SEPVLCRVM

MEMORIA AETERNA

município Chaves

MUSEU DA REGIÃO FLAVIENSE

CORPVS MANET MEMORIA VIVIT

The body remains. The memory lives on

CAMALVS / BORNI F/HIC SITVS/ EST ANNOR/

XXX EXS Ↄ TARDV/FRATER FACIE/AELVS CURAVIT

Camalo, son of Bórnio and a member of the Tardos family, was buried here following his death at the age of 30.

His brother, Aélio, commissioned this tomb.

Funeral stele with a semicircular pediment decorated with a quadriscele

2nd–3rd centuries AD

Chaves region (MRF/NcARQ/42/09)

VIATOR, VIATOR

QVOD TU ES EGO FVI

QVOD NVNC SVM ET ERIS

Traveler, traveler

what you are, I once was

what I already am, you will be.

Aquae Flaviae – final rest

Vlterius nihil est morte neque utilius

Nothing is more distant and more useful than death

For Roman society, death signified a transition, a passage, and even a rest after the long journey that was life. It also signified the beginning of a new form of existence, the success of which was guaranteed by a dignified and properly conducted funus (funeral rites), a proper burial. This belief that the dead and the living could influence one another was reflected not only in the strict observance of funeral rites – cremation or burial – but also in the perpetuation of the memory of the deceased amongst the living, particularly family members, and in the punishment of those who desecrated burial sites.

Those for whom family or society had provided a proper resting place became part of the divine community of the Manes or Lares, the guardian spirits of homes and families, honoured during the Parentalia festival; those who had no family or had been forgotten by their own could become Lemures or Larvae, that is, dangerous, wandering spirits who would torment the living, remembered in the exorcisms and rituals of the Lemuria festival. This was the case for those who had suffered a violent death – *saeuus finis* – or a premature one – *mors acerba* – or those who had not been given a funeral in accordance with Roman rites – the *insepulti*.

Whether cremated or buried, the Roman deceased was to be accompanied by a coin to pay Charon's fare, as well as personal or professional items that might prove useful in the afterlife. Death reflected the individual's way of life, their economic power and their personal ties, often inscribed on the epitaph. The grave, almost always outside the perimeter of the 'city of the living', might be marked by a funerary monument – stele, ara althar or cup (barrel form) – or, in exceptional cases, take the form of a mausoleum.

At *Aquae Flaviae*, the identification of sacred burial sites has made it possible to define the perimeter of the Roman town, which is bounded by the Tâmega and Ribelas rivers to the east and west, and by Street Joaquim José Delgado to the south. Judging by the data gathered during the archaeological excavations based on research carried out in recent decades, *Aquae Flaviae* appears to have undergone urban contraction to the north during the Late Imperial period, which is why the necropolis was established around what is now Square General Silveira.

“City of the Dead” – a glimpse outside

Hospes, quod deico paullum est, asta ac pellege

Traveller, what I say is but a little thing; stop here and read from start to finish

Roman cemeteries were established outside the city, beyond the pomerium, the boundary wall, in accordance with Tablet X of the Law of the XII Tables (mid - 5th century BC) – “no human corpse shall be buried or cremated within the city”. Exceptionally, and when the deceased was a special person or even an emperor, as was the case with Trajan, this rule would be broken. In any event, cemetery areas were integrated into daily life, occupying roads and access routes, aqueducts, entertainment venues and even industrial zones.

The appeals made to the living and to travellers in the epitaphs bear witness to this interaction between the dead and the living, since, for the Romans, this was where the true immortality of the individual lay, who was “called to life” in the moments when their message was read and communicated.

Burial grave in a brick-lined chamber
Late Imperial period
General Silveira Square

Identified in 2000, the Roman necropolis at General Silveira Square, from which this grave composed of *tegulae* originates, attests to compliance with the imperial requirement to conduct funeral rites outside the *pomerium*.

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SITI TIBI TERRA LEVIS

May the earth lie lightly upon you

CORIA / PHIL

Coria, daughter of Philippi

Funeral stele with a semicircular pediment decorated with a “quadríscele”

2nd – 3rd centuries AD

Chaves Region (MRF/NcARQ/39/09)

MAX / FLAV

Maximus Flavius

Funeral cup (barrel form)

1st – 3rd centuries AD

Camões Square (MRF/NcARQ/48/09)

C· PORCIO / FRONTONI / ARCOBR / · H · S ·

Here lies Caius Porcius Frontonius, from Arcobriga

Funeral stele

Roman period

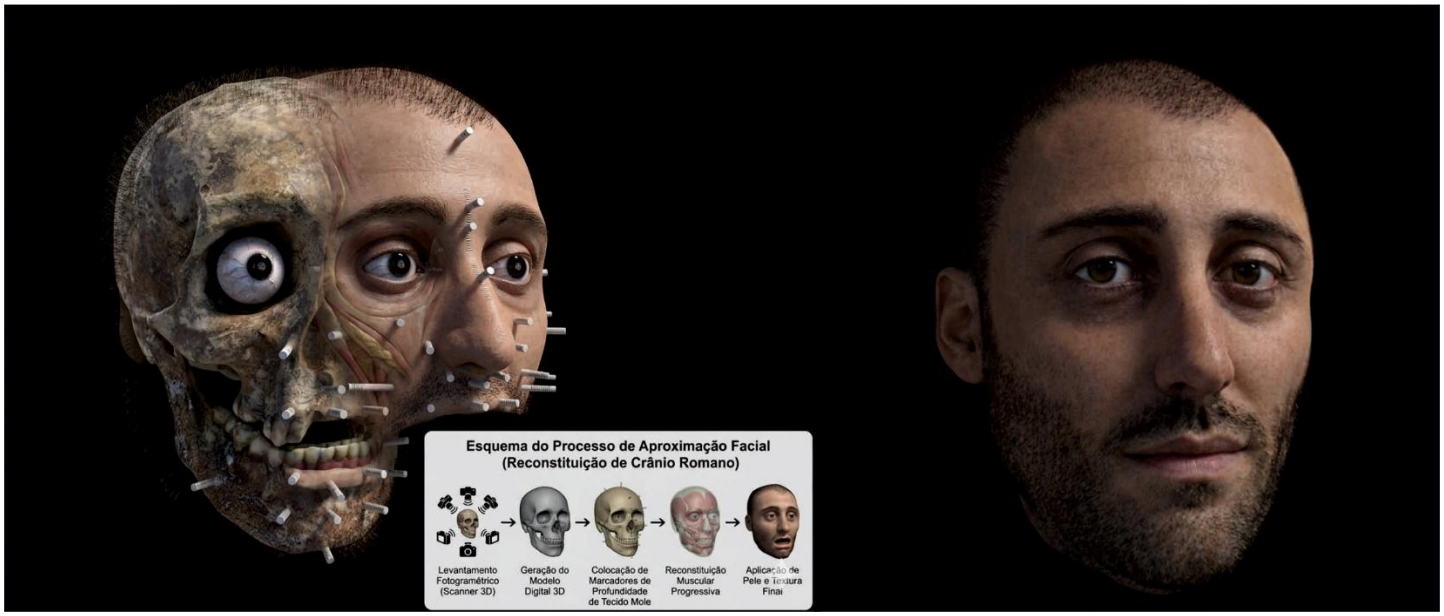
Vilar de Nantes

Giving a Face to the Past

The ruins of the Roman medicinal baths, the result of the violent collapse the building suffered in the last quarter of the IV century d.C., were the final resting place of the people of Aquiflavia who, at the time of the catastrophe, were devoted to leisure and well-being. They also served, following the building's ruin, as the site for the burial of an anonymous young man in a coffin made of brick material – tegulae.

The preserved skeletal remains provide us with key information about this individual's age, state of health and living conditions and, through the technique of forensic facial reconstruction, enable us to reconstruct their physical appearance, 'putting a face' to an archaeological find dating back fifteen centuries. The development of facial reconstruction parameters makes it possible, in a digital environment, to restore expression to the young man buried amidst the ruins of what were once Roman medicinal baths.

In a historical period marked by profound socio-economic and political changes and by the arrival of peoples such as the Suevi, coming from Northern Europe, the city was adapted and its peripheral areas, now in ruins, were repurposed as burial grounds. We witness a reduction in the perimeter of the "city of the living".



Burial in a brick coffin
Skeleton of a young adult (aged 18-25)
4th – 5th centuries AD
Arrabalde Square –Roman Baths

The thermal complex identified in Arrabalde Square, opposite the Courthouse, bears witness to extensive imperial investment in the use of mineral-medicinal waters. The high-imperial baths were succeeded, in the 3rd century AD by a monumental complex that was later destroyed by a natural disaster in the IV century.

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Worlds in transition

The spread of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire, from the 2nd century AD onwards, did not lead to the replacement of deeply rooted pagan practices; rather, these coexisted with everyday Christian life: early Christianity. In the following centuries, known as Late Antiquity (5th–8th centuries AD), the arrival of new peoples in Portuguese territory led to the coexistence of two distinct strands of Christianity: Arianism and Catholicism. The councils held between the 4th and 7th centuries AD consolidated Christianity within the communities and established the practices to be observed within them.

With regard to death, and given that the Church was still establishing itself among the faithful, the interpretation of funeral practices and liturgical rituals in the Roman style persisted. Burial, a practice prevalent among the Romans since the 3rd century AD, became the norm during this period, as the Christian world was consolidating the idea of death as a sleep until the Resurrection. The dead continued to be buried outside the city walls, in accordance with Roman precepts, for fear that they might return and disturb the living.

The concept of walls was also extended to the walls of basilicas, which were usually located in Roman forums, as has been observed at *Aquae Flaviae*. This globular vessel, from an early Christian grave in the vicinity of the supposed basilica lying beneath the medieval church, bears the inscription DEP ET [...] FLAV MATERNIANVS VIXIT [...]. Despite the absence of the Christian expression ‘famulus dei’ or ‘famulus christe’, which described the servants of God or of Christ, the location of the grave and the type of inscription allow us to corroborate the chronology of this burial.

The practice of burying the dead inside funerary basilicas or even in their immediate vicinity embodied the belief in an urban wall separating the world of the living from that of the dead, with the aim of protecting the former from the darkness and chaos of the outside world. In the centuries that followed, the choice of these sites persisted, as did the coexistence of ancestral pagan practices and the new rites and precepts instituted by the Church. The most pragmatic example was the reuse of a Roman funerary stele as the lid of a medieval stone sarcophagus.

SEVERAE / LVCIBRIGAN / ET · SEVERINA / E · F · EIVS · L · P ·/ F · CVRAVE/ RVNT

For Severa, daughter of Lucius of Brigantium, and for Severina, her two daughters, their parents commissioned this site

Late Empire

Funeral stele with a triangular pediment decorated with two triskeles and four horseshoe arches

Medieval sarcophagus with a lid reused from a Roman grave

Middle Ages

Republic Square

Between Earth and Heaven – rites and spaces

Memento, homo, quia pulvis es et in pulverem reverteris.

Remember, man, that you are dust and to dust you shall return.

The medieval centuries, profoundly shaped on the Iberian Peninsula by the arrival of new religions and the ceaseless struggle for the sovereignty of the kingdoms, were a time when the Catholic Church established its dogmas and norms. In the Early Middle Ages, contrary to the provisions of the First Council of Braga (VI century), burials continued to take place both alongside the walls of funerary basilicas and within them, near the altar – a privilege reserved for religious dignitaries and powerful individuals.

The proper burial sought by Christians gave the medieval landscape of death the appearance of concentric rings, extending from the church altar—reserved exclusively for religious figures—out to the churchyard. The closer to the church, the more dignified and effective the burial would be. Towns and cities came to incorporate the eternal resting places of those who, through influence or money, secured divine protection in the Hereafter.

In an era defined by violence and constant warfare, in which the threat of death was ever-present, the doctrine of life after death was not yet sufficiently developed; it did little to alleviate the anguish faced in one's final moments and led to the use of ancient practices and rituals, to which new meanings were gradually ascribed. It was only at a late stage, after centuries of failed efforts, that the Church managed to effectively impose a common basis of beliefs and mortuary practices on the Christian faithful.

The practice most criticised throughout the Middle Ages was the noisy displays of grief that accompanied funerals, which persisted among the common people. The structures of dependency between communities and their lords and sovereigns carried the imminent threat of disorder and disintegration following the death of the latter. This fear was exorcised through exaggerated displays of mourning and grief.

Most likely, Christian doctrine on death was only truly assimilated after the dissemination of the catechisms following the Council of Trent, already at the beginning of the Early Modern Period.

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Medieval sarcophagus with a lid decorated with palm leaves

Middle Ages

Churchyard of the Church of Santa Maria Maior – Romanesque Portal (971/MRF/NcARQ/676/09)

UT INFERORUM CARCERES
ET CLAUSTRA QUEQUE HORRENTIA
PERTRANSIENS IN ETHERA
***CELI FRUATUR PATRIA*.**

So that, passing through the prisons of hells
and all the dreadful cloisters,
he may enjoy his [heavenly] homeland
in the ether of heaven.

Gravestone decorated with two staffs surmounted by a cross pattée

Middle Ages

Churchyard of the Church of Santa Maria Maior – Republic Square

Death in book

> And because of our sins in this day and age, many priests who are supposed to be shepherds of souls are not only ignorant when it comes to instructing and teaching the faith, the creed and the other matters pertaining to our salvation, but they do not even know what every good Christian ought to know, nor are they instructed or taught in the Christian faith as they ought to be; and what is most distressing and harmful is that some do not know or understand the Scriptures which they are to read and expound every day. (Sacramental, Chaves, 1488)

Aware of the gaps in the clergy's education and the need to spread catechesis among the faithful, the Church turned to the printing press, which was on the rise in the late 15th and 16th centuries, becoming one of its principal patrons. Works such as the Sacramental, the 1488 edition of which was printed in Chaves, and the Tratado de Confissom, from 1489, also printed in the city, made it possible to overcome borders and distances within the Christian world, but above all to bring the clergy closer to an understanding of the sacred texts in Latin, through manuals in Portuguese and Castilian.

Similarly, the Book of Hours of King Manuel I, illustrated in the 16th century, aimed to compile instructions and reflections on Christian life, whilst also proving to be an artistic document that portrays 16th-century Portugal, including regarding the concept of a Good Death.

Medieval sarcophagus with a lid decorated with a crozier surmounted by a cross pattée

Middle Ages

Camões Square (925/MRF/NcARQ/678/09)

Medieval sarcophagus without a lid, decorated with a cross pattée and two heads at the ends of the headboard

Middle Ages

São Caetano (982/MRF/NcARQ/677/09)

The value of death

By the 16th century, burial within churches was firmly established, as the contributions made by the families of the deceased constituted a considerable source of income for the institutions. Socially, death was fully accepted as a form of social distinction for the individual – from the grave in the churchyard where an anonymous person was buried, to the tomb inside a church where their name would be perpetuated through time. This practice of the Catholic Church also extended to religious orders and charitable organisations such as the Misericórdias.

The spread of the Misericórdias throughout the Kingdom of Portugal in the 15th century, and their rapid growth in the context of overseas expansion, stemmed largely from the charitable contributions of their members. Within their buildings – hospitals, churches – they housed a range of spaces that could serve as burial places for benefactors, with levels of prominence depending on the amount of contributions made. Although they were institutions of power, the Misericórdias enjoyed widespread acceptance within communities due to the social support they provided, particularly through their care for the poor and the sick.

In contrast to the burials of the institutions' benefactors and their families, over the centuries cemetery areas were established in churchyards, in unmarked graves or in tombs clad in stone. Indeed, the lack of hygiene and unsanitary conditions in these spaces, where animals, economic activities and burial grounds coexisted, were mentioned in various religious documents, which strongly recommended fencing off and promoting the cleanliness of these 'sacred places'.

Cemeteries as spaces unequivocally defined and set apart from the everyday lives of the people only became institutionalised in the 19th century, one of the centuries in the history of Portugal when death in combat occurred throughout the country. In the context of the Peninsular War, the town of Chaves was the scene of military clashes during the so-called Second French Invasion (1809), which resulted in hundreds of deaths, largely of foreigners, whose bodies would not return to their countries of origin for a "proper burial".

A 17th century tombstone decorated with a fleur-de-lis, characteristic of the Miranda family coat of arms, and bearing a virtually illegible epitaph – “S. de Aleyxo de Miranda”

17th century

Church of the Misericórdia

Skeletons of two soldiers interred in a mass grave associated with the Second French Invasion (1809)
Early 19th century
Public Garden

The cemetery on the eastern bank of the River Tâmega, near the former chapel of Santa Maria Madalena, is the result of the battles fought between Portuguese troops, aided by the English, and French forces under the command of General Soult. The preservation and identification of the buttons on the military uniforms made it possible to determine the nationality of the deceased

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