

## Remembering the Dead in the City: The Place of Death and Burial in Ancient Rome

Despite the prohibition against intramural burial, which relegated tombs to areas outside the city (Toynbee 1971; Hopkins 1983), Rome possessed spaces within its boundaries associated with death and burial. Many are connected to distinguished people and events from the city's early history, including founding figures and republican heroes, whose burials were generally thought to lie in the Forum Romanum. Prior research has revealed that these spaces were probably not sites of actual burial but commemorative monuments celebrating individual accomplishments and Roman political culture writ large (Frischer 1982–1983). Nevertheless, ancient sources identify them as tombs and describe interactions with them in decidedly funerary terms. Their "presence" thus exposes contradictions between ancient thought and practice, which complicates widely held beliefs about the space and place of burial among the living.

This paper explores how the Romans thought about and engaged with places associated with death and burial in the heart of the city. The tombs of three Republican heroes—Publicola, Fabricius and Tubertus—loom large since they are routinely upheld as famous examples of exceptions to the rule. Investigation of the surviving reports about them—and archaeological evidence when applicable—reveals how the descendants of these heroes incorporated visits to their tombs to strengthen their family's identity and maintain their place in Rome's history well into the imperial period. By contrast, the place connected with the death and burial of Rome's founding figures, the *lapis niger*, was designed to prevent interaction with the space and forget the past it represented (Davies 2018). Although both sets of burials occupy a different conceptual and physical space in the city, I aim to show that there was no one way to remember the dead and that, in exploring these contradictions, it is possible to gain a more nuanced understanding of

the relationship between the living and the dead in Roman society and deeper insights into commemorative culture.

#### Works Cited

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