

Nine Days After? Problems in the Sequence of Events at Roman Funerals

In almost every reconstruction of Roman funerals, from 19th century pioneers like Joachim Marquardt (1886) through widely cited discussions like that of J. M. C. Toynbee (1971) to more recent work by Emma-Jayne Graham (2011), Anthony Corbeill (2004), and others in recent decades, scholars have asserted that there was a both a standard nine-day period for a Roman funeral and a second rite that took place at the grave nine days after the burial. Indeed, recent scholarship has tended to expand the complexity of this second “ninth-day rite” with increasingly elaborate conjectures. This paper will argue that, on the contrary, there is no ancient evidence for the regular practice of any ritual on the ninth day after burial, and that texts that scholars have cited to that effect cannot bear the weight put upon them. There is therefore no reason to place any part of the funeral rites after the original nine day period that culminates with the burial and funeral feast.

Bibliography

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