Debora Ferreri

8 Grave Goods and Burial Typologies:
Funerary Customs in Ravenna

Abstract: The transformation and development of burial rites between the 4th and the 8th centuries were not uniform and there were various intermediate stages according to different towns and the variability of the archaeological record. This paper analyses a sample of Ravenna and its territory focusing on the practice of laying object with the dead, the presence of grave goods inside tombs and their ritual significance, as well as the types of burials and the concept of funerary space used within the new imperial see.

The archaeological excavation and new research of the basilica and monastery of San Severo and the port area at Classe offer a lot of knowledge for understanding funerary practice and the relationship between the space of the living and the space of the dead in Late Antiquity and at the beginnings of the Middle Ages.

From the 5th century the relationship between the living and the dead changes. The spaces of the living and the dead were not separated but united in the everyday sphere as interactive categories, also in Ravenna and its territory. The location of the burials is founded on the belief that the spaces within which funeral ritual and burials took place had an important effect on their form and experienced meaning, and that, reciprocally, ritual uses produced or constituted urban spaces. Death is part of everyday life, and the burials are close to homes. This change in the management of the urban spaces reflects a new cultural and social concept. The intramural burials may yield important evidence on urban religion, ritual, social change organization and topography.1

The development of burials rites between the 4th and 8th centuries was not uniform and there were various intermediate stages according to different towns and the variability of the archaeological record. During the course of the 3rd century, cremation in the Roman Empire began to be progressively replaced by inhumation. It was not until the end of the 8th century that cremation was explicitly condemned. The types and shape of burials change, but the transformations depend on different regions. Some Roman burial typologies continued, like *cappuccina*, sarcophagi and *enchytrismos*, and new ones appeared. From the late 5th century the use of funerary inscriptions begins to recede but does not disappear completely.2 The early medieval

2 De Rubeis 2007, 387–400.

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society looked to the Roman World for how to care for their dead and in the choice of grave types. However, this was sensitive to cultural influences and traditions related to the histories of the different regions of our country. Burial rites provided families with an opportunity to display not only their religious devotion but also their wealth.

At Ravenna during Roman period, the necropolis was placed along the coastline, the sandy strip that separated the town from the sea, and along the access roads. Most of the cemeteries were placed near the main roads that connected Ravenna with the surrounding area, both to the north and towards the south, in Caesarea and Classe. The landscape was characterized by the presence of water; the funerary areas were often separated by funerary enclosures or divided from each other by ditches, embankments, lanes and wooden fences, but no masonry (Fig. 1).

Between the 3rd and the 4th century these necropolises continued to be used, which consequently is interesting from an intensification of funeral activities; contemporarily, new areas were destined for cemetery use following the development of the city. During the 5th century, Ravenna was transformed with the construction of the wall, causing the urban spaces to be redefined. Some Roman cemeteries remained outside of the city, but very close to it and continue to be used, although through new dynamics. Ravenna’s oldest necropolis, located around the town, continue to be used. In this period, we find different rituals, inhumation and cremation. Later, the construction of the great basilicas in Ravennate necropolises contexts, like Sant’Apollinare in Classe and San Severo, related to the cult of the martyrs, produce a big change: these funeral areas were turned into meeting places, not only for individuals and families but also for large part of the urban community. In addition, the presence of tombs of saints and bishops inside cemeteries constituted an attraction for the burials. These buildings inside the settlement further conditioned the distribution of burials in the urban space, a practice absent in the Roman world. The cemetery behind the apse of the church of San Giovanni Evangelista, one of the most important funeral areas of Ravenna used from the 1st century BC until the 6th century AD, after the completion of the wall, was inside the urban circuit.

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3 Giuntella 1998, 64.
4 Effros 2002.
5 Berti, Ortalli 2000, 213.
8 About recent excavation on San Severo see: Augenti 2006; Augenti/Bertelli 2006; Augenti/Begnozzi/Bondi/Cirelli/Ferreri/Malaguti/Scozzari 2012, 238–245.
10 Bermond Montanari 1975; Leoni/Maioli/Montevecchi 2008.
Fig. 1: Ravenna and Classe: necropolis and funerary areas from the Roman period to the Middle Ages (map by the author).
urban burials within the city of Ravenna are considered “privileged”, associated with church buildings, like Basilica Apostolorum, Sant’Agata Maggiore, Sant’Agnese and S. Croce, the local storage places are buried characters that have played a special role in local political history. In the urban space, burials are inserted in open areas, in ruinous structures, or abandoned houses and buildings, independent of any adjacent religious building. Sometimes they occur at abandoned domus, like in via D’Azeglio or in via Pier Traversari. The dead are related to people still working and living in other parts of structures.

The transformation of grave goods should also be noted. The presence, or absence, of grave goods in a funeral context is a very complex issue. The association of different object in graves might be related to the desire to preserve and transmit a certain memory of the dead. Grave goods inside the burials of the majority of Ravenna’s necropolises contained simpler artifacts like combs, buckles, pots and so on. The practice of laying objects with the dead is attested from ancient times and continues in Roman times. Changes in different forms and practices appear in Late Antiquity, also depending on the areas and societies. However, in the 5th to 7th centuries, the grave-goods custom was hardly ever uniform, and even where grave goods were not the norm, some burials were singled out for depositions. Objects found in early medieval graves include a wide variety of artefacts, but occur as regionally distinct, gender-differentiated kits. Between the 4th and 7th centuries graves contained few grave goods. These were usually small objects from everyday life, but in some graves wealthy and articulated grave goods were also found, like weapons or jewellery; items that, in addition to the wealth of these objects, show the clear presence of clothed deceased. Some objects refer instead to a symbolic meaning, which interpretations often become multiple and different. This is the case of faunal elements such as animal teeth, eggs, ceramic spindles whorls, which are considered kinds of amulets and lucky charms. Later, from the mid-7th century, the presence of the grave goods inside tombs is increasingly scarce, although in some, and even later in the Middle Ages, many objects were found that are usually attributed to elements of clothing such as buttons, buckles, belt elements.

The custom of depositing grave goods disappeared from the various regions of Europe at different times and for different reasons. While this disappearance often coincided with the spread of Christianity, it is by no means certain that Christianity was actually the cause of its disappearance in every single case. Where grave goods were discontinued, they did not normally disappear suddenly, but gradually and with social differences. Such a causal connection is widely assumed in the case of Anglo-Saxon England where the spread of Christianity during the 7th century coincided with a

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gradual decline in the provision of grave goods, which were finally phased out early in
the 8th century. On the other hand, grave goods continued among the Franks and in
Greater Moravia for up to two centuries after Christianization. Some grave goods,
thus, would likely have served as material reminders of events in the life of the de-
ceased. Roman funeral processions included representations and objects which gave
an account of the deceased’s life and achievements. Grave goods may also be meta-
phors of the origins of people; this would explain the early medieval phenomenon of
‘burials out of place’ – individuals buried with items which belong to different regions
or countries. For some, the disappearance of the objects inside tombs is seen as an act
of the Church and the consequence of Christianity, although there is no explicit prohi-
bition of these practices. From the 8th century, moreover, the use of donations pro
anima (goods were donated to the Church or to the relatives of the deceased), spreads.
This practice served to strengthen family ties but above as a way of holding onto one’s
heritage. The Church never condemned the deposition of grave goods. The progressive
disappearance of grave goods was a phenomenon of the period, but is also associ-
ated with more pragmatic reasons, such as not removing precious metals or useful
objects from circulation.

Objects inside funerary contexts has sparked archaeologist’s interests and de-
bates, often based on different approaches. The analysis of objects buried with the
dead, in fact, offers a wide variety of information. First is information about typology
and classification of materials, which in addition to providing historical information,
indicate cultural, social and economic data. This is relevant to understanding the rit-
ual significance of the grave goods and the role in funeral celebrations. The analysis
of grave goods with the characteristics of the burial, the disposition of the body inside
the coffin, and information about age and gender of the deceased, could help us un-
derstand social organization and its internal societal changes. To analyze the
changes in funeral customs, identify regional identity and the differences between
groups of individuals, or social groups and status, it may be useful to identify the
types of burials with chronological variants, especially for cemetery contexts used for
a long period. The construction of chrono-typological sequences, however, could re-
sult in numerous methodological problems, especially if the researches are based on
partial archaeological data/studies and want to use this type of analysis to date indi-
vidual graves or cemeteries contexts. In these cases, there is the risk of an overly-
detailed typology, which does not include the dynamics of the whole cemetery.

15 Gimbutas, 1971, 142.
16 Hesberg 1998, 23.
17 La Rocca 1993.
18 Dierkens/Périn 1997, 82; Fevrier 1987; Rebillard 1994.
19 La Rocca 2007; Barbiera 2005.
Space and position of the graves in the cemeteries might have been employed to emphasized social relations.

The archaeological literature does not provide many details about grave goods in Ravenna’s burials. In many cases there are not informations about material culture or human remains, but just archaeologiacal partial data. For this reason, the territory of Classe could offer a lot of knowledge for understanding funerary practice in Ravenna. The excavations and research of the basilica and monastery of San Severo and the port area at Classe are already being carried out according to this perspective. Archaeological evidences can be used for understanding funerary practices between the Roman Age, through Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages, in continuous along the complex life of the city and the ecclesiastical building. From the 7th century this area of the city was interested by some structural and topographic transformations that changed the concept of space, allowing the coming of the burials in living contexts, dynamics similar to many other cities in Italy and Europe. In this area the burials were found in warehouses, in correspondence of the walls of these buildings that in some case changed the use. The presence of these burials inside the warehouse testifies to an important transformation of the use of these areas between 6th and 7th century. In some of these building, for example, were found news groups of houses and craft activities.

**Pendants, Earrings, Bracelets and Other Finds**

In the port area of Classe elements of pendants were found inside four graves. Other objects, as some dress fitting, including foot of a stirrup brooch, belt buckle types, rings, have been found in other contexts, such as in the same port area and inside the complex of San Severo, but are not associated with burials. A female burial, inside building n. 9 of Classe’s port area had a faint amethyst placed over the chest. More significant, however, is burial 29, which is also placed in building nr. 9. It is a burial of a child of about 2–3 years. A small necklace was around her neck composed of colored glass paste and a bronze element (Fig. 2). Some necklace beads were also present inside burials 1 and 3 found in the building nr. 14. The latter burial belongs to an infant, at maximum of 5 months of age, laid in an earth grave with east-west orientation, within the interior of a despoliation of the pit perimeter building structures 14. Besides the presence of some necklace beads, an unreadable coin was found inside the tomb, as well as a small achromatic ceramic jug.

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21 About the archaeological research in this area see: Augenti 2005; Malnati/Sassatelli/Augenti/ Maioli 2007; Augenti/Cirelli 2010.
22 Ferreri 2014.
23 About the location of burial inside the port area of Classe see: Ferreri 2009, Ferreri 2011.
dating from the second half of the 8th century. The latter has a small and a nozzle positioned on the opposite side. On the surface are visible traces of coloring. In other funerary context similar containers were found inside infant burials; some have been recognized as baby bottles (Fig. 3 and 4).²⁴

The same functions amulet and ornament had the bulla, a pendant of Etruscan origin in spherical or conical shape, used as a good luck charm by the children of noble origin and then became part of grave goods most used and common.²⁵ A bubble in gold was found in a tomb, dated between third and 4th centuries A.D., in the necropolis of Marabina in Classe.²⁶ Originate from the same necropolis other small items of jewellery as an earring, found in a tomb reused in the second half of the 4th century A.D., which would generate an average bronze of Marcus Aurelius and two small coins of Constantius II.²⁷

In regards to jewels, they are present only sporadically. Some scholars say this is probably due to the richest tombs being violated in ancient times or suggest the presence of rich privileged cemeteries not identified.²⁸ It is also possible that local customs were such as to have few objects in the tombs. From the necropolis of the

²⁴ Schwindenhammer 2009, 77.
²⁶ Minguzzi 1983, 190 ill. 18.6.
²⁷ Minguzzi 1983, 198.
Ponte Nuovo in Ravenna comes an earring of gold and garnets with teardrop pendant, created sometime between the 2nd and 4th centuries.\textsuperscript{29} From the same necropolis a necklace attachment dated between the 2nd and 3rd centuries was found. Here a necklace with glass pearls and a crescent moon pendant in gold was found in a mass grave, which dated between the 2nd and the 3rd centuries. This type of object with apotropaic value endures until the Middle Ages.

Among the jewels, space deserves the pendant found at the necropolis of Darsena, in the cemetery near the city of Ravenna, between the outer zone of the apse of San Giovanni Evangelista and Theoderic’s mausoleum. In this area, just outside the city walls, some burials and the famous “Theoderic Corazza” were found.\textsuperscript{30}

In the urban area, specifically inside the Basilica Apostolorum (today’s San Francesco) below the front wall of the crypt, a tomb was found with a kit consisting

\textsuperscript{29} Maioli 1990b, 448.
\textsuperscript{30} Minguzzi 1983, 199 ill.18.7; Baldini Lippolis 2007, 134–147; Bierbrauer 1994.
of a gold bracelet, some necklace beads and a medal. The object known as the “Gioiello di S. Francesco” can be dated between the late 6th and 7th centuries.\(^3^1\) Also associated with some burials are engraved gems and amber, some used for the making of rings.\(^3^2\) An amber ring with a female bust comes from the graves behind the apse of San Severo.\(^3^3\) This is a smooth ring, but with the casing to the setting formed by a colored stone, which comes from the necropolis of Podere Giorgioni.\(^3^4\)

A conical agate with Fortuna Abundance dated between 2nd and 3rd centuries comes from San Severo.\(^3^5\) A bronze signet ring with carnelian engraved with chrismon and fish is also found here, which dates back at least to the 4th century or perhaps the 5th century (Fig. 5).\(^3^6\) Amber and coral had precious value but also a magical and propitiatory significance, already known in the ancient world. In some cases the glass production scaps have an apotropaic value.\(^3^7\) Many of the gestures

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33 Maioli 1990b, 450–451. A similar ring comes also from the necropolis of Voghenza.
34 Maioli 1990a, 398 ill.20/2.
36 Maioli 1990b, 452 ill. 65; Bermond Montanari 1968, 28.
that accompanied death in the Roman world continue to be used, probably with the desire not to interrupt a tradition of reassuring a well-known ritual.

Some objects disseminated in most ancient tombs disappear, like lamps and toilet bottles. In the area of Ravenna until the 3rd century, lamps are among the items most present in the necropolis of Classe, along with glass balsam. Toilet bottles are traditionally attested in Classe burials, and in some cases with special shapes and colors. In one of the graves behind the apse of San Severo, a small oil lamp in the shape of a shell was found; a specimen similar to those found in the necropolis of Marabina and the necropolis of Vasche dello Zuccherificio. Other types of toilet bottles came from necropolis of Palazzette.

## Coins

Coins have been found in several graves, generally near the head or in the hand of the deceased, presumably based on the customs of paying an obol to Charon. The

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39 Maioli, 400 ill. 122/2.
40 Maioli 1990b, 439.
ancient tradition of depositing coins in burials continued into the late Middle Ages, although its occurrence is relatively rare. Coins appear as amulets in brooches from the 11th century and may have been included with medieval burials for their apotropaic value. Single coins of silver were sometimes deposited in or near the mouth or eyes. Cases where two coins were placed near the mouth or shoulders of the body or where coins were bent before being placed in the grave, indicate distinctive rites. Magic amulets often took the form of circles, including birth-girdles, rings, seals, coins, discs and badges.41

Coins are also found in graves of the Early Middle Ages, but not in the mouths of the dead; it is therefore uncertain if they were intended as payment during the journey, although this may well have been the intention of coins placed in a hand of the corpse. Only some objects can ever have been meant as an obulus, and they should be identifiable by their standard deposition or uniform distribution. At the same time, the case of Charon’s Penny highlights that there may have been, in the concepts of some societies, a distinction between goods specifically for the journey and goods meant for use in the afterlife. The coins inside the tombs may have a different function, also with respect to their original use and present in circulation at the time of deposition. They can become pendants or amulets after having been drilled and placed on the deceased as a pendant. In other cases, instead, they are replaced by other objects, such as simple metal discs.42 The material with which were usually made and the round shape gave a magical-religious significance to these objects. It was common belief that evil spirits could not get into circular objects.43 Their presence, therefore, together with talismanic connotation, also served to guard the tombs from evil spirits, but also by grave robbers.44 The deposition of coins associated with burials is not an indicator of social status; they are in fact attested in tombs of all kinds. Moreover, it must be added that their presence as a kit is neither a rule nor a widespread practice. The graves containing coins represent, in general, very low percentages in the context of an entire necropolis.45 The use of lay in the tomb coins, unsystematic in the ancient world, continued with the same irregularities in the Middle Ages and beyond.46 In the suburbs of Rome, for example, of about 335 burials studied, only 61 had within them a coin lying independently.47 Inside the tombs the coins are often found at the head of the deceased, or close to the chest, probably placed inside apparel; more rarely in the lower limbs, in the hands of the deceased. In many contexts, however, they are found within the

41 Gilchrist 2008.
42 Arslan 2010; Stevens 1991.
43 Perassi 2001, 102.
44 La Rocca 1988.
45 Travaini 2007, 259.
46 Peduto 1995; D’Angela 1995 and bibliography.
burial filling. Probably in these cases they are evidence of a gesture, a kind of good wishes at the end of the funeral ceremony to give evidence of the coins in the very act of burial. Although the laying of kits inside the tomb was abandoned between the late 7th and 8th centuries, the coins continue to be found, both in tombs of the wealthy and in the tombs of ordinary people. There are, in fact, sometimes small coins of low value. Old Roman coins are found in many medieval tombs, a sign of a ritual use.\(^{48}\) Coins inside the tombs of saints deserve a separate discussion. Usually the coins found in these tombs are dated to a period close to that of the transfer or recognition. In Milan, in the tomb of St. Ambrose, who died in 397, coins of little value were deposited. After about a century, an observation of the burial took place on which occasion other currencies of little value were placed. Their presence probably was intended to create a link between life and death, between human and divine.\(^{49}\) In the tombs of the popes, however, coins were laid that were issued during their pontificate.\(^{50}\) In some cases, the graves of the saints were accessible to the devotees and faithful, who threw coins as offerings or to create a link with the saint. The pilgrims on their travels brought with them money that was often left at the altar as a gift or at the grave of the saint once they had reached their destination. Leaving their money was part of the rite.\(^{51}\) Inside the mausoleum of Saint Rufillo, the chapel where the bishop Severus was originally buried, within the imposing church complex a consistent amount of coins has been found over the floor and inside the burials. These were often small and unreadable similar to practices also found at Classe. Also some coins were placed within the most important tomb (Burial 162), the one for which the chapel was built – located at the center of the apse (Fig. 6). Two coins were placed above the feet of the deceased, along with a shell; another coin was placed behind the skull.

The literature does not provide many details about this practice in Ravenna. A Justinianic coin was found inside the tomb in the north portico of the Basilica of Santa Croce.\(^{52}\) Inside a sarcophagus in the porticus of S. Agata Maggiore, a coin of Heraclius or Constans II was found. In the area of Sant’Apollinare basilica, a considerable amount of small coins dated from the 4th to the 6th century were found. They have been interpreted as testimony to numerous offers from the faithful on the occasion of their attendance of the place of worship or during burial.\(^{53}\)

Most of them is attested in the port area; of a sample of 50 found burials, 34 were devoid of coins while 16 had one or more coins. However, money was found inside the mouth of the deceased, recalling Charon’s obol (burial 33) in one case. In

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\(^{48}\) This is the case, for instance, of some burials of Castel Trosino and Nocera Umbra.


\(^{50}\) Geary 2000.

\(^{51}\) Travaini 2007, 269.

\(^{52}\) Cirelli 2007; Gelichi 1990.

\(^{53}\) Morelli 2003, 552–565; Morelli 1999.
San Severo, however, the evidence of depositing the coins inside the burials is poor. Of about 200 tombs that have been found, only 7 had coins inside them that can be associated to the deceased. The chronology of these coins is between the 4th and the 11th centuries.\textsuperscript{54} According to a study of necropolises in North Italy, coin depositions decreases from a rate of 45\% in the period between the late 3rd and 4th centuries to 17\% from the 5th to the mid-6th century; and then became sporadic certificates of coins used as such and not as jewellery.\textsuperscript{55} The transformation of the ritual outfit appears to be tied to a gradual abandonment of ritual elements for greater proportions of the deceased’s personal equipment (jewellery, clothing, weapons, tools). These types of objects, belonging to the sphere of personal cleanliness, are found in many tombs of Ravenna, especially in Classe’s necropolis. Evidence of imperial era objects also continue to be present during the Late Antiquity. Most of them are objects in bone, such as pins, needles, but also machine lathed boxes (burial 29 farm Giorgioni) and mirror handles. An object made of ivory also comes from grave 29 of Podere Giorgioni, a probable flabellum shaped handle arrow and terminating in a small feline head.\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{54} About coins from Classe: Baldi 2015.
\textsuperscript{55} Gastaldo 1998, 21–23.
\textsuperscript{56} Maioli 1990b.
Bone Objects: The Combs and the Knifes

Between 5th and 7th century the object that occurs most within burials is the bone comb. The latter is an object of everyday use and toiletry need for both women and men. It was used to tidy up, clean hair but also to do hairstyles. Combs have been found in almost cultures and time period. They are functional, decorative and ritual objects. The role of combs in the production and manipulation of identity has previously been discussed, but it remains unclear whose identity was being expressed, to whom it was being communicated, and on whose behalf. In early medieval contexts, personal use products are most frequently found, especially associated with graves dated between the 6th and 7th centuries and regardless of sex and age of the deceased. In fact, they are even found within male and female child burials. Similarly, combs have no distinction in relation to the social status of the deceased, appearing within tombs with rich grave goods but also as a unique element / object. They are, if anything, the shape, the quality of the object and its decoration to show the richness and social category of the buried. Chronologically multiple element combs begin to be produced during the late Roman Empire and were widespread in Transalpine and Mediterranean area up to the 7th century. In the Danubian area they are frequent in 4th and 5th centuries cemetery areas, especially those close to fortified centers, continuing to be produced in the Byzantine provinces of Illyria.

Bilateral combs in Italy are concentrated in the northern regions (in particular in Veneto and Istria), with a presence also in Puglia and Avellino’s territory, as well in Corsica and Sardinia. From the 4th century, but especially between the 6th and 7th centuries, evidence of combs with a double row of teeth appear. This type gradually replaces or at least exists alongside those with a single row and handle. They are variously shaped and decorated within Late Roman tradition and frequently found in Lombard burials. The dual row of comb teeth is shorter with a more simplified decoration, as bundles of parallel lines or intersecting, or in many cases without decoration. Over the course of time, regardless of the material used, combs do not show significant typological transformations; some changes are related to the type of decoration. Usually they consist of a handle of varying shape and decorative motif with a single or double row of teeth. The latter type seems the most common, both in

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57 Ashby 2006.
61 De Marchi/Possenti 1996, 204–205.
62 About combs and productions see also Giostra 2012, 274–288.
Italian territory and in trans-Alpine area, and within the Merovingian kingdom. These simple and common objects have been the subject of numerous interpretations of their meaning and the great importance of ritual expression. In some contexts, combs in tombs has been interpreted as a link between the deceased and those who mourn their loss, preparing the dead for burial. Their presence was associated precisely with this activity. The comb was definitely used in those ritual phases in which the deceased’s body was washed and prepared for the funeral. The existence of these objects, as well as tweezers, pins or cosmetic brushes refer not only to the care of the body in the physical and practical sense, but also a preparation of the symbolic body, namely the passage from life to death. The position of the combs inside the tombs was different; they could be placed at various points over the body of the deceased: near the head, in connection with their functional use, the basin, the height of the femurs, but also in the foot or by the arm.

From the point of view of materials, most of the combs were made of bone and wood, but there are also specimens in ivory or metal. The basis of the different material used for their implementation and the type of processing, it is possible to identify their value. It is also important to remember the bond and the reference that these objects have with hair: a sign of nobility and, at times, magical powers. This strong symbolic value of hair, but also the beard, is present in many cultures and traditions, even in different historical periods. Practices regarding the treatment of hair have a relationship with many funeral ceremonies. There are cultural traditions in which it is necessary to shave the hair, as a sign of mourning; in other cultures, however, it is prohibited. There are also some cases in which women leave the hair disheveled and unkept, or rip them as a sign of grief.

In some regions of late antique Italy, combs appear to be a characteristic element of funerary rituals. As in the case of Oderzo and Meizza, they constitute one of the elements most frequently found even in burials with graves limited to a few items of daily use, such as a short-bladed knife, spindle whorls, from isolated belt buckles. In Oderzo, a Byzantine stronghold located between the Duchy of Friuli and the rest of the territories occupied by the Lombards, combs were found in nine graves out of a total of nineteen. They were positioned near the skull in five cases, four were instead at the pelvis.

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63 Williams 2007.
64 About wooden comb at Classe: Maioli 1994, 110–111. Others wooden combs were found in Crecchio: Staffa/Pellegrini 1993, 55.
65 Cecchelli 1960, 891–894.
66 The Edict of Diocletian fixed the price for a female bone comb at 14 denarii maximum (Dacl 1938).
67 Huntington, Metcalf 1983, 103.
The presence of a comb can have both a personal value linked to everyday life and an apotropaic value linked to a conception of the head as the seat of the vital forces of the individual.\textsuperscript{70} At Sutton Hoo, the presence of a horn comb inside the mound 17 has been linked with the tomb of a prominent figure. The item has been interpreted as a sign of definitive separation from the dead by the livings, who would have laid down the comb as the last item.\textsuperscript{71} In other contexts, however, their presence is very poor, if not almost absent, as in the case of Rome. Here, in about 500 urban burials, only two combs have been found.\textsuperscript{72} The combs are often found in rich cremation graves, sometimes burnt and buried with the remains of the bodies, but also in inhumation. In late Roman and early medieval cremations, these may have a ritual function, used to prepare the body of dead during the passage from life to death.\textsuperscript{73} Sometimes miniature combs were made especially for inclusion in cremation.\textsuperscript{74} In some cases, it has been speculated to have a liturgical more than functional value.\textsuperscript{75}

The major types of combs found in Classe and Ravenna are two side antler composite combs, which have a labour-intensive production method. The production method of composit-combs is explained in detail in other studies. Due to the properties of the antler, the method of production was very specific. In Ravenna the presence of combs associated with funerary rituals is attested especially between the 6th and 7th centuries. The combs are attested in the cemetery areas outside the walls of the city as well as in urban burials. A comb fragment of bone, dated between the 6th and the 7th, was found in a tomb in the north portico of the Basilica of Santa Croce. The graves, located in different areas of the church, are dated during the first half of the 6th century.\textsuperscript{76} Wooden combs are reported in the sarcophagus found during excavation of the portico of Sant’Agata in Ravenna.\textsuperscript{77} Some bone combs were found in a larger funerary area, composed of about 51 tombs inside the so-called domus of Via D’Azeglio and dated between the 6th and the 7th centuries. The cemetery area is set on part of the walls, and uses some elements as a burial chest, a prestigious urban residential domus.\textsuperscript{78} Between the 6th and the 7th centuries, part of the domus are abandoned and partly transformed; to this phase belong burials. Among the few funerary objects, bone combs and brooches were found. A woman’s

\textsuperscript{70} De Marchi/Possenti 1998, 205.
\textsuperscript{71} Carver 2005.
\textsuperscript{72} Meneghini/Sant’Angeli Valenzani 2000, 109–115.
\textsuperscript{73} Williams 2006.
\textsuperscript{74} MacGregor 1985, 75; Rijkelijikhuijzen 2001, 201.
\textsuperscript{75} MacGregor 1985, 77–82.
\textsuperscript{76} Gelichi 1990.
\textsuperscript{77} Gerola 1934.
\textsuperscript{78} Montevecchi 2004.
grave had a comb made of bone behind her head, and her wrists had two bronze bracelets of the type “to end swollen”. 79

In the context of the port area of Classe, some burials have been identified which have combs like grave goods. The combs are inside the female and infant burials, typically behind the head of the dead, especially in relation to women’s graves. 80 In one case, a comb was found on the left femur of the dead or to the left humerus, associated with the burial of a child. Among these seven combs inside the tombs only two are ornamented in the central rib; for others, without decoration, one can set a link by type ‘A’ also identified in Comacchio. 81 The combs from Classe’s burials 14, 24, and 9, however, do not have any decoration, but they have similar form and processing; they are all of the double row type of teeth, consisting of rectangular plates joined by means of two rods, having a semicircular section and fixed with iron rivets quadrangular section. One of the two rods is decorated with engravings on the board due to the cutting of the teeth; some are also visible traces possibly due to rounding and the appointment of the teeth, because it has horizontal tracks to the tip (Fig. 7). The comb of the grave 14 is a double row of teeth of different sizes and incomplete in some points (Fig. 8). The comb is made of five rectangular laminated plates, side by side and then adhered with four nails, square in section, set in the central rib. There are no decorations. This type of comb was found at the Villa Clelia (Imola), Luni, and Ibligo-Invillino. 82 The comb from burial 24 (measures: 12,2 cm length; width 5.6 cm) is made with six lamellar elements; it presents two rows of different size teeth. The different parts are held together by two smooth central strips, semicircular in cross-section, in which we notice four through holes for the rivets. The handle shows along the edges of the notches due to the cutting of teeth (Fig. 9). 83 The comb from burial 9 (measures: 12,2 cm length; width 5,4 cm) has a double row of teeth of different sizes, with central ribs and iron rivets to hold together the lamellae of which it is composed; it has no decoration, visible traces of “appuntamento” are on the teeth. 84 The comb of the burial 25 is a multiple bilateral type but fragmented. It presents two teeth of different sizes, a central rib and at least four iron rivets. It is unclear as to how many blades it was composed. 85 The comb in grave 33 has a decoration in the central rib, made of oblique zig-zag and vertical lines (measures: 13,8 cm length; width 5.5cm).

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80 Ferreri 2011.
81 Patitucci 1970, 92.
82 Melli 1984, 28; Bierbrauer 1973, 112.
83 These combs have a comparison at Imola (Villa Clelia), Luni and Comacchio. See: Maioli 1994; Nastasi/Vay 1978, 88; Patitucci 1970, 92.
84 Similar combs are amounted to Riva del Garda, Meizza, Romans d’Isonzo: Cavada 1992, 121; Torcellan 1986, 54; Riemer 2000, tav. 22.
Fig. 7: Combs from burial (drawn by the author).
This comb is made up of six rectangular strips held together by rivets fixed in the central rib. The holes for nails are five but only two nails remain (Fig. 10).\footnote{Similar combs were found in Classe, Mezzocorona, and in Rome at the context of the Crypta Balbi. Guidoni 1983, 192–193; Bassi/Demetz/Endrizzi/Oberoslen1994, 145, 323; Ricci 2001, 405–406.} A pattern of parallel lines engraved along the edges of the central rib is seen on the comb of the grave 22. The combs found in the burials 22 and 32 are smaller than others. There are relevant elements in children’s grave goods. This type of comb is widespread in
many cemeteries, as an element in the deceased grave goods. It appears as early as the 4th century, but the peak of the spread was reached in the 6th to 7th century. Working tracks and the cutting of the teeth are present in some combs, such as the one from grave 32. It is a multiple bilateral comb with a double row of teeth of many cemeteries, as an element in the deceased grave goods. It appears as early as the 4th century, but the peak of the spread was reached in the 6th to 7th century. Working tracks and the cutting of the teeth are present in some combs, such as the one from grave 32. It is a multiple bilateral comb with a double row of teeth of

Fig. 9: Burial 24 with a comb and amethyst (Classe) (photo by the author).

Fig. 10: Burial 33 with combs, nails and coin (Charon’s Pence) (drawn by the author).
different sizes, and a central rib fragmented in multiple parts with five visible rivets. The rib shows traces due to cutting of the teeth. It is not known how many strips were used.88

Other combs were found in the port area in the previous surveys, such as in building 1 and 2 and inside of some drainage structures, but it is unclear if they were in relation to burials.89 Wooden combs have also been found in Classe and Ravenna. In the site of San Severo, a bone comb was found, but its context is questionable and is not clear if it belongs to a burial.90 The position of the combs behind the head of the deceased is attested in other cemeteries, in both male and female, youth and adult graves. The placement of combs close to the head of the deceased is a widespread practice. It is present also in Rome, in the Vigna Barberini necropolis, where a comb was placed near the head of the deceased that had thicker teeth on one side,91 this use is also attested in some burial in Castel Trosino,92 in Verona inside a burial dated to the end of 6th century,93 in a small cemetery at Acqui Terme, and in Nocera Umbra.94

This type of comb has a big diffusion in Emilia Romagna. This practice is attested in the territory of Modigliana, in the ancient communication route of the Marzeno Valley, inside a cemetery dating to the 6th-7th century. The funerary area is a group of 23 graves of adults, children and infants. Five graves had a few burial objects such as bone combs, small ceramic jug, a bronze earring with vague glass paste, a small iron bangle, earrings bronze and an iron comb.95 The position of the combs with respect to the body of the deceased was varied: on the pelvis, near the forearm, and on the chest. The combs belong to a single type with a double row of teeth, one was a large mesh and the other tight, welded at the center of two bars fixed by iron nails.96 A particular decoration in the central element that also served as a handle are not present: in three cases the strips are not decorated while vertical incised bundles of three to four parallel lines are shown in only one comb. In this context, combs do not seem to have a relationship to gender and age of the buried; they are associated with burials of adults and infants. It was assumed that these

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88 Similar combs were found at Monselice and Sant’Antonino Perti: Murialdo 2001, 526–529; De Marchi/Possenti 1998, 224, ill. VII.
93 La Rocca 1989, 55.
94 Burial 22, 29, 30, 31, 34, 39, 66, 69, 100 in Pasqui, Paribeni 1919. About the comb’s position see also Baldini Lippolis 1997, 146.
95 Montecucchi 2014, 33.
96 Guarnieri/Montecucchi, 2013, 46, ill.9.
objects were produced locally or imported from neighboring production areas. Moreover, in Emilia Romagna territory, the presence of combs is also associated with other objects, such as ceramic materials, earrings or bracelets, especially in infant burials. In the upper valley of Bidente, in the territory around Forlì, only one comb was found placed inside a burial. It dated to the 6th century and came from the little town of Santa Sofia (Forli), in Chiesa di Sopra. The comb came from a group of five burials, three in earth graves and two in a coffin. In addition to the comb inside the burial were two bronze earrings and in another tomb, dated to the 6th century, a silver earring. In Emilia Romagna combs are attested also inside burials around Comacchio and in the necropolis of Vogheza, in Ferrara’s territory, dating between 6th-7th centuries. In the necropolis of Santa Maria in Padovetere combs are present in 22 tombs, dating between the second half of the 5th and 7th centuries.

As far as knives is concerned just as the combs, are one of the most common artifacts in tombs. In some funerary context, the knife and the comb are associated in the same graves. Usually the knife is deposited together with a belt to which it was hung, within pockets or leather or fabric bags. In the harbor area of Classe, a handle knife handle made of bone was found in a burial. The handle has no holes and only a green hue due to contact with metal, perhaps of bronze. By analyzing the length, the handle may be missing a part that contained anchor blade nails. Other handles were found in landfill layers and not inside coffin. On them are bronze rivets or in one case, iron. Likely removed for reuse, no trace of the blade was found. Microscopic investigations of the use-wear have shown that these instruments have been used in daily activities.

The presence of bone objects inside burials is also attested in the oldest tombs of Ravenna and Classe. These are mainly items related to the personal sphere, such as pins, needle ridges, mirror handles or boxes. An object made of ivory came from a burial in Podere Giorgioni.

97 Montevecchi 2014, 39.
99 Patitucci Uggeri 1970, 92 ill. 19 tipo A.
100 Berti 1992, 13–43; 41 ill. 7; Andreoli 2006, 309–320, 314 ill. 4.
101 Corti 2007, 531–552; 545, ill. 17.
102 This association of object is present in the necropolis of Romans d’Isonzo (Maselli Scotti 1989). Two combs with a knife was found inside burial 1 in Luni’s theater (WardPerkins 1977, 664, tav. 331, 5–8).
103 Bóna 1976.
104 Burial 29 from Podere Giorgioni in Maioli 1990 b, 239 ill. 20/03.
As we have seen combs from Classe and Ravenna show similarities in shape with other found in many cultures across Europe. This was a result of cultural influences, diffusion of knowledge but also the result of trading networks. As for the production bone objects, it can be traced to local production, most likely in the same port area of Classe where bone workshops were found. Although the workshop has not been found, it is possible according to material evidence and archaeological investigations that there was an atelier for bone in the port area.\(^{105}\) Proof of this are the numerous semi-finished and waste products, mainly concentrated in the courtyard of one of the warehouses, specifically building 18 (Fig. 12). The carved or unfinished objects come mostly from trenches used as waste areas. In other cases, considerable objects were also identified as semi-finished and unfinished, as metatarsals, ribs probably used for plates, and a stage of sawn deer antlers. Indicators of handcrafted production activity are chopsticks found in the warehouse area, presenting the facets and the stem has a rectangular section, already cut in dimensions suitable for the machining of a needle or a pin (Fig. 13).\(^{106}\) In addition to combs and knife handles, numerous objects made of bone come from the port buildings such as pins, game pieces, dice, but also plates and decorative elements for small containers. The forearm of a doll was also found in a pit, probably a disturbed burial. These objects were often placed inside tombs associated with young unmarried women (Fig. 14).\(^{107}\)

It is not easy recognised antler or bone craftsmen because antler workshop probably did not produce much waste, except for the burr, the tips of the tines and small chips of antler. The combmaker is usually presented with a number of options

\(^{105}\) Augenti 2012.
\(^{106}\) Béal 1983, 57–58, nn. 35–38.
\(^{107}\) Martin-Kilcher 2000, 63–77.
regarding raw material. Combs may be fashioned from postcranial bone, tipically bovid and equid ribs and metapodialis. Other longbones may be used as well as horn and rarely ivory.\textsuperscript{108} Material availability is important for the combmaker. Combs are usually made from pieces of antlers and often elaborately decorate. Methods of raw material pre-treatment may also have been diverse. It may have been considered important to work antler when fresh, or soaked when seasoned.\textsuperscript{109} Decoration may take the form of incised lines or dot-and-circle motifs (Fig. 15). The variation of shape, style and size could relate to different uses, cultural influences,

\textsuperscript{108} About combmaker and comb typologies see also MacGregor 2015.
\textsuperscript{109} Ashby 2011, 199.
changes in fashion or regional differences. In this period Ravenna and Classe’s port area has still an important role for commercial routes in Mediterranean. From the eastern Mediterranean, the northern Africa and the Adriatic, came wine, oil, garum,
cereals and others material, like amphora, lamps and cooking ware. This type of production activity is also part of different craft and production activities amounted in the port area. In the 7th century, indeed, some stores are partly transformed into their original use of collection and storage of goods. Evidence also suggests different production activities were installed such as glass processing, production of ceramics, motar processing, and traces of obvious activities such as metal processing and probably woodworking.

Furthermore, it is assumed the presence of a laboratory to melt and work fibulae and similar objects. In this landscape alternate craft activities, with houses, even those inside the warehouse, and little cemeteries. Archaeological evidence

Fig. 15: The combmaker activities (after Larsen 2006).

110 Cirelli 2007; Cirelli 2014; Augenti/Cirelli 2010.
suggests an urban space organization where economic and productive activities are close to living space. In Ravenna there was a productive class and skilled workers, as mosaic artists, masons, painters, potters and glass makers, booksellers, silversmiths, blacksmiths. Material evidence from other urban contexts of the 7th century leads one to assume a presence of small-scale structures and shops located in urban areas and distributed in various centers of northern Italy. The evidence of production of these combs are also in workshops placed in urban contexts in the late 7th century. As in the case of the ergasterion of Crypta Balbi in Rome, there are scraps of ivory combs. Here two main groups of activities related to a rubbish dump in the 7th century have been identified, that of metals and ivory, bone and horn.

In the area of Classe, a bone working area was found that is older than that of the port. It is also assumed that another one was in San Severo, where numerous scraps were unearthed. Probably the craft had a relation with the Roman villa, under the church of San Severo (Fig. 16). In Romagna other bone workshop were

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**Fig. 16:** Bone’s scraps from San Severo (after Maioli 1990).

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113 Cosentino 2005, 430–432.  
114 Ricci 1997, 265–267, ill. 11–12.  
116 Maioli 1990b, 452.
located inside the Rocca Malatestiana of Rimini.\textsuperscript{117} Outside of Emilia Romagna a bone workshop was identified in Milan in Piazza Erculea where excavations have found more than 200 objects made of bone. In this case, the workshop was active between the 1st and the 3rd century; in an area next to a residential sector there was one used for processing of materials.\textsuperscript{118} Other excavation, like Carthage between 1982–83, have brought to light many objects made of bone, thus identifying a machining workshop; it was thought that the material was scattered throughout the excavation but in particular two areas. Also in this case the scraps were found at the edge of living space. In 1990 in Rome, exploring a late Roman complex in the northeastern area of the Palatine,\textsuperscript{119} a large number of objects and their varieties have allowed for speculation on the technology and tools used by craftsmen. It was also possible to identify different types of materials made of bone and the great ability of works, documenting a specialized workshop. Similar very common combs have also been found in Rome, dated mostly between 6th and 7th centuries. These are formed by a rectangular plate reinforced by two curved section strips, set by five iron pins.\textsuperscript{120} In addition, there are also scraps of ivory; evidence that even in Rome this extremely special and precious material was worked.\textsuperscript{121}

**Small Objects and Charms**

Some objects inside the graves have a value of amulet. This value was based on the belief that some objects possessed virtues or produced a marvelous effect. Their special properties derived from the natural order and their power did not require the aid of spirits. The choice of objects and natural substances deposited in graves depended on the inherent properties of their materials: stones, plants and animal parts possessed occult materiality.\textsuperscript{122} Usually these types of objects express a desire on the part of the living to protect the dead in their passage to the underworld. Right now, in fact, the dead are exposed to evil spirits or demons.\textsuperscript{123}

It is necessary to be careful when determining the value of an object as a lucky charm and not risk interpreting objects of dubious function or difficult to interpret in this way, as has been done in the past. This is mainly to avoid the overly-widespread recognition of talismans.\textsuperscript{124} In several cases, these antique items were placed within

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\textsuperscript{117} Ortalli 1985, 354–355; Maioli 1980, 183.

\textsuperscript{118} Bianchi 1995, 100; Caporusso/Blockley 1992–93, 121–123.

\textsuperscript{119} Hostetter/Howe/Brandt/Clair 1991, 47–56.

\textsuperscript{120} Ricci 2001.

\textsuperscript{121} Clair 1996, 368–374.

\textsuperscript{122} Gilchrist, 119–159.

\textsuperscript{123} Hertz 1978.

\textsuperscript{124} Effros 2003.
coffins and in direct contact with the body, arguing against an interpretation as residual items or accidental losses. It is important to identify the placement of these magical objects in relation to the corpse, whether in direct proximity to the body, inside the shroud or coffin, or in the grave fill. Many materials linked to magic that were placed in graves are organic, including substances such as parchment, hair, leather, beeswax, wood, and plant and animal parts.

In the conversion of Northern Europe to Christianity, the church tolerated and absorbed magical practices such as the use of healing charms, while the Christian cult of relics extolled the miraculous healing properties of the bones of saints or any substances that had come into contact with them. Some scholars argue that such practices were not merely ‘pagan survivals’, but vitally important elements that were deliberately absorbed into a new mix. This was not the simple fusion or syncretism of two sets of beliefs, but was instead a dynamic process that involved the sustained engagement of folk traditions and Christian practice with the Classical, Judaic and Islamic inheritance.

In Ravenna’s cemeteries, the presence of animal bones placed next to the bodies of the dead refers to a classical tradition. This is attested in several contexts, but it is possible only in a few cases to assume a ritual value. In some burials along the ancient road *Romea Vecchia* animal knuckle bones and teeth are present. In some burials of the port area, animal bones within the coffin fills were identified. In other cases, some teeth of animals were found placed on the chest of the deceased, as a kind of amulet.

### The Nails

The presence of nails within the burials is not always traceable to the timber elements, coffins or wooden box. In the case of coffins, of which wooden track is no longer preserved, comes to help the taphonomic analysis of bone remains, which allows identification of the type of space in which the decomposition has occurred. In these cases, also, often they find themselves nails placed on the corners of the earth graves, used to fix the walls; sometimes the nails were also used to secure the cover. The nails used for coffins were usually of iron, while those employed in the construction of furniture in iron or bronze. Often they have been found with the tip twisted or bent. In addition to a use of this type, namely the functional construction of the tomb, the nail also had a ritual use. They, in fact, could be deposed with the deceased in

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125 Gilchrist 2008, 124.
126 Gilchrist 2008.
128 Duday 2006; Duday/Sellier 1990, 15–18.
superstitions or good luck. In this they are found on the individual’s body, resting on
the thorax, or within one small olla.129 The apotropaic value of nails follows a Roman
custom.130 In some cases, however, in addition to an amount of luck, they have been
interpreted as an attempt to “fix” the body of the deceased to the ground, preventing
its return to the world of the living.131 The possibility that the dead could return to life
in the form of lemures, or larvae, exerting a baleful influence on the living, was
averted by the use of objects of magical power.132 In the Roman world, the nail was
connected to defixiones, magical actions in which it is used the defigere verb, meaning
to tie, nail, and force an individual to do or not do a certain action. The usual defix-
iones were inscriptions on papyrus or lead sheets, generally prepared against ene-
mies.133 The corpse, as an ancestor, was protected and honored, and had been seen as
the protector of the family. At the same time, one had to monitor and defend himself
from its possible negative actions. Some nails found inside both Roman and medieval
tombs were interpreted as gestures of this function. A further use, difficult to associate
with symbolic values, is one in which the nails are found directly in the body of the
dead. They are impaled on the trunk, forearm, pelvis, and even in the head.134 In
Ravenna territory burials with nails fixed in the ribs of the dead were found,135 while
in another case in the right heel of the skeleton’s foot.136 Perforated and studded
skulls, in addition to being seen as elements to not bring back the dead among the
living, are also signs of medical activities, of penances imposed for murder or other
executions.137 In European folklore, driving a nail into the head of a corpse was a way
to eliminate and not to return as a vampire or revenant.138 Fear of polluted objects has
its counterpart in the widespread fear of revenants and vampires dead returning from
the grave. Such fear has often led to countermeasures to prevent their return, includ-
ing the deposition of certain objects in the grave. Identifying such apotropaic grave
goods may be difficult, but they may include incomplete or broken objects, or objects
which look out of place in the context of a particular grave.139

132 Perassi 1997.
133 Maioli 2010, 163–166.
134 Belcastro/Ortalli 2010.
135 Maioli 1994a, 108.
136 Burial 8 from necropolis of CMC at Classe: Maioli 2010, 165.
137 Belcastro/Ortalli 2010, 163–166.
138 The bibliography on this subject is vast, see: Gilchrist 2005; Gilchrist/Sloane 2005; Daniell
1998; Caciola 1996, 3–45.
139 Gilchrist 2008.
The Eggs

The egg is a symbol of rebirth, so closely linked to the ideology of funeral. Symbolic references are prevalent. They can evoke, in fact, rituals related to Orphism but also mythology. The eschatological and esoteric world is correlated with the achievement of "individual salvation." In the territory of Ravenna this ritual is attested in a single burial, found in the complex of San Severo. The burial (Number 157) is located in the outside area of the mausoleum, on the western slope. It is a burial in an amphora, destined for a newborn. The amphora was broken on the side of the neck, where it was placed a brick. Behind this brick and above the head of the small body, there were two eggs at the sides of the skull. In the tomb there were also small coins, unfortunately illegible (Fig. 17). In Roman graves, food offerings were particularly frequent but they are also known from early medieval graves. Usually these survive as animal bones, but other foodstuffs such as wild apples and a chicken egg have also been found in 6th-/7th century-graves. The presence of eggshell inside burials has no other attestations in the territory of Ravenna.

The presence of eggshells is attested in the necropolis of Nocera Umbra fairly frequently, where thirty burials containing eggshells have been found. Some were found in a child’s grave (burial 88), at the back of the small burial; others in the head area (Burials 140 and 54). An infant burial containing a still-intact shell egg was also found in Puglia, in Rutigliano, in a cemetery context dating from the late 6th and 7th centuries.

Types and Rites

As for the types of burials attested to Ravenna and its territory there is a variety of situations. The identification of types of burials with chronological variants may be useful, especially for cemetery contexts with a long use, to analyze the transformations related to the funeral customs, identify regional identity, the differences between groups of individuals, social groups and status. The construction of chrono-typological sequences, however, can result in numerous methodological problems, especially if the research is based on partial studies with the aim of using this type of analysis to date individual graves or cemeteries contexts. In these cases, there is also

141 About the funerary organization in the complex of San Severo see: Ferreri 2011.
142 Pluskowski 2010.
144 For the eggs in the burial of Nocera Umbra: Pasqui/Paribeni 1918.
the risk of creating an overly detailed typological division, which does not include the dynamics of the whole cemetery.

The context of San Severo in Classe has offered some interesting information thanks to the diachronic analysis of funerary practice in the complex. The church of San Severo, built above a Roman villa and a necropolis, near the mausoleum of a 4th century bishop of the city of Ravenna, was the last great act of monumental character constructed within the urban space in the period AD 570–582. Between the late 9th and 10th century a Benedictine monastery was built, entirely made of reused bricks recovered from the Roman villa beneath it. The entire life of the site of San Severo is

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146 About recent excavation at San Severo see: Augenti/Begnozzi/Bondi/Cirelli/Ferreri/Malaguti/Scozzari 2012; Augenti/Cirelli 2016.
characterised by burials and this funerary practice changed and developed according to the life of the basilica and the monastery. Separate areas were reserved for different categories of people, according to the importance attributed to each sector of the cemetery, in relation with the church and the vicinity to the relics of the Saint, according space hierarchy within Christian cemeteries. These areas have been used for long periods, and they are characterized by different funerary practices and destinations.\textsuperscript{147}

The port area, on the other hand, offered a detailed look at historical periods of the 7th and 8th centuries, and for burials related to living environments.

Different types of burials have been identified, based on construction characteristics and the materials employed. The overlap of graves and stratigraphic analysis of the deposit showed the coexistence of several funerary types, with some variations thereof, such as masonry boxes, primarily determined by the nature of the materials used in the construction of chests. In some funerary structures, in implementation of a box, and there are also some fragmentary inscriptions. This type of redeployment is present in many medieval sites, especially when the burial areas are set on settlements characterized by a long association. The types of burials are linked to funeral rites, cremation or burial. In some cemeteries of Ravenna used during the Roman period or since the 3rd and 4th centuries both rites are attested. In these cases the cremations were found inside of urns made of ceramic,\textsuperscript{148} glass, stone, and also lead.\textsuperscript{149}

In the necropolis of podere Minghetti, which was in use from first century B. C. until 6th century A.D., a lot of \textit{busta} have been found. Others are attested at the necropolis of Palazzette, beyond the basilica of Sant’Apollinare. This necropolis was used from the middle of the first century A.D. to at least the 4th and 5th centuries.\textsuperscript{150}

The types which have a long use are the crates within bricks as well as earth graves, which in some cases could differ in shape or depth. The bricks cases are distinguished by shape, type of coverage, the floor type and sizes. The structures are made of reused bricks and roofing tiles, bonded with simple earth and in some rare cases with mortar. The bottom of the case may be ground or by intact or fragmented bricks placed horizontally. In some cases, the form can be anthropomorphic. In the complex of San Severo this type is used between 6th and 7th centuries, in the funerary areas connected with the basilica. The large brick cases are often used to accommodate more than one individual, often associated with people linked to the same family. At San Severo the anthropological studies have shown some possible familiarity between some individuals inside the same graves. Here, in the mausoleum area – the more significant and symbolic space of the ecclesiastic complex – the large bricks cases were open to put a new body inside, then closed

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{147} Ferreri 2011.
\item \textsuperscript{148} Maioli 1990a, 393.
\item \textsuperscript{149} Podere Giorgioni. See: Maioli 1990a, 392.
\item \textsuperscript{150} Maioli 1990a, 406.
\end{itemize}
with tiles and mortar. In some cases, they moved the last body inside to make room for the new depositions. The practice of removing the human remains was careful: the skulls on one side, legs and arms on the other side.\textsuperscript{151}

The arrangement of the bricks could be different, placed horizontally or usually cut into \textit{quinsquipedali}. In some cases they were found tipping brick tombs, which contained burial in wooden coffin, as the CMC necropolis on the Via Romea Vecchia\textsuperscript{152} and in the necropolis in via dei Poggi.\textsuperscript{153}

The coffin covers are made with different materials such as bricks, horizontal tiles, blocks of limestone or red Verona marble. In some contexts, the presence of wooden roofing is also hypothesized, preserved only in part because of problems related to the preservation of wood in places like the port warehouses in Classe. In some particularly damp contexts, wood is perfectly preserved. It was also possible to find the wooden coffins used for activities related to transporting the dead in the cemetery.\textsuperscript{154} The traces of wooden fences are also present in the negative, like hole, with removed poles sometimes found still \textit{in situ}.\textsuperscript{155} The wooden coffin could be made without nails.

In the context of San Severo the covers of brick coffin showed signs of intensive use of the same box to lay dead in different time. In other cases, instead, the covers were closed and sealed with mortar.

A type attested in Ravenna, especially in Classe, is the use of amphorae like coffin (\textit{enchytrismos}). These are mainly of African or Gaza amphora type used as a whole, especially for infant burials, that usually were close to houses.\textsuperscript{156} The amphora can also be cut down the sides or vertically, as a sort of burial bed on which lay the dead. In the necropolis of Vasche dello Zuccherificio, instead, amphorae have been used for adult’s burials. These types are mainly used from the 3rd century onwards, like those of Podere Minghetti, and reached a maximum spread during the 5th and 6th centuries.\textsuperscript{157} Also the sarcophagi were used for adults and children. This type was more than a simple place to entomb the dead. These tombs, indeed, were visible to all who entered the church and their inscriptions available as guides for commemoration.\textsuperscript{158} The sarcophagi were the perfect tools for commemoration and markers of the social roles of the persons who were entombed, so

\textsuperscript{151} Ferreri 2011.
\textsuperscript{152} Maioli 1990a, 399.
\textsuperscript{153} Leoni, Maioli, Montevecchi 2008.
\textsuperscript{154} Leoni, Maioli, Montevecchi 2008, 92.
\textsuperscript{155} Leoni, Maioli, Montevecchi 2008, 93.
\textsuperscript{156} Ferreri 2014.
\textsuperscript{157} Stoppioni 1983, 130–131, 133.
\textsuperscript{158} Valenti Zucchini/Bucci 1968.
they were used for bishops and members of the local elites. In Ravenna an active and regular use of sarcophagi continued into the early 9th century.\textsuperscript{159}

The use of cappuccina type continued until the 6th-7th century. They are present in suburban contexts within the city of Ravenna. Furthermore, their presence is attested at church buildings, like in San Severo, but also in other contexts such as the domus of via d’Azeglio, the domus of via Pier Traversari or near the necropolis of Cà Lunga, where burials, especially of enchytrismos and alla cappuccina type, have been found.\textsuperscript{160} One cappuccina was found in Santa Giustina in Capite Porticis and in the cemetery area of Porta Caesarea (Fig. 18).\textsuperscript{161}

In some funerary structures, there are also some fragments of spolia. This practice is present in many medieval sites, especially when the burial areas are placed on settlements characterized by a long habitation. In some cases, the setting of cemetery areas on disused buildings, such as domus or public buildings, promotes the use of some walls as funerary containers. Similar cases are present in the port area where a burial uses a masonry water runoff channel as a burial chest (Fig. 19).\textsuperscript{162} The use of brick or stone material from more ancient buildings is already attested between the 1st and 3rd century, like in the necropolis of via dei Poggi.\textsuperscript{163} In the site of via D’Azeglio a burial uses the mosaics floor of the domus like deposition.\textsuperscript{164} Another burial reused a cocciopesto tank like coffin.\textsuperscript{165} In the narthex of San Severo, structures of the thermae of the Roman villa below the basilica are used as part of funerary coffers. Sometimes a brick or a tegula is used like a funerary cushion below the head of the deceased. This practice is attested in the Podere Minghetti\textsuperscript{166} and in the complex of San Severo, where funerary cushion was used for adult and infant burials.

From 7th century, the practice of laying of small personal goods inside the grave is abandoned and some types are no longer used. The cemetery organization, however, became more complex and articulated: the funerary areas are often distinct, not only by gender and age, but also by parental or social groups.\textsuperscript{167} Differents languages are used to express identity and memory and the funerary sphere is a key of social, religious and politica context. The funeral and the treatment of the corpse played an important role in transformation of mortuary and commemorative ritual. Church’s

\textsuperscript{159} The sarcophagi of Ravenna have frequently been the object of studies and research, for the social and political significance and interpretation see Schoolman 2013 and ist bibliography.
\textsuperscript{160} Maioli 1987, 61.
\textsuperscript{161} Cirelli 2008.
\textsuperscript{162} Ferreri 2011.
\textsuperscript{163} Leoni/Maioli/Montevecchi 2008, 94.
\textsuperscript{164} Negrelli 2004, 124 ill. 181.
\textsuperscript{165} Cirelli 2008, 120.
\textsuperscript{166} Leoni/Maioli/Montevecchi 2008.
\textsuperscript{167} Ferreri 2011.
interst for liturgy increased and funeral rites became more controlled by ordained members of the clergy. The location and the quality of the burials in the cemetery, especially in reference to sacred buildings, became relevant especially for social status and identity of the individual within the community.\textsuperscript{168}

\textbf{Fig. 18:} \textit{Cappuccina} from the basilica of San Severo (photo by the author).

\textsuperscript{168} Effros 1997.
Fig. 19: Burial uses a masonry water runoff channel as a burial chest (Classe) (photo by the author).

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