

In my PhD project I am focussing on the burial rites of Christian monks in Egypt in Late Antiquity. In a case study I work on the archaeological material of a monastic cemetery in Western Thebes. The state of preservation of the finds and their localisation in the spatial context allow a comprehensive reconstruction of the ritual acts, which also have a sensory dimension. The assemblage of actors, actions and sensory impressions can be described as an atmosphere in which the promise of Christian salvation can be experienced by the emic believer.

SPACE. The space of my study is the necropolis of the cenobitic Paulos monastery. The topographical setting already expresses its significance: The monastery and its necropolis are exposed on a hilltop as a widely visible landmark separated from the other communities of Thebes. The setting here becomes a material expression of lived group identity.

ACTIONS. I aim to reconstruct the burial rituals as completely as possible. The archaeological material enables a comprehensive reconstruction of the actions of the burial process, from the embalming of the corpse to the burial and the memoria at the grave. Written sources inform about liturgical procedures, chronological sequences and cult actors.

IMPRESSIONS. Sensory impressions always have a material dimension that is archaeologically accessible, such as the preserved fragrant oils that were used for embalming or the design of the necropolis, which determines the directions of movement and viewing. For further impressions, I draw on written sources that provide information about the time of day of the burial, the actors present and actions such as the communal saying of prayers and chanting.

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CHANGES AFTER LIFE



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