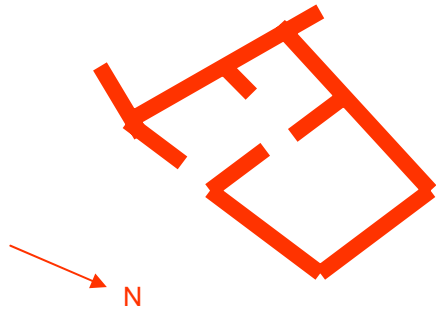
Figure 40
Mausoleum L1 at the Pianabella Necropolis
Plan by Milton Torres
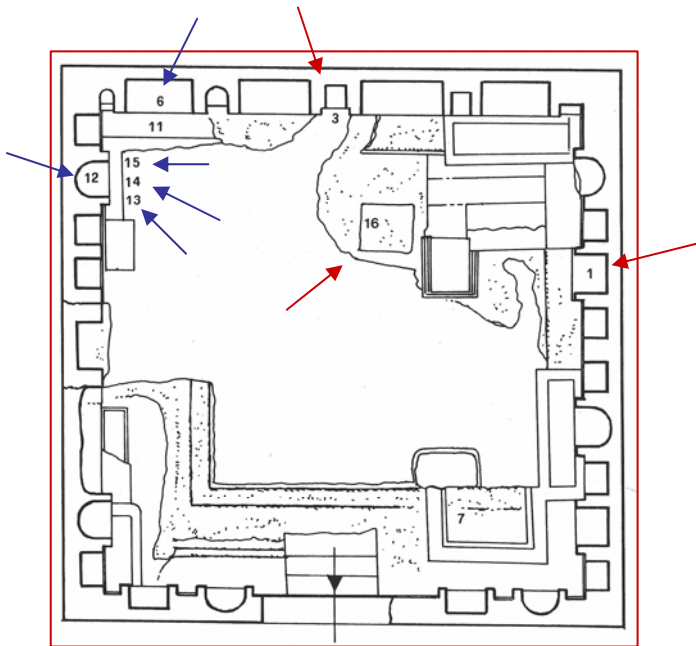
Figure 41
Columbarium 1 at the Pianabella Necropolis
(red arrows indicate *tituli* belonging to the Popilii andblue arrows those belonging to the Licinii)
After MORANDI 1982

Figure 42

Symposiastic Scene (Portrait B 99)

From PAROLI 1999
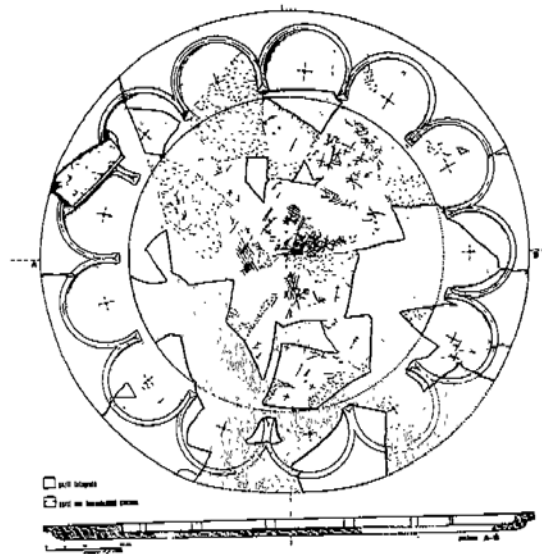
Figure 43

Mensa from Pianabella

From SANTAGATA 1981

Figure 44

Water Pipe from Tomb on the Via Basolata across from the Pianabella Basilica

Photograph by Milton Torres
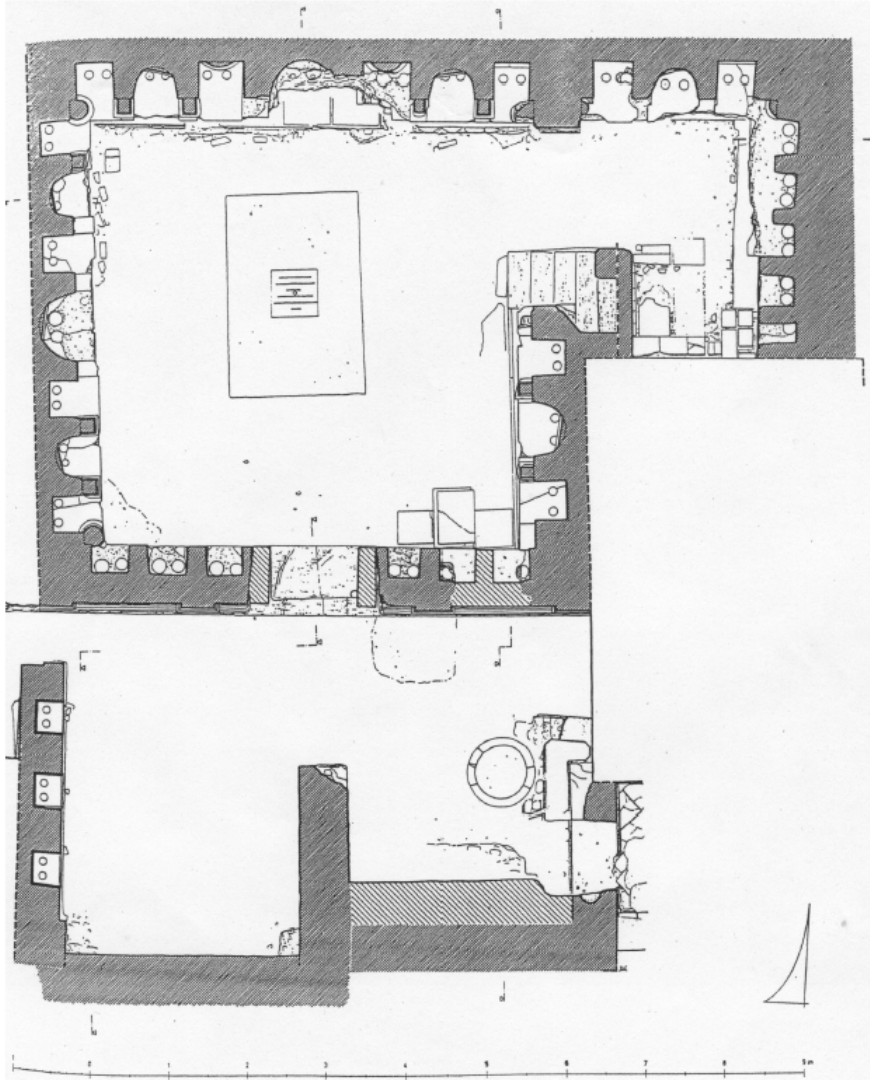
Figure 45

Tomb H, Vatican Necropolis

From MIELSCH & VON HESBERG 1995

Figure 46

Stucco from the Tomba della Sacerdotessa Isiaca

From Fototeca Museo Ostiense

Figure 47

Stucco from the Tomba della Sacerdotessa Isiaca

From Fototeca Museo Ostiense
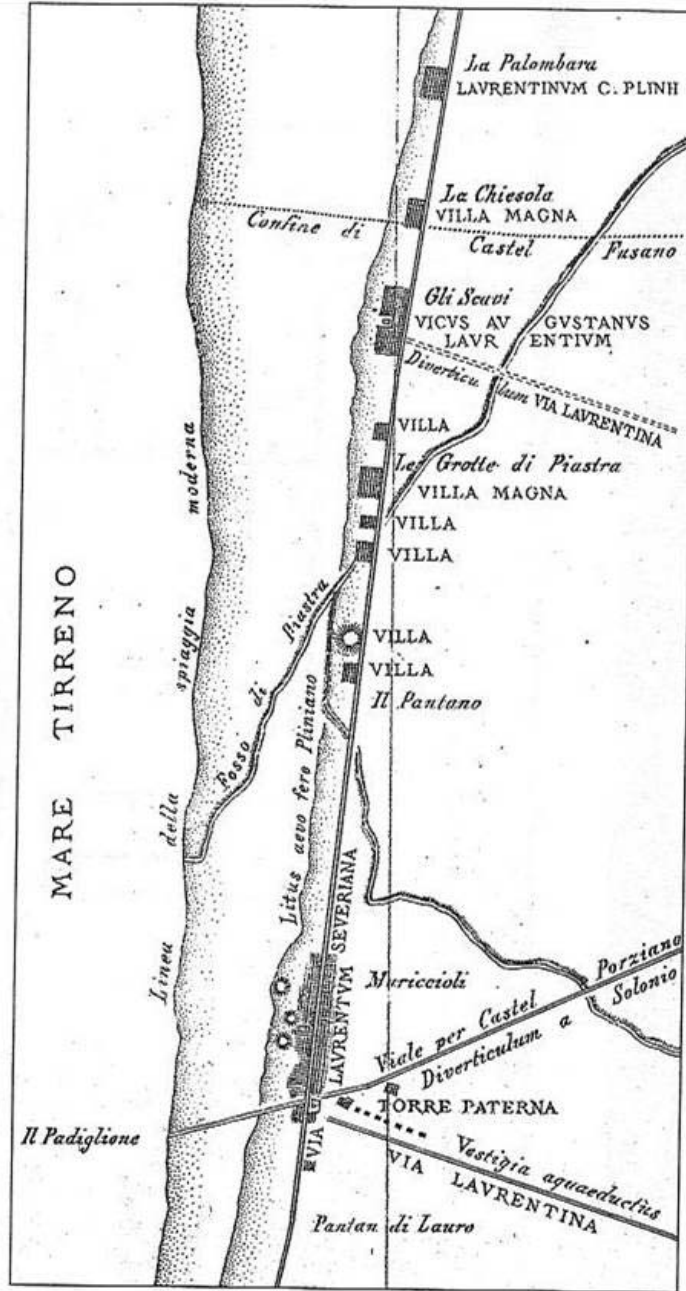
Figure 48

Villae along the Via Severiana

From LANCIANI 1903
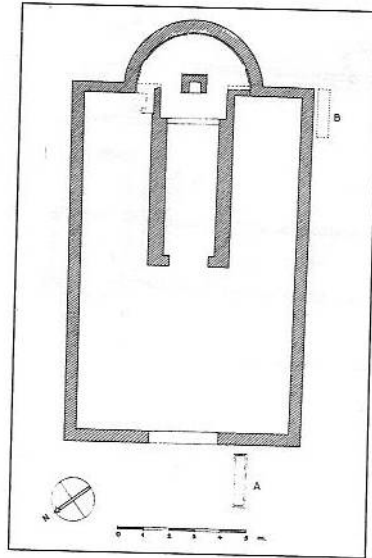
Figure 49

Castel Fusano Basilica

A = sarcophagus; B = tomba a cappuccina

From LAURO & CLARIDGE 1998
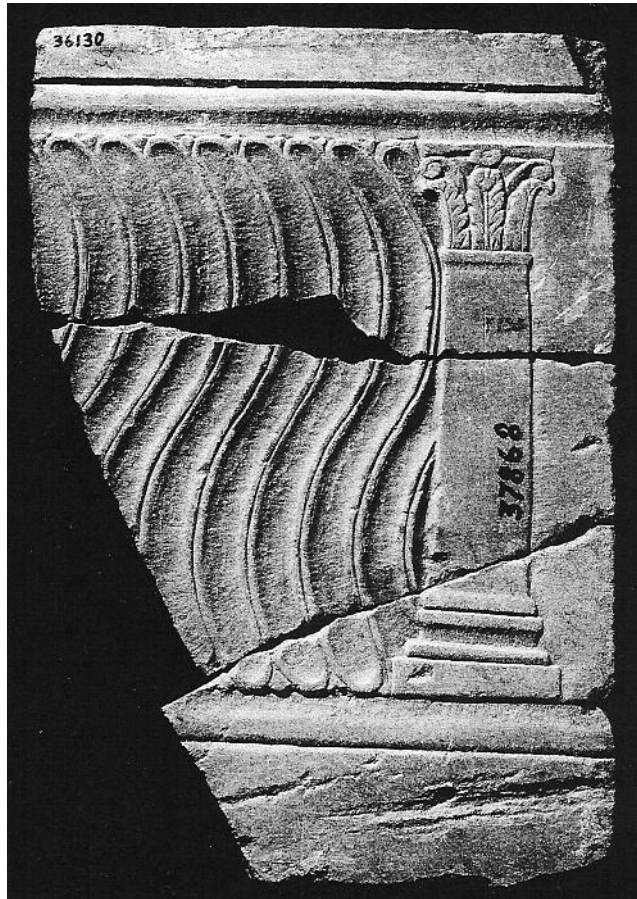
Figure 50
Marble Closing Slab B 102
From PAROLI 1999

Figure 51

Marble Closing Slab B 101

From PAROLI 1999

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Vita

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