



DEATH AND THE SOCIETIES OF LATE ANTIQUITY

New methods, news questions ?

WELCOME SPEECH

Good morning to all,

it is our great pleasure to welcome you to the “Death and the societies of late Antiquity - New methods, new questions?” conference. We are really pleased to have been able to organize this face-to-face event despite the constraints of the health crisis, and to be able to benefit from a hybrid communication system. This hybrid model, which has from now become a common way of operating scientific meetings, will offer the opportunity to some of the speakers and a part of the audience to attend the event and to participate in scientific discussions remotely.

Before starting this conference, we would like thank our partners and funders: the UMR Ades, the Transfunéraire ANR programme, the Institut d’Archéologie Méditerranéenne ARKAIA, the MorAnt research program, the UMR Eco-anthropologie and the group of doctoral schools of the Université Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne. Without their support and the personal commitment of their respective managers (Virginie Scardina in Marseille, Hélène Criaud and Florence Loiseau in Paris), we simply would not have been able to organize this event. A special thanks goes to all of them.

Our gratitude also goes to the Maison Méditerranéenne des Sciences de l’Homme which welcomes us during these days to its premises and whose staff has been extremely available and attentive with our requests.

We would like to express our deepest thanks to our session chairmen and chairwomen for being here and for having accepted, before this event, together with the other members of the scientific committee who are following us remotely, to support us in this project accomplishment on which we have been working for more than 2 years. Their contribution has definitely been crucial for the conference preparation.

The meeting is going to take place over three days, this afternoon, tomorrow Thursday the 4th and Friday the 5th of November all day long. The presentations are going to be given in French or in English without translation. The presentation must last a maximum of 15 to 20 minutes

followed by 10 to 15 minutes of questions and discussion. As for the Q&A session, priority will be given to the audience present in the room, those following us remotely will have to write their questions in the online discussion space, these will be read by the chairperson. If there is no more time to answer all the questions asked online, we invite you to contact the authors directly.

Thursday, at the end of the communications and, unfortunately, only for those present on site a session dedicated to posters will be held from 5.30 pm to 6.30 pm in the hall, which will give us the opportunity to exchange with their authors.

Coffee breaks take place in the friendly room, located to the right of the Germaine Tillion room where we are. In this same room, will be held the welcome cocktail, this evening from 6 pm to 7.30 pm. It is important to note that we must leave the building at 7:30 pm.

For lunch, the cafeteria of the establishment is open to all and if the meals are at your expense, a space is reserved for us for lunch.

All coffee breaks are free and open to everyone, they take place in the *salle de convivialité* located to the right of the Germaine Tillion room where we are now. In that same room this evening from 6pm to 7.30 pm will be held the welcome cocktail which is open to all. We must free the building at 7:30 pm sharp.

For lunch, the cafeteria of the campus is open to all. The meals are at your expense, however a space is reserved for us there.

We must do a brief reminder of the sanitary rules to follow: the COVID-19 certificate, issued if you have tested negative or you have been fully vaccinated, is mandatory to access the rooms, the wearing of the mask is required in all rooms and all time except during coffee breaks and meals. Hydroalcoholic gel is at your disposal at the entrance and in the room. The room is constantly ventilated.

We are also pleased to inform you that we are preparing a bilingual publication as an extension of the symposium, with the support of the MMSH and the *Presses Universitaires de Provence*. Its release, available in full free open access, is scheduled for the anniversary date of the symposium, at the end of 2022. We are already working towards the accomplishment of this ambitious project, and the contributors have already been sent the guidelines and dead-lines for the articles writing. We will of course keep all of you posted with the release of the proceedings.

From the conception of this meeting, our objective was twofold. On the one side, we wanted to understand how the questions concerning funeral practices and representations of late antiquity evolved, under the impetus of multidisciplinary approaches and new methods developed in the field of archaeo-anthropology. On the other, we wanted to explore the variety of dynamics developed within various societies around death-related issues in a historical period rich in social, cultural, and institutional changes.

So, it seemed important to us to leave a Romano-centered, or even Mediterranean-centered vision, and to integrate territories and entities outside the Empire into the debate. It also seemed essential to us to get out of the pitfalls of a vision focused only on the appearance and development of Christianity. Thus, we wanted to underline the importance of considering from the start the plurality of entities that make up the late Antiquity world: uniqueness in the Empire does not exist.

The following communications, whether oral or displayed as posters, offer the opportunity to speculate on the world of the dead on a large geographical and thematic scale. The debate is articulated and complex due to the combination of several disciplines (from archaeo-thanatology, to history, epigraphy, biogeochemistry, topography, etc.). They promote an increase of our knowledge on the treatment of the deceased and their place among the living.

Four major themes will be developed during these days. We're going to start today with a session chaired by **Professor Llorrenç Alapont-Martin on the evolution of funeral practices over time**. We are going to explore how the various elements composing the whole funerary system (epigraphies, deceased, sepulchral structures, funerary furniture, among others.) evolve from the 3rd until the 7th century, to better understand the transformations over the long term.

Tomorrow morning we are going to discuss the issue of **social identity through death** in a session chaired by **Doctor Dominique Castex**. The funerary context provides a privileged framework for observing the management and representation of belonging to a social category. Social identity corresponds to defined cultural values, whether it is attributed by the living to the dead, or whether it reflects the place occupied by the deceased during life in his society.

In the afternoon we will then focus on **the transformation of the organization and topography of funeral ensembles** in a session chaired by **Professor Anne Nissen**. The choice of the geographical location and internal organization of the burial sites, the evolution of their

location, their limits, the conversion of previous structures into burial sites, are indeed important sources of questioning on the relationship between the living and the dead.

The last day will be dedicated entirely to the theme **territories of the empire: from the heart to the margins** which is going to engage 2 sessions (morning and afternoon) respectively **chaired by Doctor Sacha Kacki and Doctor Elisabeth Anstett**. Funerary gestures, in fact, represent a set of codes shaped by beliefs, culture, the material means available, the environment but also by regulatory and legislative provisions such as those that prevailed throughout the Roman period. This third and final day of the conference will aim to understand how funeral practices vary in the different territories under the influence of Rome, closer and farther from the heart of the Empire, but also at its borders.

We are therefore ready to start this event by welcoming our guest speaker Alexandra Chavarria Arnau. Professor of medieval archaeology at the University of Padua, her research on architecture, town planning and landscape archaeology has led her to work also on funerary issues, especially during the late and early Middle Ages. She is a member of the Directory board of the *Società di Archeologi Medievisti Italiani*, co-founder and editor of the journals *European Journal of Post-classical Archaeologies* and *Progetti di Archeologia*. She is co-leader of the Seal of Excellence ARCHIDATA Program on OSL dating of historic mortars. Coordinator of the Padua Research Group for the Mediterranean Mountain Landscapes (FP7) project (2014-2017). This project has been designated by the Humanities Scientific Committee of the European Union as one of the top five innovative research projects in the humanities and as an outstanding example of current European cultural heritage research and practice.

She has directed numerous archaeological digs, including at the UNESCO Archaeological Site of Torba-Castelseprio (2013-201), at the Church of Santa Maria di Lugo, Ve (2008-2010), Maguzzano, Bs (2005-2008), San Pietro di Limone, Bs (2014, 2013), at the baptistery of Padua (2011-2012) and has been conducting excavations in Croatia (Isola di Rab) with the University of Zagreb since 2005.

We are very pleased to receive her in Aix-en-Provence, thanking her sincerely for having accepted our invitation. We are indeed very honoured to have her here to open this symposium and to hear her speech on multidisciplinary analysis in the funeral context of late antiquity. So we leave her the word.

Gaëlle Granier, Charlotte Boyer, Elisabeth Anstett