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# The Necropolis of the Roman Fleet at Ravenna. Recent Excavations at Classe

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# The Necropolis of the Roman Fleet at Ravenna. Recent Excavations at Classe

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

Source: *La lettre*, no. 34, July 2012

- 1 **A symposium, coordinated by Professors John Scheid (Collège de France) and Jacopo Ortalli from the University of Ferrara (Italy), on the international excavations at Classe, was held at the Collège de France in February 2012.**
- 2 It brought together the team from the experimental excavations undertaken from 2003 to 2005. During this experiment, the archaeological teams from different countries in Europe where funeral archaeology has made strides ahead in recent years, worked together, each with its own methods. The excavations were on a section of the necropolis of the Adriatic fleet, in which the oldest graves date back to the first half of the first century C.E.
- 3 The German colleagues are accustomed to first doing a cross-section of the structure discovered, to analyse the stratigraphy (which in this case was difficult to discern since the part under excavation was in a sand-dune), before going through the rest of the grave layer by layer. The other partners in the experiment, from Italy, France, Switzerland and Luxembourg, disregarded the difficulty due to the sand-dune and proceeded by doing a horizontal stratigraphic excavation. They cleared the structure layer by layer, without first doing a probe to identify the stratigraphy.
- 4 The excavations were deliberately limited to a period of three years. The idea was to allow for joint reflection on the findings and to publish, within a reasonable interval, the data on the hundreds of tombs that had been unearthed and analysed. The team is

currently in the publication phase and extensive laboratory studies on the material discovered is reaching an end.

- 5 The symposium revealed that the diverse excavation methods, especially those of our German colleagues, who proceed mainly by partial cross-sections of the archaeological structures before excavating the whole, and those of the other teams, who excavate the whole by horizontal strata, produce the same stratigraphic results.
- 6 Relations between the graves and funeral monuments were also presented, as well as the beginnings of syntheses on burial graves (Fiorella Bestetti, Bologna) and on pyre graves. Henri Duday broached the problem of urns, and John Scheid presented and, with Maria Romana Picuti, commented on the inscriptions discovered during the excavations. The symposium also afforded the opportunity for discussions between participants and the public on the first findings.
- 7 The next day the team met at the Hugot Foundation to prepare the publication programme and to examine questions of detail on the work that remains to be done before the final draft.

- France: Valérie Bel (INRAP), Patrice Méniel (CNRS), Henri Duday (CNRS, EPHE), Véronique Matterné (INRAP), John Scheid (Collège de France)

- Switzerland: Steffi Martin Kilcher, Christa Ebnöther (University of Bern)

- Luxembourg: Jeannot Metzler, Catherine Gaeng (Centre national de recherche archéologique)

- Germany: Marion Witteyer (Regional Archaeology, Mainz), Peter Fasold (Archaeological Museum of Frankfurt)

- Italy: Jacopo Ortalli (University of Ferrara), Maria Grazia Maioli (Emilia-Romagna Archaeological Heritage Superintendence), Giovanna Montevicchi, Cristina Leoni (La Fenice Cooperative, Bologna), Maria Romana Picuti (Perugia), Fiorella Bestetti (Bologna)

Symposium held on 8 February 2012

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## AUTHOR

**JOHN SCHEID**

Religion, Institutions and Society in Ancient Rome