Norbert Zimmermann – Leonard V. Rutgers – Eva Kodzoman – Antonello Vilella – Michael W. Dee

The Jewish Catacomb at the Vigna Randanini in Rome. A New Architectural and Archaeological Study. With an Appendix on Tomb Statistics

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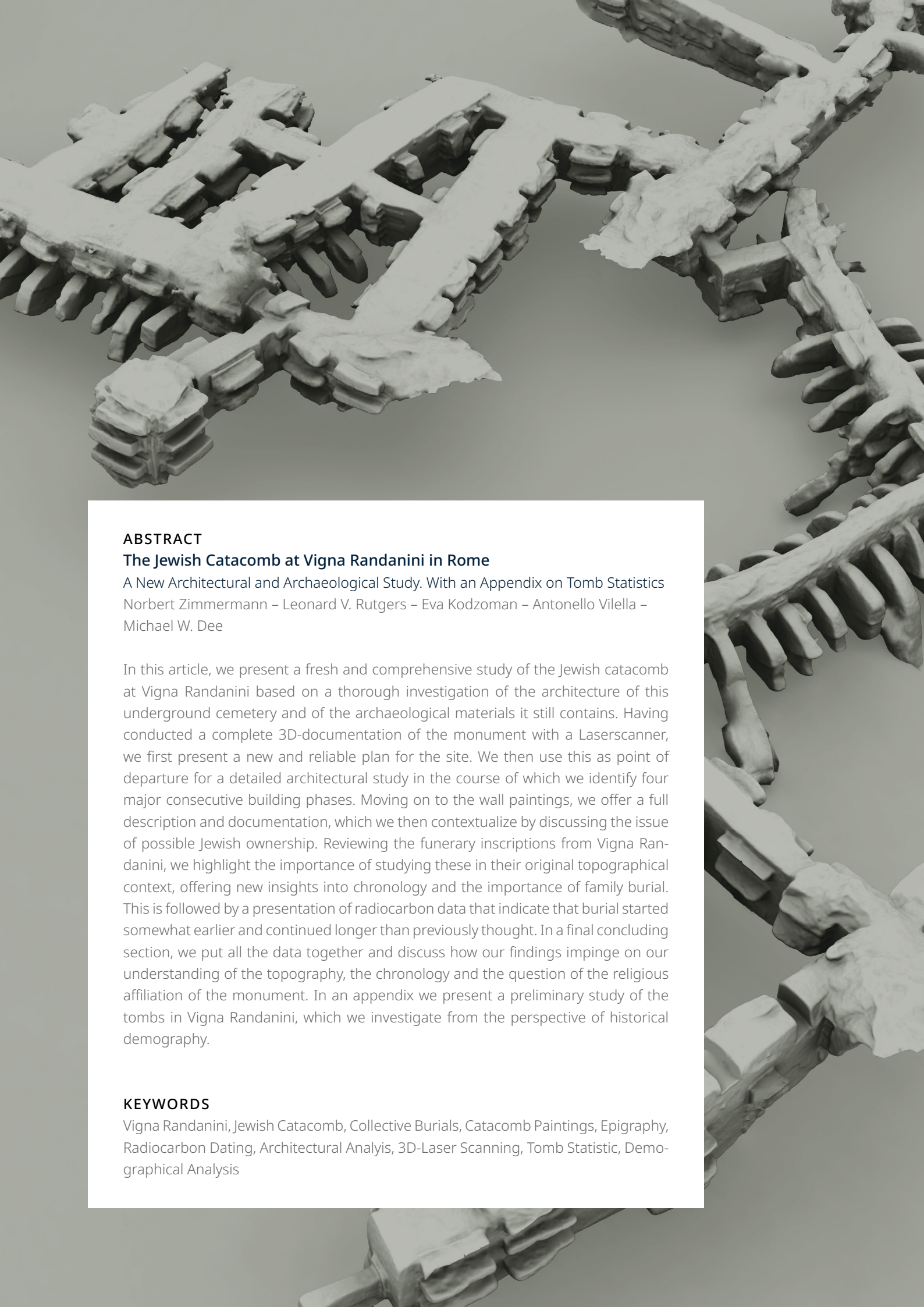

ABSTRACT

The Jewish Catacomb at Vigna Randanini in Rome

A New Architectural and Archaeological Study. With an Appendix on Tomb Statistics

Norbert Zimmermann – Leonard V. Rutgers – Eva Kodzoman – Antonello Vilella – Michael W. Dee

In this article, we present a fresh and comprehensive study of the Jewish catacomb at Vigna Randanini based on a thorough investigation of the architecture of this underground cemetery and of the archaeological materials it still contains. Having conducted a complete 3D-documentation of the monument with a Laserscanner, we first present a new and reliable plan for the site. We then use this as point of departure for a detailed architectural study in the course of which we identify four major consecutive building phases. Moving on to the wall paintings, we offer a full description and documentation, which we then contextualize by discussing the issue of possible Jewish ownership. Reviewing the funerary inscriptions from Vigna Randanini, we highlight the importance of studying these in their original topographical context, offering new insights into chronology and the importance of family burial. This is followed by a presentation of radiocarbon data that indicate that burial started somewhat earlier and continued longer than previously thought. In a final concluding section, we put all the data together and discuss how our findings impinge on our understanding of the topography, the chronology and the question of the religious affiliation of the monument. In an appendix we present a preliminary study of the tombs in Vigna Randanini, which we investigate from the perspective of historical demography.

KEYWORDS

Vigna Randanini, Jewish Catacomb, Collective Burials, Catacomb Paintings, Epigraphy, Radiocarbon Dating, Architectural Analyis, 3D-Laser Scanning, Tomb Statistic, Demographical Analysis

NORBERT ZIMMERMANN – LEONARD V. RUTGERS – EVA KODZOMAN –
ANTONELLO VILELLA – MICHAEL W. DEE

The Jewish Catacomb at Vigna Randanini in Rome

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Introduction[1]

1 The materials preserved in the Jewish catacombs of Rome represent the largest coherent body of archaeological and epigraphic evidence relating to a specific Jewish Diaspora community during Roman times. So far the two interconnected underground Jewish cemeteries below Villa Torlonia on the Via Nomentana are the only ones to have been systematically researched[2]. There is another Jewish catacomb complex at Monteverde. It was excavated in the early years of the twentieth century, yet the reports produced before the cemetery's final collapse in the late 1920s lack vital information on that site's topography and the archaeological context from which the artifacts, including many funerary inscriptions, derive[3]. Recently an isolated gallery belonging to this very same catacomb was found. Being empty, this discovery has added little to our understanding of what appears to have been the oldest Jewish catacomb in Rome[4]. All this leaves us with the third major Jewish catacomb complex, the one under Vigna Randanini, wedged between the Via Appia Antica and the Via Appia Pignatelli. Discovered and partially cleared in 1859, this monument has so far escaped serious

1 This article combines the results of two research projects on the Jewish catacomb of Vigna Randanini: the ongoing project on *Collective Burials at Rome from the Late Republic to Late Antiquity* at the German Archaeological Institute in Rome (DAIR) and directed by N. Zimmermann and Th. Fröhlich, with E. Kodzoman and A. Vilella as collaborators, and *Reconfiguring Diaspora*, directed by L. V. Rutgers at Utrecht University and sponsored by the Dutch Research Council (N.W.O.; grant no. 360-50-08). N. Zimmermann and L. V. Rutgers conceived, designed, and supervised this study. The catacomb was 3D-scanned in cooperation with the Technical University of Vienna (I. Mayer, E. Kodzoman, A. Miziolek), the topographical-architectural study and all drawings were done by E. K. (section I), the paintings were studied by N. Z. (section II), the inscriptions were investigated by A. V. (section III). L. V. R. located the radiocarbon samples and evaluated their significance together with M. W. D. who processed them at the Groningen Center for Isotope Research (section IV). L. V. R. revised all sections with input from the authors. N. Z. and L. V. R. contributed equally to the discussion (section V) and the appendix. Corresponding authors: N. Zimmermann: Norbert.Zimmermann@dainst.de and L. V. Rutgers: l.v.rutgers@uu.nl. 3D models of the cubicula discussed in section II are provided subsequently on the landing page of the article.

2 Beyer – Lietzmann 1930; Fasola 1976; Barbera – Magnani Cianetti 2003; Rutgers et al. 2006; Rutgers 2015.

3 Müller 1912 and Kanzler 1915.

4 Rossi – Di Mento 2013. On chronology, Rutgers 2009.

1

Fig. 1: Plan of the catacomb of Vigna Randanini based on 3D Pointcloud from 2018

archaeological investigation and excavation[5]. To date, only a handful of generic studies are available. There is, however, a reliable publication of the funerary inscriptions from this site[6].

2 In this article, we present a comprehensive documentary study of the remarkable Jewish catacomb at Vigna Randanini. Having conducted a 3D-documentation of the monument, we present the results of a detailed architectural study of the entire underground cemetery, a new study of the wall paintings, a full investigation of the inscriptions that are still *in situ*, and a discussion of the results of radiocarbon dating. Integrating the information deriving from these different datasets, we then offer a discussion in which we explore the larger historical and cultural ramifications of our discoveries. In an appendix, we present a statistical overview on graves numbers, grave types, and their distribution per region and briefly discuss what these figures tell us about the demography of the population buried at Vigna Randanini.

I. Topographical development[7]

Introduction

3 Previous scholarship on the topography and architectural history of the Jewish catacomb at Vigna Randanini has hypothesized that this underground cemetery originally consisted of a set of independent hypogea that were interconnected at a later moment, at which point they coalesced into the catacomb we know today[8]. As will be detailed below, we have found that this view of the site's architectural development, which so far has been based on an impressionistic reading of the monument, is essentially correct. Also, several maps have been produced in the past by scholars who tried to arrive at a better understanding of the topographical and chronological development of the site. These include plans by Raffaele Garrucci, Jean-Baptiste Frey, the *Pontificia*

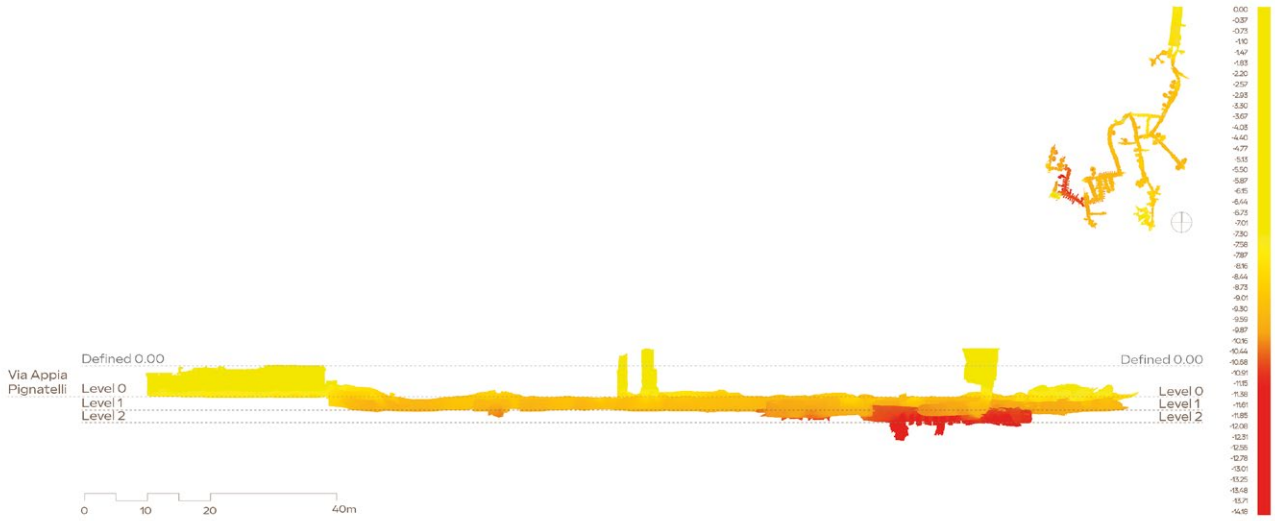

Fig. 2: Height range of the Pointcloud conducted in Cloud Compare showing three levels of the catacomb of Vigna Randanini

2

5 Herzog 1861; Garrucci 1862.

6 Vismara 1986; Rutgers 1988 and Rutgers 1990; Noy 1995; Cappelletti 2006; Dello Russo 2011; Laurenzi 2013. Note that there still is another Jewish underground cemetery, the size of which is unclear. It was located in the Vigna Cimarra, see Dello Russo 2010.

7 This section is a resumé of Eva Kodzoman's master thesis at the Technical University of Vienna, defended in January 2021.

8 For the last overview, see Laurenzi 2013, 26–30.

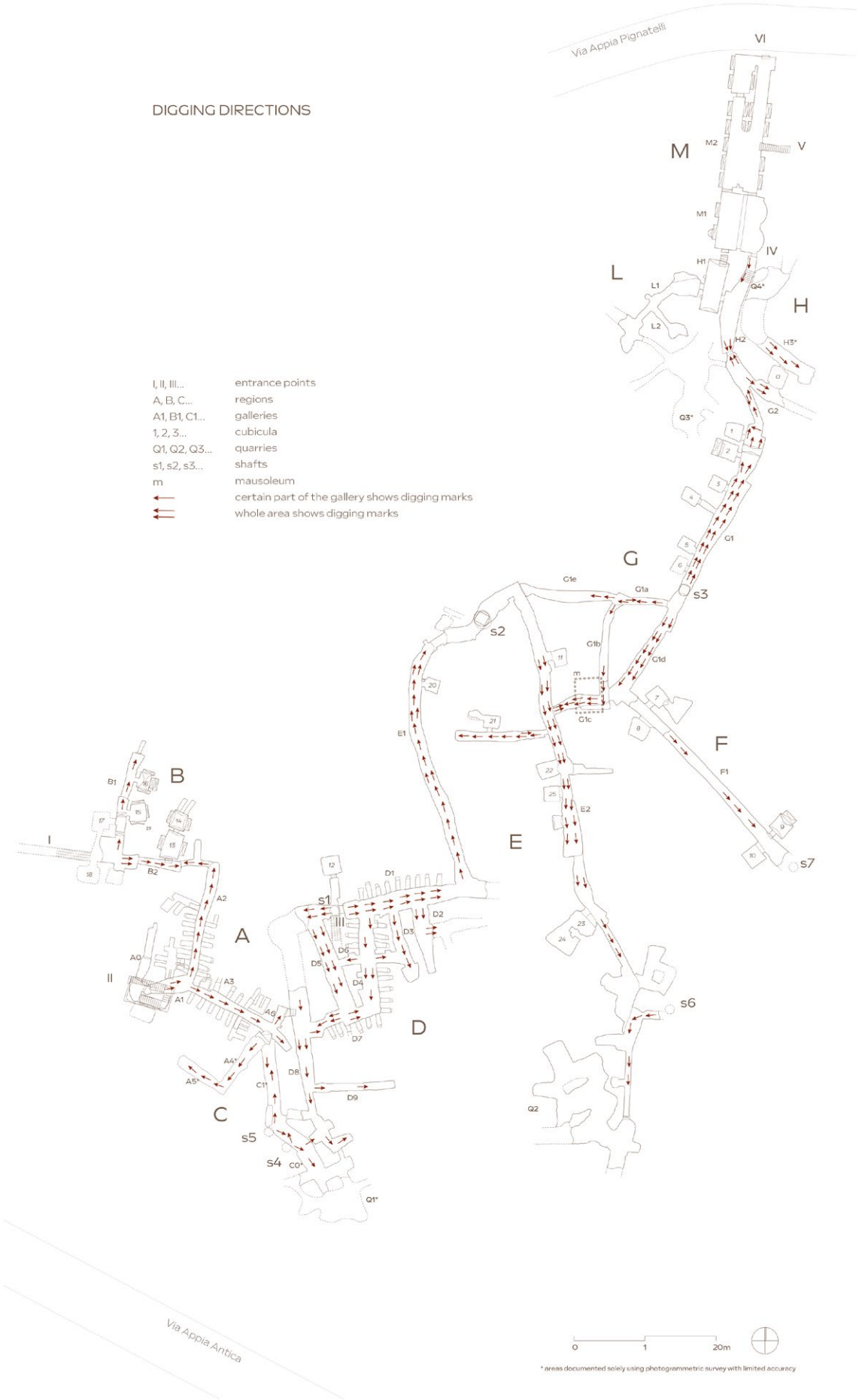

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Fig. 3: Plan of directions of excavation of the catacomb, based on preserved hack marks in the ceiling areas

Commissione di Archeologia Sacra, Cinza Vismara, Marco Vitale, and most recently by the *Soprintendenza Archeologica di Roma*, which is the one that was used, with additions, also by Elsa Laurenzi[9]. Study of those plans reveals that none of these is a truly reliable basis for the type of analysis we are proposing here.

4 Here we present the results of the first comprehensive architectural study of the network of galleries that make up the Vigna Randanini catacomb complex, including a detailed and fully reliable map. To permit a structural analysis of the catacomb's construction history we conducted a 3D-laser scan of the entire catacomb for the first time[10]. Laser scanning resulted in the production of a Pointcloud, that is, a three-dimensional digital representation of the underground galleries we have scanned. This, in turn, allowed for the creation of a 2D-plan (fig. 1) and 2D-sections of all galleries. Combined with a careful on-site architectural study of the monument carried out in the fall of 2017[11], these newly produced plans provide us with all the information we need to propose a new, detailed comprehensive architectural study of this Jewish underground cemetery in all of its complexity.

5 Pointcloud data were processed in Riscan Pro software, which turned out to be an essential platform for model modifications. In designating galleries, we have generally followed the map produced by the PCAS in 1984, so that our map also divides the catacomb into ten regions – from A to M, with A to L relating to the underground portions of the monument, and M as the designation for the rectangular *sub divo* space that serves the current entrance to the catacomb from the via Appia Pignatelli.

6 To allow for easy identification of the corridors that run for a total length of roughly 710 meters, we adopted the numbering system found in the PCAS plan – a system whereby specific galleries are identified by a combination of letters and numbers (e.g., gallery E1, F2, etc.). Even so, there were times where our own research indicated that we needed to slightly adjust the numbering proposed in the PCAS plan[12]. Instead of merely giving names to the four *cubicula* that have been decorated with wall paintings (known since E. R. Goodenough's study as Painted Rooms I–IV)[13], we have numbered all *cubicula* in the same way as they appear in the plan produced by the *Soprintendenza Archeologica di Roma*, namely in a consecutive order from 1 to 18.

7 Even though many parts of the catacomb were never excavated to the original ground level it is still possible to distinguish the various sections of the monument based on the (higher or lower) level at which they were first created. The outdoor space M, which was adapted in a later moment so it could accommodate no less than 70 *arcosolia* graves, is positioned on the level of the Via Appia Pignatelli and can be considered as representing the ground level at the time. We have designated it as level 0. Underground regions C, D, E, F, G, H can be classified as belonging to level 1, which is around two meters deeper than level 0. Finally, regions A and B, located on the other side of the catacomb near the Via Appia, both belong to level 2, meaning that they are around four meters below the level of the Via Appia Pignatelli (fig. 2). As for the entrances to the catacomb, it should be noted that today there are only two entrances that remain

9 Plan of Vigna Randanini in 1 – Garrucci 1862, 5; 2 – Frey in Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana 10 (1933); 3 – Map produced by *Pontificia Commissione di Archeologia Sacra* (henceforth PCAS) in 1984; 4 – Vismara 1986, 372 fig. 5; 5 – Vitale 1994, 16; 6 – Lombardi 2009, 4 fig. 1. 7; a new plan of the Soprintendenza Archeologica di Roma (SAR) was published, with additions, in Laurenzi 2013, 30 fig. 7.

10 The applied Laserscanner Riegl VZ 400 was generously provided to the German Archaeological Institute by Riegl Laser Measurment Systems, Horn, Austria, thanks to N. Studnicka.

11 See the report by Zimmermann et al. 2018, 140–144.

12 While generally following the 1984 PCAS plan our investigations suggest that we should designate as A4 and A5 the two galleries in region C that join region A. Also, to better understand the development process and do justice to the architectural evolution of the galleries in question we decided to split the galleries of the region G, G1a and G1b into smaller subsections named here G1a to G1e.

13 Goodenough 1953, vol. 2, 17–21.

4

Fig. 4: Ceiling plan of one part of gallery G1 showing perfectly preserved hack marks

accessible, namely M IV and A II. At present there are furthermore two vertical light- or airshafts (s2 and s3) that link the monument to the surface above[14].

Method

8 While producing a 3D-digital model and of a new 2D-plan we also conducted a careful visual examination of the entire catacomb. The purpose of this investigation was to study on site all visible surfaces, including the hack marks left on the walls by those who originally created the underground galleries (fig. 4)[15]. Those parts of the catacomb that had been destroyed or had been so heavily restored that the original wall and ceiling surfaces are no longer discernible were obviously excluded from the study. Even so, our investigation of these hack marks turned out to be fruitful. As can be seen by looking at the red arrows in fig. 3, the procedure of investigating digging directions allowed us to determine the construction history of the galleries in which they were found, and, by extension, of the catacomb as a whole. Generally, the direction of the digging of the galleries is evident only in relatively narrow spaces. In wider corridors hacking traces on occasion represent a second step or a finishing operation, which occurred after the initial digging had been completed. We also found that the *fossores* did not usually bother much with any later smoothening out of irregularities, so that as a general principle the hack traces can be taken as documenting the direction in which the underground galleries at Vigna Randanini were originally dug.

9 Studying the catacomb by looking at these construction traces, we managed to identify those areas where the construction of this underground cemetery had originally started, including the position of possible additional entrances no longer vis-

14 A general study of *lucernaria* in Roman catacombs is still lacking. In case of the Jewish catacomb at Vigna Randanini, these shafts should not be called *lucernaria*, as is common in the literature (e.g. Laurenzi 2013, 33). The reason for this is that they differ from air- and lighting shafts one typically encounters in the other catacombs in Rome, where such shafts are typically shaped in a regular fashion and distributed evenly over the catacomb. At Vigna Randanini, by contrast, the two shafts have a round shape and get wider as they descend towards the gallery floor. This indicates that originally these shafts were part of a hydraulic system that was adapted for funeral use later on.

15 The visual examination of all surfaces in the catacomb was done together with N. Zimmermann and Silke Haps. We found that on-site discussions of the wall surfaces and directions of the cutting traces were crucial in helping us understand the construction of the catacomb along the lines we are presenting in the main text.

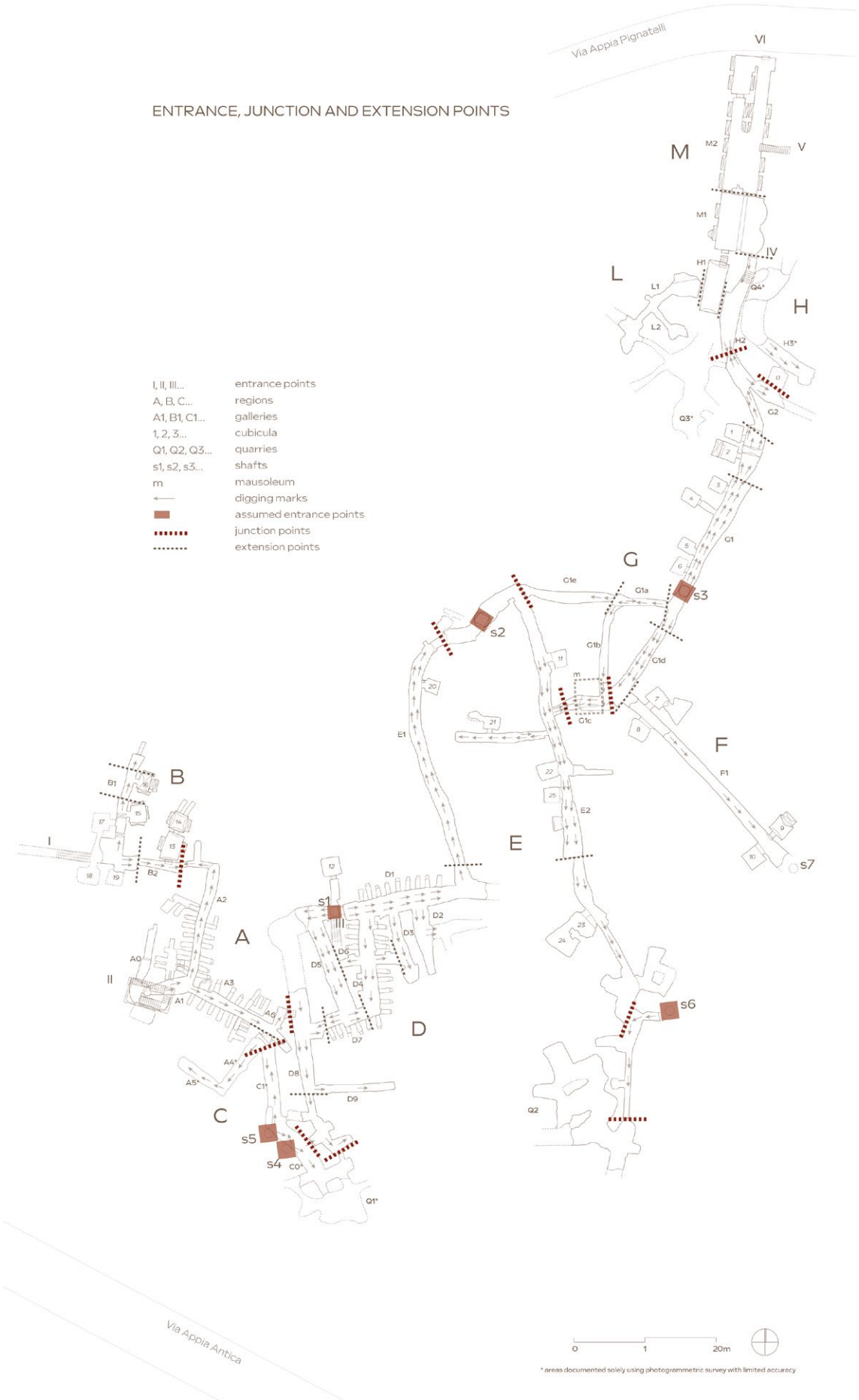

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Fig. 5: Plan of the possible entrance, junction, and extension points of the catacomb

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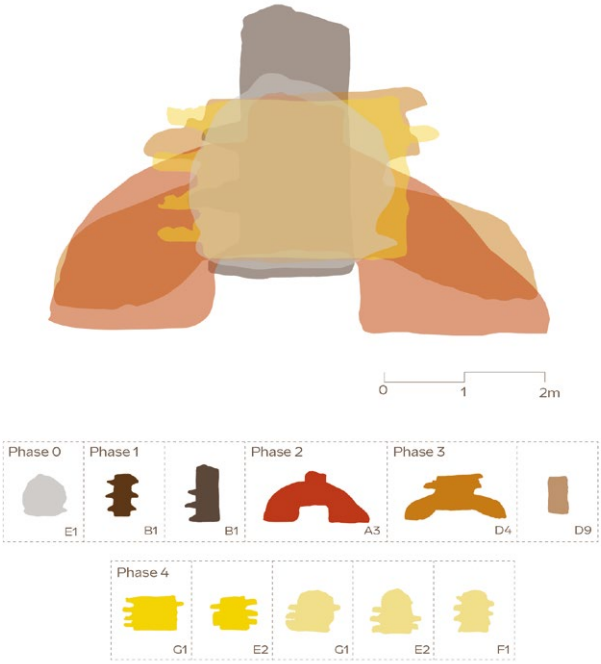

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Fig. 6: Mesh of the catacomb of Vigna Randanini based on the 3D Pointcloud

Fig. 7: Gallery sections from different regions sorted by phase affiliation

ible today (fig. 5, I–VI). This same procedure furthermore allowed us to scrutinize junction and extension points. Junction points can be defined as areas where two different construction phases merge, as evidenced by the hack marks from opposing directions that coalesce. Extension points typically display hack marks that continue on in the same direction, as in the case of galleries that have been added to existing ones for the purpose of creating additional corridors for extra tombs. Study of all this was vital for determining which areas had been independent before evolving into the much larger units one sees when visiting the catacomb today.

10 Once the on-site inspection and on-site scanning had been concluded we proceeded to look at our Pointcloud using a software[16] that enabled the tracing of the course of floor and ceiling levels in all of their architectural complexity. This allowed us to calculate the amount of volcanic soil that had been removed during the construction phase of the catacomb, which in turn permitted us to study the catacomb from economic and demographic perspectives as well as from a chronological one[17]. We then created a mesh and determined the contours of all catacomb galleries (fig. 6)[18]. Galleries displaying remarkable structural characteristics were singled out for further detailed investigation. Galleries that look similar structurally-speaking were hypothetically assigned to one and the same excavation phase, even when such galleries are not located in the same region but in different parts of the catacomb (fig. 7).

16 We used CloudCompare, and Open-source 3D-pointcloud and mesh processing software: <https://www.danielgm.net/cc/> (24.10.2022).

17 As shown by Rutgers 2019.

18 For the mesh we used Geomagic software, for the contours we applied Rhinocerous 3D-software. For Solidworks plugin: <https://www.artec3d.com/3d-software/solidworks-cad> (24.10.2022).

General Architectural Characteristics

11 A proper interpretation of the topographical development of the Jewish catacomb at Vigna Randanini is difficult because of a) the irregular shape of the underground galleries that make up this underground cemetery and b) because of the twisted and seemingly illogical ways in which these galleries are connected to one another. Even so, we believe that the overall architectural development of this underground cemetery must have evolved as follows.

12 The excavation of the Vigna Randanini catacomb initially began near the Via Appia, that is at the opposite end to where the current entrance of the catacomb can be found, which is located on the Via Appia Pignatelli. Once this original entrance on the Via Appia-side of the monument had been dug, the underground cemetery expanded in a northerly and an easterly direction. Because the galleries created at this early point were arranged in a rather regular fashion, we may assume that the expansion process was initially a controlled affair, reflecting a scenario whereby new sections were added as soon as the corresponding *sub divo* plots of land had been acquired (typically, underground galleries could only be dug after one had acquired ownership of the corresponding ground surface above). This process of gradual expansion continued until the catacomb as we know it today was fully formed, with the later building stages underground going considerably faster than those in the beginning.

13 We also discovered that as this process unfolded new underground sections did not just originate from what are the main entrance points into the catacomb today, which are located in regions A, B and M. There were also galleries that were constructed starting from shafts – an observation that is of vital importance if one is to fully understand the construction history of the Vigna Randanini catacomb. In addition to the shafts that are still visible today, we managed to locate five other such shafts. Sealed off at the present, four can be shown to have served as starting points for entering the part of the catacomb in which they are located (originally, they gave access to wells or water reservoirs that were later repurposed and turned into galleries destined for burial).

14 Studying the architectural characteristics of the catacomb we believe that it can be subdivided into a series of smaller units or developmental stages. When units looked similar, we have assumed that they should be assigned to roughly the same chronological period, even in cases where such units were not originally interconnected or located in the same general areas. All in all, we have come to the conclusion that the building history of the Vigna Randanini catacomb consists of four main construction phases that we will detail below. The reconstruction of these phases provides us with a relative chronology.

Construction Phases and Relative Chronology

Phase 0 – Pre-existing Structures

15 This phase comprises the earliest moment in building history of the monument, when the Vigna Randanini catacomb did not yet exist as such. In the area where the catacomb would eventually come into existence there were several pre-existing subterranean structures. These included the *arenari* or quarries Q1 to Q4, L and H, shafts s2 and s3, the *nymphaeum* M, and the cistern H1 (fig. 8)[19]. Access to these underground areas was possible via an underground cistern in region H, via quarries Q1 to Q4, and via shaft s2 and shaft s3. Given the architectural characteristics and the function of all of these structures, it is evident that at this point in time, these subterranean hollows did not have a funerary function yet. They were used for other purposes, including agricultural use, i.e., to collect water that could be drawn up when needed, or as sites from which to extract building materials, i.e., the volcanic rock the Romans are known to have used for a variety of architectural purposes.

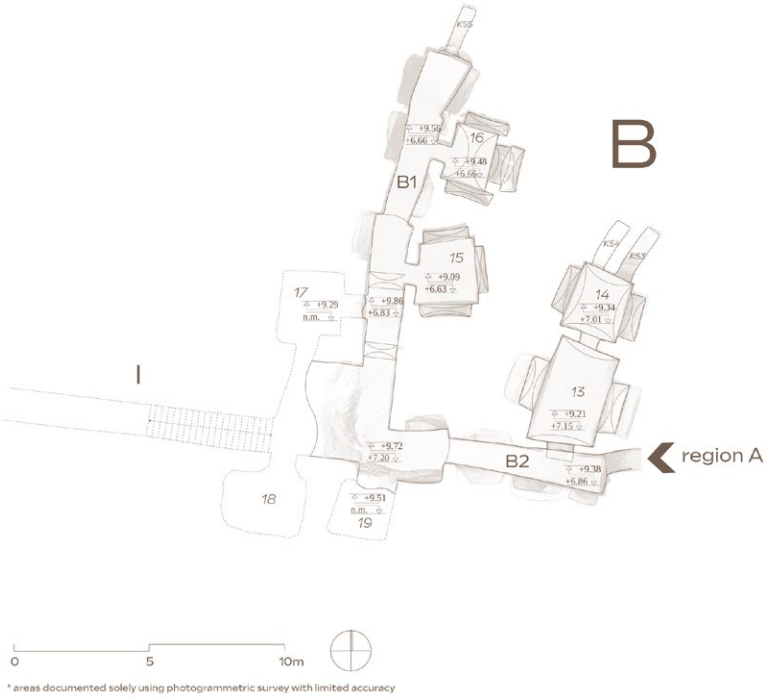
19 A detailed study of the building history of structure M is still a work in progress.

Fig. 8: Phase 0 of development of the catacomb of Vigna Randanini: Pre-existing structures

16 As the underground cemetery at Vigna Randanini began to develop, these structures gradually must have lost their original functions. From then on they were integrated into the catacomb by being adapted so they could be used for burials, particularly during phase 4. In terms of location and positioning, all these pre-existing structures can be found in close vicinity to the main roads in the area, that is, near the Via Appia at one end and near the Via Appia Pignatelli at the other. However, when the digging of the underground galleries destined specifically for burial began, this work initially happened independently from these pre-existing areas of use. These pre-existing features were partly integrated only at a relatively late (fig. 8).

Phase 1 – Earliest Beginnings. A Family Hypogeum

17 The earliest construction phase of the later catacomb took place in region B which includes an entrance buried today but known from previous plans[20], the galleries B1 and B2, and a set of seven *cubicula* (cub. 13 to 19) (fig. 9). This is where underground burials at Vigna Randanini first started. As can best be ascertained by looking at our plan, the area in question was circumscribed. It consisted of but two subterranean galleries. To these initially four and then two more underground burial chambers were later added. Given its restricted size we may assume that this compact subterranean arrangement served as a burial location for a small group of families. Two interconnected *cubicula* in this area, commonly known as Painted Rooms I and II, were richly decked out with wall paintings (numbered here as 13 and 14)[21]. The galleries in this region were used for simple *loculi* burials. By contrast, the *cubicula* contain



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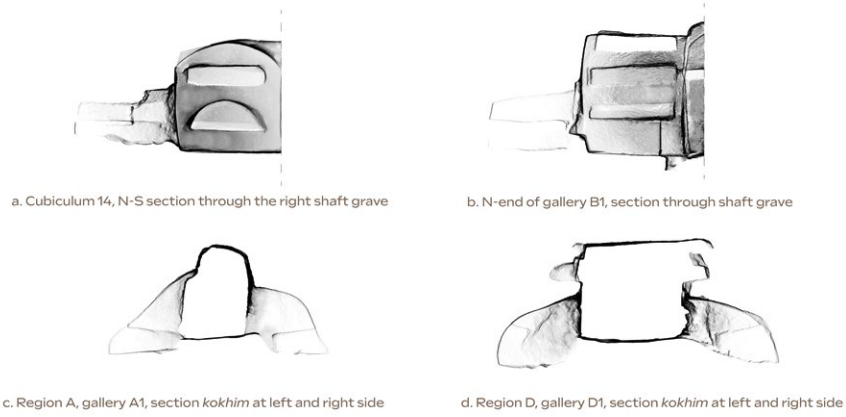

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Fig. 9: Plan of region B

Fig. 10: Shaft graves and *kokhim* graves, sections of point clouds

20 Garrucci 1862, 5; Frey 1933, 386.

21 This designation stems from Goodenough. For an extensive discussion of the wall paintings, see section II of this article.

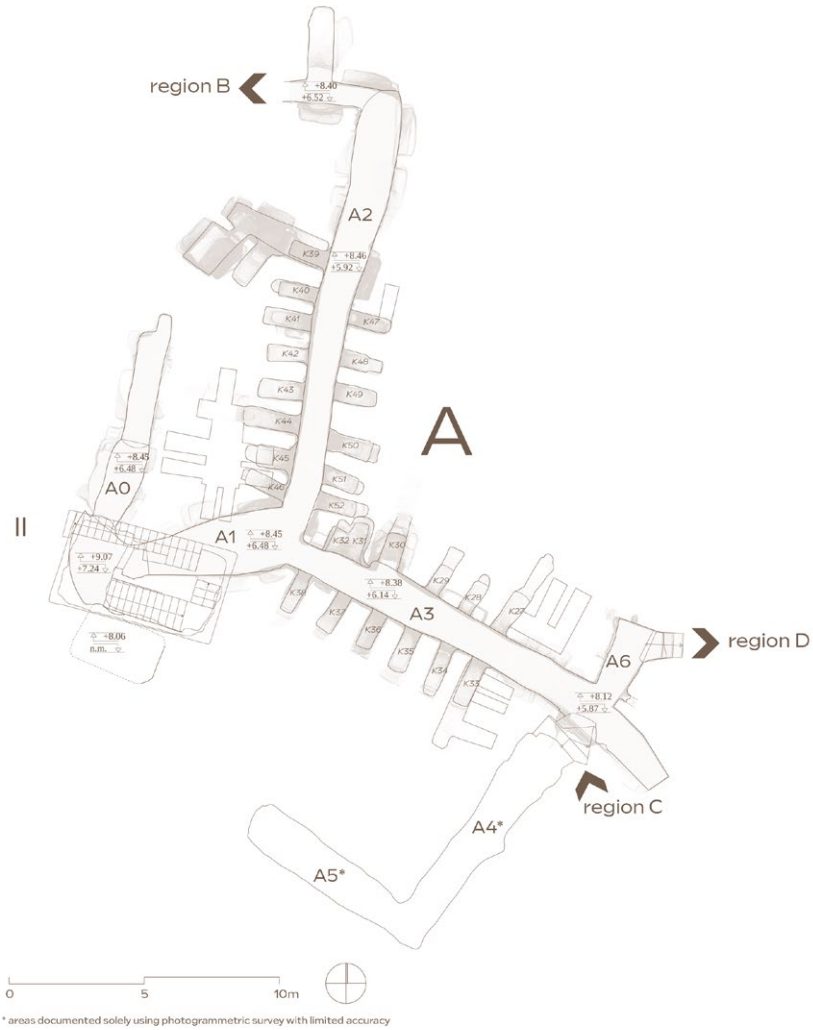
Fig. 11: Phase 1 of development of the catacomb of Vigna Randanini: Beginnings of the burial function – a family hypogeum

more monumental graves of the *arcosolia*-type. On the backwall of *cubiculum* 14 there are two shaft tombs that belong to the original stage of this burial chamber. They seem to be an early form of the *kokhim* type (fig. 10a). There is still another shaft grave nearby, at the end of gallery B1, of the same type and shape as the ones in room 14 and dating to the same early period (fig. 10b)[22]. When one looks at the boundaries of region B, it can be observed that these take on a quadrangular shape. Such a shape is no coincidence. It indicates that the earliest phase of the Vigna Randanini catacomb must have originated under a property above that was connected to the Via Appia Antica – one with clearly delineated boundaries (fig. 11)[23].

Phase 2 – Development of a Jewish Collective Hypogeum

18 The next construction phase entailed the digging of region A, which comprises 26 *kokhim*, here numbered as *kokhim* 27 to 52 (fig. 12). Originating independently from region B, as indicated by its shape, region A corresponds once again to a clearly delineated property above – a plot of land that was once again accessible from the Via Appia Antica and that may have been acquired for the specific purpose of wanting to develop a cemetery underground. Access to region A took place via the independent entrance II, from which galleries A0, A1, A2, and A3 were then dug. Gallery A0, which is the first gallery on the left of the entrance can also be considered as belonging to region A. It contains five *loculi* graves only. Since this gallery was excavated on a higher level than A2 but constructed in similar fashion as A1 it is probable that it also developed during this phase. Galleries A4, A5 and A6 are to be considered as extensions of these early galleries and represent a later stage in the development and exploitation of region A.

19 The two rectangular galleries A2 and A3 constitute the main structural feature of region A. On both sides of these two main galleries, we encounter a group of 26 *kokhim* graves (fig. 10c). These were all hollowed out of the tuff walls in an orderly and systematic fashion. These *kokhim* have a distinctive appearance.



12 Fig. 12: Plan of region A

22 For further analysis, see section II (on these graves being part of the original *cubiculum*) and section V (on the Jewish nature of *kokhim* graves).

23 Because *hypogea* in and around Rome first developed as underground extensions of funerary mausoleums located above ground (e.g., Brandenburg 1984), it can be assumed that regions B (and A) of the Vigna Randanini catacomb also developed in that manner. On the property of the Vigna Randanini catacomb there are ruins of a second-century mausoleum described by Pirro Ligorio as Sepolcro dei Caeselli but without any clear connection to the underground catacomb, see Rausa 1997, 88–91.

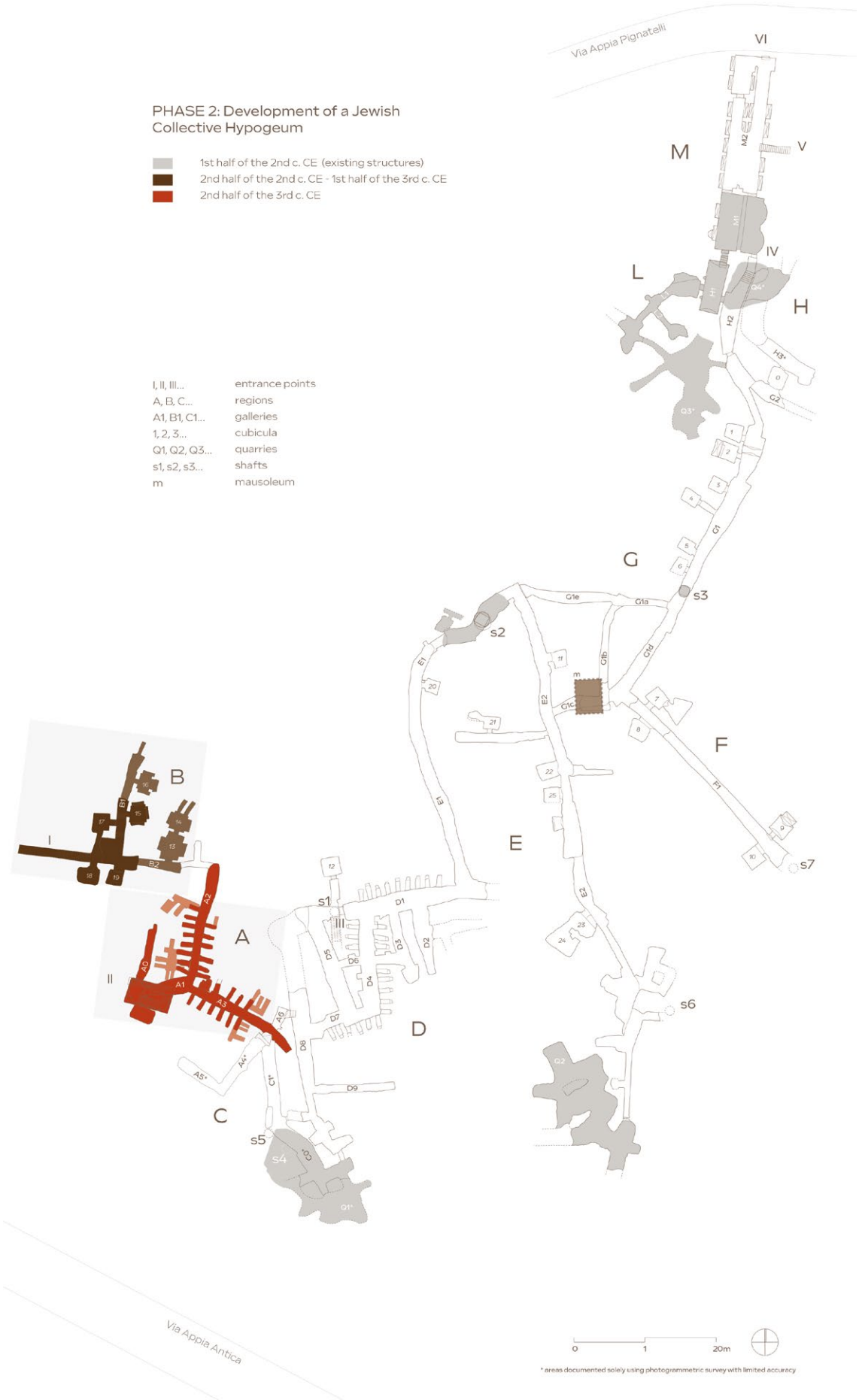


Fig. 13: Phase 2 of development of the catacomb of Vigna Randanini: Development of the first Jewish collective hypogeum

They have been cut at right angles to the gallery, meaning that their entrance is from the gallery into the sides of which they were excavated. The openings are typically narrow and rectangular, with an elongated form that ends in a semi-circular top. Inside, the ceilings are vaulted. They end in a kind of a little semi-circular niche. At the floor level of the passage a ledge was created in the vertical side wall. The inside of the *kokhim* could be closed off by placing slabs on such ledges. The frames around the outside opening were recessed to accommodate a vertical closing slab. One such slab was found elsewhere in the catacomb.

20 Regarding their formal appearance, the *kokhim* in this area all look the same, meaning that the people buried here refrained from expressing differences in social hierarchy through their funerary architecture[24]. The limited number of *kokhim* (26) along with the size of the galleries allows for the conclusion that this cemetery was intended for either a group of families or a small community. It is interesting to note that some *kokhim* (k. 27, k. 33, k. 39, k. 45) were deepened to provide space for additional burial slots, turning these tombs into what looks like small family tombs (even when access was fairly difficult as these spaces could only be entered through the original *kokh*). Because they have all been broken into long ago, we do not and cannot know whether the *kokhim* graves at Vigna Randanini were used for primary or secondary burial. Hence we can no longer determine the exact number of original burials per *kokh*. At some point *loculi* graves were added to the galleries where the *kokhim* are found. We do not know whether this happened at roughly the same time that the *kokhim* were being constructed or later. In the end, this particular region contained around 100 burial places in total.

21 In terms of the cemetery's relative chronology, the most likely scenario seems to be that region B was already functioning independently when the first few galleries in region A were being created (fig. 13). Work in region D, to be discussed below (phase 3), probably began at roughly the same moment in time that the *kokhim* were being added to the main galleries of region A.

Phase 3 – Development of a Second Collective Jewish Hypogeum

22 In due course a second collective hypogeum was created at Vigna Randanini. This happened in region D, that is, in an area that comprises *cubiculum* 12 and *kokhim* nos. 1 to 26 (fig. 14). Region D is located close to regions B and A. Once again, its outer boundaries are rectangular in shape, suggesting that this area corresponded to a clearly delineated plot of land on the surface above. Access to region D probably occurred via an independent entrance that is blocked and therefore inaccessible today (it may have been partially destroyed). It allowed access via gallery D1 and was located opposite *cubiculum* 12 and the shaft s1[25]. Galleries D2 to D7 – galleries that are so broad that they may rightly be called funerary halls – were all excavated at this time, as part of what appears to be a coherent construction project. Region D comprises one beautifully painted *cubiculum* (cub. 12, a.k.a. Painted Room III), which is located close to an air and light shaft. Galleries D8 and D9 show a layout that differs slightly from the initial galleries of the region D. They are also part of this phase, probably of its later stages.

23 The most distinguishing feature of region D is the presence of *kokhim* graves of which there are 26 (fig. 10c). They can be found distributed in the walls of galleries D1, D4, and D7. *Loculi* graves also occur regularly, especially in the galleries D2, D3, D5, D6, D7, D8 and D9 where they can be found evenly distributed along the walls. The *loculi* that occur in galleries D1 to D4 were added secondarily. The only *cubiculum* in the region, no. 12, is located close to the entrance and contains wall paintings; it is the single most

24 Again, see for the discussion of the form and possible origin, *infra* section II and V.

25 Remains of modern concrete and indications of a staircase that once served to enter this region are visible in the area around the shaft s1. The 1984 PCAS plan also shows an indication for the expansion of the gallery and steps of a staircase in that direction.

important burial place in this part of the catacomb. It is conceivable that it served as the burial chamber of the donor and his/her family. Generally speaking, region D seems to have functioned as the burial space of a group whose members were keen on finding a proper resting place in the rectangular halls that surrounded the monumental burial chamber that dominates this part of the hypogeum. All in all, there were 26 *kokhim* graves in region D and six *loculi* in *cubiculum* 12 that seem to belong to the initial phase. In due course, further *loculi* were added increasing the total of burial spots in this area to 340.

24 In terms of building history, it seems clear that galleries D2 to D7 were excavated in a consecutive fashion right after the construction of entrance gallery D1. Furthermore, it is important to note that at this particular stage these galleries were not yet connected to any of the other underground galleries, as is also indicated by the fact that this region was originally located at a higher level. Because of the particular shape of the galleries – three times as wide as those in region B and twice as wide as the galleries of region A – and because they were more densely packed with *kokhim*, it seems reasonable to conclude that region D came into existence independently and at a later stage than regions B and A, conceivably it was the product of a group of catacomb workers that

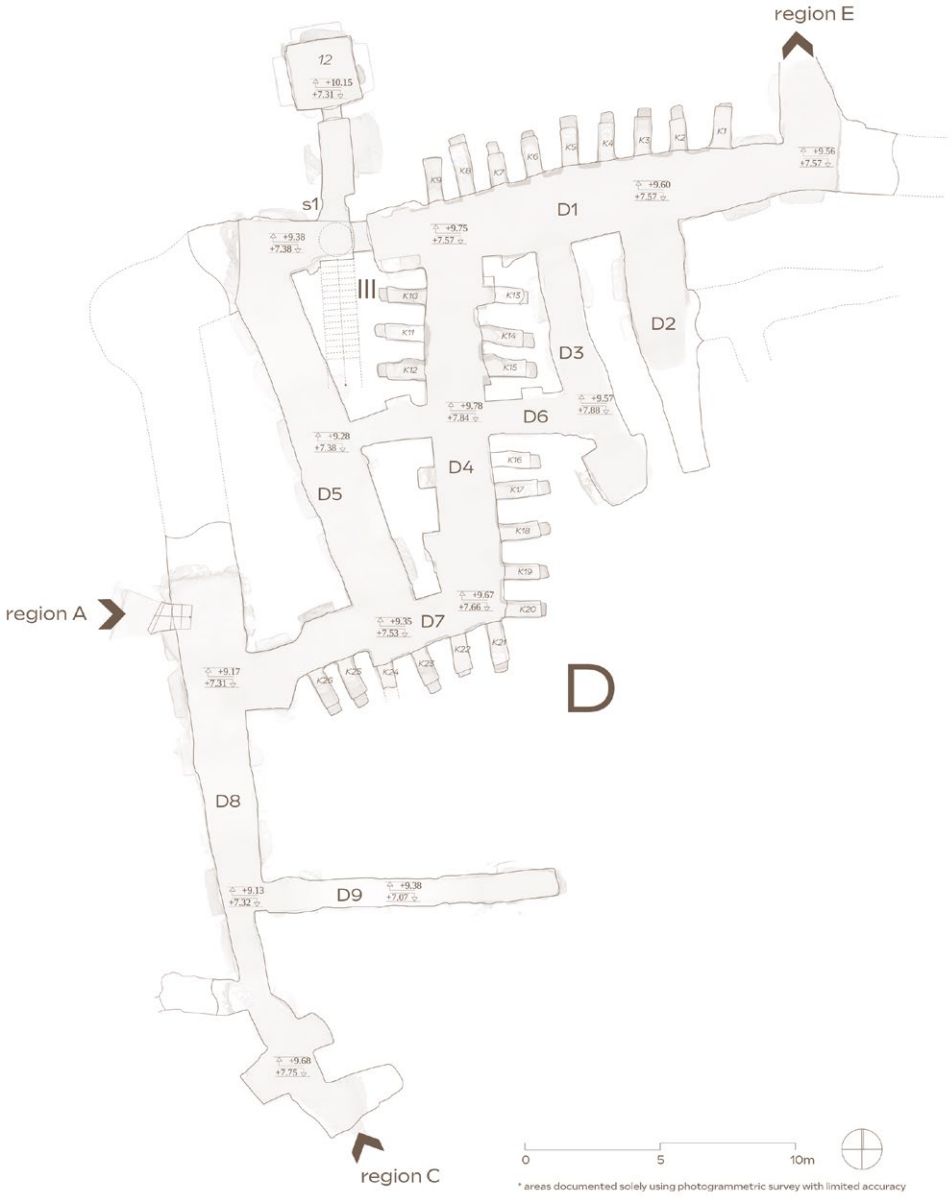


Fig. 14: Plan of region D

Fig. 15: Phase 3 of the development of the catacomb of Vigna Randanini: Development of a second collective Jewish hypogeum

had their own individual desire to dig a burial space in a local character[26]. The extension of the galleries in region D that connected this area to the rest of the Vigna Randanini catacomb date to a second phase in the construction of the D-region. This happened at a moment when the decision was taken to interconnect all the underground regions (so B, A, and D) in the northern part of the Vigna Randanini catacomb (fig. 15).

Phase 4 – Development of the Catacomb

25 The Vigna Randanini complex developed into the catacomb one can still visit today when a) regions B, A and D were interconnected; b) when the existing underground structures E, G, F, H, and L, which are all located in the central and southern sections of Vigna Randanini, were extended; and when c) additional *cubicula* were added, namely the ones numbered 11 to 25, 1 to 6, and 7 to 10 (fig. 16). It was only then, when the northern and southern sections of the Vigna Randanini catacomb were merged into a single underground structure, that one can begin to call this complex a real catacomb. Areas that were once used by separate groups of people, as in case of regions A and B, now start to become an integral part of a cemetery that feels, for the first time, like a genuine communal underground graveyard.

26 The process that turned the monument into a continuous interconnected space first started when region D was extended to the north and region E was developed, as is evidenced by the construction of galleries E1 and E2 (fig. 16). Soon after that the already existing region A was extended further via the construction of the additional galleries A4, A5, and A6. Shortly thereafter area A and region D were connected to one another, thus creating a contiguous space where before there had been separate underground cemeteries. Also, for the purpose of connecting the new northern galleries to the existing entrances in the south and the utilization of the existing system for burial purposes, a partial destruction of existing graves took place. Such a situation can be found at the junction point of D/A area where signs of cutting through a pre-existing *loculus* from the direction of the A region are clearly visible. Another example is at the junction point D/E where the extension was made from what appears to be the back wall of a previous *cubiculum* (fig. 5).

27 At roughly the same time, there also occurred a further expansion of existing underground structures. This happened near shaft s3, where galleries G1 and G1a–c became integrated into the system of underground galleries (fig. 16). When the first galleries were created in region G this area did not have a separate entrance (there only was a shaft, s3). To connect G to an area with an entrance and to create conditions that would allow for further expansion, a connection was made between G1c and E2.

28 What is perhaps most remarkable about the galleries that were built at this point is that they no longer have the shape of compacted *nuclei* aimed at accommodating but a small number of burials, as had been the case earlier in regions A, B, and D. Instead, we now see that these galleries were designed from the outset to form long, uniform corridors, meant to link pre-existing underground structures for the purpose of creating a single, homogenous catacomb. Looking at the cross-sections of these galleries and studying the accompanying hack marks, there can be no doubt that this is what the building activities performed during stage 4 were designed to accomplish (fig. 7). That the walls of the galleries now added were furnished with a dense network of *loculi* graves – interrupted only by the entrances to the various burial chambers that were also constructed during this period – provides further evidence to show that the building activities carried out during this final construction phase were all aimed at creating a catacomb in the proper sense of the word.

26 For more, see our discussion in section V.

Fig. 16: Phase 4 of the development of the catacomb of Vigna Randanini: Development into a catacomb

29 This brings us, finally, to the last stage in the building history of the Vigna Randanini catacomb. During this period the southern galleries of the catacomb complex were connected to the pre-existing *nymphaeum* M – an above ground structure that now was repurposed so that burials could take place there, as is evidenced by the presence of fragmented terracotta sarcophagi and at least 70 *arcosolia* graves fitted into what looks like a mausoleum-like building. Entering the catacomb via the Via Appia Pignatelli now became possible. Early on, gallery G1 was extended further to the north at which point *cubicula* 1–2, one of which is also known as Painted Room IV, were added. Another extension of the same gallery happened to the south when G1d was formed and connected to G1c. Gallery G1c was built for the specific purpose of bringing about a connection with region E. As more burial spaces were needed gallery G1d was expanded further, as was gallery F1 where *cubicula* 7–10 were developed (fig. 16). The pre-existing underground structures which we identified as *arenari* or quarries and which are located at the very edges of the Vigna Randanini catacomb complex were probably joined to the catacomb during this phase. This is also when the galleries C0 and C1 (fig. 16) and the southern part of gallery E2 with *cubicula* 23 and 24 were developed.

30 The structural features of all these galleries suggest that much of the work done during phase 4 occurred within a relatively short period of time. The grave type that occurs most frequently during this fourth phase is the *loculus. Loculi* occur in both galleries and *cubicula*. They usually use the available wall space in a regular fashion, organizing the *loculi* in files of three to five tombs. A carefully laid-out grid of tombs resulted, as can be observed, for example, in the D-region in the lower Jewish catacomb under Villa Torlonia (but also in nearly all early Christian catacombs of Rome). Only sometimes do they appear as accidental additions, mostly for secondary tombs. All in all, some 850 *loculi* may be found in the galleries and an additional 120 in the *cubicula*. Given these numbers it is evident that by now the hypogea at Vigna Randanini were in the process of being transformed into a collective catacomb. It is interesting to observe that in this catacomb stage no new *kokhim* were added.

Concluding Remarks

31 The Vigna Randanini catacomb (fig. 16) is located under a triangular piece of land that is wedged between two ancient roads, the Via Appia and the Via Appia Pignatelli. It was on, or rather directly off these ancient roads that the Vigna Randanini catacomb complex first began to develop. When this happened, the monument was not yet a catacomb at all. First to appear was a subterranean cemetery of limited dimensions and consisting of a set of interconnected *cubicula* (region B). It is possible that this cemetery was an extension of a mausoleum above ground, but for lack of evidence we cannot now be sure. Then two further underground cemeteries materialized separately from one another in the same general area, namely regions A and D. They both have the appearance of communal burial grounds and are remarkable because of the omnipresence of *kokhim* type graves. All three early underground cemeteries were located in the vicinity to the Via Appia, conceivably under a piece of land that had long been used by the inhabitants of ancient Rome to erect their funerary monuments in pretty much the same way that we see elsewhere along the Via Appia[27].

32 Development into a catacomb proper occurred from the moment onwards that region D underwent an extension that linked it with regions A and B on one side and with region E on the other. To judge by the physical appearance of the galleries that were added, it follows that the underground cemetery that now came into existence was different in character from the smaller ones that had been constructed separately before. Rather than catering to families or a small community, the walls in regions E, G,

27 Spera 1999, 24.

and F offered space to *loculi* graves that appear all over the place, in the same way we see happening in the Jewish and early Christian catacombs around Rome. This indicates that the Vigna Randanini complex was now transformed to accommodate as many tombs as possible.

33 While this was happening, a considerable number of burial chambers was also added to the new galleries. Many of these are simple in appearance. Only one has wall paintings, of a rather crude nature[28]. We may assume that these burial chambers were meant for and bought by families that wanted to keep together in death. This would explain the visual focus on the founding member that one sometimes sees, as in case of expensive sarcophagi located in the central *arcosolium* facing the entrance in *cubiculum* 2 and *cubiculum* 9. One final vital development during this last stage in the evolution of the Vigna Randanini catacomb was the contemporary extension of region M in a northerly direction, thus linking the Via Appia Pignatelli side of the monument to the rest of the site.

II. The Wall Paintings

Introduction

34 From the moment they were first discovered, the wall paintings of the Vigna Randanini catacomb aroused much interest, not only because of their state of preservation, but also because of their unique iconographical character that combines pagan (or neutral) and Jewish motifs[29]. They have been preserved in the form of four painted *cubicula*: one double and two single burial chambers that belong to three chronologically distinct phases in the catacomb's construction history and use. Here we present a new study of these wall paintings within their broader topographical and chronological context, analyzing these paintings through a study of their style and iconography. As will become evident below this procedure allows one to propose concrete suggestions for a general dating of the respective burial chambers, which in turn helps in dating three of the main construction phases of the catacomb. Moreover, the fully contextualized analysis of the painted *cubicula* proposed here also allows us to gain a more accurate understanding of the possible religious allegiance of those who commissioned these burial chambers, including the oldest family hypogeum. As this latter hypogeum is the oldest one, we will start our discussion with it.

The *Cubiculum* of the Pegasus (*cubicula* 13 and 14)

35 The double cubiculum currently known as "of the Pegasus" (identified on our map as cub. 13–14, see fig. 9) and previously referred to as Painted Rooms I and II[30], is located in region B. These two rooms were the last two chambers to be added to the small collection of interconnected hypogea or subterranean family graveyards that make up this part of the cemetery – the oldest section of an underground cemetery that in due course would evolve into the Vigna Randanini catacomb (identified above as phase 1)[31].

36 The two *cubicula* were dug into the north wall of gallery B2. They consist of a larger rectangular room 13, barrel-vaulted, and a smaller square room 14, arranged along the main axis of the entrance and equipped with a shallow cross vault (fig. 17, 18). Both rooms have *arcosolia* cut into their side walls, each wall being furnished with one

28 To be discussed in section II.

29 Garrucci 1862; Goodenough 1953, 17–21; Rutgers 1990; Finney 1994. 3D models of the cubicula discussed in section II are provided subsequently on the landing page of the article.

30 Goodenough 1953, 17–20; Laurenzi 2013, 55–66.

31 As the plan of region B (fig. 9) clearly shows, the little family hypogeum developed from West to East in at least two steps. Rooms 13–14 at the very west belong to a secondary extension.

of these arched, monumental type of graves. While in room 13 a further large *loculus* was cut into the backwall of the each of the two *arcosolia*, in room 14 two large *loculi* were added above the *arcosolia* (one above each *arcosolium*). This was done as part of the original design, as shown by the fact that the wall paintings take these *loculi* into account. All walls and ceilings were plastered and painted in a single instance. Only the inner sections of the *arcosolia* were never painted nor even plastered.

37 The most remarkable tombs to be preserved in these two painted rooms are the two graves cut into the back wall of room 14, which directly faces the entrance to this chamber (fig. 19). They are shaft graves that have frequently been identified as *kokhim*[32].

38 The wall paintings of *cubiculum* 13–14 belong to the so-called "stile rosso-verde" or red and green linear style – a distinctive type of pictorial decorative pattern best documented in Rome and Ostia in Severan times – and that one typically also encounters in the earliest sections of the early Christian catacombs of Rome[33]. In this decoration system the overall surface of the walls is always white, with the edges including the borders of the *arcosolia* always accentuated by a red band, and with additional decorations done using short green lines.

39 Here, a horizontal red line subdivides the walls of room 13 into two sections: the lower half is a base zone that reaches up to the *arcosolia*. Above it is a main zone that covers the rest of the wall up to the ceiling. In room 14 the red bands subdivide the surface into three horizontal zones, namely a base band, a second framing the *arcosolia* and a third surrounding the *loculi*. The uppermost zone is made up of fields that reach up to the ceiling. While the base zone was kept simply white, the upper zone was further subdivided and decorated. Thin red and green lines create further vertical and horizontal fields that have been organized in a symmetrical fashion even if they are never quite identical in size. These fields display a sparse décor of bars that look like hooks, evoking the illusion that they all hang from or float in space. As a result, there is no three-dimensional depth in these renderings at all. Paintings like these try to imitate, in a very modest form, contemporary architecture-paintings that typically included *aediculas*. Such paintings were usually applied in rooms of secondary importance, hence the reduced quality in the way they represent architectural furnishings[34].

40 The ceilings of rooms 13 and 14 have likewise been subdivided using the same red and green lines that here form a sophisticated concentric system consisting of primary and secondary fields, all of which have been arranged along the main diagonal axis of the rooms. *Horror vacui* characterizes the spaces around the inner fields. These have been filled with various floral and faunal decorative motifs of the kind common in Roman funerary art during this period, consisting of peaceful ornaments such as flowers and birds as well as dolphins and Erotes. The painters paid particular attention to the decoration of the primary image fields on the walls and ceilings. Thus, on the walls that flank the main entrance to *cubiculum* 13 there appear representations of a beautifully rendered

32 We will discuss the phenomenon of *kokhim* as a Jewish type of grave in section V.

33 Overviews in Rutgers 1990, 146–148; Bisconti 2006; Laurenzi 2013, 165 f.; with further bibliography. The same 'style' is applied in rooms of secondary importance in the houses at Ostia. Instead of 'style' it is advisable to use the term 'decoration system', as that is what was intended. Following August Mau's classification of the Pompeian wall painting into four distinctive 'styles' the term 'style' has been applied universally to decoration systems of Roman wall paintings and continues to be used inappropriately. This creates much confusion.

34 For an example, with clear rudimentary indications of architectural structures, see the paintings in the so-called *cubiculum* of Miltiades in the catacomb of S. Callisto, in Carletti 1992; Bisconti 2006, 75–77. In the view of M. Dvorák, catacomb painters, particularly those working in the early Christian catacombs, who developed the green-and-red-line decoration were inventing what he called a "christlicher Sonderstil," that is "a specific Christian painting style," see Dvorák 1923, 94. Even though this has no basis in the surviving materials, especially considering that the paintings of the catacombs develop in the same fashion as Roman paintings documented in other settings, even today there are still those who argue in favor of the idea of a specific Christian 'catacomb style,' or at least a specific Christian dimension to this decoration type, see Bisconti – Ferri 2021, with reference to Mols – Moormann 1998.

Pegasus (one on each wall) that have been painted onto a white surface without any indication of a landscape. Consequently, these mythological horses that give the room its present name seem to float in mid-air. Adjoining the *arcosolia*, we find representations of isolated animals (one per frame) including a chicken, a rooster, a pheasant, a ram beside a *caduceus* and, flanking the entrance to room 14, two peacocks. All these animals stand on greenery, but there is no indication of any sort of real landscape here. In the central tondo on the ceiling we encounter two human figures. The one on the left represents Victory as evidenced by the palm leaf she holds in her right arm. She is pictured in the process of crowning a nude man who is holding a branch, probably an athlete[35].

41 Room 14 (fig. 18) is very similar in decoration, with ornamental motifs that fill the walls that flank the *arcosolia* as well as the outer rings that have been painted on the ceiling and that include the usual flowers, birds, and Erotes. Contained within the ceiling's central tondo we find a female figure that can be identified as Fortuna on account of the cornucopia that she carries[36]. Finally, on the back wall facing the entrance to room 14 there is a central scene that is in poor shape today and that has long been identified as a representation of Orpheus among his animals. This, however, is not convincing at all. Orpheus is tangibly absent in a water-color reproduction of this wall painting, produced in 1873 by the first person to document this room, namely William Ewing (fig. 20). This is an important observation especially because at that time the painting was significantly better preserved than is the case now[37]. Equally important, the available surface on the backwall of *cubiculum* 14 was too small to have accommodated a narrative scene of the kind suggested in the literature (we will argue below that the shaft graves are part of the original design and not later additions that ruined the original wall painting, as has frequently been maintained). Considering such observations, it makes more sense to suppose that the decoration was in line with the rest of these two painted rooms which, as we have just observed, had been decorated with a smattering of isolated motifs rather than with a larger, narrative kind of scene. One final argument supporting this line of thinking relates to the colors used on the backwall. Meaningful figural paintings are usually rendered using bright, fresh colors, as happened in case of the figures represented on the ceilings in the *tondi*. We find no such colors on the backwall of *cubiculum* 14 at all, but rather encounter the more muted hues seen in case of the animals and floral motifs included on the walls throughout *cubiculum* 14. Thus it stands to reason that another kind of image once graced this particular wall, possibly the image of an Eros or a shepherd surrounded by animals, including a horse – in short something that would fit well the overall bucolic scenery we find in these two painted rooms.

42 Overall, the motifs represented on the walls rooms 13 and 14 evoke the atmosphere of a peaceful garden, conveying friendly and positive messages, from the flowers,

35 Balty 1997. J. C. H. Balty, s.v. Victoria, in: LIMC 8,1, 237–269.

36 Ragusa 1997. F. Ragusa, s.v. Tyche/ Fortuna, in: LIMC 8.1, 125–141.

37 William Ewing drew several watercolor images for Henry Parker, see Parker 1877, n. 1161. The scene of the back wall of *cubiculum* 14, now mostly destroyed, was first described by Garrucci 1862, 66, when it was still in a much better state of preservation. Garrucci identified a man or shepherd with horses, as drawn by Ewing. Robert Eisler, who was particularly interested in Orphic themes, is the scholar who started the confusion. During a visit in 1915 he sketched all what he needed to see, namely Orpheus with a lyra, and he published this drawing years later, see Eisler 1925, 4 fig. 2. Eisler's reconstruction remains quite impossible. There may have been a central shepherd as part of a bucolic scenery, or an Eros and a horse, but the interpretation as Orpheus, discussed again in Laurenzi 2013, 60 f. seems anyhow impossible, as the only animal that was recognizable before this part of the wall painting disappeared was described and depicted as a horse. A horse is surely the least characteristic animal in Orpheus' entourage, see Garezou 1994 and against Bisconti 1988 and Bisconti 2000a, 237. In fact, the old PCAS photograph in Nuzzo 2000, 137 fig. 194, still shows parts of the horse and probably the head of a shepherd. See for the older discussion also Rutgers 1990, 146 with note 43. Very helpful too is Finney 1994, 247–256, esp. 251. The image of Erotes grazing sheep or other animals occurs quite frequently, for example in the Domitilla catacomb, in the *cubiculum* of the Good Shepherd or in the *cubiculum* of Ampliatus (both contemporary to our case), and, even in combination with shepherds and horses, in painting no. 63 (fourth century), see Wilpert 1903, taf. 249, 2.

Fig. 17: *Cubiculum* 13, orthogonal wall-views of the 3D model: a) West wall, b) North wall, c) East wall, d) South wall, e) Ceiling

Fig. 18: *Cubiculum* 14, orthogonal wall-views of the 3D model: a) West wall, b) North wall, c) East wall, d) South wall, e) Ceiling

Fig. 19: Back wall room 14, shaft graves and wall painting

19

the Erotes, and the animals to the representations of – clearly traditionally Roman – Victoria and Fortuna. This brings us to an apparent contradiction that scholars have been trying to solve: the supposed contrast between an iconography that is not Jewish at all and the two graves in the back that are arguably Jewish in character; or, more generally put, that these two painted *cubicula* are part of a catacomb that is clearly Jewish (note that we have no *in situ* epigraphic evidence from these chambers that could solve the matter one way or the other)[38]. While some have argued that the pagan iconography of the paintings shows that the first owners of these burial chambers must have been pagans[39], others have focused on shaft graves in room 14 as an indicator to show that

38 Noy 1995, no. 338 was not located here *in situ*, as suggested by Mazzoleni 1976, 92. This is evident when we look at the engraving in Roller 1881, fig. IV, which is an early engraving that lacks any reference to this inscription. Roller includes two other inscriptions in his illustration, namely Noy 1995, nos. 336 and 331 but they are also not in their original location (and have since been removed). Noy 1995, no. 223 is lying around in one of the *arcosolia*, but again clearly not *in situ*.

39 Goodenough 1953, vol 2, 21. 30–32; Leon 1960, 60; Mazzoleni 1976, 92; Rutgers 1994, 44 f. 64; Levine 2012, 149.

20

Fig. 20: William Ewing, water colour, Foto Parker nr. 1160

the original owners were Jewish all along[40]. A third interpretation seeks to reconcile both views, arguing that the paintings represent a first, pagan phase, while the Jewish shaft graves relate to a second stage that coincides with the moment the originally pagan hypogeum was being integrated into the nearby Jewish catacomb, namely the one we have identified above as cemetery A[41]. To support this third theory, scholars point to the fact that the digging of the two Jewish tombs in the backwall of *cubiculum* 14 partially destroyed the wall paintings, which in their view documents a distinct chronological order – one where the pagan wall paintings come first and the Jewish shaft graves later[42].

43 Having once more investigated the back wall of room 14 carefully, we conclude that the third theory summarized here turns actuality upside down. When one looks closely at these wall paintings, it becomes evident that the two shaft graves were part and parcel of the original architectural and artistic design. Even after some parts of the plaster on this wall have disappeared since (especially around the right shaft that was entirely excavated down to the floor level at some point, fig. 19), enough of the painting remains to reconstruct its original layout (fig. 21). What we are looking at here is an unusual composition – one where a horizontal partition into three bands was combined in an uncommon fashion with a vertical division of the main field, as evidenced by the remaining parts of the red lines and green frames (mostly at the left side and in the center)[43]. This uncommon pictorial composition was designed specifically so that the wall paintings would accommodate and integrate the shaft openings, which had been cut out of the rock before any painting or even stucco was applied to the wall. There is simply no other type of grave in the catacombs (i.e., *loculi* or *arcosolia*) that could

40 Nuzzo 2000, 135 f.; Laurenzi 2013, 37 f. 47. 55 note 24.

41 Laurenzi 2013, 65 f.

42 See, for example, Nuzzo 2000, 137. The discussion and further bibliography also in Dello Russo 2013, 22–24.

43 This was supposed already in Mazzoleni 1975, 29, and Dello Russo 2013, 23.

Fig. 21: Reconstruction of the main wall of *cubiculum* 14

21

be inserted in this layout, and a layout of the paintings without the two shafts makes no sense at all[44]. In short, the remaining portion of the wall painting suffices to reconstruct the original situation as one where the shaft graves were an integral part of the original design of room 14.

44 Moving on to the broader artistic context to which the red-and-green linear decorations in rooms 13 and 14 belong and from which they emerged, it should be noted that paintings done in this decorative system survive in several contemporary nearby underground cemeteries. Even if these paintings may not have been executed by the same craftsmen, they were surely produced by workshops that were closely related to the one responsible for rooms 13 and 14, as is evidenced by painting style, decorative system, and compositional design[45]. There are several good examples that are relevant here including a) the so-called "Sacrament Chapels" – a group of six private *cubicula* (A1–A6) that date to 230–260 C.E. and that are located in the Area I in the catacombs of Callixtus on the Via Appia; b) the so-called "crypt of Lucina," which consists of three *cubicula* belonging to a private nearby hypogeum (usually referred to as L1, X, Y), also

44 See fig. 19, 21: The wall paintings wrap themselves around the shaft openings and "respect" them. This applies even in case of the grave on the right, which later on was deepened. All of this is evidenced by the red painted decorative lines that frame these graves. We see this clearly when we look at the horizontal lining that sits on top of both shafts and that represents the lines that pictorially divide the upper and central halves. As for the shaft grave on the left, we notice that there are still red decorative lines to the left and under it, just as similar red lines have been preserved to the right of the shaft grave on the right. Furthermore, the lower half of both graves were interlinked with a red decorative line designed to form a central ornamental field, one decorated with green leaves meant to highlight the central axis. We may assume there once were further decorative lines between the two graves, otherwise the surviving decoration does not make sense. All in all, the layout of the wall paintings on the backwall clearly integrates the graves into its pictorial composition, meaning that paintings and graves were created at one and the same time.

45 Finney 1994, 146–274 was the first researcher to suggest that these early Christian and pagan paintings were produced by same craftsmen. He suggests very close workshops were responsible for decorating the sacrament chapels and the chapels of Lucina in Callisto, and for our room 13 and 14 in the Vigna Randanini. For how craftsmen can be identified by paying careful attention to the many little differences in the decorations, see Zimmermann 2002, 45.

situated in the Callixtus catacomb[46]; c) the so-called "galleria dei Flavi," a private pagan hypogeum which is now part of the nearby Domitilla catacomb on the Via Ardeatina[47]; and d) the so-called *cubiculum* of the "Good Shepherd,"[48] the only *cubiculum* belonging to a small communal cemetery which was also integrated into the Domitilla catacomb at a later point in time.

45 What all these burial chambers have in common is that they display the same elementary design that we have seen at Vigna Randanini, namely a basic structure done in the style of red-green linear decorations, with further embellishments consisting of traditional ornaments such as isolated birds and flowers. Some of these burial chambers, such as the "hypogeum of the Flavi," are pagan or neutral insofar as the decorative motifs included on its walls and ceiling are concerned. Others, such as the so-called *cubiculum* of the Good Shepherd, whose owner may have been a Christian as indicated by the evidence from the surrounding galleries, make use of a traditional iconographic type, simply because a specifically early Christian iconography had not yet come into existence at this time[49]. For yet others, such as the ones at the Callixtus catacomb, their early Christian connection is shown by funerary inscriptions and the fact that biblical scenes have been added to the standard repertoire. As has been pointed out frequently, the early Christian additions that appear in the Callixtus catacomb are clearly experimental in character: renderings of Jesus as the Good Shepherd or scenes taken from the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, such as the Sacrifice of Isaac, Daniel in the Lion's Den, or the Resurrection of Lazarus, seem ad-hoc inventions that were inserted on the spot because the customer was keen to include such additions[50]. Looking at these developments from the perspective of how the workshops that produced red-and-green linear decorations operated, it becomes clear that these were produced by one or more groups of painters that were active all over Via Appia/Via Ardeatine region and specialized in producing standardized work. Even so these workmen also responded to what customers required of them, adding new iconographic features where these could be accommodated into the general framework of the work they offered. This was a very dynamic moment in the history of Roman wall painting, and the workshops were responding creatively to new demands[51].

46 Returning to the iconography of rooms 13 and 14 in the Vigna Randanini catacomb and considering what has just been said about how the workshops operated, we may conclude that the wall paintings there were simply ordered "off the shelf," that is, without the addition of further iconographical, or, in this case, specifically Jewish, motifs. It is important to stress at this point that the absence of such Jewish iconographic motifs does not automatically exclude Jewish ownership[52]. It is conceivable that when these paintings were done, Jewish art too had not yet come into its own so that at this point there was hardly any repertoire to make use of (note that in our discussion of the topography of Vigna Randanini we concluded that this section is among the earliest in the construction history of the monument)[53]. Also, it is conceivable that there were Jews in Rome that had nothing against the representation of Fortuna, of Victoria, or even of a nude athlete on the ceiling of their burial chamber, as themes that exuded a generalized

46 See Bisconti 2006; Bisconti 2009.

47 See Pani Ermini 1969; Pani Ermini 1972; Giuliani 2002; Zimmermann 2016, 1996 f.

48 See Pergola 1975; Fasola – Testini 1978, 103–139; Zimmermann 2016, 1996.

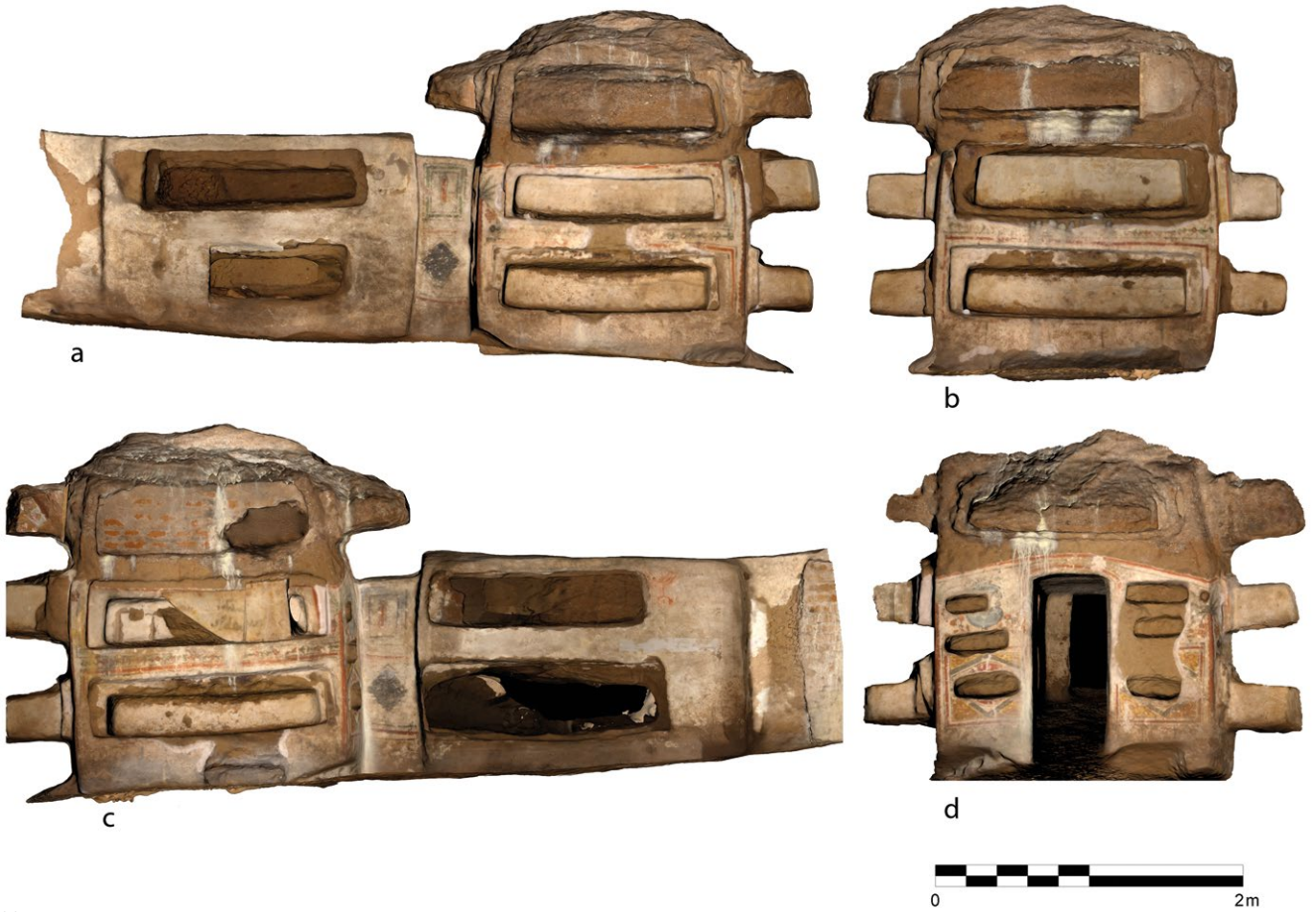
49 On the integration of the *cubiculum* of the Good Shepherd into the Domitilla catacomb, see Fasola 1989, 59; Fiocchi Nicolai 2018, 116.

50 Bisconti 2000b, 309–316; Bisconti 2009, 25–28; Zimmermann 2015, 457–461; Zimmermann 2021, 50–54.

51 Innovative painters were also at work in the nearby catacomb of Praetextatus, where in the unusual *cubiculum* 'of the coronatio' a group of experimental and unique Christian scenes was painted in a setting of red-and-green-line decoration, see Bisconti 1997.

52 Rutgers 1995, 79 f. 92–95; Levine 2012, 150.

53 Levine 2012, 69–97.



22

Fig. 22: *Cubiculum* 12 "With the Palm Trees", orthogonal wall-views of the 3D model: a) South wall, b) West wall, c) North wall, d) East wall

sense of success and well-being[54]. Fundamentally, such representations cannot be taken as evidence to argue that the owners of rooms 13 and 14 must by definition have been pagans.

Cubiculum "With the Palm Trees"

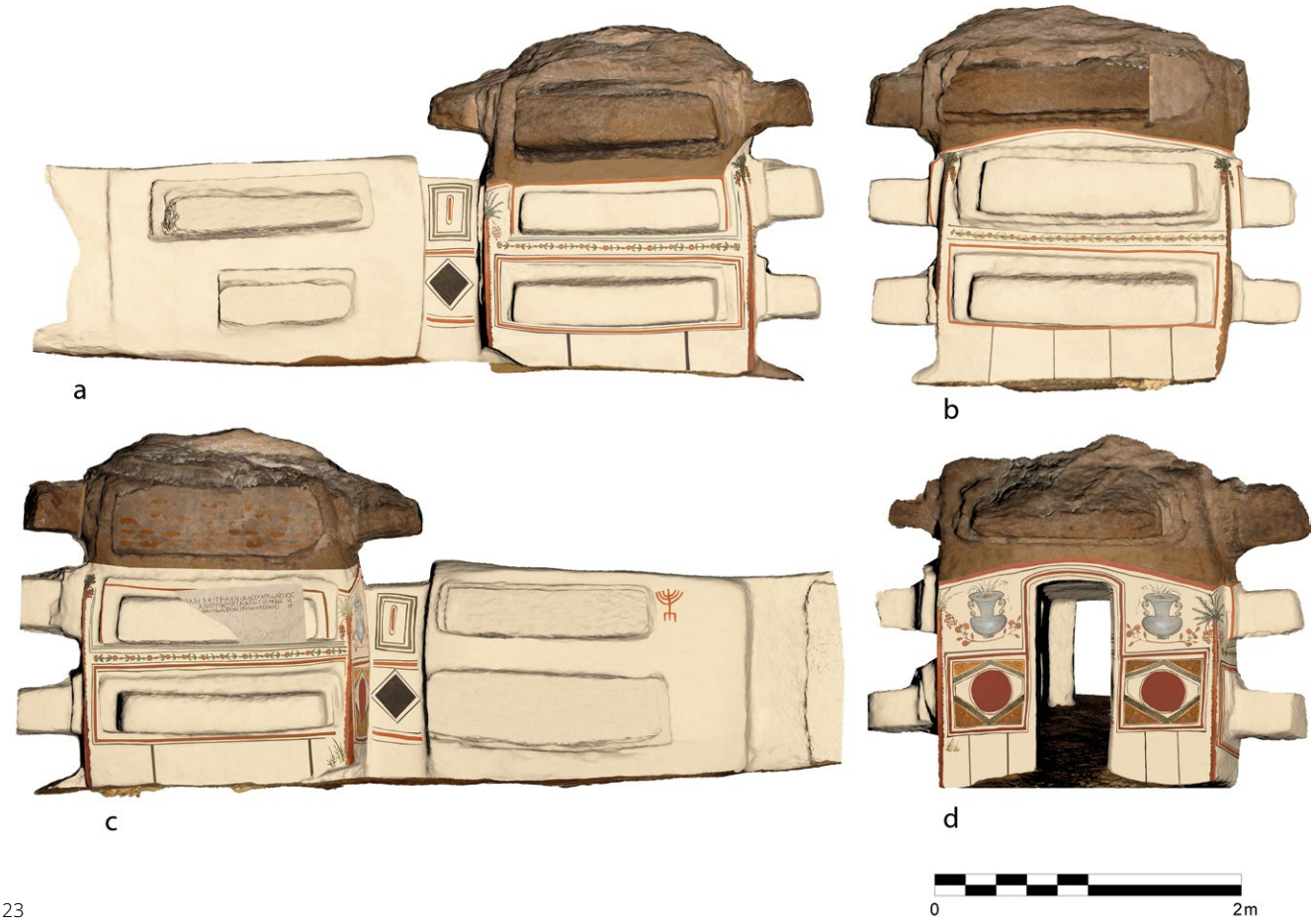
47 The third painted room is cubiculum 12 (fig. 12). Known in the literature as Painted Room III, the current designation "With the Palm Trees" is appropriate because of the four beautiful date palms that decorate the four corners of the room[55]. As will be detailed below, the paintings contained in this *cubiculum* represent a next step in the decoration history of the site. *Cubiculum* 12 is the only example in region D. As suggested above it stands to reason that *cubiculum* 12 was the burial chamber of the donor or the owner of the region – a hypothesis that finds further confirmation in the fact that it faces what originally was the only access to this section of the catacomb (III)[56].

48 A four-meter-long *dromos* or entrance gallery flanked by a set of two huge *loculi* on each side precedes *cubiculum* 12. This connects the entry to the *cubiculum* to the gallery D1 wall. The three main walls of *cubiculum* 12 were originally prepared to receive two huge *loculi* each, while the entrance wall remained without graves (fig. 22). In due course, however, this chamber came to be used intensively. The original flat barrel vault was raised to create space for one additional *loculus* on each of the room's

54 On the general dislike of nudity in Judaism, see Moon 1992; Poliakoff 1993; Orpana 2019. On Jews as athletes, Kerkeslager 1997. For another example of this phenomenon, see Rutgers 2017.

55 Laurenzi 2013, 51–55, with further bibliography.

56 See also Dello Russo 2013, 12.



23

Fig. 23: Reconstruction of *cubiculum* 12 "With the Palm Trees

four sides, including the area above the entrance[57]. Moreover, three little *loculi* for children were added to the side walls flanking the entrance[58].

49 *Cubiculum* 12 was completely decked out with wall paintings. The *dromos* was covered by a coating consisting of white plaster only[59]. The *cubiculum* was decorated on all sides with paintings that have been well preserved. These paintings display a white plaster base that also covers the interior of all the original *loculi*. The painter then subdivided the walls into three further horizontal zones: there is a base zone that reaches up to the lower *loculi*, a middle zone that extends to the higher *loculi*, and finally a space that stretches all the way up to the vault. The base zone has been decorated with an imitation of ashlar that was painted onto the walls using simple black lines. In the middle zone, all the *loculi* are framed by two bands in black and one in red respectively. In the upper zone we encounter black and blue framing bands. In addition, an ornamental band of flowers functions as a frieze that separates the *loculi* in the middle from those of the upper zone. The entrance wall contains a middle zone decorated with an imitation of *opus sectile.* This scheme consists of a porphyry circle that has been placed into a hexagonal field which, in turn, has been superimposed on a yellow breccia square (fig. 24). In the upper zone, there are two blue fountain *kantharoi* with water splashing out of them. Flanking the feet of the *kantharoi* are flowers, maybe flowering

57 Garrucci claimed in *La Civiltà Cattolica* 6 (1883), 104 that he saw remains of birds that had been painted on the ceiling. It is difficult to ascertain what Garrucci saw precisely, considering that the original ceiling had already been taken out in antiquity.

58 Goodenough 1953, vol. 2, 20 maintained that the back wall of the *cubiculum* had been destroyed but that is incorrect.

59 At the right side of the *loculus* in the east side of the *dromos*, a menorah is painted in a simple red line. It seems possible but not evident that it belongs to the original phase.

Fig. 24: Detail of the entrance wall with palm tree motif

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roses. Last but certainly not least are the four quite monumental palms enlivening the corners of the room. Provided with palm fronds and dates, these palm trees extend over the three zones into which the walls of *cubiculum* has been subdivided. By placing the palm trees in all four corners of this burial chamber, the painter who created this ensemble was literally setting the tombs into a paradise palm garden. In terms of chronology, the paintings, including the renderings of the fountains and the colorful opus sectile ornaments, fit a date sometime in the first half of the fourth century C.E., placing *cubiculum* 12 possibly into the early Constantinian period[60].

50 When it comes to identifying the religious affiliation of the people who ordered the painted decorations in room 12, there are but few indicators to go by. There are no funerary inscriptions from inside this *cubiculum* that are of any help here. We are thus left with the evidence presented by the paintings themselves, particularly those

60 See for a dating Laurenzi 2013, 51; also, the discussion in Rutgers 1990, 148. The *kantharoi* remind one of very similar *kantharoi* in *cubiculum* B at the via Latina catacomb (Ferrua 1990, fig. 47, 67). For *opus sectile*, see also Falzone 2021.

preserved in the main room[61]. As for the motif of the palm tree, which is a fairly unusual image and especially so in the catacombs of Rome, we know that it was used to indicate victory, and, more generally, served as a symbol to denote a paradise garden[62]. Such symbolism explains why it appears in different settings, including early Christian ones where representations of palm trees typically also include renderings of Christ between Peter and Paul, but it does not appear before the fourth century[63]. In Jewish art, palm trees also occur, as a motif that was meaningful to Jews[64]. This would explain why there is at least one other instance of palm trees at Vigna Randanini, namely a rendering of two palm trees accompanied by the usual Jewish symbols such as the *lulav*, *etrog* and menorah that appear prominently as framing devices on the front of a Jewish sarcophagus that was retrieved by Garrucci from an unknown location inside the Vigna Randanini catacomb and that can now be found in the Bode Museum in Berlin[65]. It is significant to note that this piece is a one-off, made specifically for a Jewish customer who seems to have had specific representational wishes. What is remarkable about *cubiculum* 12 more generally speaking is that unlike chambers 13 and 14 there are no animals or human figures represented here at all. There is, however, a straightforward indication of Jewishness in the form of a menorah which was painted in red and which can be found at the right end of the upper *loculus*, on the right side of the *dromos* (fig. 22, 23)[66]. Even if one argues that this menorah was added only secondarily to the *loculus*, it still fits in completely with the general character of region D, which is clearly Jewish.

51 Summing up, it is clear that the evidence for a possible Jewish ownership of *cubiculum* 12 is circumstantial – a definitive identification being difficult on account of the fact that bucolic and garden themes were popular among pagans, Jews, and Christians alike. Still, the palm trees can be shown to have special meaning when seen as having been ordered by Jews. It is conceivable that the person who selected them regarded the vegetal theme as a reference to the old homeland of the Jews, as an allusion to a *Gan Eden*, or as a reference to the future Jerusalem where the general resurrection of the Jewish dead was believed to take place – even as a reference to all of these. No less significantly, *cubiculum* 12 belongs to a section of the catacomb that was clearly Jewish as indicated by the inscriptions and tomb types (to be discussed below). If the owner of *cubiculum* 12 was indeed a wealthy person who financed the construction of the other galleries belonging to this very Jewish cemetery, then we have reason to suppose that he considered the paintings in his own burial chamber as explicit references to his own Jewish cultural identity.

61 The idea that there were painted *mezuzoth* flanking the entrance, as suggested by Leon 1960, 206 on account of a set of straight lines he saw as references to *mezuzoth* (cf. Deut. 6:4–9 and 11:13–21), has to be discounted. In Jewish settings *mezuzahs* are found in domestic and not in funerary settings. Besides, these lines are not titled, as one would expect if these were *mezuzoth.* Being straight instead, they imitate the bands we encounter in the *cubiculum* itself and so should be regarded as decorative rather than typically Jewish in nature.

62 De Santis 2000.

63 See the palms with dates flanking the *arcosolia* and passages of *cubiculum* B of the via Latina catacomb, Ferrua 1990, fig. 44–47, also in the scene of Joseph with his brothers, fig. 58, maybe as an indication of "Egypt". See also the image of the *Concordia Apostolorum*, very close to Randanini, at S. Sebastiano / ex-Chiaraviglio catacomb, with palms separating Peter and Paul and the other Apostles, Bisconti 2009, 168–171; and, also in S. Sebastiano, inside the main tomb of the Platonia, the Apostles who bring crowns to Christ are divided by similar palms, see Nieddu 2005/2006, again as paradisiacal or eschathological allusion.

64 Fine 2005, 140–145.

65 For an extensive study, see Schmidt 2018.

66 See infra, III, fig. 29a left.

Cubiculum "Of the Menorah"

52 The last painted room, known in the literature as Painted Room IV, is our cubiculum 2 (fig. 16). It is located in gallery G1, which today forms the main entrance gallery to region G and thereby also to the entire catacomb. Its name refers to the representation of the menorah on the main back wall that faces the entrance. The decoration of this burial chamber marks the final step in decking out the Vigna Randanini catacomb with paintings. The decoration of *cubiculum* 2 is very simple, yet straightforwardly Jewish in its iconography (fig. 25, 26)[67].

53 The square *cubiculum* is vaulted. It was originally prepared to receive only one single burial in the form of a marble sarcophagus, which was placed below the floor level and was therefore invisible. It was located under a huge central niche carved into the main wall[68]. Later burials, consisting of six *loculi* for adults or adolescent children carved into the side walls and two further *loculi* for small children placed in the entrance wall, seem to confirm regular family use of this *cubiculum*. It is noteworthy that these later tombs cut into, and so destroyed, the wall paintings with which the *cubiculum* had originally been decorated. Paintings had been done on all four walls, meaning that the entrance wall as well as the vault were all equally painted, with the exception of the central niche which was not even plastered. The paintings consist of a white ground onto which a very simple decoration of red frames and greenish ornaments were added in a way that strikes one as a very crude reference or copy of the red-and-green-line decoration we have encountered in burial chambers 13 and 14[69]. Here an irregular red line serves as frame that runs around the room's edges, subdividing the available surfaces into smaller panels. The vault is bisected by a red line furnished with a simplified saw-tooth ornament. Its key feature is a central tondo which is surrounded by four greenish angles. The corners are framed by quarter-circles. They have been filled with green stylized objects that can be identified as (Jewish) *ethrogim*. Above the niche on the main wall (which is the wall facing the entrance) the wall has been vertically subdivided into three. The image of a menorah has been placed in the central panel. Although the menorah is very simple in its portrayal, being drawn in an irregular red line, it is at the same time also quite detailed. Its trunk has been placed on a triangular base and carries arms equipped with stylized leaves. These, in turn, carry seven mounted lamps. Such details indicate that the person who painted or commissioned this otherwise elementary menorah was familiar with the Biblical text that describes precisely what a seven-branched candelabrum ought to look like.

54 As for the remainder of the wall paintings: the left and right walls have been symmetrically subdivided, with a red linear scheme in the form of an ashlar ornament marking the base zone. In the main zone and again in red are drawn three huge shields that seek to imitate, in a very simplified fashion, a wall done in *opus sectile*. The high, elongated trapezoids with semi-circular shapes that unite the decorative system at the corners are reminiscent of other such wall paintings, for example the comparable shields in the so-called *cubiculum* of the *mensores* in Domitilla – an example that might also indicate a possible dating for our *cubiculum* in the second half of the fourth century[70]. Such a date is consistent with our topographical analysis, where we documented that this burial chamber was excavated only at a relatively late moment in time, as one of the last extensions of gallery G1 to the north (today it is accessible from M via H2, but that is not the original access). *Cubiculum* 2 can thus be said to be an integral part of a

67 Laurenzi 2013, 49–51.

68 Rutgers 1988.

69 The quality of the colors and of the paintings is quite limited. It was evidently painted free-hand, and the very pale yellow used for secondary elements was probably once a green color that has lost its intensity.

70 Nestori 1993, 130–132 no. 74; see Pergola 1990; Zimmermann 2002, 129–135 fig. 82.

network of narrow galleries that comprise regions E, G and F, which represent the last phase in the building of Vigna Randanini, when the cemetery was being developed into a true catacomb.

55 As for the religious identity of the owner or owners of *cubiculum* 2, there are no funerary inscriptions but only the wall paintings to go by, which are distinctively Jewish in their iconography[71]. By contrast, the sarcophagus, hidden below floor level, with its 'pagan' imagery (the Muses) and placed under the main arch across the entrance is a typically Roman product[72]. To conclude, it is remarkable that a later generation ruined the wall paintings when they carved a set of *loculi* tombs into the walls. We may assume that their guiding principle was the proper burial of their loved ones, in the setting of a family tomb they had conceivably inherited, and that this desire was of greater significance than preserving the existing wall paintings at all costs.

Conclusions

56 By studying the four painted rooms in the Vigna Randanini catacomb within the context of their topographical placement, it is possible to discern the following developments in terms of iconographical approaches. The iconography of the first two *cubicula*, chambers 13 and 14, is completely standardized, with no references to Jewish motifs at all. We have suggested that these two chambers may have had a Jewish owner all the same, that is, someone who was highly integrated into contemporary Roman culture insofar as that person's iconographical preferences were concerned. The next painted *cubiculum*, namely 12, is part of larger funerary context that is clearly Jewish. Again, the paintings are not at all specifically Jewish in their iconography, even if the palm trees can be interpreted as a visual reference to the Jewish homeland. Also, there are no animals or human figures here, yet it is difficult to determine whether this was the result of a deliberate choice. When the cemetery finally becomes a catacomb with *loculi* tombs lining long galleries, *cubiculum* 2 was created, in which we find a menorah straight across from the entrance that has been painted in the simplest of ways, yet furnished with all of the details necessary to show that we are in the presence of Jewish ownership. When seen from this perspective, it follows that the wall paintings preserved at Vigna Randanini document the same kind of gradual development we noticed while studying the site's topography. Just as the catacomb develops from a privately owned set of hypogea to a fully-fledged catacomb, we see that in terms of its decoration too we are in the presence of a community that is caught up in a process of gradually finding a way towards its own distinctively Jewish visual language.

71 Herzog 1861, 93 mentions a red dipinto, which has since disappeared. The few letters Herzog reported do not allow for any sort of identification.

72 Rutgers 1988 on the only documentation, a picture from the nineteenth-century Parker collection. Incidentally, *cubiculum* 9 in gallery F1 is an exact copy of *cubiculum* 2 in terms of its architectural appearance, with a sarcophagus across the entrance (it lacks wall paintings), meaning that this *cubiculum* too was excavated at a relatively late moment in time.

Fig. 25: *Cubiculum* "Of the Menorah", orthogonal wall-views of the 3D model of all surfaces: a) South wall, b) East wall, c) North wall, d) South wall, e) Ceiling

Fig. 26: Reconstruction of the paintings of the *cubiculum* "Of the Menorah"

III. The Inscriptions

Introduction

57 The epigraphical materials from the Vigna Randanini catacomb comprise 212 funerary inscriptions[73]. These were mostly carved into the stone: 135 such engraved texts survive. Nine further inscriptions were painted on stone. Twenty inscriptions on stone that we know of from the literature are now lost so that we can no longer determine whether they were painted onto or carved into the stone. In forty-one cases inscriptions were engraved onto mortar. Often these were scratched into the mortar while the cement was still wet. Sometimes they were painted onto it. Seven texts applied to mortar are now lost so that we can no longer identify the execution technique used. Finally, there are a few inscriptions placed onto sarcophagi, walls, architectural or building elements, and plaster[74].

58 Early excavations reports including the works of Marucchi, Frey, and Noy allow us to trace the conservation history of most of the inscriptions carved into stone. Having systematically surveyed all the available information, we can assert that many inscriptions that can be found in the catacomb today are no longer *in situ*. In many cases it is challenging to ascertain the original find spot of such inscriptions[75]. This lack of information regarding where inscriptions were located originally obviously hampers our understanding of the epigraphy and the chronology of the cemetery, including the issue of the religious and cultural affiliation of the people buried there.

59 To make matters even more complicated, we also know of several fragmentary inscriptions kept inside the catacomb that are not explicitly Jewish in either content or decoration (to be presented below). These can best be designated as "pagan." It seems plausible that this small set of inscriptions did not originally belong to the Vigna Randanini catacomb. They rather seem to originate from unknown tombs and sepulchral areas above the catacomb, ending up in the catacomb because they were stored there some later time[76].

60 In this section we will first discuss some of the general characteristics of the inscriptions that make up our collection – such as languages, formulae, names, onomastic practices, community-related and other occupational references, and chronology. Then we will examine the few epigraphic materials that, on the basis of the information from early excavation reports, can be assigned to each of the four building phases even when no longer *in situ*. Inscriptions we know for certain are still *in situ* will receive a special attention in this discussion. This approach, which places special emphasis on the larger topographical context in which the inscriptions appear and that also pays attention to how they impinge on the chronology of the site, is new insomuch as earlier studies have only looked at the inscriptions *per se*.

73 For a complete and reliable edition, see JIWE 2, 173–331. See also the *addenda* and *corrigenda* to this volume and JIWE 1 presented in Noy 2005. For an extensive discussion of the cultural meaning of the inscriptions, see Rutgers 1995, 139–209. For a different view on language use, Noy 1997. Equally fundamental is the work of Margaret H. Williams. For her collected essays, see Williams 2013. A brief recent survey in Laurenzi 2013, 84–90.

74 Three sarcophagi, see Laurenzi 2013, 77 f. and JIWE 2, nos. 277. 337. 341. For the two inscriptions on architectural and building elements, see JIWE 2, nos. 394 and 400. Inscriptions preserved on walls and on plaster will be discussed in detail below, in the main text of this section.

75 Garrucci provides useful overviews of where inscriptions were found in the time of his excavations but often refers to the exploration stages of the catacomb in general rather than to specific galleries or *cubicula* (see Garrucci 1862 and Garrucci 1865, 150–192). There is no room in this article to provide more details on the problematic conservation history of the epigraphic materials of the catacomb. I aim to make this topic the subject of a separate study.

76 As is the case with a recently published cippus (Ariosto et al. 2020) and with two fragmentary slabs kept in room H1 and bearing the following texts: [---] *a(nnis) m(ensibus) III* / [---]+A *duo*; ------ / [---]*N*[---] / [---?] *nepotorum* [---] / *b(ene)m(erenti).* All are 'pagan' and because of their lettering and wording can be dated from the first century B.C.E. to around the second C.E.

General Characteristics

61 Greek is the language most frequently attested to in the cemetery, followed by Latin[77]. There are only three fragmentary inscriptions where we cannot identify the original language[78]. None of them has words in Hebrew that one sometimes finds in inscriptions from the other Jewish catacombs of Rome. Unsurprisingly, within the Vigna Randanini corpus there are various interesting examples of linguistic interaction[79]. In fourteen texts we encounter transliteration, mostly Latin epitaphs that were transliterated into Greek[80]. The remaining four examples comprise two further Latin texts written in Greek and followed by Greek closing formulae, one Greek epitaph engraved in Latin characters, and one Greek text that includes a single transliterated word, φεκι for *feci*[81]. We also find seven cases of juxtapositions between Latin texts and Greek phrases, whether transliterated or not[82].

62 Overall and inevitably, we encounter more Greek formulae than Latin ones. Opening expressions concerning the resting place of the deceased typically use the formula ἐνθάδε κεῖτε[83], which appears to be typically Jewish[84]. By contrast, ὧδε κεῖτε is poorly attested[85]. There is one case for both κεῖτε following ἐν εἰρήνῃ and one for κεῖτε placed after the name of the deceased[86]. Comparable Latin expressions are very scarce, appearing only as *depositus* and *hic posita*[87]. Closing formulae express the hope that the deceased would rest in peace. Basically, they are compound forms of the expression ἐν εἰρήνῃ ἡ κοίμησίς σου, but we do also encounter combinations with other pronouns: αὐτῆς/αὐτοῦ, τοῦ, and ὑμῶν[88]. In only one case ἐν εἰρήνῃ can be found at the beginning of an epitaph where it precedes the name of the deceased in the genitive case[89]. As a result of their fragmentary condition, there are seven inscriptions where we cannot identify the finalized version of the ἐν εἰρήνῃ formula[90]. Phraseologies that express the hope the deceased would sleep among the good and the just, which is a typically Jewish blessing, are rarely found[91]. References to the building or placing of a tomb are expressed using the Latin verbs *facere* and *ponere*[92]. Their Greek counterparts, ποιέω and τίθημι, are three times less frequently attested[93].

77 Greek is used in 125 texts: JIWE 2, nos. 205–206. 208. 209. 211–213. 215. 216. 219. 221–223. 227–232. 235–240. 242–244. 246. 251. 253–257. 259. 262. 263. 267–270. 272. 274. 276. 277. 280–282. 286. 288. 290. 292–295. 299. 301. 303–307. 309–311. 314–317. 320. 321. 324. 326. 327. 329. 331. 333. 334. 336–342. 344–348. 350. 351. 353–358. 360. 362–365. 373–376. 382–390. 392–395. 397. 398; Laurenzi 2013, 77 f.; and two new *in situ* inscriptions (to be discussed later). While Latin is used in 49: 207. 214. 218. 224. 226. 233–234. 241. 245. 247–249. 252. 258. 260. 266. 271. 278. 279. 283–285. 291. 296. 297. 308. 312. 313. 318. 319. 323. 325. 330. 361. 366. 367. 369–372. 377. 378. 380. 381. 391. 396. and 399–401.

78 JIWE 2, nos. 225. 300. 302.

79 On bilingualism in Graeco-Roman Jewish community see Rochette 2008. Recent studies on the Greek–Latin bilingualism in the inscriptions from Rome are in Felle 2007 and Tozzi 2019.

80 JIWE 2, nos. 220. 261. 264. 273. 275. 287. 289. 328. 349. 368.

81 JIWE 2, nos. 332 and 335 (Greek closing formula); 204 (Latin characters); 250 (transliteration).

82 JIWE 2, nos. 217. 265. 343. 352. 379 (transliterated); 322 and 359 (not transliterated).

83 In thirty-eight cases (JIWE 2, nos. 209. 212. 219. 222. 223. 227. 228. 230–232. 235. 251. 253–256. 262. 269. 272. 276. 277. 281. 282. 288. 306. 324. 329. 333. 338. 346. 347. 354. 357. 373. 376. 383. 385). See also κεῖμε/κῖμαι in (342. 360) and an isolated κεῖτε (295).

84 Rutgers 1995, 191.

85 JIWE 2, nos. 237–239 and 337.

86 JIWE 2, nos. 286 and 295.

87 JIWE 2, nos. 401 and 207.

88 Seventeen cases of αὐτῆς/αὐτοῦ (JIWE 2, nos. 217. 222. 223. 236–239. 253. 255. 281. 288. 347. 348. 351. 352. 358. 393) and one for both τοῦ (240) and ὑμῶν (336).

89 JIWE 2, no. 375.

90 JIWE 2, nos. 216. 298. 338. 340. 362. 376 and 382.

91 JIWE 2, nos. 233 and 377 (the good); 235. 270. 329 and 342. 343 (the just).

92 Thirty cases for *fecit*/*fecerunt* (JIWE 2, nos. 214. 218. 220. 250. 260. 266. 271. 273. 275. 279. 285. 287. 291. 308. 322. 323. 328. 335. 352. 359. 367. 368–372. 377. 378. 391. 399) and three for *posuit*/*posuerunt* (234. 284. 325).

93 Nine cases of ἐποίησεν (JIWE 2, nos. 206. 208. 229. 267. 321. 336. 351. 358 and 375) and three of θῆκεν (339. 345 and 350).

63 As for the larger historical and cultural meaning of the patterns summarized here, it should be pointed out that the relative importance of Latin, which is more visible in the Jewish inscriptions from Vigna Randanini than in the funerary inscriptions from the other Jewish catacombs of Rome, has given rise in the literature to the theory that the Jews buried at Vigna Randanini were more Romanised than Jews buried in other catacombs[94]. However, as Rutgers has argued at length, the relative differences between the various Jewish catacombs do not allow for such a conclusion[95]. The evidence rather suggests that Jews all over Rome were equally caught up in a process of gradual linguistic and cultural shift, which is perhaps best evidenced by the fact that we see Latin names appearing quite frequently in inscriptions composed in Greek. The naming patterns and onomastic practices we find at Vigna Randanini offer a particularly rich perspective on this phenomenon[96]. As one would expect at this stage of Roman naming practices *nomina singula* are attested the most, while *duo nomina* and *tria nomina* names are rarer[97]. There are a very few formulae indicating double names: ὁ καὶ, ὁ κέ, τοῦ κέ[98]. Latin names occur most frequently, both as *gentilicia* and as individual names, the former being sometimes used independently from the latter[99]. Even so there also is a noticeable presence of Greek personal names, among which *Alexandros*/*Alexandria*[100], *Eusebios*[101], *Prokopios*[102] and *Simon* are the ones that occur most frequently[103]. Semitic and biblical names are rare. Among these, *Iuda* and *Sabatius* (in various forms) appear several times[104]. *Trullis* is the only recorded name of Egyptian origin[105].

64 As noted by David Noy, the inscriptions from the Randanini catacomb provide but few references to synagogues – a term that can equally refer to a Jewish place of worship or to a Jewish community – compared to the epigraphic materials from the other Roman-period Jewish catacombs in Rome, particularly Monteverde[106]. While in the latter there are at least 19 epitaphs that mention a total of eight different synagogues[107], in our cemetery we only find two surviving references to synagogues, those of the Campesians (Καμπησίων) and of the Siburesians (Σιβουρησίων)[108]. Noy thinks that the designation Campesians refers to a community or building located in the Campus Mar-

94 Leon 1960, 77.

95 Rutgers 1995, 176–184.

96 Rutgers 1995, 139–175 provides an extensive analysis. On Jewish onomastic practices in the Western Diaspora, more generally, see Ilan's corpus of 2008.

97 For a summary on the devolution of the *tria nomina* system in relation to the inscriptions from the Jewish catacombs, see Rutgers 1995, 158–163. There are 30 twofold names in 22 inscriptions (JIWE 2, nos. 206. 226. 273. 275. 284. 285. 290. 308. 325. 326. 328. 329. 352. 353. 355. 360. 366. 368–378. 380) and three threefold names in the same number of texts (341. 360. 377). In the latter, as *praenomina*, we find *Aulus* (341), *Lucius* (377) and *Publius* (360); conversely, *praenomina* used as individual names are *Gaius* (220. 306. 367. 373) and a second instance of *Lucius* (344).

98 JIWE 2, nos. 276 and 338, and 217 respectively.

99 The most frequent *nomina gentilicia* are *Aelia* (JIWE 2, nos. 234. 285; three cases), *Aurelius*/*-a* (206. 226. 241. 265. 279. 284. 325. 328 and 378; seven females, five males), *Flavius*/*-a* (265. 273. 290.323; five females, one male), *Iulia* (266. 267. 326. 368. 370 and 378; six cases). On the cultural meaning of these names, Rutgers 1995, 162. Among the individual names, we can consider *Dulcitia* (247. 321. 345; three cases), *Iustus*/*-a* (260. 271. 344. 369. and 379; four males, one female), *Honoratus* (223. 256. 257, and 329; three males) and *Sabinus*/*-a* (291. 295. 308. 348. and 376; four females, one male).

100 JIWE 2, nos. 246. 259. 279. 285. 336. 338. 343 and 368.

101 JIWE 2, nos. 209. 354 and 374.

102 JIWE 2, nos. 222. 281. 282.

103 JIWE 2, nos. 211. 305. 310 and 314.

104 JIWE 2, nos. 217. 231. 262 and 298 (*Iuda*); nos. 220. 244. 269. 339. 356 (*Sabatius*).

105 JIWE 2, no. 229. On this name, see Ilan 2008, 654 s.

106 JIWE 2, 178.

107 The synagogues of Agrippesians (JIWE 2, nos. 130 and 170), Augustesians (96. 169. 194 and 189), Calcarenians (69. 98. 165), Hebrews (2. 33), Tripolitans (166), Vernaclesians (106. 114. 117) and Volumnesians (100. 163. 167). In one fragmentary inscription we can probably read a reference to the synagogue of Campesians (1). On Jews as burners of lime, see Rutgers 2006.

108 JIWE 2 nos. 288 and 338 respectively.

tius. He is less certain about a possible connection between Siburesians and the Subura, known from literary sources as a one of the most disreputable quarters in the ancient Rome[109]. Even if few epitaphs from Vigna Randanini refer to synagogues by name, there are still five fragmentary inscriptions that allude to synagogues and that we can add to our little corpus from this site[110]. The inscriptions in question include references to various synagogue officials (such as *pater*/*mater synagogès*), but they do not include a reference to the name of the synagogues in question[111]. Such references fit neatly into a pattern where it is common for the inscriptional materials from the Vigna Randanini catacomb to refer to the various offices and titles used within the Jewish community of Rome[112]. They include *archisynagogos*[113], *archon*[114], *gerusiarch*[115], *grammateus*[116], and, finally father and mother of the synagogue[117]. At Vigna Randanini there are also several offices and titles that are but poorly attested to and that recur not very often at all. These include the *nomomathes*[118], the *prostates*[119], and a single *hyperetes*[120]. This last person, whose inscription from Vigna Randanini is the only instance of this function appearing in the Western Diaspora, served as an assistant to the *archisynagogus*.

65 Finally, references to non-community-related occupations are rare in the Roman Jewish inscriptions[121]. The Randanini catacomb is no exception to this general phenomenon. Inscriptions record only four professions: a chief physician (*archiatros*)[122], a painter (*zoographos*)[123], a trader (*emporos*)[124], and a sausage-seller (*bubularus de macello*)[125]. All of this suggests that the people buried at Vigna Randanini were similar to Jews entombed in the other Jewish catacombs of Rome in that they wanted their role in the Jewish community remembered on their funerary inscriptions rather than the way in which they earned their living.

66 To propose a precise chronology for the Jewish funerary inscriptions from the Vigna Randanini catacomb is difficult because the easiest and most certain way to date them, namely by deciphering consular dates, applies only in the case of an inscription that is no longer *in situ* and that refers to a person buried in 501/502 C.E.[126]. By looking at the linguistic features and their onomastic characteristics, and by comparing these to contemporary non-Jewish epigraphic materials from Rome, and, in the case of the *koine* Greek, to papyri from Egypt, Rutgers has shown that overall the inscriptions from the

109 Welch 1999.

110 JIWE 2, nos. 216. 236. 251. 292 and 355.

111 JIWE 2, nos. 428. 451. 452 and 527. Still another epitaph from this cemetery mentions a *grammateus Sekenon*, without providing any word for the synagogue (JIWE 2, no. 436). There is discussion about which town is referred to here, nor is it certain that is a reference to an actual synagogue.

112 On the meaning of this, see Rutgers 1995, 199 f.

113 JIWE 2, no. 322.

114 JIWE 2, nos. 210. 235. 256. 257. 259. 265. 288. 289. 322. 337. 338. 342. 344. 351 and 380. See also the archon-to-be no. 259.

115 JIWE 2, nos. 321. 351. 354 and 389.

116 JIWE 2, nos. 223. 249–250. 253. 255–257. 262. 263. 266 and 344. See also the *grammateus*-to-be, no. 259.

117 JIWE 2, nos. 209. 251. 288. 292 and 355.

118 JIWE 2, nos. 270. 374, and 390. It occurs also at Monteverde, no. 68.

119 JIWE 2, no 373. At Monteverde: no. 170.

120 JIWE 2, no. 290.

121 Rutgers 1995, 199.

122 JIWE 2, no. 341.

123 JIWE 2, no. 277.

124 JIWE 2, no. 360.

125 JIWE 2, no. 343. Due to its uniqueness in terms of content and language, the epitaph of *Alexander bubularus de macello* has attracted scholarly attention. Margaret Williams believes he could have been an upmarket sausage-seller, a purveyor of kosher beef (see Williams 2002).

126 JIWE 2, no. 401 (kept in *cubiculum* 3). To propose a precise chronology for the inscriptions from the other Jewish catacombs of Rome is also difficult. Excluding one inscription that may or may not had been found in Rome, there are no more dated Jewish funerary texts from said city (the inscription points to the year 331 C.E. and is edited in JIWE 2, no. 564; it is kept at the National Archaeological Museum of Naples).

Jewish catacombs of Rome, including those at Vigna Randanini, may be said to date to the third and fourth centuries C.E.[127]. This is not to say that individual inscriptions may not be dated earlier, as suggested by Solin[128]. Dating inscriptions on the basis of their decoration, especially using the Jewish symbols they contain, is next to impossible[129].

The Inscriptions from Vigna Randanini in their Topographical Context

67 The Jewish funerary inscriptions from ancient Rome have often been studied without any reference whatsoever to the topographical context in which they were found and to which they belong. Even when it can be challenging to determine where exactly a given inscription comes from, study of the larger physical context can still produce useful insights, as we are about to show here. Specifically, we will look at how the epigraphy at Vigna Randanini relates to the various construction phases we have detailed in section I of this contribution. In fig. 27 we present an overall plan of the catacomb with an indication of all the epigraphic materials that remain *in situ* at Vigna Randanini. This plan is our point of departure in our efforts to determine how this evidence relates to the construction history of the site.

68 While studying the topography of the Vigna Randanini catacomb, we argued that region B and *cubicula* 13–18 belong to **phase 1** in the building history of the site (fig. 11). The only epigraphic find we can assign to this particular area in the catacomb is the epitaph of *Asklepiodote* and *Alexandros*, whose *loculus* was arranged by *Kostantis* (fig. 28)[130]. This inscription was discovered by Garrucci, who noted that he found it in a fragmentary state close to the two painted rooms 13 and 14[131]. The Jewishness of the inscription follows from the closing formula and from *Alexandros*' office, namely *archon*, which was a common one within Jewish communities and which was used to designate a role comparable that of a magistrate[132].

69 Study of the early excavation reports reveals that presently we cannot assign any inscription to **phase 2**, which is when region A was established (fig. 12). In contrast though, we can ascribe *in situ* epigraphic evidence to **phase 3**, when region D came into existence (fig. 14). In the corridor leading to *cubiculum* 12, previous researchers have noted the Greek epitaph of *Kyros*, written on the still-fresh mortar below a *loculus*[133]. In the same passageway there is a Jewish seven-branched candelabrum (*menorah*) painted in red onto the plaster to the right of the upper *loculus* on the eastern wall (fig. 22c, 29a). More menorahs, along with palm branches (*lulav*) and ram's horns (*shofar*), were painted on the fragmentary slab that seals a *kokh* in the nearby gallery D4 (fig. 29b).

70 Jewish symbols also occur in later areas of the cemetery. Two engraved *menoroth* have been preserved on the walls of galleries E2 and G1, both of considerable size (circa 45 cm in height). Interestingly they are located next to the entrances to *cubicula*: one is across from *cubiculum* 4, a second one faces the entrances to the unnumbered room near the southern end of gallery E2 (fig. 30). Three more candelabras were engraved into the still-fresh mortar sealing *loculi* in galleries G1b and E1, and *cubiculum* 3 (fig. 30). Because they are often difficult to discern, it is possible that more such engraved menorahs will be discovered in the future.

127 On vulgar Latin, Rutgers 1995, 184–191. On the disappearance of the *tria-nomina* system as evidenced by the inscriptions from the Jewish catacombs of Rome, Rutgers 1995, 158–163.

128 Solin 1983, 694.

129 The fundamental study on this aspect is by Williams 2011.

130 JIWE 2, no. 336: Ἀσκληπιοδό/τῃ μητρὶ καὶ Ἀ/λεξάνδρῳ ἄρ/χοντι ἀδελφῷ /[5] Κωστάντις / ἐποίησεν / [ἐ]ν εἰρήνῃ ἡ / [κοί]μησις ὑ/μῶν || ΑΣ.

131 "... a poca distanza dalle stanze dipinte" (Garrucci 1865, 158 no. 4).

132 Sources and parallels for this title are in the comment of JIWE 2, no. 69.

133 JIWE 2, no. 286: ἐν ἰρήνῃ κῖται Κῦρος. I could not find this text, but this does not imply its complete loss.

71 In galleries C1, D8, D9, and D10, we find the largest coherent group of epigraphic materials from the catacomb (this concentration is clearly visible in fig. 27). Here, there are at least twenty-three epitaphs, all located *in situ*. They mostly show single names, traced onto the mortar of the *loculi* and located in the following galleries (fig. 31): six in C1[134]; seven in D8[135]; nine in D9[136]; one in D10[137]. The way all these inscriptions have been placed on the *loculi* differs per tomb. Some were positioned centrally on the *loculus*, others appear on the lower or upper half. Thus we may conclude that there does not seem to have been a standardized way of doing this. Twelve inscriptions were incised into mortar after it had hardened[138], and one was painted, probably with lime[139]. Eight more inscriptions were traced when the mortar was still fresh[140]. This obviously means that these inscriptions were produced shortly after the respective *loculi* had been closed off[141]. Within the group as a whole, Greek texts occur twice as often as Latin ones (there are fourteen Greek inscriptions versus seven Latin ones)[142]. This distribution is consistent with the fact that linguistically Greek is the most commonly occurring language at Vigna Randanini, as has already been observed.

72 Perhaps the most striking feature of the group of inscriptions we have just presented is the fact that in at least five cases we find that the same name has been inscribed twice, whether on the middle of a *loculus* or on the upper and/or lower frames (fig. 32). This applies to the Greek epitaphs of *Arsinoe*, *Rebeka*, and *Simon*[143] as well as to the Latin inscriptions that remember *Dafne* and *Monninus*[144]. A possible sixth case can be found in gallery D8, where on a *loculus* that faces the entrance to D9 there are two fragmentary lines beginning in *E*/*epsilon* where the lower letter has always evaded the attention of previous editors (fig. 33)[145]. Excluding the case of *Monninus*, where the upper name was scratched and the lower one was engraved into the still-fresh plaster, there are no internal differences in the execution method of these inscriptions: if the first name is written using one technique, the second one is inscribed using the same technique too.

73 The procedure of using the same person's name twice should probably be seen as indicative of the desire to honor the memory of the deceased in an inexpensive, yet expressive fashion. Perhaps this happened because the people who did this were not able to provide these tombs with stone epitaphs. To this can be added that to the best of our knowledge, this particular epigraphic habit does not occur in the other Jewish catacombs and hypogea of Rome[146]. However, there are parallels for this practice in the early Christian catacombs of the city. There one encounters inscriptions that also render the name of

134 JIWE 2, nos. 296–299 and 319. 320.

135 JIWE 2, nos. 293–295. 300 and 303–305.

136 JIWE 2, nos. 309–317.

137 JIWE 2, no. 318. There are only two inscriptions with more elaborated texts carrying more than just than names in this area: JIWE 2, nos. 295 (Σαβεῖνα Πάλμη κεῖτε) and 298 ([--- ἐν] εἰρήνῃ / *nepos Iuda*[---]. The latter is also the only extant bilingual inscription in this group of inscriptions.

138 JIWE 2, nos. 293. 294. 299. 300. 310–313. 315. 318 and 319.

139 JIWE 2, no. 320.

140 JIWE 2, nos. 295. 297. 298. 303–305. 309 and 314.

141 There are three further inscriptions belonging to this group that are now lost so that we can no longer identify the technique used to execute them, JIWE 2, nos. 296. 316 and 317.

142 JIWE 2, nos. 293–295. 299. 303–305. 309–311 and 314–317 (inscriptions in Greek); nos. 296. 297. 312. 313. 318–320 (inscriptions in Latin). JIWE 2, no. 300 is a fragmentary inscription whose original language can no longer be determined.

143 JIWE 2, nos. 320. 311 and 310.

144 JIWE 2, nos. 318 and 297.

145 JIWE 2, no. 300.

146 From the catacomb of Monteverde there are nine inscriptions that either certainly or probably bore only one name (JIWE 2, 167 no. XIX and nos. 35. 47. 49. 54. 65. 155. 159. 161), while in the cemeteries of Villa Torlonia one can find two inscriptions that contain only single names (JIWE 2, nos. 504. 506). In both catacombs there are no surviving inscriptions displaying the same name written at least twice.

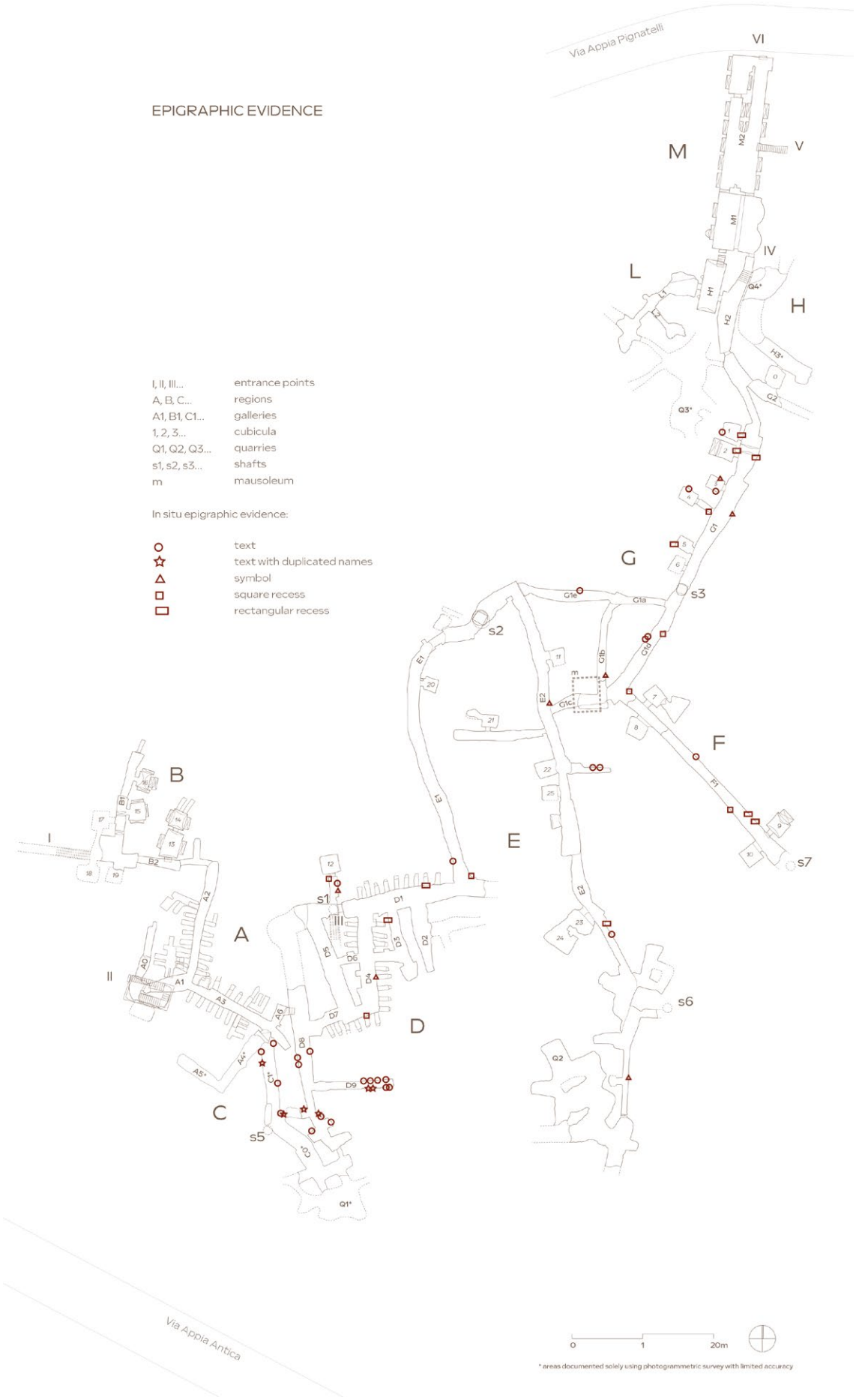
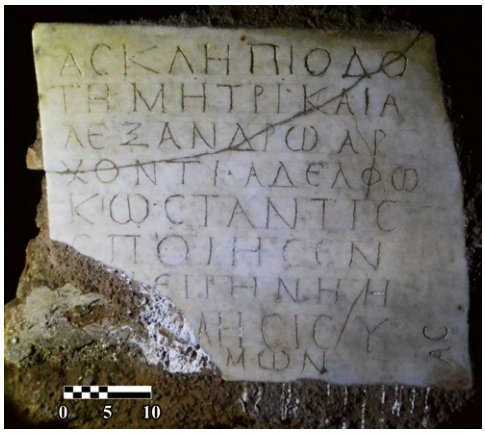


Fig. 27: Plan of the Vigna Randanini catacomb with indication of the *in situ* epigraphic evidence

the deceased more than once, reproducing it as many as five times in the most elaborate cases. Considering that in the early Christian catacombs of Rome this practice seems to have enjoyed popularity mostly from the post-Constantinian age onwards[147] we can use such evidence to argue that region D at Vigna Randanini generally dates to around the first half of the fourth century C.E. More specifically, because the galleries that contain these 'onomastic inscriptions,' namely D8–D10, were opened during a slightly later stage in the construction of this part of the cemetery, it is conceivable that the work was executed around the mid-fourth century C.E., thereby dating our **phase 4** to that time.



28

Fig. 28: Gallery G1, epitaph of *Asklepiodote* and *Alexandros*

74 The inscriptions that have been preserved *in situ* in regions C and D are particularly important because elsewhere in the catacomb *in situ* inscriptions are few and far between (fig. 27). In C and D there are 12 of these, which have been scratched and painted onto as well as scratched into the plaster: two in E4[148]; another two in F4[149]; one in gallery E1[150], F5[151], G1e[152] and *cubicula* 3[153], 4[154], and 12[155]. To these we can add a new fragmentary graffito, found in the *cubiculum* 1 and bearing the name *Rebeka*, and an unreadable painted text in Greek from gallery E2 (fig. 34)[156]. Even when we know that over the centuries much evidence was lost (in ways we can no longer reconstruct), it is nevertheless remarkable to note that there seem to be clear differences in the distribution of epigraphic evidence throughout the cemetery.

75 Continuing our discussion of epigraphic evidence that can be assigned to **phase 4**, it can be observed that much of the surviving evidence belongs to that phase, i.e., to the last construction phase in the building history of the Vigna Randanini catacomb (fig. 16). Two inscriptions uncovered in *cubiculum* 6 mention individuals related to each other, namely the painted epitaphs of *Kentoulia* and *Oursakia*, who were daughters of *Oursacius* – a man from Aquileia who served as a *gerusiarch* in a Jewish community either in that city or in Rome (fig. 35, top two photos)[157]. Even though we do not know where exactly it was found, a third painted epitaph relates to a person that belongs to the same family, referring to another daughter of *Oursacius*, namely *Simplikia* (fig. 35, bottom photo)[158]. It should be noted that all three inscriptions share clear similarities in their wording and in the technique used to execute them. It is conceivable that *Oursacius*' family owned at least a section of the *cubiculum* 6[159].

76 Individuals that are related to one another also appear in two epitaphs uncovered in *cubiculum* 10. The first one of these tells us of the untimely death of *Onoratos*, son of the archon *Roufos*. The second one preserves the memory of *Roufos*' father, a man

147 See, e.g., Carletti 1998, 55, providing occurrences specifically from ICVR 10.

148 JIWE 2, nos. 301 and 302.

149 JIWE 2, nos. 242 and 243.

150 JIWE 2, no. 280.

151 JIWE 2, no. 247.

152 JIWE 2, no. 245.

153 JIWE 2, no. 219.

154 JIWE 2, no. 228.

155 JIWE 2, no. 286.

156 For the graffito, I offer the following transcription: ((signum ignotum))? / Ῥεβ[έκα ---?]. The fragmentary Greek text shows two lines: +++Ṃ+[---]++[- c.3 -]+ / +++[---].

157 Respectively in JIWE 2, nos. 237 (kept in E1 and containing this text: ὧδε κῖτε Κεντουλία / θυγάτηρ Οὐρσακίου / ἐν εἰρήνῃ κύμισις αὐτῆς) and 238 (kept in D1 and displaying this text: ὧδε κῖτε Οὐρσακία θυγάτηρ / Οὐρσακίου ἀπὸ Ἀκουιλείας γερου/σιάρχου ἐν εἰρήνῃ κύμις αὐτῆς).

158 JIWE 2, no. 239 (kept in E1): ὧδε κῖτε Σινπλικί/α θυγάτηρ Οὐρσακίου / ἐν εἰρίνι κύμισις αὐτῆς.

159 On the case, see also Mazzoleni 1987.

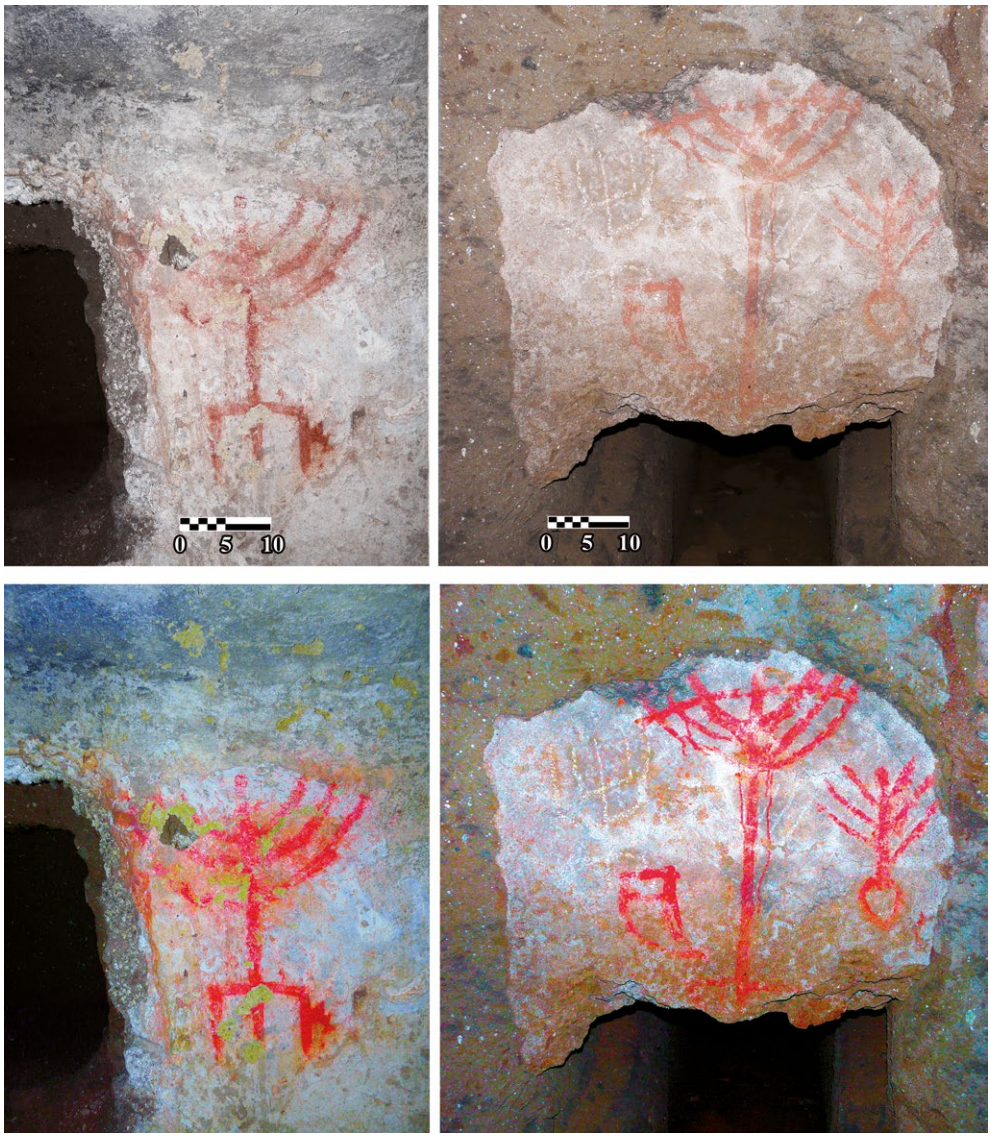


Fig. 29: a (top left): Painted *menorah* in the passageway to *cubiculum* 12; b (top right): Gallery D4, painted slab sealing *kokh* no. 17; c–d (bottom row): digitally enhanced versions of the photos in the top row

29

also named *Onoratos*[160]. This family probably owned at least a section of the *cubiculum* in which the slabs were found. Moreover, the older *Onoratos* could have been the husband of *Petronia*, with whom he honored the memory of their son *Petronius*[161] (who was thus the brother of said *Roufos*) and to whom he dedicated a funerary text too[162]. Unfortunately, we cannot trace back these latter two inscriptions to *cubiculum* 10. Even so, these four items provide us with a fascinating "family portrait."

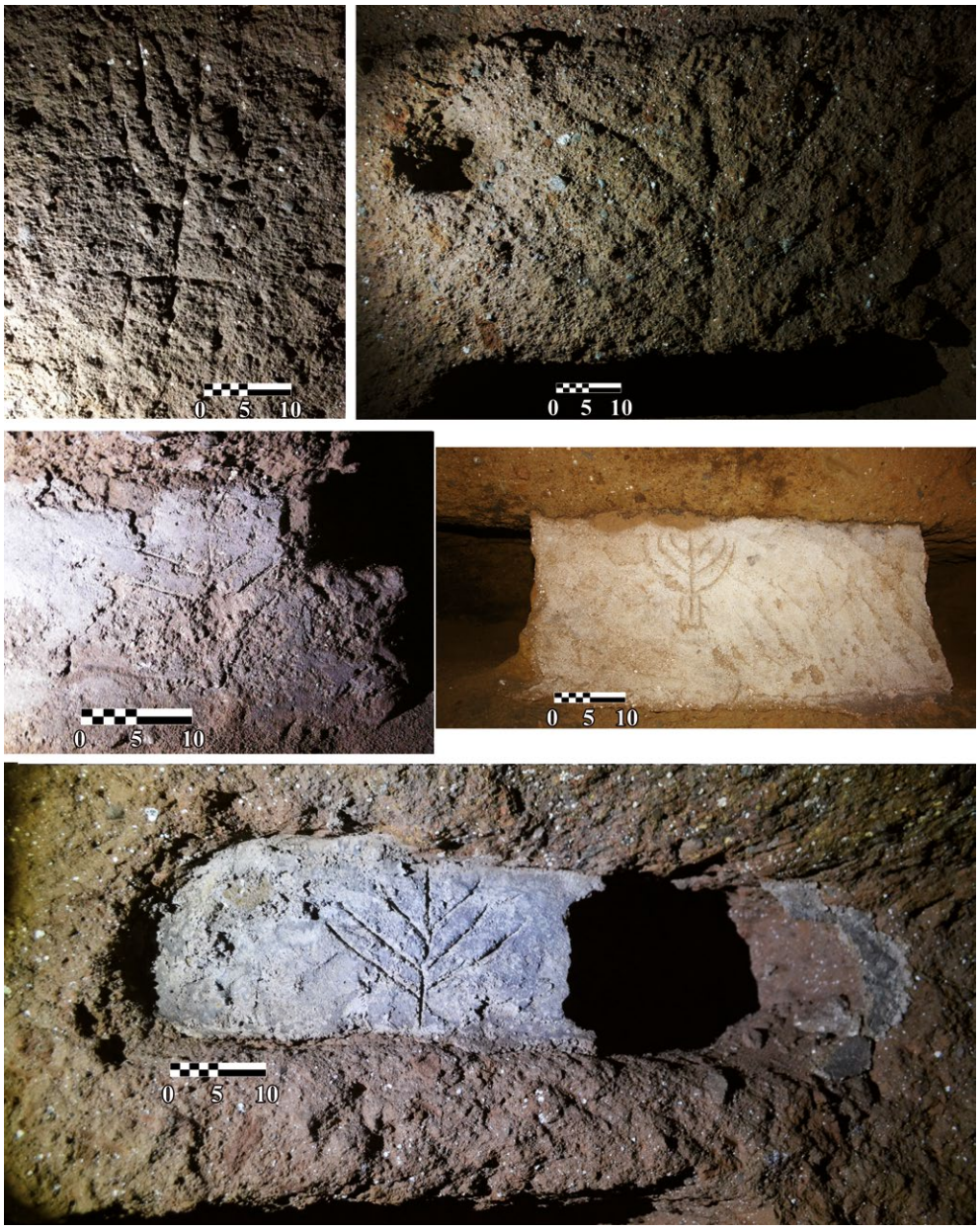
77 Moving to the room facing said *cubiculum*, namely chamber 9, we find that it houses the tomb of *Oursos grammateus*[163]. His epitaph was on a slab found as a closure of

160 JIWE 2, no. 256 (kept in E1): ἐνθάδε κῖτε Ὀνωρᾶτος γραμμα(τεὺς) / νήπιος υἱὸς Ῥούφου ἄρχ(οντος) ὃς ἔζη/σεν ἔτη ς΄ ἡμέρας κη΄/ ἐν ἰρήνῃ ἡ κοίμησίς σου; and 257 (kept in A3): ἐνθάδε κεῖτε / Ὀνωρᾶτος γραμ(ματεὺς) / ὅσιος ὃς ἔζησε/ν ἔτη ο΄ μ(ῆνας) η΄ /[5] [ἡμ(έρας)] ιβ΄ Ῥοῦφος ἄρχ(ων) / τῷ πατρὶ γλυκυ/τάτῳ ἐν εἰρή/[ν]ῃ ἡ κοίμησίς σου ((menorah)).

161 JIWE 2, no. 223: Ὀνορᾶτος πατὴρ / γραμματεος Πε/τρωνία μήτηρ Πε/τρωνίῳ γραμματεω /[5] ὑῷ ἀσυνκρίτῳ ἔζησεν / ἔτη κδ΄ μῆν(ας) δ΄ ἡ(μέρας) ιε΄ ἐν/θάδε κεῖται ἐν εἰρή/νῃ κοίμησις αὐτοῦ.

162 JIWE 2, no. 329: ((menorah)) / ἐνθάδε κεῖτε Μ[-c.4-]/να Πετωνία ἔζησ/εν ἔτῃ νε΄ γυνὴ Ὀ/[5]νωράτου / καλῶς κομ/οῦ μοτὰ τῶ/ν δικέων.

163 JIWE 2, no. 253: ((menorah)) ((omphalos)) / ἐνθάδε κεῖτε Οὖρσος γραμμ/ατεους τὶς ἔζησεν κβ΄ καὶ / δύω ἔτη καὶ μῆνας τρῖς ((avis)) /[5] μνεία τοῦ μελλονυμφίου / ἐν εἰρη οἱ κυμις αὐτοῦ ((avis)).



30

Fig. 30: Top row: Engraved *menoroth* at the end of E2 and facing *cubiculum* 4; Middle and bottom rows: scratched menoroth in E2, *cubiculum* 3, and G1b

a pavement tomb, as Garrucci tells us[164]. The slab is kept in the same *cubiculum* in which it was originally found, but it is evidently no longer *in situ*. Then there are two more inscriptions that seem to record four related individuals. *Prokopios* and *Crispina* made a tomb for their son *Ioses*, who died eight days after his second birthday[165]. He was probably the brother of another *Crispina*, who was named after their mother and who died at an unknown age. She is being recorded as having been a zealous woman and a lover of the law (σπουδέα φιλέντολος)[166]. Unluckily, we do not have sufficient information to identify the findspots of these slabs so as to determine whether the family was buried together somewhere in the cemetery. Noy has pointed out that Frey and Delling assumed that *Maria*,

164 "Il marmo dove questo epitaffio è scolpito, copriva un sepolcro cavato sul pavimento della stanza che ha il cornicione sulla porta d'ingresso (i.e., *cubiculum* 9)" (Garrucci 1862, 59).

165 JIWE 2, no. 282: Ἐνθάδε κεῖται / Ἰωσῆς τὸ νήπιον / ἡδὺν ἐτ(ῶν) β΄ ἡ(μερῶν) η΄ Προ/κόπις ὁ πατὴρ Κρισ/[5]πῖνα δὲ μήτ(ηρ) προσ/εύχοιο ἐν εἰρήνῃ / τὴν κύμησιν αὐτοῦ.

166 JIWE 2, no. 281: Κρισπεῖνα Προκοπίου / σπουδέα φιλέντολος / ἐνθάδε κεῖται ἐν εἰρή/νῃ τῇ[ν] [κο]ίμησιν αὐ/[5]τ[ῆ]ς.

Fig. 31: Selection of inscriptions that bear only names. Top row: Inscriptions of *Eusebis* and *Plane*, in D9; Bottom row: Inscriptions of *Kalandio* and *Hilarus*, respectively in D8 and C1

31

Fig. 32: Top row: Inscription of *Simon*, gallery D9; Second row: Inscription of *Dafne*, gallery D10; Third row: Inscriptions of *Rebeka* and *Monninus*, galleries D9 and C1; Bottom row: inscriptions of *Arsinoe*, gallery C1

32

baby daughter of *Prokopios*, also belonged to this same family[167]. However, the evidence itself does not allow us to confirm this view.

78 As to the findspot of the epitaph of *Salpingius*, we can be certain where it was found[168]. According to Garrucci, it was unearthed in the "cunicolo secondo," that is E2, the second longest gallery of the catacomb on the side of the Via Appia Pignatelli[169]. In H2, there is a marble sarcophagus that bears a Greek inscription painted in red on one of its sides (fig. 36). Unfortunately, the text is quite faded so that only a few letters can be safely identified[170].

79 **Phase 4** saw the expansion of the cemetery towards the north, including the transformation of the external space M whereby its pre-existing walls were adapted and turned into sepulchral niches. Here, Garrucci found three inscriptions in 1859 (fig. 37)[171]. He tells us that *Esidorus* was buried under the first arch to the left and that *Aemilia Theodora* was interred somewhere nearby. Regarding the funerary inscription of *Markia,* Garrucci observes it was unearthed in this general outside area without providing us with any further specifics[172]. Garrucci's observations do not help in identifying the exact findspot of any of these slabs. According to Giovanni Battista de Rossi, a fourth inscription, namely the epitaph of *theosebes Eparchia*, was also found here in area M[173]. Despite their general fragmentary state, all four inscriptions have in common that they are brief and consist of but a few lines that have been arranged vertically. This suggests these epigraphic materials may have been used as closures of pavement tombs, perhaps in the tombs below the arches, with the texts having been arranged in such a way that passers-by could easily read them.

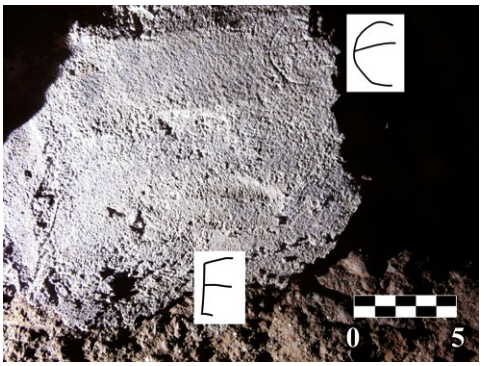


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Fig. 33: Graffito with *E/epsilon*, gallery D8

80 One final feature that, to the best of our knowledge, has so far evaded the attention of researchers is the presence of at least 16 wall recesses found around the catacomb and that were probably carved specifically to accommodate inscribed slabs. The niches come in two forms: rectangular and squared ones, with nine and seven cases respectively. The occasional presence of rust residue inside some of these niches or in their direct surroundings suggests the use of iron clamps used to secure the slabs (at the present time we do not know whether they are ancient or modern). Niches of this kind are situated especially in the later regions of the catacomb, namely F and G, meaning that they are datable to **phase 4**. Even so, they can also be found in D and E (fig. 27; both squares and rectangles). In addition to their presence, these niches stand out because of the way in which they have been placed in the galleries. Most of these recesses can be found near specific *kokhim*, and, even more interestingly, next to *cubicula*. This suggests that they may

167 JIWE 2, no. 222: Μαρία βρέφος ἀγα/πητὸν ἡ θυγάτηρ / Προκοπίου ἐνθάδε / κεῖται ἐν εἰρη< νῃ> ἡ κύμη/[5]σις αὐτῆς.

168 JIWE 2, no. 268: ((shofar)) / Σαλπίνγι/ους νήπι/ους / ((shofar)).

169 Garrucci 1865, 171 f.

170 Elsa Laurenzi has attempted a tentative first reading, writing that: "Sulla prima riga si legge EYGEITHI, sulla seconda A[_]ASTH[_]" (Laurenzi 2013, 77 s.). Here follows my improved yet likewise tentative transcription: EYΓEIΘI ((signum ignotum))E / Δ+AΣ++ / [---]+ETIṬ / ------.

171 JIWE 2, nos. 204 (*Esidorus* / *eterus* / *en irene qui*/*mesis su*); 206 (Αὐρήλιος / Βάσος Αἰ/μιλίαι / Θεοδόρ/[5]η ἐποίησε/ν) and 208 (Μαρκίαι / συν[[[β]]]ίῳ / ἰδί[[[αι?]]] Αἰλι/ανὸς ἐποί/[5]ησεν / ((menorah inversa))). The inverted *menorah* in the latter inscription might indicate we are looking at a reused slab that had been appropriated from another tomb. I agree with Noy thinking that this reuse does not exclude the original text from having been Jewish.

172 On *Esidorus* and *Aemilia Theodora*, see Garrucci 1862, 7 and 60. On *Markia*, see Garrucci 1865, 158 no. 5.

173 G. B. de Rossi, ms. 16270, no. 1 (quoted in CII 1, no. 228). The inscription is in JIWE 2, no. 207: *hic posita Epar*/*chia theose*/*bes qua*[*e v*]*i*/*xit annos LV*/[5] *d*(*ies*) *VI dormi*/*tio tua in bono*.

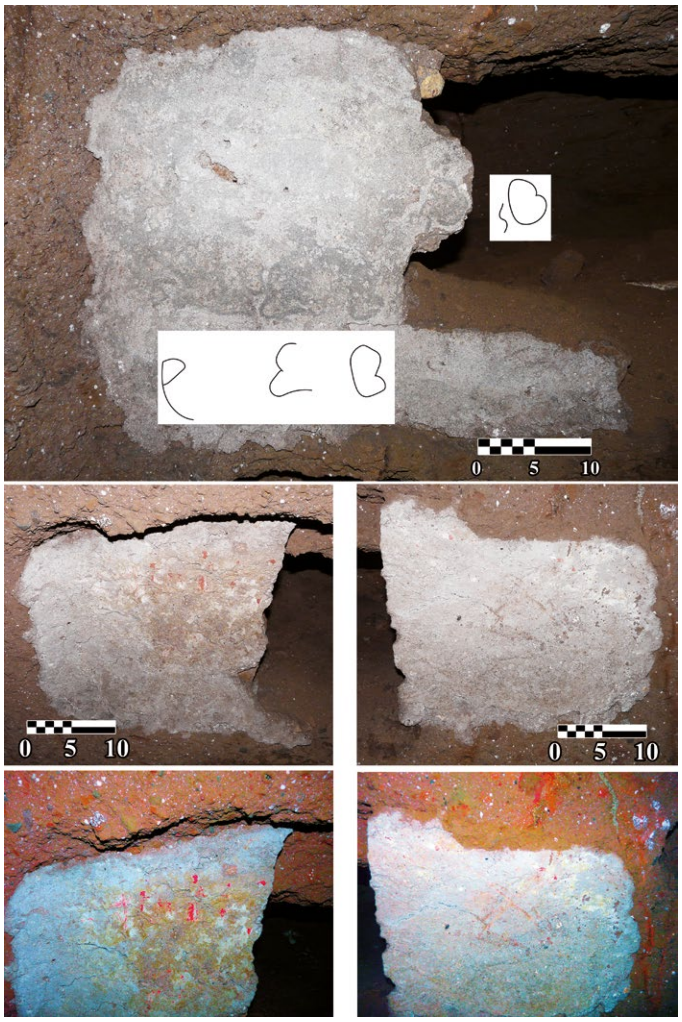

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Fig. 34: Top row: New inscription from *cubiculum* 1; middle row: New painted text from gallery E2; bottom row: digitally enhanced versions of the photos in the middle row

Fig. 35: Funerary inscriptions of *Oursacius'* daughters

have served as property markers (*tituli possessionis*) placed specifically near the entrance to such chambers, as is particularly evident in case of *cubicula* 1, 2, and 4 (fig. 38)[174].

Conclusions

81 In our discussion we have sought to highlight the importance of the epigraphic materials from the Vigna Randanini catacomb. We have pointed out that *in situ* evidence indicates how the erection of inscriptions was an integral part of the funerary habits of the people that used this cemetery to entomb their loved ones, particularly during the later stages in the development of this cemetery. As for the earliest stages of the Vigna Randanini catacomb there exists but little epigraphic evidence that can be assigned to it, with just one inscription that can be said to belong to regions A and B (our **phases 1** and **2**). In contrast, there is considerably more epigraphic evidence that relates to **phases 3** and **4**, which is also when inscriptions become more easily recognizable as Jewish. Particularly intriguing was a group of 23 inscriptions carved onto hard or into still-fresh mortar in the galleries C1,

174 Something similar can be seen at Beth She'arim – on which see Schwabe – Lifshitz 1974 – but also at Domitilla, a Christian catacomb located not far from Vigna Randanini in the suburbs of Rome. Here, one can find property markers engraved into the door lintels of two *cubicula*, notably in the *Flavii Aurelii* region. The first reads *Ecpleciorum* (ICUR 3 6662 = EDB 22579), while the second one *Grapti* (EDB 8366).

D8, D9, and D10 and consisting of single names only, which were occasionally duplicated on one and the same grave. We pointed out that this epigraphic habit has numerous parallels in the early Christian catacombs of Rome dating to the post-Constantinian age and beyond.

82 As for the communal or, at the very least, the family aspect shaping the arrangement of the tombs, we have discussed the previously unknown phenomenon of wall recesses made to accommodate inscribed slabs apparently aimed at documenting ownership of individual graves, sets of graves, and even entire *cubicula*. Individual inscriptions confirm the idea of families wanting to keep together in death, as was the case in *cubiculum* 6, where at least three daughters of the *gerusiarch Oursacius* from Aquileia were buried in one and the same burial chamber, or in *cubiculum* 10 that housed the remains of the nephew and father of the *archon Roufos*, both named *Onoratos*. We suggested there may be two further epitaphs remembering members of the same family, namely *Petronia* and *Petronius*, respectively the mother and the brother of *Roufos*.

83 One final remarkable characteristic relating to these later inscriptions, which generally belong to the fourth century C.E., is that they are openly Jewish in terms of their content and/or visual features they display. This suggests that a distinctively Jewish, that is religiously flavored, epigraphy came to full fruition over the course of this century, as was suggested above. Burial seems to have continued into the late fourth century C.E. as evidenced by the four inscribed slabs found in the open-air cemetery that borders on the via Appia Pignatelli (M). However, before trying to assign a chronology to the cemetery as a whole, let us first turn to what the results of our radiocarbon dating suggests.

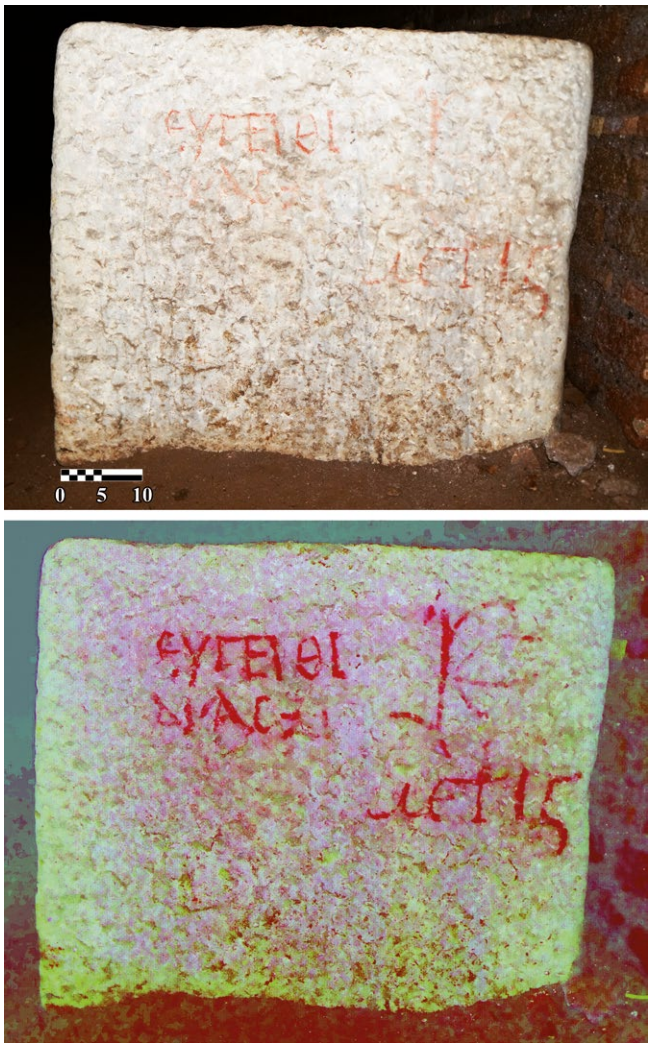

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Fig. 36: Top row: Gallery H2, painted sarcophagus; bottom row: digitally enhanced version

IV. Radiocarbon Dating

Introduction

84 Applying a methodology first developed in the Jewish catacombs under Villa Torlonia and later fine-tuned in the Liberian Region of the early Christian catacombs of St. Callixtus, we collected samples for radiocarbon dating throughout the Vigna Randanini catacomb complex[175]. The samples consisted of small pieces of pieces of charcoal. They were found encased in the plaster sealings of graves and in the lime that was applied to the walls while these were being prepared for the application of wall paintings. Even though charcoal samples are typically difficult to find in the catacombs of Rome, we still managed to retrieve a decent set of samples from various parts of the catacomb. Samples were then shipped to the Centre for Isotope Research at Groningen University in the Netherlands for analysis. Here we first discuss where in the catacomb we retrieved the samples, how they were processed, and then present the calibrated results and offer a brief discussion of how we think these results should be interpreted.

175 Rutgers et al. 2005; Rutgers et al. 2006; Rutgers et al. 2007.

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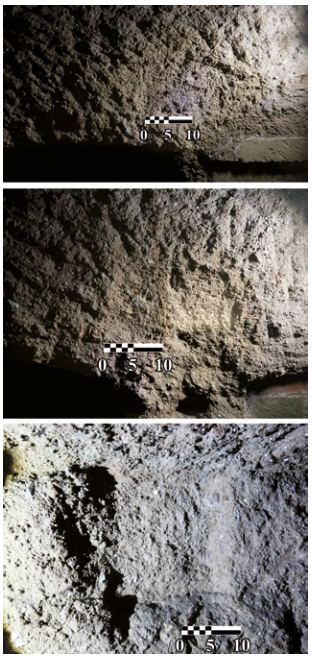

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Fig. 37: Top: Epitaphs of *Esidorus* and *Aemilia Teodora* (respectively kept in E1 and H1); Bottom: Epitaphs of *Eparchia* and *Markia* (the first is kept in the Museo Nazionale Romano, while the second one is lost)

Fig. 38: Top and middle rows: Rectangular recesses to the right of the entrances to *cubicula* 1 and 2; Bottom row: squared niche at the beginning of the southern wall of the passageway leading to *cubiculum* 4

Provenience

85 Samples 1–4 derive from the walls of the two painted *cubicula* in the B-section of the catacomb (the samples are listed individually in table 1 (fig. 40) below. For an overview of their location in the catacomb, see fig. 39). Sample 1 comes from the back-wall of the second room (the wall with the two shaft graves, i.e., *cubiculum* 14). Sample 2 was retrieved from the first burial chamber (*cubiculum* 13), from the left wall, near the doorway and near the panel that carries a representation of a peacock. Sample 3 comes from the same *cubiculum* and was found over the doorway "to the outside," that is, the door that connects these chambers to the rest of the catacomb in general and gallery B2 in particular. Sample 4, finally, derives from the interior wall that flanks this door to the left; that is, when you are looking outward, towards the rest of the catacomb. We discovered it below the image of a Pegasus.

86 With samples 6 and 7 we move to the third painted room, the one decorated with palm trees (*cubiculum* 12). While sample 6 was found encased in the external wall of this burial chamber, sample 7 comes from the backwall on the inside, near the *loculus* with supporting wall. Sample 8 was found in gallery E1, on the wall opposite (and not far from) *cubiculum* 20. Sample 9 derives from a *loculus* closure on the south face of gallery F1b, exactly in the middle between the two entrances to gallery F1a. Sample 10 was retrieved from the left wall of the fourth painted *cubiculum* (number 2), the one with the menorah. Finally, with sample 11 we move back to an earlier part of the catacomb: this sample was recovered from a tomb closure on the floor level of the south wall of gallery D9, right at the beginning of this gallery (where it connects with gallery D8).

Distribution

87 The distribution of the samples corresponds to what has been observed in our earlier work in the catacombs of Villa Torlonia and St. Callixtus. Charcoal samples are commonly found in settings where there is a lot of plaster, for example in burial chambers that were decked out with plaster walls, or on tombs that use significant amounts of plaster in their sealings (as, for example, in region D of the lower Jewish catacomb under Villa Torlonia). Normally, however, one does not find charcoal in the sealing of *loculus* tombs (the most common tomb type in both the Jewish and early Christian catacombs of Rome) because a) most of these tombs have little plaster to begin with;

Fig. 39: Map of the Vigna Randanini catacomb indicating the location of samples collected for radiocarbon dating

Sample		Date Ref. (GrM-)	^{14}C Date (yr BP, ±1σ)	Calibrated Age Range (Year CE, 68% Probability)		Calibrated Age Range (Year CE, 95% Probability)	
Name	Material			From	To	From	To
Vigna Randanini 1	Charcoal	18536	1930 ± 50	26	202	39 BCE	222
Vigna Randanini 2 (sample 1)	Charcoal	20316	1840 ± 30	133	242	124	311
Vigna Randanini 2 (sample 2)	Charcoal	20317	1827 ± 27	169	308	129	319
Vigna Randanini 3	Charcoal	20318	1863 ± 24	130	217	124	235
Vigna Randanini 4	Charcoal	20319	1867 ± 25	130	213	121	236
Vigna Randanini 7	Charcoal	18884	1849 ± 22	133	236	128	239
Vigna Randanini 8	Charcoal	20320	1622 ± 25	415	531	409	538

40

Fig 40: Table 1. Radiocarbon dates for the samples collected at Vigna Randanini

and b) tomb sealings have often been seriously compromised during the 1500 years that they have been exposed to visitors, grave robbers, and collectors of antiquities. Not surprisingly, this is also what we saw at Vigna Randanini. Only two of the 11 samples come from graves rather than from rooms or corridors covered with stucco, and only one of these produced results.

Method

88 The preparation of charcoal for radiocarbon dating followed a simple acid-base-acid (ABA) procedure. First, the sample was weighed into a test tube (>10 mg), and an acid treatment was applied (HCl, 4% w/vol, 80°C, 30 min). Then the sample was rinsed three times with deionized and decarbonized water (or 'demi-water'). Second, a base step was conducted (NaOH, 1% w/vol, RT, 30 min), after which the sample was again rinsed three times with demi-water. Finally, another acid was applied (HCl, 4% w/vol, 80°C, 30 min), and the sample was rinsed three times once more, and then oven dried. Approximately 4 mg of the dried product was subsequently weighed into a tin capsule for combustion in an Elemental Analyser (EA) coupled to a semi-automatic gas collection system and an Isotope Ratio Mass Spectrometer (IRMS). Finally, the graphite was pressed into an aluminium cathode for radiocarbon measurement on a Micadas Accelerator Mass Spectrometer (AMS)[176].

Results and Discussion

89 Table 1 (fig. 40) lists the results of radiocarbon (^{14}C) dates for the seven samples that produced results. The results are also shown graphically (fig. 41). The samples where results were not achieved are likely to have been inorganic. ^{14}C ages have been calibrated to calendar years with software program OxCal[177] version 4.3, using the IntCal20 calibration curve[178].

90 Before discussing these results, it is important to state why we believe that the 1-sigma (68% probability) and 2-sigma (95% probability) ranges we present here are generally reliable; that is, why we think they correspond to the actual timeframe during which the Jewish catacomb at Vigna Randanini was in use. The main reason is because we know that the little bits of charcoal we radiocarbon dated were a by-product deriving from the production of the plaster. They are the fragmentary, carbonized remains of wood used to fire the kilns in which limestone was being thermally decomposed, so that it could be ground down and turned into quicklime (by adding water)[179].

176 For more detail on the charcoal pre-treatment procedure, see Dee et al. 2020.

177 Bronk Ramsey 1995.

178 Reimer et al. 2020.

179 Rutgers et al. 2006, 173 f.

A palaeobotanical study of the charcoal samples from the Jewish catacombs at Villa Torlonia has revealed that shrubs such as ash trees were the sort of wood typically used to bring the kilns up to the right temperature[180]. For that reason we may conclude that the old wood effect (which results in samples coming out too old for the archaeological context they are supposed to date) is not likely to have a factor of much significance here. Brush wood was only a few years old before it was cut down and used for heating purposes.

91 Keeping that in mind, the results presented in fig. 40 allow for the following observations. First, they provide us with an absolute chronology. This is important because the catacombs of Rome are notoriously hard to date, as is well known[181]. This situation certainly applies at Vigna Randanini where we have only one inscription that is firmly dated and no coins. Second, it is evident that not all our samples produced results. This is particularly true in case of sample no. 10 which was found encased in the wall of the painted room decorated with a menorah and other wall paintings – paintings that are difficult to date precisely on the basis of their stylistic appearance alone, yet that belong to a part of the catacomb where we would have liked to produce a firmer chronology.

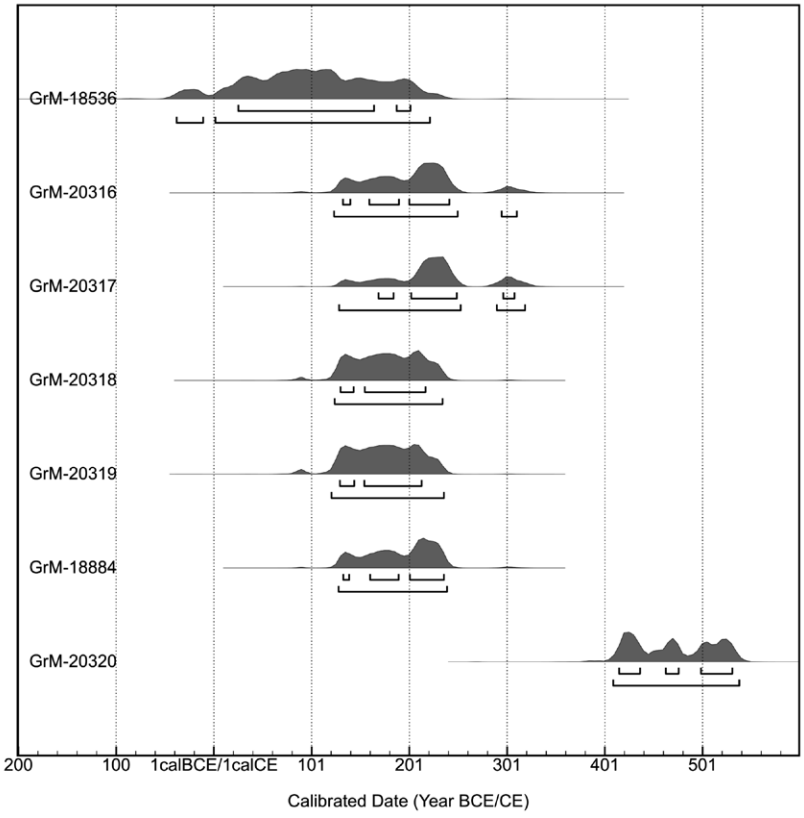

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Fig. 41: Plot of the calibrated radiocarbon dates obtained for charcoal samples from Vigna Randanini. Samples 6, 9, 10 and 11 failed to produce sufficient carbon for analysis

92 Even so, the data we do have are helpful in getting a handle on the chronology of the Vigna Randanini catacomb. To begin with, the results for samples nos. 1–4 from the first two painted rooms are so consistent as to be almost interchangeable. This holds true particularly for samples nos. 2–4. What these samples suggest is that the plastering of these two rooms is likely to have occurred at one and the same time – something we had already observed on the basis of our study of the wall paintings in these chambers. It is interesting that sample no. 1, which was retrieved from the back wall of the second chamber, is possibly earlier than the other samples from these two rooms, but not so early as to cause concern or require any special explanation (50% of its range overlaps with the other results; indeed it may in fact not be any older, because it is a less precise result). As for their chronological range, these four samples indicate that these rooms may indeed have been built during the first half of the third century C.E. as also suggested by a stylistic analysis of the wall paintings they contain. However, our results also allow for a scenario whereby these rooms emerged earlier, that is, sometime over the course of the second century C.E. No matter what date one prefers (and it impossible to definitively settle on an earlier date or a later one on the basis of these radiocarbon results alone), one thing is clear: the results of our radiocarbon dating confirm that these two painted burial rooms represent an early building phase, and possibly even the earliest building phase, in the construction history of the Jewish catacomb at Vigna Randanini. This is consistent with what we have observed in the section on the building

180 Rutgers et al. 2006, 174.

181 Deckers 1992; Guyon 1994; Rutgers et al. 2006, 169 f.

history of the Vigna Randanini catacomb, namely that area B is where the construction of this cemetery began.

93 When we now move to the next set of dates, namely those relating to the third painted *cubiculum* "With the Palm Trees," an interesting picture emerges. Of the two samples that derive from this *cubiculum*, only one produced a result, providing us with a date range between 128 and 239 C.E. This is decidedly earlier than the chronology we have proposed for the wall paintings that grace this room. We cannot explain why there is such a divergence, nor can we determine once and for all which of the two chronologies is correct.

94 When we look at the last sample from our series, namely sample no. 8, we have a date that is significantly later, namely ranging from 409–538 C.E. A fifth to early sixth century C.E. date is really late and does not sit at all well with the received wisdom that holds that burial in catacombs decreased significantly over the course of the fifth century, in the years following Alaric's Sack of Rome of 410 C.E.[182]. Even so, it is evident that we need to allow for just such a scenario, particularly considering that the only dated inscription we have from Vigna Randanini dates to 501–502 C.E. Such data suggests that burial continued at Vigna Randanini for a longer period that we were previously aware of, even when we have no way of determining the scale on which this happened. That said, the late date of our sample suggests that we need to conceive of this process that led to a discontinuation of burial the catacombs as a gradual rather than a sudden affair[183]. And finally, these dates correspond with what we have observed regarding the site's topography, namely that the gallery from which radiocarbon sample was retrieved represents the last phase in the building history of the Vigna Randanini catacomb.

Conclusion

95 The results of our radiocarbon dating confirm the relative chronology we have proposed in section I. They help to transform this relative chronology into an absolute one that is by and large consistent with the chronological evidence provided by the wall paintings and the inscriptions. They finally show that burial at Vigna Randanini may have started somewhat earlier than previously known. It certainly continued for a longer period of time than previously thought.

V. Discussion

96 Building on the material we have presented in the previous sections, we are now in a position to discuss how these findings interrelate and what they possibly mean.

Topography

97 The single most important result relating to the architectural history of Vigna Randanini is that this catacomb was not built all at once. It was not an underground cemetery planned coherently from start to finish. Rather, it consists of several underground sectors that initially developed separately and that were connected to one another only in due course. It is only during the last phase (our phase 4) that we see the monument develop into a true catacomb, that is, an underground cemetery consisting of long galleries that are packed with graves.

182 Discussion in Fiocchi Nicolai 2012.

183 On the general decrease in population in Rome during this period, starting in 410 C.E., see now Dey 2022, 33–68.

98 It goes without saying that the building history at Vigna Randanini raises interesting questions about catacomb planning, organization, and ownership. While area B may have been built by a couple of families that collaborated, sections A and D were clearly designed from the start to accommodate more burials, giving these sections the appearance of communal burial grounds. This is evidenced by two sets of 26 *kokhim* graves (one set in each section), with the A-set arranged along two rectangular narrow galleries, and the D-set organized along the walls of galleries that are unusually wide. Yet, it is only during the last phase that we can speak of a catacomb in the proper sense of the word, as evidenced by the fact that in the galleries belonging to this last phase we encounter twice as many tombs as in regions B, A, and D combined. During this last phase, there is also a change in grave typology. *Loculus* tombs have become the norm now, and we also find the occasional sarcophagus. Most of the *cubicula* also belong to this phase. In our study of the inscriptions we noted that at least some of these burial chambers may have been acquired by families keen on being buried together in their own subterranean space. Thus, we are witnessing a development that finds a counterpart in the early Christian catacombs of Rome where we also see *cubicula* mushroom, particularly in the second half of the fourth century C.E. as, for example, in the Liberian Region in the catacombs of St. Callixtus. It almost feels as if the old Roman family tomb that used to be constructed on the surface now descends below ground and is integrated into the catacombs of Rome.

99 We can no longer determine who was responsible for developing the various larger underground cemeteries at Vigna Randanini – a wealthy donor, such as the one possibly buried in the *cubiculum* with the palms or in *cubiculum* 2, a set of families, a group of collaborating individuals pooling their resources, or even an entire community. Whoever was in charge, it is important to keep in mind that some, if not all, of the three early sections at Vigna Randanini developed independently from one another. This suggests that they came into existence because different groups of people were working here side-by-side, meaning that the early sections were never the work of a single overarching organization that took care of things in a centralized fashion. Such a situation again mirrors what we see happening in the early Christian catacombs of Rome. There too we notice that individual believers or groups of people, for example folks involved in the same lines of business, were opening up galleries and burial chambers in a catacomb, meaning that such work was not exclusively done by a central organization such as the Church of Rome that did perform some but certainly not all of the work[184]. Apparently then, work in the Jewish and early Christian catacombs of Rome thrived precisely because of enterprising individuals who took charge of the situation themselves.

100 That said, it is conceivable that as time went by the process of enlarging catacombs was done in a more consolidated and centralized fashion. This may have been the case in the F and E regions in Vigna Randanini, which were built in a way geared towards continuous expansion. Yet even in the case of these galleries we cannot be sure whether this development occurred because coordination was now resting in the hands of some central body, or because by this time the *fossores* or diggers were so experienced that they went about their business without needing the involvement of people or institutions higher up the organizational ladder.

Chronology

101 As is well known, dating catacombs is difficult for a variety of reasons, in particular because of the absence of a sound stratigraphy[185]. In the sections included

184 Rutgers 2019, 219 f. with references to the earlier literature.

185 Deckers 1992; Guyon 1994; Rutgers 2006.

above we have gathered various sorts of chronological indicators that can help us to translate the relative chronology of the site discussed in section I into an absolute one.

102 As for the earliest section of the cemetery, namely region B, the wall paintings that have been preserved in *cubicula* 13 and 14 provide us with a date in the first half of the third century C.E. The radiocarbon data suggest that work may have started here even somewhat earlier, over the course of the second century C.E. For region A we have no chronological indicators other than that this area was probably excavated prior to region D, which we can date and that thus provides us with a *terminus ante quem*. For this latter region D there are once again the wall paintings available that can be dated through stylistic parallels to the first half of the fourth century C.E. The radiocarbon date available for this rooms differs fundamentally from such a chronology, suggesting a dating to the second or third centuries C.E. instead. We have no good explanation for this discrepancy. Inscriptional evidence preserved in the galleries belonging to the last phase of the catacomb as the cemetery started to expand in the direction of the Via Appia Pignatelli point in the direction of the fourth century C.E. and beyond, as evidenced by the onomastic data, and, especially, the phenomenon of the single names. The wall paintings in *cubiculum* 2 and the sarcophagus installed there further confirm a fourth century C.E. date of this section of the cemetery.

103 One final issue relates to the question of how long the Vigna Randanini cemetery was used for burial. As we have seen there is an inscription dating to 501 or 502 C.E. that may or may not belong to this cemetery[186]. And then we have a radiocarbon sample (no. 8) from gallery E1, across from *cubiculum* 20 that dates from between 409 and 538 C.E. From the perspective of catacomb burial both these dates are unusually late[187]. Interestingly, radiocarbon evidence relating to the Jewish catacomb of Monteverde likewise suggests that that Jewish burial site was used well into the fifth and even the first quarter of the sixth century C.E.[188]. Considering that we have no archaeological evidence that informs how the Jews of Rome buried their dead in early Medieval times, yet can be sure that they did not join the transition whereby burial in catacombs morphed into interment in the suburban funerary basilicas used by Rome's early Christian community, we should perhaps allow for a scenario whereby Jews used the catacombs for burial during a longer period than did their early Christian contemporaries[189]. Because we cannot date individual tombs in Vigna Randanini we have no way of determining whether this occurred on any significant scale. We can only assume that the Jewish population of Rome must have suffered from the Gothic wars and the events that came after in much the same way as did the rest of Rome's urban population[190].

Religious Affiliation

104 One of the questions that has intrigued scholars most about the underground cemetery at Vigna Randanini relates to the matter of the religious identity of the people that used it for burial. In our discussion of the epigraphic evidence, we have seen that inscriptions are often our best guide in this matter, to the extent that we can conclude that a) the many inscriptions relating to phase 4 clearly document that the galleries in which they were found represent a Jewish cemetery and that b) some pagan inscriptional materials kept near the current day entrance to the catacomb are later intrusions, that

186 JIWE 2, no. 401.
187 Fiocchi Nicolai 2001, 92.
188 Rutgers et al. 2007.
189 Fiocchi Nicolai – Spera 2021.
190 On the demography of Rome during this period, see Dey 2022, 33–68.

is, inscriptions that derive from pagan cemeteries known to have existed on top of the catacomb and that were placed here to safeguard them[191].

105 Regarding the religious affiliation of the people responsible for the construction of region B, we have suggested that the iconography of rooms 13 and 14, traditionally seen as typically pagan, does not necessarily exclude Jewish ownership. We have argued that these rooms were decorated at a time that an iconography that was specifically Jewish had not yet come into existence but that in and by itself this does not exclude Jewish patronage. We proposed that these wall paintings should be understood as having been ordered from a group of painters that were active in the Via Appia-Via Ardeatina area and that provided customers with imagery that was not necessarily pagan but merely provided a positive message – the kind of message some Romanized Jews might have liked. We furthermore also noted that there is one Jewish inscription from region B[192]. To this may finally be added that the shaft graves in the back of the second *cubiculum*, which we have argued formed an integral part of the room from the very start, may be *kokhim*, i.e., graves that are typically Jewish (for a discussion of *kokhim*, see below). We realize that all of this does not prove definitively that region B was used by Jews either from the start, or exclusively. We merely want to point out that the evidence cannot be used to rule out Jewish usage per se.

106 This brings us to a discussion of regions A and D. In our discussion of the wall paintings in the *cubiculum* decorated with palm trees, we suggested that palm trees may refer to Roman Palestine, but that, again, we cannot be entirely sure on the basis of such pictorial evidence alone, simply because palm trees also occasionally occur in contemporary non-Jewish archaeological contexts. That both regions were used by Jews follows from the inscriptional evidence and from a menorah that sits on the sealing of one of the *kokhim* graves in region D (fig. 29). It is at this point that these *kokhim* found in both these regions should be filtered into the discussion. As indicated above, a *kokh* is a type of grave that is cut straight into the wall and at right angles to it. What is most remarkable about this type of grave is that they are highly unusual in Rome[193]. Such a state of affairs raises the question of where this particular type of grave might have come from, and what their usage here at Vigna Randanini could possibly mean.

107 It is not difficult to figure out where the *kokhim* at Vigna Randanini may have originated. Having been invented in Alexandria before being transplanted to the Phoenician Hellenistic necropolis at Maresha (Beth Guvrin), *kokhim* soon began to represent the standard type of Jewish tomb in Judaea, particularly in the huge necropolis that surrounded the city of Jerusalem, especially during a period that lasted from the second century B.C.E to 70 C.E.[194]. Even when later on *kokhim* lost their popularity in Jerusalem as well as elsewhere in the Jewish homeland, by the third century C.E. the sages of the Mishnah (and, inevitably, later also those of the Babylonian Talmud) were still considering a family tomb provided with *kokhim* as the Jewish tomb par excellence[195]. It is not necessary to enter into a discussion of whether *kokhim* were preferred specifically because of the typically Jewish custom of secondary burial[196], or even to point out that the Jerusalem *kokhim* most similar to the ones in Vigna Randanini are those preserved

191 Tombs such as the above-ground Sepolcro dei Caesellii located within the property of Vigna San Sebastiano, illustrated by Pirro Ligorio and referred to as Tomb of Caesilli in Rausa 1997, 91–93, also discussed in Dello Russo 2011, 4; Mineo 2001, 109, and Spera 1999, 260.

192 JIWE 2, no. 336.

193 González-Salinero 2022, 146 maintains that there were also *kokhim* in the nearby Jewish hypogeum on the Via Appia Pigantelli discovered by Müller 1886, 49–56, yet he misunderstands Müller, who specifically writes he found only *loculi* and *arcosolia* there, so that the *kokhim* at Vigna Randanini are the only Jewish *kokhim* we have at Rome.

194 Kloner – Zissu 2007, 61–81.

195 *M. B. Bat*. 6:8; *b. B. Bat.* 100b–200b.

196 Kloner – Zissu 2007, 107–110 and cf. fig. 79 on p. 570.

in the one-of-a-kind "Graves of the Prophets" cemetery on the Mount of Olives[197]. What is important, though, is how all of this adds up. Because *kokhim* appear in Rome in an underground cemetery that was used by Jews and because this happened at a time that *kokhim* were the single most common type of grave in the homeland of these Jewish immigrants, it stands to reason to argue that when *kokhim* appear in Rome, as they do at Vigna Randanini, they should be considered as an indicator of Jewishness. Furthermore, the fact that we encounter *kokhim* graves in two of the relatively early sections of the Vigna Randanini catacomb can be taken to mean that this particular way of digging graves was done by the people who had just arrived. They may have done so because they either wanted to preserve this tradition, or, alternatively, because the workmen they hired were making tombs in the only way that at this point was familiar to them (meaning they must have come from Roman Palestine). The fact that we no longer encounter *kokhim* in later building stages, particularly during phase 4, should finally also be understood against this same general background. By this time Roman Jews were so integrated into Roman society that they no longer cared about the *kokhim* that were anyway now going out of fashion even in the Jewish homeland itself.

108 This also brings us to the issue of the shaft graves in the backwall of *cubiculum* 14. These are graves of an unusual type that go straight into the wall like the *kokhim* do. But are they to be considered as real *kokhim*, especially considering that we have isolated parallels in Rome from a number of pagan *hypogea* and early Christian catacombs in the form of tombs that look very similar and that are typically referred to as "a forno"[198]? And if so, do they point towards Jewish ownership?

109 Our view is that they could be. Whereas the parallels preserved in the Christian catacombs are isolated examples that never find a follow-up or evolve into a standardized kind of grave type[199], the *kokhim* of Vigna Randanini do, as is evidenced by the long rows of *kokhim* graves in the regions A and D. For that reason, it is conceivable that the two tombs in the backwall of room 14 are early, experimental examples of a tomb type brought from Roman Palestine – one that was fully developed later in the A- and D-regions which both postdate this chamber, as we saw in our study of the site's topography[200]. If this is the case, one may argue that these tombs provide us with further evidence to argue that painted rooms 13 and 14 were Jewish from the very beginning.

110 In conclusion, it is evident that while there is much Jewish archaeological evidence at Vigna Randanini, and that the evidence gets stronger over time, as indicated by both the wall paintings and the inscriptions, we still cannot rule out entirely the possibility of non-Jews having been buried there also[201]. Both the wall paintings and the inscriptions can be read as pointing towards pagan ownership, even when the wall paintings allow for a Jewish reading also (the pagan inscription are likely to derive from elsewhere, as pointed out before). In *cubiculum* 2, we see both worlds side by side, in a seamless fashion: a wall painting with a menorah that sits over a sarcophagus with the Muses on it. Again, such a sarcophagus does not at all exclude Jewish ownership, but lacking firm inscriptional evidence or genetic data, we cannot be sure. One final

197 Avin – Zissu 2016 who date the complex to the fourth and fifth centuries C.E. The *kokhim* were clearly inspired by a first century family tomb with *kokhim* integrated into the later monument. We would like to thank Boaz Zissu for discussion.

198 In other tombs in Rome there are but few parallels to the *kokhim* we find in regions A and D at Vigna Randanini, namely a gallery opened in the grave of the Pancratii at via Latina, see Montella 2005, 336 fig. 143. Singular tombs "a forno" can be found in the catacombs of Domitlla and Commodilla, see Nuzzo 2000, 168 f. 188 f.; via Doria Pamphili, see Nestori 1959, 8 and fig. 5; via Anapo, see Fasola 1984, 100, and San Ermete ai Parioli, see Bonavenia 1894, 139.

199 Pace Pergola 1975, 69 and 93 f.

200 As said above, there is still another shaft grave at the end of gallery B1, that may likewise be the result of the same experiment, see also Laurenzi 2013, 37 fig. 12, who presents the same interpretation as we do here.

201 Elsner 2003 hypothesizes about inter-cult fluidity.

interesting piece of evidence is this. There are two inscriptions from inside the Vigna Randanini catacomb that document the burial of proselytes, that is of full converts to Judaism[202]. There is also evidence for a Godfearer, i.e., the *theosebes* inscription that derives from M, which is an outside area on the Via Appia Pignatelli that was converted to funerary use only at a second stage. This would seem to suggest that converts to Judaism were fully accepted by the community, whereas Godfearers, of whom we know that they operated at the fringes of the Jewish community, were not.

111 Even when we cannot fully exclude a pagan presence at Vigna Randanini, we nevertheless believe that in terms of religious affiliation, we may postulate developments at the site as consisting of the following two main steps. In a first stage, the cemetery was developed by a Jewish community or even a group of families that brought with them grave forms which they had long been accustomed to in the Jewish homeland, namely the *kokhim.* Having not yet had the time to develop their own pictorial language, these "early adapters" engaged local workmen when it came to decorating their cemetery with wall paintings. Then came a second phase, by which time the Jewish community was more fully established and during which the expression of one's Jewish identity in inscriptions and in the art became more important. This happened over the course of the fourth century C.E. at a time that the Jews are known to have made their identity more salient in response to a Christian state that pursued its religious policy with more and more fervor. Jewish burial finally ceased in the sixth century, which is when a whole new chapter in the history of the Jews of Rome was about to begin.

Appendix: Tomb Statistics for the Vigna Randanini Catacomb. Preliminary Results

112 Because we fully documented the Vigna Randanini catacomb we are in a unique position to present the total number of tombs, which in turns allows us to say a few words about the demography of the population that used this site for burial. The approach we are presenting here has hardly been pursued in the study of the catacombs of Rome so far, one of the reasons being that previous work never produced the sort of precise and comprehensive documentation we managed to here[203]. In what follows we present a first complete overview of graves that have been preserved in the Vigna Randanini catacomb, add several observations on the difficulties that accompany this way of collecting and producing data, discuss the distribution of the evidence per region, and offer some preliminary thoughts regarding the interpretation of the evidence.

113 To begin with, we counted all tombs that are visible at this moment in all of the catacomb's regions, i.e., from subterranean regions A to G and in the external building M[204]. We then classified them according to their types, distinguishing *loculi*, *arcosolia*, shaft tombs, *kokhim*, and sarcophagi (fig. 42). In addition to specifying the total numbers we present the data subdivided per region (fig. 43). To keep matters simple, we have subdivided *loculi* into two categories only: those for adults (if longer

202 JIWE 2, 218 and 224.

203 For an introduction to a demographical analysis based on tomb statistics in Roman catacombs and their interpretation, see the case study of the Jewish catacombs of Villa Torlonia and the regional study of the early Christian ones at St. Callixtus, Rutgers 2006, and Rutgers 2015. The approach we are presenting here builds on the methodology that Rutgers has developed in these works. For an isolated example of a detailed study that takes on board all of the tombs, burials and individuals (including their physical anthropology), see the work on the hypogeum of Trebius Justus, in Rea 2004.

204 The actual ground level in the galleries is probably not the original one, and generally the lowest line of *loculi* may still be covered with earth. We decided to include only tombs that we could actually document rather than adding furter hypothesized ones.

than one meter) and those for infants (if shorter than one meter) (fig. 45a, 46a)[205]. In addition, we have also drawn a distinction between tombs found in galleries as opposed to those located inside the *cubicula* (fig. 44). This is because tombs placed in galleries may be hypothesized to have served an entire group or community, while the tombs placed in the *cubicula* probably belong to single families (as evidenced by isolated epigraphic evidence as discussed in section III above). To this should be added that in all cases we have also tried to differentiate between a) original and b) secondary tombs (fig. 45a–b. 46a–b). Such a distinction is important because original tombs serve as indicators of how a given space was designed and used initially, as in case of regular rows of *loculi*, which tend to be carefully planned and neatly interspaced. Secondary tombs, which obviously document developments at a later moment in time, are often not the result of careful planning. In fact, such additional burials have been placed in such a manner that they sometimes destroy original tombs, either partially or completely. While this phenomenon in and by itself raises interesting questions about burial practices that may appear to us as indicative of a lack respect for the dead or at least for the integrity of the grave, it is also interesting to observe that there are notable differences in the relationship between "original" and added tombs in galleries against those found in the *cubicula*, including the way this phenomenon played out in the various regions, which suggests different types of usage per region. Note that the results presented here are preliminary, as we offer a rather simplified view without detailed discussion – such a dedicated study is still in preparation.

114 Regarding the tombs preserved at the Vigna Randanini catacomb we cannot generally be sure how many bodies were buried in any one tomb, be this a *loculus*, an *arcosolium*, or a shaft grave. Nearly all tombs have been broken into in the past and are open today, with the bones mostly lacking. Taking into account the phenomenon of secondary or added tombs, however, which was the preferred way of creating additional burial space (as opposed to breaking into and re-using existing ones), we may assume that generally one tomb (*loculus*, or *arcosolium*, or shaft grave) was meant to receive the mortal remains of a single person only. Only in cases where *loculi* or *arcosolia* are very deep, we may suppose they were designed to entomb two or, in singular cases, as many as three bodies.

115 The galleries that make up the catacomb of Vigna Randanini extends over a total length of ca. 730 meters, linking the via Appia at the one end with the via Appia Pignatelli at the other. The total number of graves that are currently visible and that we have documented as part of this study is 1737. They consist of 1187 *loculi* for adults, 399 *loculi* for children, 65 *kokhim*, 13 *arcosolia*, 2 sarcophagi, and 1 'box' grave (*Kastengrab*) (fig. 45. 46). Of this total number of 1737 graves, we noted that 1451 of these graves are located in the galleries, comprising 1070 *loculi* for adults, 325 *loculi* for children, 54 *kokhim*, and 2 *arcosolia*. In the *cubicula* we found 97 *loculi* for adults, 51 *loculi* for children, 11 *arcosolia*, 2 sarcophagi, 2 shaft graves, and 1 'box' grave (fig. 44).

116 Here is how the evidence divides over the various regions, where we present the data following the topographical order we have proposed above (section I) (fig. 43–46):

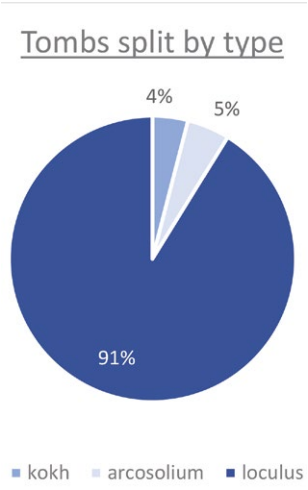
117 The earliest hypogeum called region B comprises ca. 25 meters of galleries and comprised 6 *cubicula*. Here there were 58 tombs, comprising of 44 *loculi* for adults, 10 *arcosolia*, 3 shaft graves, and 3 *loculi* for children. Of these 58 tombs, 43 can be found in galleries, 41 of which were for adults, 1 *loculus* for a child, and 1 shaft grave. In the *cubicula* there were 14 tombs, of which 10 were *arcosolia*, 2 shaft graves, and 2 *loculi* for adults. Of all these 58 graves only 6 can be considered as a secondary addition; 3 of

205 On the basis of their respective sizes it is possible to further distinguish between new-born, infant, adolescent, and adult, and we will apply usually statistical methodology in a following detailed study.

these were *loculi* for children and 2 were *loculi* for adults. All of these were in galleries, while 1 *loculus* for an adult was found in a *cubiculum*.

118 Region A came into existence independently and right after the building of region B. It consists of galleries only that are 58 meters in length. Here, we counted a total number of 114 graves, consisting of 50 *loculi* for adults, 35 *kokhim*, and 29 *loculi* for children. Originally, there were only 26 *kokhim*. Some of them were later enlarged on the inside, creating an even lower level. This happened in case of 9 such secondary *kokhim*. 14 *loculi* for children and 13 for adults located in this region were also added later. So, of the 114 graves, 36 are to be considered as later additions.

119 The third area at Vigna Randanini to come into existence, namely region D, also emerged independently, with a set of galleries that have an extension of ca. 94 meters. It contains but one *cubiculum*. The total number of graves amounts to 342, distributed as follows: 240 *loculi* for adults, 76 *loculi* for children, and 26 *kokhim*. All the 26 *kokhim* were dug in the side walls of the galleries, as were 226 *loculi* for adults and 70 for children. The *cubiculum* and its *dromos* offer space to 14 *loculi* for adults and 6 for children. Of these 342 graves, a total number of 90 was added secondarily, namely



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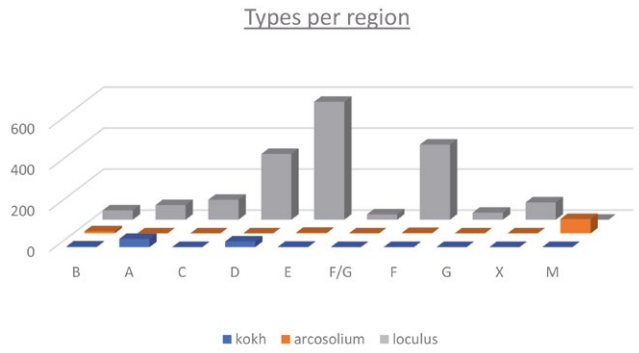

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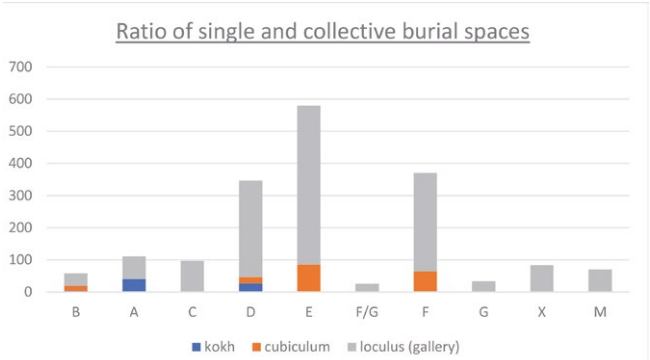

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60 *loculi* for children, and 30 *loculi* of adults. In the *cubiculum* 6, *loculi* for children, and 4 for adults were secondary tombs.

120 Region C is an addition located between regions A and D, on both levels, and develops in the form of only two short galleries with regular lines of *loculi*, a regular one on the level of A, and an irregular gallery on the level of D, totaling 66 meters. It contains 97 tombs, with 92 *loculi* for adults, and 5 for children. All seem to be inserted in a systematically order, without secondary additions.

121 As has been argued in section I, the next three regions E – F – G take on the form of regular of catacomb galleries. Region E has ca. 178 meters of gallery, comprising also 7 *cubicula*. The total number of graves is 513, that is, 364 *loculi* for adults and 146 for children. There are 2 *arcosolia* and 1 shaft grave. Of these 513 tombs, 450 are found in galleries, consisting of 330 *loculi* for adults, 119 for children, and 1 shaft grave, while 41 are in niches, with 24 *loculi* for adults, 15 for children, and 2 *arcosolia*. Finally, 7 are in *cubicula*, consisting of 4 *loculi* for adults and 3 for children. Of all the 513 graves in region E, 53 can be classified as secondary additions, comprising 44 *loculi* for children located in galleries and 7 further *loculi* for children situated in *cubicula*.

122 In Regions F and G we find a similar pattern of regular catacomb galleries, with a length of ca. 135 meters and containing 11 *cubicula*. These accommodated a total number of 466 tombs, subdivided in *332 loculi* for adults, 129 for children, 2 sarcophagi, 1 *arcosolium*, and 1 'box' grave. Of a total 466 tombs, 80 were secondarily added, of these 65 *loculi* were for children and 14 were for adults, 1 was an *arcosolium*. Of the

Fig. 42: Subdivision per tomb type: *Kokh*, *arcosolium*, and *loculus*

Fig. 43: Tomb types per region: *Kokh*, *arcosolium*, and *loculus*

Fig. 44: Ratio of single and collective burial spaces: *Kokh*, *cubiculum*, and *loculus* (in gallery)

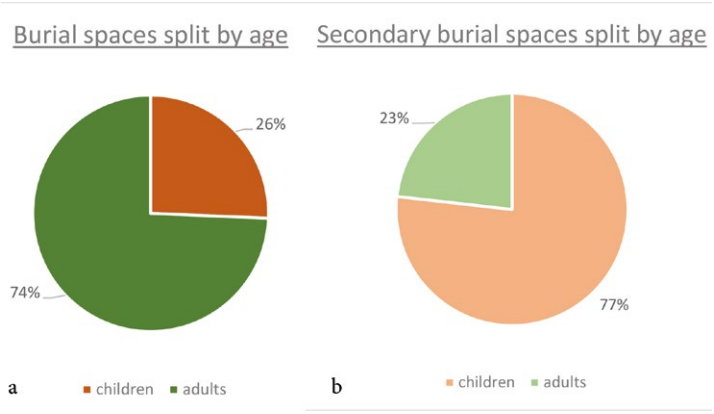

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Fig. 45: a) Burial spaces categorized by age as indicated by tomb size: adults versus children; b) Secondary burial spaces categorized by age: adults versus children

secondary graves, 35 *loculi* for children can be found in the *cubicula*, along with *loculi* for adults, and 1 arcosolium.

123 Finally, outside at the entrance from via Appia Pignatelli, in the walls of building M are visible 70 *arcosolia*. These were constructed in such a way that they remind us of the burials inside the catacomb. They use all of the available space to the best of their ability and should probably be seen as part of the Jewish communal cemetery.

124 On the basis of the figures presented above, it become possible to quantify the size of the groups or communities associated with the various sections of the catacomb. To arrive at these figures, one should apply a Crude Death Rate of 40 per thousand as well as an average family size of 4.3, assuming also that the *kokhim* graves were used for single primary burials also, and not for secondary depositions, as happened frequently in Roman Palestine, where this type of tomb was regularly even if not always used for multiple depositions[206]. If we assume that sections B, A, and D were used during a period of fifty years, it follows that the group of people using section B comprised 29 people or ca. 6 or 7 families, those patronizing section A 70 people or 16 families, and those exploiting section D 171 people or 40 families[207]. This shows that the *cubicula* and galleries that make up region B were but a small affair that involved but a few families. Regions A and D, by contrast, are the result of a larger kind of enterprise. This is particularly clear in the case of region D. It is also interesting to note that half of the burials in region D occurred in *kokhim* graves while the other half happened in regular *loculi*. Both types of tombs were located in unusual wide galleries. In region D we see also an extraordinary high number of secondarily inserted *loculi*: they mostly appear as filling of the space above the openings of the *kokhim* in the large galleries D1, D4, and D7. These are probably to be considered as the work of family members of folks buried in the *kokhim*, that is, of people who wanted to be buried nearby, which they brought about by adding *loculus* graves nearby.

125 During phase 4 the Vigna Randanini catacomb experienced its greatest expansion and became a regular catacomb, something that may have lasted for about a century, meaning that burial capacity of the catacomb at that point in time corresponded to a community of 243 souls or 56 families (or if we assume this also happened during a fifty-year period the double amount)[208]. This applies to regions E, F, and G where we have long galleries with constantly high numbers of *loculi*, interrupted here and there by *cubicula*. Along all the gallery walls, the space was generally used for regularly organized rows of *loculi*, but secondary additions (in the form of *loculi*) are rare. When this happened, it seems to be usually for a child with the intention to be close to a specific burial, maybe from the same family.

126 Adding up the demographic data we have just presented it follows that the Vigna Randanini catacomb offered space for a community that in real life counted no more than 550 souls on average. Such a figure is sobering when we consider the size of the Jewish community in ancient Rome as hypothesized by traditional scholarship[209].

206 For the rationale behind Crude Death Rates and for family size, see Rutgers 2006, 353.

207 B = 58/50 = 1.16 tombs per year = 29 people; A = 141 tombs/50 years = 2.82 tombs per year = 70 people; D = 342 tombs/50 years = 6.84 tombs per year = 171 people.

208 979 tombs/100 years = 979 tombs per year = 244 people. This excludes the external region M, which contains another 70 *arcosolia*: 70/50 years = 14 tombs per year = 35 people.

209 For discussion, Rutgers 2006.

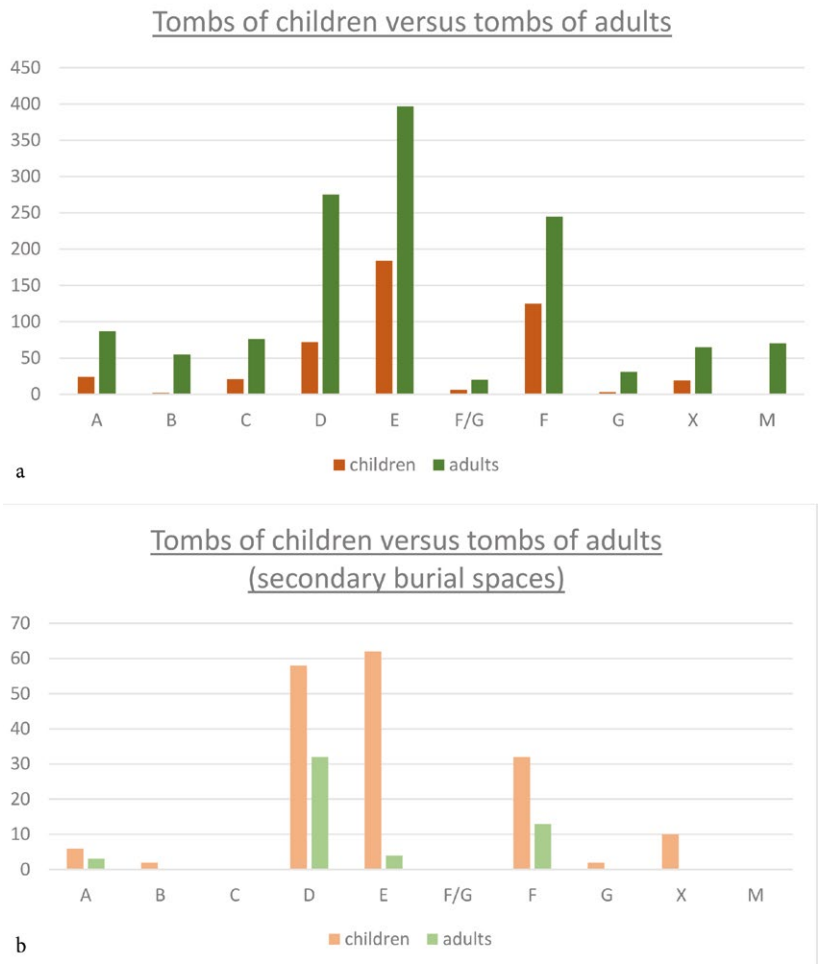

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Fig. 46: a) Tombs of children versus tombs of adults per region; b) Tombs of children versus tombs of adults per region, secondary burial spaces

Along similar lines, about 25% of the *loculi* at Vigna Randanini belong to children. This is obviously a minimum figure as children could be buried in full-sized *loculi* and may rest in *arcosolia* and *kokhim* too (which we cannot document because these tombs have been compromised). However this may be, said figure of 25% is not in any way atypical inasmuch as it finds parallels in both the Jewish and Christian catacombs of Rome, pointing to levels of mortality where half of the population did not survive its fifth birthday[210].

127 Much more can be said that is possible to present here. We will reserve those observations for a future demographical and sociological study of the monument.

Acknowledgments

128 We were very grateful to Rita Paris, former, and Simone Quilici, present director of the Parco Archeologico dell'Appia Antica, and to Carmelina Ariosto, funzionario archeologo del Parco dell'Appia Antica, for permission to study the catacomb, and for the permission to publish here with our results and the 2D-documentation also photos of wall paintings and inscriptions of the Randanini catacomb. We would also like to thank the owner, Alberto Del Gallo, for access to the monument, and Alberto Marcocci, our *fossor* at Randanini, for his help. We are also grateful to Marina Döring, Antonio Enrico Felle, Max Limoncelli, Irmengard Mayer, and Silke Haps, for their help.

210 Data and discussion in Rutgers 2006 and Rutgers 2015.

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