

Topography, monumentalization and funerary customs in urban necropoleis in *Baetica*

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'Inebriated, like a butterfly' (*CIL II²/7, 575, fig. 1*)¹

Mors mala solvit ...

When faced with death, Romans were always concerned about the visible effect of their passage through this world and to end their days with the minimum of dignity. This concern regarding the moral status of one's acts, the approval of one's behaviour by others (including family) and the virtues displayed during one's lifetime² is seen in several Hispanic *carmina epigraphica* praising the merits of the deceased; some epitaphs even include among the virtues of the deceased that they almost established blood links with their peers.³ It was a common ambition to die in the arms of one's beloved; this is reflected in a *carmen sepulcralis* at Astigi (1st c. A.D.) in which a widow laments that although his early death had made this impossible, she had scrupulously observed the duty of *pietas* by providing a worthy tomb for him and wishing him eternal rest.⁴

Romans were also anxious to have access to a minimum of funeral rites necessary to make their passage from this world to the next less traumatic, as well as to a tomb in which their remains could be lain to eternal rest (whether or not they believed that a further life actually existed). If possible, the tomb should be of monumental proportions and with an epitaph carved on a solid support to perpetuate their name for ever.⁵ This explains why certain Hispanic inscriptions reflect frustration on the part of the living for not having been able to erect a monument (*cella memoriae*)⁶ worthy of their loved ones or to inscribe their *tituli sepulcrales* in *litterae aureae*,⁷ a cruel metaphor for the clash



Fig. 1. *CIL II²/7, 575: carmen sepulcralis* (Corduba). Libation with wine on the cremated remains is mentioned as a way of guaranteeing both survival and remembrance. End of 1st to first half of 2nd c. A.D.

1 This is a loose translation of a *carmen sepulcralis*. The complete verse runs: *d[es]iero volitet meus eb[rius] / [p]apilio ossa tegant...*

2 *Paupertas, amicitia, pietas, fortitudo, honestas, pulchritudo ...*, in the case of men; *obsequium, pietas, castitas, pudor, pudicitia, sedulitas, univira ...*, in the case of women, documented by inscriptions only in *Baetica* (Hernández Pérez 2001, 140 ff. and 155 ff., respectively; Fernández Martínez 2007, for *Baetica*).

3 CLE 1140 (Marchena, Seville, 1st c. A.D.); cf. Hernández Pérez 2001, 181.

4 CLE 1138, 2; cf. Hernández Pérez 2001, 24 ff.

5 See Jordan 2011 for a recent study of the rôle of the promoters and donors of *tituli sepulcrales* in *Hispania Citerior* (with references to *Baetica*).

6 De Filippis 1997, 110 ff.

7 CILA II, 175 (*Celti*, second half of 2nd c. A.D.); cf. Hernández Pérez 2001, 184 ff.; Fernández