

## **In search of senators deceased: Senatorial tomb building reconsidered.**

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When studying metropolitan Roman tombs and burials, one is struck by the wealth of evidence for well-off freedmen and their first-generation descendants. More recently, attention has also been drawn to the simplest kinds of graves with no or very few grave goods, and no grave marker that would have left any traces. What is conspicuously lacking, however, at least from the mid-first century CE onwards, is a clearer idea of what the tombs of the first two orders, especially of the senatorial class, looked like. While it has always been acknowledged that inscriptions testify to the continued *erection* of senatorial tombs in suburban Rome, the general belief is that we do not, and cannot know much about them.

In my paper, I would like to demonstrate that this gloomy conclusion is premature. A contextual approach to the epigraphic evidence can demonstrate that the general ideas and ideologies we observe in late republican and Augustan élite tombs continue to inform tomb building and decoration through to at least the end of the third century. I shall explore three main themes: (1) types of tombs preferred by the senatorial class; (2) foundation and use of mausolea as multi-generational family tombs; (3) key ideologies as expressed by tituli and image decoration.