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THE ORGANISATION OF JEWISH BURIALS IN ANCIENT ROME IN THE  
LIGHT OF EVIDENCE FROM PALESTINE AND THE DIASPORA

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## THE ORGANISATION OF JEWISH BURIALS IN ANCIENT ROME IN THE LIGHT OF EVIDENCE FROM PALESTINE AND THE DIASPORA\*

The bulk of the evidence for the Jewish community of Rome in early imperial times consists of the inscriptions from the three large Jewish funerary complexes that have been discovered to the north-east, south and south-west of the ancient city - the so-called Nomentana, Appian and Monteverde catacombs.<sup>1</sup> In each of them, the synagogues to which some of the deceased belonged are referred to by name. From this, Leon, the author of the only detailed study to date of the inscriptional evidence from the Jewish catacombs of Rome, was led to believe that it was a Jew's synagogal membership there that determined his place of burial and that most synagogues only ever used one catacomb.<sup>2</sup> (The counter view was that Jewish burials at Rome were organised somehow or other by a central body.)<sup>3</sup> For Leon this synagogue-catacomb linkage was all-important. Central to his study was the idea that different sections of Roman Jewry possessed significantly different cultural characteristics. Statements like "the Appia group included the most Romanized congregations, the Monteverde the most conservative, and the Nomentana the most Hellenized and least Romanized" run like a refrain throughout the work.<sup>4</sup> Thus the idea of a direct relationship between congregation and catacomb was fundamental to the under-pinning of his whole work. But, crucial though the concept was, the evidence on which it was based was not nearly as firm as Leon made out. What is more, he nowhere examined the evidence from Palestine and the cities of the Diaspora, places with which the Jews of Rome were in close contact throughout, to see whether his basic premise, that in a Jew's choice of burial place his synagogal affiliation was paramount, had any validity. My first objective in this paper, therefore, is to review the evidence on which Leon based his thesis and demonstrate the weakness of his case. The second is to try and discover with the aid of comparative evidence

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<sup>1</sup> So called by H.J.Leon, *The Jews of Ancient Rome*, Philadelphia 1960 [hereafter referred to as Leon, JAR] and in this paper but often referred to as the catacombs of the Villa Torlonia, Vigna Randanini and Via Portuense. Note that Fasola has now established that the Nomentana complex consisted of two separate catacombs and not one, as had previously been thought. See U.Fasola, *Le due Catacombe Ebraiche di Villa Torlonia*, RAC 52, 1976, 7-62.

<sup>2</sup> Leon, JAR, ch.VII, *passim*. The idea first surfaced in his article *New material about the Jews of Ancient Rome* in JQR, N.S. 20, 1929-1930, 301-312.

<sup>3</sup> G.La Piana, HTR 20, 1927, 363 and S.Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews II*, Columbia University Press 1952, 199. For a recent re-statement of this view, see A.Konikoff, *Sarcophagi from the Jewish Catacombs of Rome*, Stuttgart 1986, 34.

<sup>4</sup> Leon, JAR 110. *cf.* 241, 243-244 and 258.

from Palestine, the Diaspora and pagan Rome itself, the factors which may have influenced both the character and the organisation of Jewish burials there.

We will begin by setting out in tabular form the evidence which lies at the heart of this debate - *viz.* the forty inscriptions from Rome<sup>5</sup> which mention by name either one or more of the synagogal communities of the city.<sup>6</sup> Since a chronological order cannot be established, the congregations are listed alphabetically. Inscriptions of unknown or uncertain provenance are printed in italics. Note that two epitaphs are listed twice - *CIJ* 523 under Campesians and Volumnesians, since the deceased was associated with both these congregations, and *CIJ* 433 under Campesians and Calcaresians, since its attribution is disputed. While Leon has taken the surviving letters of the name - KA - as a reference to the synagogue of the Calcaresians, Frey's suggestion (*CIJ ad loc.*) that the Campesians could be referred to here must be preferred - there is simply not enough room on the stone for the other name.<sup>7</sup>

<i>CIJ</i>	Congregation	Findspot	Entry into the public domain	Frey's attribution	Leon's attribution
365	Agrippesians	Monteverde catacomb	Paribeni (1919)	Via Portuensis	Monteverde
425	Agrippesians	Monteverde catacomb	Müller (1912)	Via Portuensis	Monteverde
503	<i>Agrippesians</i>	<i>not known</i>	<i>De Winghe (15??)</i>	<i>uncertain provenance</i>	<i>probably Monteverde</i>
284	<i>Augustesians</i>	<i>Praetextatus catacomb</i>	<i>Marangoni (1740)</i>	<i>Via Appia</i>	<i>Monteverde</i>
301	Augustesians	Monteverde catacomb	Müller (1912)	Via Portuensis	Monteverde
338	Augustesians	Monteverde catacomb	Paribeni (1919)	Via Portuensis	Monteverde
368	Augustesians	Monteverde catacomb	Migliore (1748)	Via Portuenseis	Monteverde

<sup>5</sup> These comprise about 7% of the inscriptional material available. For this, see J.B.Frey, *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaicarum* I, Rome 1936 (reprinted with a prolegomenon by B.Lifshitz, New York 1975) [hereafter - *CIJ* I<sup>2</sup>] and *SEG* 26, 1157-1202.

<sup>6</sup> *CIJ* 173 and 501, which some have taken as referring to the synagogues of the Herodians and Arca Libanou respectively, have been omitted, since the existence of those congregations is very doubtful. See Leon, *JAR* 159-165.

<sup>7</sup> This can be seen all too clearly from the print-out of the text in Leon, *JAR* 329. In fact, what we must read here is Κα[μροῦ]. Since there is only room for six or seven letters on the stone (see photograph in *CIJ ad loc.*) and sense demands that the last three must be restored as ἐρω]ν, the congregational name itself must have been inscribed in the shorter Latin form. For other examples of congregational names that are Latin in form but Greek in transcription, see *CIJ* 318; 383 and 494.

416	Augustesians	Monteverde catacomb	Migliore (1748)	Via Portuensis	Monteverde
496	<i>Augustesians</i>	<i>Via Anicia</i>	<i>Gatti (1900)</i>	<i>near Porta Portese</i>	<i>Monteverde</i>
304	Calcaresians	Monteverde catacomb	Müller (1912)	Via Portuensis	Monteverde
316	Calcaresians	Monteverde catacomb	Müller (1912)	Via Portuensis	Monteverde
384	Calcaresians	Monteverde catacomb	Paribeni (1919)	Via Portuensis	Monteverde
433	Ca(lcaresians)? Ca(mpesians)?	Monteverde catacomb	Müller (1912)	Via Portuensis	Monteverde
504	<i>Calcaresians</i>	<i>not known</i>	<i>Spon (1685)</i>	<i>uncertain provenance</i>	<i>probably Monteverde</i>
537	<i>Calcaresians</i>	<i>R: unknown L: Porto</i>	<i>Le Blant (1886)</i>	<i>Porto</i>	<i>probably Monteverde</i>
88	Campesians	Via Appia catacomb	Garrucci (1863)	Via Appia	Via Appia
319	<i>Campesians</i>	<i>not known</i>	<i>known since 1756</i>	<i>Via Portuensis</i>	<i>source unknown</i>
433	Ca(mpesians)? Ca(lcaresians)?	Monteverde catacomb	Müller (1912)	Via Portuensis	Monteverde
523	<i>Campesians &amp; Volumnesians</i>	<i>not known</i>	<i>De Winghe (1592)</i>	<i>uncertain provenance</i>	<i>probably Monteverde</i>
281	Elaea	Vigna Cimar-ra catacomb	Berliner (1893)	Vigna Cimar-ra catacomb	Vigna Cimar-ra catacomb
509	<i>Elaea</i>	<i>not known</i>	<i>Lupi (1734)</i>	<i>uncertain provenance</i>	<i>source unknown</i>
291	Hebraioi	Monteverde catacomb	Müller (1912)	Via Portuensis	Monteverde
317	Hebraioi	Monteverde catacomb	Müller (1912)	Via Portuensis	Monteverde
510	<i>Hebraioi</i>	<i>not known</i>	<i>Migliore (1748)</i>	<i>uncertain provenance</i>	<i>probably Monteverde</i>
535	<i>Hebraioi</i>	<i>Porto</i>	<i>Lanciani (1868)</i>	<i>Porto</i>	<i>probably Monteverde</i>
7	Secenians	Nomentana catacomb	Paribeni (1920)	Via Nomentana	Nomentana

18	Siburesians	Nomentana catacomb	Paribeni (1920)	Via Nomentana	Nomentana
22	Siburesians	Monteverde catacomb	Paribeni (1920)	Via Nomentana	Nomentana
35a	<i>Siburesians</i>	<i>Villa Torlonia</i>	<i>Leon (1952)</i>	-	<i>Nomentana</i>
37	(Sibur)esians?	Nomentana catacomb	Paribeni (1920)	Via Nomentana	Nomentana
67	Siburesians	Nomentana catacomb	Paribeni (1920)	Via Nomentana	Nomentana
140	Siburesians	Via Appia catacomb	Müller (1886)	Via Appia	Via Appia
380	<i>Siburesians</i>	<i>not known</i>	<i>Migliore (1748)</i>	<i>Via Portuensis</i>	<i>unknown provenance</i>
390	Tripolitans	Monteverde catacomb	Paribeni (1919)	Via Portuensis	Monteverde
318	Vernaclesians	Monteverde catacomb	Müller (1912)	Via Portuensis	Monteverde
383	Vernaclesians	Monteverde catacomb	Müller (1912)	Via Portuensis	Monteverde
398	Vernaclesians	Monteverde catacomb	Müller (1912)	Via Portuensis	Monteverde
494	<i>Vernaclesians</i>	<i>Trastevere (in church)</i>	<i>Frey (1931)</i>	<i>near Via Portuensis</i>	<i>probably Monteverde</i>
343	Volumnesians	Monteverde catacomb	Paribeni (1919)	Via Portuensis	Monteverde
402	Volumnesians	Monteverde catacomb	Müller (1912)	Via Portuensis	Monteverde
417	Volumnesians	Monteverde catacomb	Paribeni (1919)	Via Portuensis	Monteverde
523	<i>Campeians &amp; Volumnesians</i>	<i>not known</i>	<i>De Winghe (1592)</i>	<i>uncertain provenance</i>	<i>probably Monteverde</i>

On the basis of this evidence, Leon claimed that all but two of the eleven congregations listed probably only ever used one burial place. While for most, this was the Monteverde catacomb in Trastevere, the Nomentana functioned as the burial ground of the Secenians<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> The existence of this congregation has been questioned *e.g.* by E.Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ III*, revised by G.Vermes, F.Millar and M.Goodman, Edinburgh 1986

and the so-called Vigna Cimarra catacomb as the cemetery of the synagogue of Elaea.<sup>9</sup> Only in the case of the Campesians and the Siburesians of the Campus Martius and Suburra respectively did Leon concede that a second catacomb had almost certainly been used. Siburesian use of the more distant Appian catacomb in addition to the nearby Nomentana could not be questioned.<sup>10</sup> But the consequence of Leon's own attribution of *CIJ* 523 to the Monteverde,<sup>11</sup> was that Campesian usage of that catacomb, as well as of the Appian, had to be admitted.<sup>12</sup> Since that concession clearly ran counter to his basic thesis, Leon attempted to limit the damage by insisting that neither congregation had ever used more than one catacomb at any one time.<sup>13</sup> No satisfactory explanation, however, was ever offered for these alleged shifts of burial ground.<sup>14</sup>

No one would deny the tidiness of this scheme but it is seriously flawed. It will have been observed that about one third of the inscriptions listed in the table (the thirteen italicized ones) were not discovered within the catacombs at all. Clearly, if any of them is to be used to make a case about where people were buried, valid criteria for determining provenance must first be established and then consistently applied. Yet this is precisely where Leon's treatment of the evidence falls down. Leon's main criterion is the length of time an inscription has been in the public domain. If known before the nineteenth century, an inscription is generally assigned to the Monteverde, on the grounds that this was the only catacomb that had been "discovered" then.<sup>15</sup> Such argumentation is invalid. All the known Jewish catacombs of Rome had, on Leon's own admission, been broken into and rifled long before they were officially discovered and systematically excavated in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>16</sup> Stray finds, therefore, could have come from any or, quite conceivably, none of them.<sup>17</sup> The only valid criterion, surely, is that an inscription must possess a properly

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[hereafter - Schürer (revised)], 98 and P.W.van der Horst, *Ancient Jewish Epitaphs*, Kampen 1991, 88. Frey's suggestion, however, (*CIJ* I<sup>2</sup>, LXXIX) that this congregation was probably founded by Jews from the N.African coastal town of Scina, designated in the *Tabula Peutingeriana* as *locus Iudaeorum Augusti*, seems entirely plausible to me.

<sup>9</sup> For the location of this small catacomb, which has yielded very few usable inscriptions, see Leon, *JAR* 51.

<sup>10</sup> The provenance of *CIJ* 140 admits of no doubt.

<sup>11</sup> Leon, *JAR* 144-145.

<sup>12</sup> Leon, *JAR* 145.

<sup>13</sup> Leon, *JAR* 145 and 153.

<sup>14</sup> Leon's suggestion (*JAR* 153) that the Siburesians probably switched to the main Appian catacomb c. 200 as the Nomentana "seems not to have been used long after the year 200" seems somewhat at variance with his remarks elsewhere (e.g. *JAR* 62 and 66) about the probable third century date of this catacomb.

<sup>15</sup> Leon, *JAR* 140; 142, n. 1; 143; 144.

<sup>16</sup> Leon, *JAR* 48 (Monteverde); 59 (Appian) and 64 (Nomentana).

<sup>17</sup> Other catacombs have been postulated - e.g. by Frey, *CIJ* I<sup>2</sup>, LXI. For a possible Jewish catacomb on the Via Flaminia, see C.Vismara, *I cimiteri ebraici di Roma in Società romana e impero tardoantico*, II,

documented findspot either in or near a catacomb. If that criterion is strictly applied, then the picture which emerges is quite different from Leon's. There is only one congregation, the Vernaclesii, of whom one can say with reasonable confidence that its known members were probably all buried in the same catacomb. By contrast, there are no less than three congregations which almost certainly used more than one catacomb. Besides the Siburesians and the Campesians whose use of a second burial ground was noted above,<sup>18</sup> the Augustesians, a Transtiberine congregation,<sup>19</sup> almost certainly used a second catacomb too. The critical piece of evidence is *CIJ* 284. This Leon attributed to the Monteverde catacomb, because it had been in the public domain since the first half of the eighteenth century.<sup>20</sup> Its findspot indicates an altogether different source. The earliest reports of this inscription inform us that it was discovered in the catacomb of Praetextatus which was in the vicinity of the Via Appia Pignatelli.<sup>21</sup> Since this is the very area in which the main entrance to the Appian catacomb was also situated,<sup>22</sup> that is far more likely to have been the source of this inscription than the Monteverde. And additional support for this attribution is to be found in the language of the epitaph - Latin. The Appian catacomb has a far higher proportion of epitaphs written in that language than either the Monteverde or the Nomentana catacombs.<sup>23</sup>

With this balance of the evidence, it would be unwise to follow Leon in asserting that the remaining seven congregations must have used each a single burial ground. With the Secenians and the Tripolitans, it is quite impossible to say since only one inscription pertaining to each has survived.<sup>24</sup> As for the rest, judgement must be suspended, since material of uncertain or unknown provenance attaches to each one.

But, even if there were no doubt about the provenance of this material, Leon's case would still require the validation of other evidence. A reference in an epitaph to a synagogue does not in itself offer any proof that it was the synagogue that dictated the place of burial. All it

Roma: politica, economia e paesaggio, ed. A.Giardina, Rome-Bari 1986 [hereafter - Vismara, Cimiteri], 359. For Jews buried outwith the catacombs, see S.Collon, *MEFRA* 57, 1940, 76, n. 2.

<sup>18</sup> See notes 11-13 above. While Campesian use of the Monteverde catacomb cannot be assumed on the basis of *CIJ* 523, whose origin is unknown, it can on the basis of my interpretation of *CIJ* 433 in note 7 above.

<sup>19</sup> The Transtiberine location of the congregation is to be inferred from the fact that at the time of its foundation - probably the reign of Augustus - the Transtiberinum was the only area occupied by the Jews. See Philo, *Leg.* 155.

<sup>20</sup> Leon, *JAR* 142, n. 1.

<sup>21</sup> *CIL* VI (1) 29757 - *tabula effossa in coemeterio Praetextati...*

<sup>22</sup> See E.R.Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period III*, New York 1953 [hereafter Goodenough III], fig. 735.

<sup>23</sup> Leon, *JAR* 77. Note that Leon's figure for the Nomentana must be revised down in the light of Fasola's publication (cit. note 1) of forty-five new Greek inscriptions from the complex.

<sup>24</sup> *CIJ* 7 and 390. Under the Tripolitans, Leon (*JAR* 153) also lists *CIJ* 408 (likewise from the Monteverde). Lifshitz, however, points out (*CIJ* I<sup>2</sup> proleg., 36) that the latter mentions only a Jew from Tripolis, not the congregation itself.



indicates is that the Jew concerned (or his family) was proud of his membership of that particular congregation. But does any confirmatory material exist? A survey of the evidence from Palestine and the Diaspora reveals that in Jewish society generally burial was regarded, in the first instance at least, as a matter of private choice and family responsibility. Only if exceptional circumstances arose or in cases of special need, did the community at large have a duty to intervene. Then, private individuals might shoulder the burden or various public bodies, their identity depending upon time and place, take it upon themselves to help. The synagogue, however, barely enters the picture.

To illustrate these points, we will first consider the Palestinian evidence from earliest times down to the third century A.D. - the probable date of at least some of the inscriptional material from the Jewish catacombs of Rome.<sup>25</sup> In Palestine, "burial with one's fathers",<sup>26</sup> either on family land or in a private cave or burial chamber, remained throughout a desideratum. Abraham's purchase of the cave at Machpelah for the burial of his family set the precedent.<sup>27</sup> And there is abundant evidence, both literary and archaeological, to show that this tradition not only continued throughout the Biblical period but retained its vitality long after. From the Bible it will be sufficient to cite the cases of Gideon, Samson and Saul.<sup>28</sup> As to the continuation of this tradition in the post-Biblical period, I Maccabees provides us with a detailed description of the late second century Hasmonaean family tomb at Modin<sup>29</sup> and the excavations of the 1970s at Jericho have revealed a whole complex of chamber and loculi (*kokhim*)<sup>30</sup> tombs of the first centuries B.C. and A.D., which had clearly functioned as family sepulchres over several generations.<sup>31</sup> But the most striking example of the tenacity of this tradition is provided by the family halls and chambers in the Beth She'arim catacombs in Galilee. Dating mainly from the third and fourth centuries A.D.,<sup>32</sup> they had been purchased by Jews not just from the immediate locality but from all over

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<sup>25</sup> The dating of the Jewish inscriptions from Rome is problematical. In the absence of absolute dates, palaeographic, linguistic and onomastic criteria are routinely applied, with widely varying results. H.Solin, for instance, who gives the inscriptions a third century date on linguistic grounds in ANRW 2.29.2, 1983, 684, actually assigns many of them to much earlier periods in his broadly contemporaneous onomastic lexicon - *Die griechische Personennamen in Rome I-III*, Berlin/New York 1982.

<sup>26</sup> For the phrase, see, for instance, I Kings 14.31; 15.24.

<sup>27</sup> Gen. 23 *passim*; 25.9; 49.31 and 50.13.

<sup>28</sup> Judges 8.32 and 16.31, II Sam. 21.12-14.

<sup>29</sup> I Macc. 13.27-30.

<sup>30</sup> The chief features of this semitic style of loculus, which we shall meet again at Rome, are that they were carved (a) at right-angles to the wall of the burial chamber and not parallel to it and (b) in a single, horizontal row. For a description and plan of a typical chamber and *kokhim* tomb, see R.Hachlili and R.Killebrew, *Jewish Funerary Customs during the Second Temple Period, in the Light of the Excavations at the Jericho Necropolis* [hereafter Hachlili-Killebrew], PEQ 115, 1983, 110 and fig. 2.

<sup>31</sup> R.Hachlili, *A Jerusalem Family at Jericho*, BASOR 230, 1978, 45-56 and *The Goliath Family in Jericho: Funerary Inscriptions from a First Century A.D. Jewish Monumental Tomb*, BASOR 235 (1979) 31-66.

<sup>32</sup> N.Avigad, *Beth She'arim III - Catacombs 12-23*, Rutgers U.P. 1976 [hereafter Avigad], 260.

Palestine and the cities of the eastern Diaspora.<sup>33</sup> To be sure, the style of these two burial places varies markedly. While the Jericho tombs are of a common semitic (Phoenician?) type,<sup>34</sup> the Beth She'arim complex displays considerable Palmyrene and Hellenistic influences.<sup>35</sup> The underlying concept, however, is the same - in death one should if one could "sleep with one's fathers".<sup>36</sup>

Circumstances, however, might prevent this, in which case it became the duty of the community to intervene. Private individuals, quite unconnected with the deceased, might then assume responsibility. The details in Matthew's Gospel about Joseph of Arimathaea are instructive here. By putting at the disposal of Jesus the tomb which he had purchased for his own interment,<sup>37</sup> this rich community leader was performing a recognised and required act of piety.<sup>38</sup> A passage in Acts (5.6ff.) has been taken by some to indicate the existence at Jerusalem of public buriers, catering for people who died suddenly.<sup>39</sup> And there is evidence also that the authorities in Jerusalem might, in special circumstances, take responsibility for burial. In Josephus, for instance, we learn of the rebel leaders between A.D. 67 and 70 operating a burial fund there for the poor.<sup>40</sup> Finally, in the period before the fall of the Temple, we should note the existence in Jerusalem of shadowy charitable groups, among whose functions were the comforting of mourners and the collection of bones.<sup>41</sup> The Talmudic Age itself saw a new development - in the third century, if not before, formally constituted burial societies made an appearance in towns.<sup>42</sup> The one body of this type in Palestine about whose activities we have specific information is the organisation that ran the Beth She'arim necropolis. Inscriptions from there show that it managed the site on a commercial basis, developing catacombs and selling spaces for individual and family burials.<sup>43</sup>

And what of the synagogue in the matter of burial in Palestine? There is nothing in the many accounts of death and burial in the Gospels to indicate that it played any role at all.

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<sup>33</sup> See M.Schwabe and B.Lifshitz, *Beth She'arim II - The Greek Inscriptions*, Jerusalem 1967 [hereafter Schwabe-Lifshitz], nos. 11-12 (Palmyra); 141-143 (Antioch) and 171-173 (Sidon).

<sup>34</sup> Hachlili-Killebrew, 110-112.

<sup>35</sup> M.Goodman, *State and Society in Roman Galilee, A.D. 132-212*, Totowa 1983, 71 and 120 (Palmyrene); Avigad, 2 (Greek).

<sup>36</sup> For examples, see Hachlili-Killebrew, 128 and 130, n. 20.

<sup>37</sup> Matt. 27.57-60.

<sup>38</sup> For the obligation on a Jew not to leave a corpse unburied, see Jos. *Contra Apionem* 2.211. *cf.* Tobit 1.17-18.

<sup>39</sup> See, for instance, *Hastings Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels I*, Edinburgh 1906, 241.

<sup>40</sup> Jos. *BJ*.5.568. Note also the purchase by the Chief Priests (Matt. 27.7) of a field near Jerusalem for the burial of foreigners.

<sup>41</sup> *Tosefta Magillah* 4. (3). 15 and *Sema ot* 12.4-5. On these passages, see J.Mann, *HUCA* 1, 1924, 325 and D.Zlotnick, *The Tractate Mourning (Sema ot)*, New Haven 1966, 80-81. The precise nature of these bodies is disputed. See Baron (cit. n. 3) 289 and 424 and M.Stern in commentary on *CPJ* no. 138.

<sup>42</sup> S.Safrai in S.Safrai and M.Stern, *The Jewish People in the First Century II*, Assen 1976, 775.

<sup>43</sup> Avigad, 253 and 265. Hachlili-Killebrew, 127.

These show that, as a general rule, funeral rites started in the house of the deceased and ended at the tomb.<sup>44</sup> From Talmudic references a similar picture emerges. The activities of the charitable societies which were active in Jerusalem before the destruction of the Temple were focussed on three areas: the house of the deceased, the grave and the banqueting halls.<sup>45</sup>

In the Diaspora the picture is in essentials the same. The traditional belief that in normal circumstances burial was a matter of private choice and family responsibility, is still widely in evidence as late as the third century - the period when Diasporan inscriptional material is at its most abundant. While the actual purchase of the land for the family tomb and the expenses incurred in its construction are not often attested,<sup>46</sup> numerous inscriptions record the acquisition and preparation of the family tomb during the owner's lifetime. This type of epitaph is particularly common in Asia Minor, where Jewish values in the matter of burial received strong re-enforcement from the surrounding culture.<sup>47</sup> Usually provision was made just for the immediate family (*i.e.* self, spouse, children and grandchildren) but in areas where Roman influence was particularly strong, 'family' was sometimes more widely construed and interment facilities provided, in the Roman manner, for the freedmen of the household and the slaves born in it too.<sup>48</sup> As for the forms of these family tombs, throughout the cities of the Diaspora they tended to be the same as those most favoured by the gentile population. Thus in Corycus in Cilicia we find Jews using the gable-topped sarcophagus,<sup>49</sup> in Acmonia, the Phrygian-style "pineapple" tomb<sup>50</sup> and in Alexandria the locally popular semitic burial form - the chamber and loculi (*kokhim*) complex.<sup>51</sup> This willingness to follow local fashions should not surprise - there were no specifically Jewish

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<sup>44</sup> See, for instance, Matt. 9.23-6 (Jairus' daughter); Luke 7.11-16 (the young man of Nain); John 11.38-44 (Lazarus).

<sup>45</sup> *Sema ot* 12.4-5. The banqueting halls were the venue for post-interment feasts for the mourners. No direct link between synagogue and burial rites is to be inferred from the discovery in the synagogue area at Beth She'arim of a plaque mentioning two rabbis involved in the processing of corpses. Probably it had once functioned as a seat marker in the synagogue for these two distinguished members of Beth She'arim society. See Schwabe-Lifshitz, 190.

<sup>46</sup> Note, however, *CIJ* 820 (Palmyra). For an example from Acmonia in Phrygia, see P.Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, Cambridge 1991, 78-81.

<sup>47</sup> For examples from Magnesia ad Sipylum, Ephesus and Smyrna, see *CIJ* 753 = *IK* Magnesia 27; *IK* Ephesus 1676; *CIJ* 745 = *IK* Ephesus 1677 and *IK* Smyrna 296. For contemporary pagan examples from Magnesia and Smyrna displaying identical or similar grave formulae, note *IK* Magnesia 21; 22 and 24; *IK* Smyrna 300 and 313.

<sup>48</sup> For examples at Acmonia and Smyrna, see Trebilco, 70-71 and *CIJ* 741 = *IK* Smyrna 295.

<sup>49</sup> On the near universality of its usage there, see J.Keil and A.Wilhelm, *MAMA* III, Manchester 1931, 121.

<sup>50</sup> See L.Robert in *Hellenica* 10, 1955, 247-51 and Plates XXXII and XXXIII, depicting a pagan and a Jewish pineapple tomb respectively.

<sup>51</sup> See W.Horbury and D.Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions of Graeco-Roman Egypt*, Cambridge 1992, xv.

tomb types which Jews had to use.<sup>52</sup> And since Jews tended to buy plots in the communal cemetery or cemeteries of the cities in which they had settled and to be buried among their gentile neighbours,<sup>53</sup> such imitation was almost inevitable.

A consequence of this emphasis upon private choice and family responsibility was that formal community involvement in burial matters was limited. As with Palestine, the evidence is both sparse and varied. The latter should not surprise. Given the absence, especially in the period before A.D. 70, of clear-cut models from Palestine, Diasporan Jews tended to follow local practices and these inevitably varied considerably from place to place. Thus in a papyrus fragment from late Ptolemaic Egypt we come across a *synodos* of *taphiastai* holding a meeting (*synagoge*) in a prayer-house (*proseuche*).<sup>54</sup> Stern, the editor of this text in *CPJ*, expressed reservations about both the Jewish character of this body and its precise funerary purpose, mainly because there were no Palestinian precedents for such an institution at this early period - the late first century BC.<sup>55</sup> But if we allow that the behaviour of Egyptian Jews in funerary matters had long been influenced by the gentile environment,<sup>56</sup> then it seems reasonable to conclude that what we must have here is a Jewish society of undertakers (*entaphiastai* is the common local term for undertakers)<sup>57</sup> modelled to some degree at least upon those frequently found in Ptolemaic Egypt.<sup>58</sup> Even if the word *synagoge* itself is not Jew-specific,<sup>59</sup> the occurrence of *proseuche* makes the Jewish character of the association virtually certain - it is never found in Egypt except in a Jewish context.<sup>60</sup> That the synagogue itself played an active role in burial matters should not be inferred from the meeting of this burial society in the prayer-house. Associations in Egypt normally met in public places, local temples usually functioning as the venue of Egyptian and Greek ones.<sup>61</sup> The local *proseuche*, then, would be the obvious meeting-place for a Jewish society.

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<sup>52</sup> On the wide range of Jewish funerary forms in the Second Temple period, see R.Hachlili, *Ancient Jewish Art and Archaeology in the Land of Israel*, Leiden 1988, 89-103. Archaeology has shown that, even in Palestine itself, rabbinical prescriptions in the area of tomb and loculi (*kokhim*) dimensions were widely ignored. See Hachlili-Killebrew, 130, n. 4.

<sup>53</sup> On the absence of Jewish cemeteries in Asia Minor, see Trebilco, 277, n. 71; on the intermingling of Jewish and gentile tombs at Corycus, see the present writer in *ZPE* 92, 1992, 252 and *JSJ* forthcoming; for the same phenomenon at Alexandria and Memphis, see Horbury - Noy, xv and 4 and D.J.Thompson, *Memphis under the Ptolemies*, Princeton 1988, 98.

<sup>54</sup> *CPJ* no. 138.

<sup>55</sup> Dated thus on palaeographical grounds - Stern, *comm. ad loc.*

<sup>56</sup> For the phenomenon in early Ptolemaic times, see Hecataeus *apud* Diodorus 40.3.8. The oldest examples, however, are provided by the embalming of Jacob and Joseph - Gen. 50.2 and 26.

<sup>57</sup> Thompson, 156.

<sup>58</sup> Societies of people connected with the various aspects of the funerary process - e.g. *entaphiastai*, *nekrotaphoi*, *choachytai* - were extremely common there. All too little, however, is known about their activities. Thompson, 155-7.

<sup>59</sup> Horbury-Noy, 33.

<sup>60</sup> Horbury-Noy, 215.

<sup>61</sup> F. de Cenival, *Les Associations Religieuses en Égypte d'après les documents démotiques*, Cairo 1972, 177-8. I would like to thank Dr. D.J.Thompson for drawing my attention to this work.

From the third century we have rather better evidence for formal community involvement in Jewish funerary affairs. At Darumatha in Babylonia we find the general public being relieved by a Rabbi of its traditional obligation to down tools and participate in a funeral, since a local burial society (name unknown) had assumed responsibility instead.<sup>62</sup> At Acmonia in Phrygia we come upon another such association (this one is called the Neighbourhood of the First Gate) being required to put roses annually on a family tomb.<sup>63</sup> As with the Egyptian example, Jewish practice here follows local usage - the rite of placing roses on the tomb, in itself a Roman one, is attested among the Greeks of Acmonia as far back as A.D. 95.<sup>64</sup> And Phrygian Hierapolis has produced another, broadly contemporaneous, example of Jews adopting local funerary practices. There we find a Jew, Publius Aelius Glycon, leaving money to two local craft guilds so that from the interest thereof they may put wreaths on his tomb annually at the Passover and the Festival of Pentecost.<sup>65</sup>

And what of the synagogue in the burial affairs of Diasporan Jews? Apart from the meeting of the *synodos* of *taphiastai* in a prayer-house in Egypt, which, as we saw, can be innocuously explained, there is little evidence for synagogal involvement in funerary matters.<sup>66</sup> In the Diaspora, as in Palestine, burial was pre-eminently a private and familial affair.

We turn now to Rome. We know that by Cicero's day the Jewish community there had already become a conspicuous entity.<sup>67</sup> Jews had probably been settling in Rome since at least the middle of the second century<sup>68</sup> but it was only after Pompey's successful Judaeen war that the Jewish community there attained any real size.<sup>69</sup> By 59 B.C., the date of Cicero's speech in defence of Flaccus, the Jews of Rome had become numerous enough to stand out at public meetings, where they were noted as much for their togetherness as their turbulence.<sup>70</sup> Though we cannot say how many of the eleven epigraphically attested congregations had been formed by this date, it seems legitimate to deduce from Cicero's

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<sup>62</sup> BT.Mo'ed Katan 27b. (Soncino ed., p. 179). For discussion of this passage, see Baron (cit. n. 3), 289.

<sup>63</sup> For full discussion of this text, see L.Robert in *Hellenica* 11-12, 1960, 409-412 and Trebilco, 78-81.

<sup>64</sup> Trebilco, 81.

<sup>65</sup> *CIJ* 777. On this text and local parallels, see now Trebilco, 178-79 and 261.

<sup>66</sup> In a fragmentary inscription from Castel Porziano (*CIJ* 533) a Jewish organisation (name lost) is recorded as having acquired land for the tomb of the local gerousiarch. Nothing, however, can be deduced about general synagogal involvement in burial matters from an honorary gesture towards a high-ranking community official.

<sup>67</sup> *Cic. Flacc.* 66.

<sup>68</sup> For a fleeting appearance, see *Val.Max.* 1.3.3. More substantial immigration is usually inferred from *Cic. Flacc.* 66. See, for instance, Leon, *JAR* 5 and E.M.Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule from Pompey to Diocletian*, Leiden 1976, 131.

<sup>69</sup> Usually inferred from *Philo Leg.* 155.

<sup>70</sup> *Cic. Flacc.* 66.

remarks that the Jews were, to some degree at least, formally organized.<sup>71</sup> Equally it seems fair to assume that the questions of how and where they were to bury their dead must have arisen. How did they answer them? We have stressed so far that in normal circumstances Jews regarded burial as a family responsibility. However, for the Jews of Rome in the final decades of the Republic, circumstances were hardly normal. Enslavement by the Romans will have severed the family ties of most.<sup>72</sup> And even though many may have gained their freedom speedily through the good offices of the richer members of the Jewish community,<sup>73</sup> they themselves will probably have been rather poor. In the early days, then, we must assume that leading figures in the community will have felt compelled to play a far more extensive role in burying the dead than was usually the case either in Palestine or the Diaspora.

That the leading figures in the Jewish community of Rome did rise to the occasion and play the role demanded by piety is shown by its earliest material remains - the Monteverde catacomb. Begun probably sometime in the late first century B.C.,<sup>74</sup> it was situated outside the city itself in the vicinity of the later Porta Portese<sup>75</sup> and was designed to meet the basic burial needs of the Jews of the Transtiberinum - the only area of Jewish occupation at that time.<sup>76</sup> Since the provision of high-density, low cost burial spaces was the purpose of the development, the preferred type of tomb, after some early experimentation with tile-covered, under-floor graves (*fossae*), came to be the rectangular, body-sized, slot in the wall, which was sealed after burial with bits of rubble, tufa and tiles, smoothed over with stucco - *i.e.* the *loculus*.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Smallwood, 134.

<sup>72</sup> On the servile status of the early members of Rome's Jewish community, see Philo *Leg.* 155; Smallwood, 131 and G.Fuks, Where have all the Freedmen gone? On an Anomaly in the Jewish Grave-Inscriptions from Rome, *JJS* 36, 1985, 25-32.

<sup>73</sup> Leon, *JAR* 5. On the obligation on Jews to ransom their compatriots, see M.*Gittin*, 4.9 (Danby's edition, p. 312); BT. *Gittin* 46b (Soncino ed. p. 206). This *mitzvah* was apparently well established by the end of the Second Temple period. See Fuks, 30.

<sup>74</sup> Frey, *CIJ* I<sup>2</sup>. 211-2, followed by Leon, *JAR* 66. The dating of the catacombs is controversial. In this paper, I have tended to follow Frey, Leon and Fasola, whose main criterion was the brickstamps found in each one. Despite the drawbacks of this kind of evidence, for which see M.J.Costelloe's review of Leon, *JAR* in *AJP* 83, 1962, 309, the dates arrived at by these means are entirely plausible. It should be noted, however, that some scholars (*e.g.* A.Ferrua, *Civiltà Cattolica* 87.4, 1936, 310; D.Mazzoleni, *Studi Romani* 23, 1975, 289-302, and, most recently, Vismara, *Cimiteri* 359 and 380-381) claim on palaeographic and linguistic grounds a date no earlier than the third century A.D. Although some epitaphs probably do belong to that period, this cannot be demonstrated for all. (See note 25 above.) And even if it could be, it still would not follow that the catacombs themselves were exactly co-eval. For many graves (*e.g.* those in the earlier part of the Monteverde) never bore an epitaph at all. On these, see note 77 below.

<sup>75</sup> Leon, *JAR* 47 and 55.

<sup>76</sup> In the time of Augustus, the Transtiberinum was still the only area of Jewish occupation. See Philo *Leg.* 155.

<sup>77</sup> The number of loculi cut in the gallery walls depended on the height of the latter. In one, more than twelve came to be fitted in the space between floor and ceiling. See N.Müller, *Die jüdische Katacombe am*

An economic solution, yes. But from where did the idea of arranging the burial of Rome's Jews in this manner come? Leon claimed, with considerable plausibility, that the source must have been the cave and rock burials of Palestine<sup>78</sup> - the earliest burial zones of the catacomb were indeed like caves.<sup>79</sup> But that cannot be the whole story. The developed catacomb with its network of galleries set more or less at right angles to each other<sup>80</sup> and serried rows of rectangular loculi running *parallel* to the gallery walls has little in common with any of the burial complexes known to us from Palestine. The first century BC chamber and loculi (*kokhim*) tombs from Jericho come closest in time and type but in terms both of scale and overall design they are entirely different.<sup>81</sup>

In developing the Monteverde catacomb the Jewish community at Rome seems to have created a burial complex that was without parallel in the Jewish world. So from where did it get the idea? We have seen that, throughout the Diaspora, Jews did not hesitate to make use of local burial forms. Indeed, their adaptability in this area had been commented upon by Hecataeus as early as the third century.<sup>82</sup> This readiness to adopt and adapt I believe accounts for most of the unusual (for a Jewish burial place) features of the Monteverde catacomb and its successors. The rectangular loculus running parallel to the gallery walls is a feature of certain Roman hypogaea. The best known example is the tomb of the Scipios on the Appian Way.<sup>83</sup> And one only has to think of columbaria like those of the Vigna Codini to see from where the idea of the saving space by creating row upon row of pigeon-holes was derived.<sup>84</sup> Nor were the early tile-covered trench-graves Palestinian in inspiration either. The Roman and Italian burials of that type apparently formed the model for these.<sup>85</sup>

Diasporan Jews in general, however, did not just borrow tomb types from their neighbours. As we have seen, there was copying on the organisational side as well. And here too, the Jews of Rome were probably no less influenced by gentile modes of operation. Developing and running a large urban cemetery was not something of which the early leaders of the Roman Jewish community will have had any experience. The only burial complex from Palestine remotely like the Jewish catacombs of Rome is the Beth She'arim complex - and construction of that did not start until the second half of the second century A.D.! Yet

Monteverde zu Rom, Leipzig 1912, 28. Generally they were left unnamed - especially so in the early days. See Müller, 33 and Leon, JAR 58-9.

<sup>78</sup> Leon, JAR 54.

<sup>79</sup> Müller actually called them *Grotten*. Müller *passim*.

<sup>80</sup> Vismara, Cimiteri, 364, fig. 3.

<sup>81</sup> For a brief description of a tomb of this type, see Hachlili-Killebrew, 110 and note 30 above. *cf.* Avigad, 259.

<sup>82</sup> Hecataeus *apud* Diodorus 40.3.8.

<sup>83</sup> See E.Nash, Pictorial Dictionary of Ancient Rome II, London 1962, Plate 1129 and J.M.C.Toynbee, Death and Burial in the Roman World, London 1971, 103-4 and 113.

<sup>84</sup> Toynbee, Plate 28. *cf.* Nash, Plates 1108-1110.

<sup>85</sup> Müller, 27.

excavating and running a vast subterranean tomb complex will have required considerable expertise - land will have had to be purchased, construction plans presumably drawn up, *fossores* employed to hew the access stairway and burial zones, and some mechanism created to deal with the sale and allocation of burial spaces. So how did the Jews of Rome go about acquiring this know-how? The most likely answer is that they simply observed and copied what the Romans did. Large-scale funerary developments were a conspicuous feature of the urban scene - particularly in the area of the Via Appia.<sup>86</sup> And discovering how these hypogaea and columbaria were financed, built and operated, will surely not have been difficult for people whose earliest experiences of life at Rome will have been on the inside as slaves. More often than not these burial complexes were family affairs, built by individual Roman families for their own personal use. But purely commercial developments are not unknown, which on completion were sold either whole or in part to private individuals and special interest groups, like funerary societies.<sup>87</sup> This kind of development could, I suggest, have served as the model for the first Jewish cemetery at Rome.

So far our discussion has focussed on the Jewish community only in its early days, when the Transtiberinum was its sole area of habitation and the Jews themselves in general poor and without family connections. But this state of affairs did not last all that long. In the course of the first and second centuries A.D., large numbers of Jews started to settle in other parts of the city like the Suburra<sup>88</sup> and the district near the start of the Appian Way.<sup>89</sup> And with time many acquired families<sup>90</sup> and a modest degree of wealth.<sup>91</sup> These Jews, it should be pointed out, were not simply the descendants of Pompey's prisoners of war. Every unsuccessful rebellion against Rome produced a fresh influx of Jewish slaves from Palestine.<sup>92</sup> And besides these, there was throughout a steady stream of voluntary

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<sup>86</sup> Cic. Tusculan Disp. 1.7.

<sup>87</sup> On these, see Toynbee, 74-75 (speculative tomb developments in general); 88-90 (a Roman example); 79-80 (an example from Aquileia). For the buying and selling of burial places in collective tombs at Rome, see K.Hopkins, *Death and Renewal*, Cambridge 1983, 212, n. 16.

<sup>88</sup> Deduced (a) from the title: synagogue of the Siburesians (Schürer (revised) III, 97.) and (b) from *CIJ* 531 - the epitaph of a pagan fruit vendor, whose stall is described as having been *de aggere a proseucha*. The agger itself was the part of the so-called Servian Wall between the Colline and Esquiline Gates. For the date of this inscription (1st-2nd century), see Collon (cit. n. 17) 88.

<sup>89</sup> Deduced from (a) Juv. *Sat.* 3.12-16 and (b) the presence of the main Appian catacomb, which was situated between the Via Appia Antica and the Via Appia Pignatelli. Its mosaicked atrium is dated on stylistic grounds to the first half of the second century. See Leon, *JAR* 56. For the second century brick stamps, see Frey, *CIJ* 1<sup>2</sup>, pp. 55.

<sup>90</sup> Shown, inter alia, by the epithets *philadelphos*, *philometor*, *philopator*, *philogoneus*. See *CIJ* 125; 152 (Appian catacomb) and *SEG* 26, 1157 and 1183 (Nomentana).

<sup>91</sup> Most of the epitaphs from the Appian catacomb are carved on marble plaques - a sure sign of prosperity. See *CIJ* 81-276.

<sup>92</sup> For the influx after the First Jewish War, see Hieronymus, *In Hieremiam*, 31.15.6. For the phenomenon in general, see Fuks (cit. n. 72) 25-29.



immigrants, some of them quite prosperous, both from Palestine itself and the cities of the Diaspora.<sup>93</sup>

Given traditional Jewish views on burial, which, as we have seen, were still widely held throughout Jewish society in early imperial times, it is only to be expected that the overall improvement in the social and economic status of Rome's Jews would be reflected in their burial arrangements. Thus it should come as no surprise to find that, although basic burial niches for the poor are still to be found in great numbers in each of the later catacombs of Rome,<sup>94</sup> there is much greater provision for families and many more indications of the operation of personal choice in burial matters. In the Appian catacomb, for instance, no less than thirty private, presumably family, cubicula have been found.<sup>95</sup> And the mural decoration of some of these<sup>96</sup> shows that the Jews of Rome, once possessed of the means, were no less averse than Jews elsewhere to following contemporary gentile fashions.<sup>97</sup> Tomb types also become more diverse. Of the new forms that now appear, several were designed to meet the growing demand, even among the less well off, for suitable family burial spaces.<sup>98</sup> And the sarcophagi too, now used on an increasingly wide scale,<sup>99</sup> reveal a similar keenness to exercise choice. While some Jews contented themselves with plain, inexpensive types made of masonry or terracotta,<sup>100</sup> others fell for the elaborately carved marble models that were much in vogue in Roman society as a whole.<sup>101</sup>

By what mechanism was this traditional desire for choice met at Rome? There is no evidence that the synagogue entered the picture here any more than it did in Palestine and the Diaspora. But what about the central burial organisation mentioned at the beginning of this article? Did the self-same body, which had opened up the Monteverde catacomb in the first century B.C. for the Transiberine Jews, subsequently develop the Nomentana catacombs

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<sup>93</sup> On immigration generally, see C. Vismara, *DArch N.S.* 5, 1987, 119-121; for a rich merchant from Asia Minor in the Appian catacomb, see L. Moretti, *RAC* 50, 1974, 215-218.

<sup>94</sup> Leon, *JAR* figs. 8-9 (Appian) and figs. 20; 24-25 (Nomentana). For the later galleries of the Monteverde, see Müller, 32.

<sup>95</sup> Leon, *JAR* 60. The Monteverde and Nomentana contain four and six respectively. See Leon, *JAR* 58 and Fasola, *Tavola I* (facing 62), areas A, a-e and Da.

<sup>96</sup> Most remained undecorated. For details, see Leon, *JAR* 60 (Appian). *cf.* 59 (Monteverde) and 206-207 (Nomentana).

<sup>97</sup> In particular, note Painted Room I of the Appian catacomb with its depiction of Victory crowning a naked youth. Goodenough's discussion is still the best treatment. See Goodenough II, 17-18. (*cf.* Goodenough III, figs. 737; 739; 741-744.)

<sup>98</sup> On the so-called *loculo ad arcosolio* type, see Fasola, 50-52 and fig. 24. For other new family grave types, see Fasola, 38-39 and fig. 16 and Müller 34-35.

<sup>99</sup> For their increasing popularity at Rome generally from the early second century A.D. onwards, see Toynbee, 270-277.

<sup>100</sup> See Leon, *JAR* fig. 5 (Appian) and Müller, 34-36 (Monteverde).

<sup>101</sup> On the topic as a whole, see now Konikoff (*cit. n.* 3) *passim*. Among the most noteworthy examples cited by him of sarcophagi used by Jews but of pagan type and provenance, are nos. 14; 15 and 21 - decorated with Seasons, masks and griffins respectively.

for the Suburran community, the Appian for the Jews of the Porta Capena area and, besides these, the two minor catacombs in the east and south of the city that go by the names Via Labicana and Vigna Cimarra?<sup>102</sup> To disprove the existence of a single controlling and providing body is impossible. However, there are a number of considerations which render its existence unlikely. In the first place, the size and the scattered nature of the Roman Jewish community goes against the idea of control by a single organisation. By Augustus' day the community already numbered several tens of thousands.<sup>103</sup> Some have put the figure as high as 60,000.<sup>104</sup> By the second century, besides having spread all over Rome, it must have been considerably larger. While it is not impossible that one body ministered to the needs of so many people in so many areas, I can think of no parallels, either Roman or Jewish, for such a mammoth funerary organisation. And there are other difficulties with this hypothesis. It leaves unexplained certain fundamental differences between the main catacombs - all of which, it is important to note, were in simultaneous use at least by the end of the second century, if not before.<sup>105</sup> If a single body controlled all the catacombs, why do some appear to have been developed in an orderly fashion, seemingly according to a plan,<sup>106</sup> yet others sprawl haphazardly?<sup>107</sup> Why do some have elegant function rooms for funeral and memorial services<sup>108</sup> but others no facilities for communal rites of any kind? In the Nomentana catacombs, for instance, the steep access stairways led straight down to the narrow galleries of the burial zones.<sup>109</sup> Why do tomb types differ so much between one catacomb and another - the *kokh*, for instance, being found only in the Appian catacomb,<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> On these, see Leon, JAR 51-52. The Jewishness of the small catacomb examined by Müller in 1885 on the Via Appia Pignatelli but no longer accessible has always been regarded as doubtful (*e.g.* by Leon, JAR 52-53 and Goodenough II, 33-35) and recently rejected by Vismara, Cimiteri 389-392.

<sup>103</sup> Jos., *BJ.* 2. 80 and *AJ.* 17. 300.

<sup>104</sup> *e.g.* J.Juster, *Les Juifs dans l'empire romain I*, Paris 1914, 209. For an assessment of the various estimates of the Jewish population of Rome, see R.Penna, *NTS* 28, 1982, 341, n. 53.

<sup>105</sup> For the dates of the Monteverde and Appian catacombs, see notes 74 and 89 above. For the date of the Nomentana complex, see Frey, *CIJ* I<sup>2</sup>, pp. 10-11, Leon, JAR 66 and Fasola, 61-62.

<sup>106</sup> For the ordered, grid-like, structure of the earliest galleries of both the upper and lower Nomentana catacombs, see Fasola, *Tavola I*. On the pre-planning of the loculi of the lower catacomb and the reasons for this, see Fasola, 53-55.

<sup>107</sup> *e.g.* the Appian. See Leon, JAR 55.

<sup>108</sup> The Appian, for instance, was equipped with a spacious mosaicked atrium, in a side chamber of which was a well. Much discussion has surrounded the purpose of these rooms but the most likely explanation is that the well room had a purificatory function and the atrium was probably used for funeral and memorial services. See Leon, JAR 57. Whether the Monteverde had similar facilities is uncertain, as the entrance area of the (now collapsed) catacomb was never thoroughly excavated. See Müller, 22-23; Leon, JAR 55-56; Goodenough II, 4-5.

<sup>109</sup> For discussion of the two stairways, see Fasola, 13-15 (upper catacomb) and 40-43 (lower catacomb).

<sup>110</sup> See Leon, JAR 6 and figs. 41-43. For their disposition see Vismara, Cimiteri fig. 5. (Up-date of Frey's plan of catacomb.)

pot burials and stacked masonry containers solely in the Monteverde,<sup>111</sup> and the *loculo ad arcosolio* type just in the lower Nomentana?<sup>112</sup> And why are interment practices, even in catacombs both contiguous and in simultaneous use, often so very different?<sup>113</sup>

But if differences like these make the idea of a single controlling burial society less than compelling, how are we to explain the burial scene at Rome? In my opinion, the evidence is most satisfactorily explained on the hypothesis that the main catacombs of Rome (of the minor ones, the scant evidence makes it unsafe for us to speak) were run by different and, to some extent, rival burial consortia. Rabbinical Judaism, to be sure, *theoretically* objected to profits being made from death<sup>114</sup> but that is really no obstacle to this hypothesis. Even at Beth She'arim itself - the Patriarchs' own necropolis<sup>115</sup> - burials had become completely commercialised by the third century A.D.<sup>116</sup> So to deny the existence of commercial and even competitive factors in the running of the Jewish catacombs at Rome would be ridiculous. Such elements are only too likely to have been present, given the strength of the profit motive among Roman funerary-complex developers generally<sup>117</sup> and the Jewish propensity to copy their neighbours in funerary matters.

If this hypothesis is accepted, a number of benefits accrue: the problem of having a burial organisation of a size unparalleled in Roman or Jewish society simply disappears. The differences between the catacombs now cause no difficulties. And, most advantageous of all, there is now a simple explanation for the phenomenon, grudgingly admitted by Leon, but never satisfactorily explained by him - *viz.* the burial at broadly the same period of members of the same congregations in quite different catacombs, some of them located in areas far from the synagogues to which the people in question had belonged. (I refer here, of course, to the presence in the Appian catacomb (a) of Augustesians from Transiberinum<sup>118</sup> and (b) of Campesians and Siburesians from central Rome).<sup>119</sup> For under my hypothesis, these Jews were simply doing what prosperous Jews had always done and were still continuing to do in other parts of the Diaspora and Palestine - using their purchasing power to acquire for themselves and their families the burial facilities of their choice.<sup>120</sup> To establish beyond all doubt that that was indeed the case, it must finally be demonstrated that these "out of district" Jews were (a) rich and (b) aspiring to burial facilities which were clearly desirable. Both

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<sup>111</sup> Müller, 42-43 (clay pots) and 34-36 (masonry containers).

<sup>112</sup> For this, see note 98 above.

<sup>113</sup> Note here Fasola 31-32 and 39-40 on the striking differences between the two Nomentana catacombs.

<sup>114</sup> See "Hevra Kaddisha" in Enc. Jud. VIII (1971) col. 444.

<sup>115</sup> See Avigad, 2 and 62-65.

<sup>116</sup> See note 43 above.

<sup>117</sup> See above note 87.

<sup>118</sup> Argued for above from the findspot of *CIJ* 284.

<sup>119</sup> Shown by the discovery of *CIJ* 88 and 140 within the catacomb.

<sup>120</sup> The Beth She'arim evidence, with its burials from all over the East, shows the trouble that some Jews were prepared to go to. In particular, note Schwabe-Lifshitz, nos. 92 and 100; 111; 141; 147 and 199; 148 and 164; 172 and 221.

demonstrations are easily made. An examination of the relevant artefacts and inscriptions (*CIJ* 88, 140 and 284) shows that all the Jews concerned belonged to families of wealth and high social standing. In two out of the three cases the epitaphs are inscribed on unusually large slabs of marble.<sup>121</sup> (All that exists of the third - *CIJ* 284 - are the eighteenth century transcriptions of the text.<sup>122</sup> Significantly, though, the epitaph is written in Latin - a sure sign of wealth and upward mobility among the Jews of ancient Rome.)<sup>123</sup> And all the Jews mentioned in these inscriptions had either been office holders (some honorary) in their respective congregations or patrons of them. As to the facilities these Jews had secured for themselves and their children, a comparison of the three main catacombs shows quite clearly that the Appian catacomb offered the best in town by far. For its galleries were wider and better lit, its cubicula more numerous, and the density of its burials much lower than in any other catacombs that has been discovered.<sup>124</sup> And it had elegant public function rooms too! The mosaicked atrium measured nearly ninety feet in one direction.<sup>125</sup>

To conclude. We have seen that in trying to make sense of the burial arrangements of the Jews of ancient Rome, two rival theories have been offered. While some have suggested that all Jewish burials there were handled by a single organisation, Leon claimed that they were arranged on a congregational basis. Neither hypothesis is satisfactory. Aside from the objections that are specific to each one, both fail to take any account of traditional Jewish values in the matter of burial and both ignore the impact of the gentile environment upon the way in which those values were expressed. In proposing that the Jewish burial scene ultimately came to be dominated by a plurality of consortia, each offering a range of facilities, from unmarked loculi at one end of the scale to spacious, arcosolia-filled cubicula at the other, we remedy both those deficiencies. Under this system not only was there at least minimal provision for poor Jews living in the vicinity of each catacomb but the aspirations of rich and upwardly mobile Jews throughout the capital were catered for as well. As to the form taken by the Jewish cemeteries of Rome, here again I think that my explanation is more satisfactory than that offered by Leon. Conceivably in the Jewish catacombs of Rome there are echoes of the cave burials of Palestine. Conceivably by adopting this form of burial the Jews of Rome did indeed satisfy some deep atavistic yearning. However, if their behaviour in burial matters is anything like that of Diasporan Jews in general, then we must conclude that the greater influence by far is likely to have come from large-scale Roman funerary developments which were such a marked feature of the urban scene from the late Republic onwards.

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<sup>121</sup> See Frey's descriptions - *CIJ* 88 and 140 *ad loc.*

<sup>122</sup> See bibliographical details given by Frey - *CIJ* 284 *ad loc.*

<sup>123</sup> An examination of the information given by Frey about the language of each epitaph and the material on which it was written, shows quite clearly that while the vast majority of scratched and painted epitaphs were in Greek, most of the Latin ones were carved on marble slabs.

<sup>124</sup> Leon, *JAR* 56-65, where details can be extracted from his accounts of the three main catacombs.

<sup>125</sup> Leon, *JAR* 56.