

Burial Customs: Roman to Christian

Adam Gross, Session 7 Necropolis



Etruscan Origins

Like temples and aspects
of religion, Romans
drew on their
Etruscan roots in
burial customs

Paintings and household
items

View of life after death
(basic human
necessities)



Early/Mid-Republic

- ▣ Inhumation first
- ▣ Cremation on the rise
- ▣ Twelve Tables (5th Century)
- ▣ 400 BC onwards



Late Republic – Early Principate

- ▣ Cremation prominent
- ▣ Tomb markers based on wealth/social status
- ▣ Poor belonged to burial collegia



Interesting Practices

- ▣ Holes in tombs for libation offerings
- ▣ Cenotaphia
- ▣ Dwelling place for the dead
- ▣ Specific holidays to celebrate the deceased
- ▣ Soldiers' mass burial
- ▣ FunusPublicium/Imp eratorium



Shift to Inhumation

- ▣ Hadrian (117-138 AD)
- ▣ Increase in Sarcophagi makers in Rome
- ▣ Why?
- ▣ Can't be from the Christians



Christianity

- ▣ Prefer inhumation
- ▣ Grave goods differ
 - ▣ Different belief about afterlife
- ▣ East – West Orientation

