# DiningEDeath

## *Interdisciplinary perspectives on the 'Funerary Banquet' in ancient art, burial and belief*

Conference at the Ioannou Centre for Classical and Byzantine Studies, Oxford

Saturday 25 – Sunday 26 September, 2010

# *Programme and Abstracts*

**Saturday 25 September**

*8:15 – 8:55 registration and coffee*

9:00 – 9:15 – Welcome
9:15 – 10:05 – Keynote opening speech: Johanna Fabricius, Freie Universität, Berlin

10:20 – 11:00 – Petra Amann (University of Vienna, Bankett und Grab Projekt): *'Banquet and Grave.' Methods, aims and first results of a recent research project.*

*11:05 – 11:35 coffee break*

*1: North Syria and Anatolia*
*Chair: Catherine Draycott, Somerville College, Oxford*
11:40 – 12:05 – Eudora Struble (University of Chicago): *Ritual Engraved: Rethinking the Meanings of Syro-Hittite Mortuary Feasts.*
12:15 – 12:40 – Elizabeth P. Baughan (University of Richmond): *Burial Klinai and 'Totenmahl'?*
12:50 – 1:15 – Sean Lockwood (Trent University): *Family Matters: The Interpretation of Lycian "Funerary Banquet" Reliefs.*

*1:25 – 2:25 pm – lunch at the Classics Centre*

*2: Egypt*
*Chair: John Baines, University of Oxford*
2:30 – 2:55 – Gay Robins (Emory University): *Meals for the Dead: the image of the deceased seated before a table of offerings.*
3:05 – 3:30 – Nicola Harrington (University of Oxford): *The 18th Dynasty Banquet: ideals and realities.*

*3:40 – 4:10 – coffee break*

*3: The Hellenic World*
*Chair: Milena Melfi, University of Oxford*
4:15 – 4:40 – Maria Tsouli and Aris Papayiannis (Ephorate of Antiquities of Sparta): *Testimonia on Funerary Banquets in Ancient Sparta (from the Archaic to the Roman Period)*
4:50 – 5:15 – Myrina Kalaitzi (KERA, National Hellenic Research Foundation): *The Theme of the Banqueter on Hellenistic Macedonian Tombstones.*
5:25 – 5:50 – Maria Stamatopoulou (University of Oxford): *Banquets in the Painted Stelai of Demetrias.*

*7 pm – conference dinner at Al Shami Restaurant (for those who have opted in)*

**Sunday 26 September**

*4: Etruria*
*Chair: Corinna Riva, University College London*
9:30 – 9:55 – Antony Tuck (University of Massachusetts): Dining with the Dead: *Practice and symbol in Etruscan funerary ritual.*
10:05 – 10:30 – Tina Mitterlechner (University of Vienna, Bankett und Grab Projekt): *The Banquet in Etruscan Funerary Art and its Underlying Meaning.*

*10:40 – 11:10 – coffee break*

*5: The Roman World*
*Chair: Susan Walker, Ashmolean Museum*
11:15 – 11:55 – Katherine M.D. Dunbabin (McMaster University): *"Merrily Reclining After his own Demise': the banquet in Roman funerary art.*
12:05 – 12:30 – Eric Smith (University of Denver): *The Eschatological Banquet: 'Hidden transcripts' in the funerary banquet scenes of the Christian catacombs.*
12:40 – 1:05 – Peter Stewart (Courtauld Institute of Art): *Image and Reality in the Roman Totenmahl.*

*1:15 – 2:25 pm – lunch at the Classics Centre*

*6: Han China*
*Chair: Craig Clunas, University of Oxford*
2:30 – 2:55 – Michael Nylan (Berkeley): *Funerary Banquets in Classical-era China.*
3:05 – 3:30 – Lukas Nickel (SOAS/Institute of Archaeology, UCL): *Banquets and Tombs in Han Dynasty China: Luoyang as a case study.*

3:40 – *Concluding remarks: Oswyn Murray, University of Oxford*

Audience Discussion

*Sponsors:*

*The John Fell OUP Fund, The Craven Committee, Somerville College, the Faculty of Classics, the School of Archaeology and the Griffith Egyptological Fund, Oxford.*

# Abstracts (in order of presentation)

Petra Amann, University of Vienna, Bankett und Grab Projekt

***"Banquet and Grave." Methods, aims and first results of a recent research project***

In February 2009, a three-year research project entitled "Banquet and Grave" was launched. Located in Vienna, a collaboration between the University of Vienna and the Austrian Academy of Sciences, the project comprises the systematic analysis of all the banqueting and drinking feast scenes connected with funeral purposes in the ancient Mediterranean, between the time span of the eighth to third/second centuries BC, considering both iconographic and hermeneutic questions. The focus lies on Italy (Etruscans, Italian peoples, Greeks, Phoenicians-Carthaginians), Greece (mainland and islands), the northern Balkan regions (Macedonia, Thrace) and Asia Minor with its widespread evidence (especially Lycia and Phrygia). In order to be able to trace the original concepts of the picture theme and possible development lines, the Middle Eastern and Egyptian evidence of the late second and first millennium is also included. The frequency of feasting and drinking motifs in the funerary sphere, its different typological developments and combinations with other picture themes are directly linked to the specific socio-political structure of the particular society or cultural group. Furthermore, the individual client and the statement he wished to make play an important role. Based on numerous regional analyses, the main goal of the project is a supra-regional comparison, considering the socio-political and religious backgrounds and including questions concerning cultural transfer and/or parallel developments. First results emerging from a detailed analysis of Etruscan and Lycian evidence will be presented.

Eudora Struble, University of Chicago

## *Ritual Engraved: Rethinking the meanings of Syro-Hittite mortuary feasts*

Do carvings of mortuary feasts represent ancient realities, showing us which materials and foods were used in rituals for the dead, or do they convey symbols of life – or afterlife – important enough to invoke for eternity? The recently discovered Kuttamuwa Stele offers new insight into Syro-Hittite mortuary images, prompting us to reanalyze the past and current thinking on these carvings. Here I will present evidence that the images are far more than pictorial diagrams for how to do mortuary rituals; that the meal, paraphernalia, and human figures on the carved objects contribute symbolic information that complements a literal understanding of the mortuary rites. Although a standard for mortuary imagery is frequently apparent, the subtleties and mixture of carved elements betrays the socio-economic spheres, familial bonds, gender, and religious associations claimed by, or for, the depicted figure. The results encourage us to reassess who commissioned the objects and asks us to consider these representations as both instructions for ritual events and as clusters of signs meant to render the deceased present.

Elizabeth P. Baughan, University of Richmond

## *Burial Klinai and 'Totenmahl'?*

How can burial furnishings help us to approach the meanings of banqueting imagery in funerary art or understand the place of banqueting in funerary ideologies? Should tombs furnished with *klinai* or replicas of banquet couches be understood as physical, three-dimensional representations of banqueting, meant to equip the dead for an eternal 'Totenmahl'? Or do funeral couches mark their occupants as members of the elite class that enjoyed banqueting and/or luxury furniture while alive? These questions are not so easily answered, because *klinai* in the ancient Greek world were multi-functional furnishings, used for sleeping and resting as well as for dining and revelry, and because burial assemblages are constructed representations, much like tomb paintings or reliefs.

This paper will summarize evidence for burial *klinai* in Greece and Anatolia in the sixth and fifth centuries BC, with particular focus on tombs with additional signifiers of banqueting (tables, drinking vessels, musical instruments etc.) or with related banqueting imagery (such as the Karaburun tumulus in northern Lycia). Parameters for interpreting funerary *klinai* as indicators of a 'Totenmahl' concept will be proposed, and relevant ethnographic evidence will also be considered. It will be argued that, far from providing 'hard evidence' to guide our interpretations of contemporary funerary images, burial assemblages reflect the same processes of ideological construction that lie behind two-dimensional representations and thus are subject to the same questions of interpretation. Nevertheless, consideration of burial furniture enriches the study of the 'funerary banquet' and, when seen alongside contemporary images, underlines the importance of this concept — however defined — in certain eras and regions.

Sean Lockwood, Trent University

***Family Matters: The interpretation of Lycian "funerary banquet" reliefs***

A distinct Lycian culture flourished in southwestern Asia Minor from the late sixth to the late fourth century BC. The majority of extant evidence for this culture is archaeological, and is primarily restricted to sepulchral monuments. Often associated with Lycian tombs are relief sculptures, the interpretation of which is made particularly difficult by the lack of first person, primary sources. Nevertheless, these scenes are most often described as 'funerary banquets' by comparison with their contemporary Perso-Anatolian and Greek counterparts. This paper focuses on Lycian banquet reliefs dated to the late fifth and fourth centuries BC, the majority of which feature a reclining male figure accompanied by a seated female companion, most often in conjunction with subsidiary figures of differing sexes and ages. Absent from the majority of the Lycian scenes are the accoutrements of the banquet (tables, food, storage vessels), with the exception of the drinking cup usually held in the hand of the reclining male figure. The focus of the scene is therefore removed from the action of the 'banquet', and is placed on the figures themselves. The subsidiary figures, particularly the children who are often shown in intimate contact with the adults, thereby emphasize the familial quality of the scenes. This paper analyzes both the typical and the exceptional Lycian banquet scenes (notably those of the Nereid Monument), in the contemporary cultural context of Greece and Anatolia, concluding that the Lycian reliefs were meant to celebrate the bonds of family. Whether the family is depicted during life or in the afterlife cannot be discerned based on the available evidence, but the setting does not change the meaning of the reliefs.

Gay Robins, Emory University

***Meals for the dead: The image of the deceased seated before a table of offerings.***

One of the most frequent images found on ancient Egyptian funerary monuments is the image of the deceased seated before a table of offerings including food and drink. It appears as early as the slab stelae of the Second Dynasty. In the Old Kingdom, it occurs on false door stelae and it remains the main image found on Middle Kingdom funerary stelae, where it is usually combined with a standard offering formula.

In this paper, I show that the superficially simple image of the deceased seated before a table of offerings is very complex, with multiple layers of meaning that may have increased over time, as offered items acquired secondary symbolic interpretations. In the offering formula, the offerings are said to be for the recipient's *kA*, creating a pun between the word *kAw* "nourishment" and *kA*, the animating life force of family lineages from ancestors to the new-born and thus shared by the living and the transformed dead, who are those who have successfully passed through death to the next stage of life. Offerings depicted do not include the range of food available to ancient Egyptians. The basic offering formula asks for bread, beer, beef, and birds. Bread and beer, made from grain, were staples, but beer was also associated with the goddess Hathor, mistress of drunkenness, who was connected with fertility and birth and by extension regeneration and rebirth into the afterlife. The foreleg played a central role in the animating Opening of the Mouth ritual, when the life force of the bull was transferred to the deceased, in a pun on the word *kA* "bull". Migratory birds, such as the pintail duck, came from the realm of chaos outside the ordered world of Egypt and thus their slaughter indicated victory over chaos, which in a funerary setting could be understood as victory over the chaos of death. Possible symbolic meanings, whether original or secondary, can also be suggested for other items that appear as common offerings. The image, therefore, goes beyond a simple meal for the dead to embody notions of status and identity, the successful passage of the deceased into the next life, his continued maintenance there by the living, and the on-going interaction of the living and the dead through ritual performance.

Nicola Harrington, University of Oxford

## *The 18th Dynasty Banquet: Ideals and realities*

Mortuary (as opposed to funerary)[1] banquet scenes were commonly depicted on the walls of Egyptian tombs of the Eighteenth Dynasty. They show the tomb-owner and his wife before a table of offerings in the company of family and friends; the presence of musicians and servants differentiates this particular scene style from other depictions of offering found in these and in later New Kingdom paintings. Banqueting in the presence of the dead was part of elite cultic activity centred on the ancestors, which took place at Thebes and possibly other sites including Memphis and Elkab. Whether poorer social classes took part in comparable feasting is not clear from textual or archaeological sources, although there are indications that non-elites may have had some form of mortuary cult as evidenced at the Amarna South Tombs Cemetery.

In this paper, the ideals presented in banquet scenes will be discussed along with evidence for feasting in the vicinity of tombs, with particular reference to Deir el-Medina and the Theban necropolis. Much research has been published on the paintings themselves, particularly by Lise Manniche who emphasizes their sexual aspects. However, the scenes not only reflect the concern for rebirth suggested by sensual imagery, but, perhaps more importantly, the part the relatives and friends of the deceased were expected to play in the maintenance of the tomb-owner's cult.

[1] "Mortuary" is understood here as ongoing commemorative practice; "funerary" as relating specifically to funeral rituals and events.

Maria Tsouli and Aristeides Papayiannis, 5th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities, Sparta

## *Testimonia on Funerary Banquets in Ancient Sparta*

One of the main characteristics of the ancient Lakedaimonians is their peculiarity concerning their beliefs about death and the places they chose to bury their deceased. The ancient authors inform us that the Spartans preferred to bury their people inside their city, close to their houses, since they thought useful for their youths to be accustomed to the idea of death. They also refer to the legislation of Lykurgus, which forbade the erection of funerary stelae on common burials, with the exception of men who died in war and of women who died during raising infants.

Thus, due to the lack of funerary stelae as well as to the intense building activity in the city of Sparta during the Roman period, which destroyed most of the earlier remnants (among them burials), very few burials of the Classical period specifically, but of the Geometric and of the Archaic period as well, had been excavated until recently. Moreover, no extensive cemetery of the Geometric, Archaic or Classical period had come to light inside the walls of the ancient city.

As a result, *testimonia* for the Classical burials of the Spartans constitute a series of funerary stelae for those who died in war, some stone vessels, mainly craters, used as receptacles, and a considerable number of the characteristic Laconian stelae with relief decoration of palmette (*anthemion)*, considered to be the upper part of funerary monuments. Even though one may notice a lack of reliefs with depictions of funerary banquets, so common elsewhere, there is a very important series of the so-called Laconian "hero" reliefs, depicting a couple or single enthroned figures holding ceremonial vessels and items of chthonic character. These are considered by many scholars to be funerary stelae depicting deities, the heroized dead or common people in ceremonies or banquets taking place during burials.

As far as finds from excavations of tombs or organized cemeteries are concerned, given the lack of a considerable number of precisely dated burials of the Archaic and Classical period noted before, the most important find, up until recently, was the excavation of an archaic tomb of about 580 BC, which came to light on the Zaimes plot on BB 117A of Sparta. In the tomb were placed 22 fine preserved vessels, belonging to a set used by the relatives of the deceased in a funerary banquet which took place during his burial. The vessels were then "cancelled" by making hollows on their bottoms, and were placed as offerings in the tomb.

A relatively recent rescue excavation, which took place in the years 2008 – 2009 on the Katsaris plot on Othonos-Amalias and Leonidou Street on BB 151 of Sparta, brought to light the first known organized cemetery inside the walls of the ancient city, with burials dating from the sixth century BC to the early Hellenistic period (first half of the third century BC). Among others, were excavated enclosures containing burials of humans and horses. One of the most peculiar but quite common offering on burials in our cemetery is a complex vessel, with a body in shape of a kantharos, an interior metal part and a separate cover with teeth-shaped lid, an object without exact parallels in other places in Greece. Due to its unique shape and its many peculiar parts, this object is considered to be a ceremonial vessel used in funerary banquets taking place in the cemetery. Moreover, in the Classical cemetery there was also found a considerable number of vessels (kylikes, skyphoi, cups) with hollowed bottoms, considered to have been used for the same purpose.

On the Katsaris plot on Kyprou and Byzantiou Street in the city of Sparta, part of the Roman Southwest Cemetery of the city was revealed. The cemetery was accessible by a funerary street that divided it into three large grave clusters. While no remarkable differences of wealth were attested, traces of ceremonial meals and animal bones were obvious both at the intersection of the street and at some of the largest burial constructions, often associated with assemblages of artifacts connected to food preparation and consumption.

Myrina Kalaitzi, KERA, National Hellenic Research Foundation, Athens

## *The Theme of the Banqueter on Hellenistic Macedonian Tombstones*

After a brief introduction establishing the area and the period surveyed, the paper will proceed to present some basic 'objective' data concerning figured tombstones with the theme of the banqueter, such as provenance (geographical distribution within Macedonia), quantity (the corpus of the material at hand consisting of a little less than thirty tombstones), and chronology: during the Classical and Hellenistic periods, tombstones with the theme of the banqueter, as an iconographic phenomenon, appear to be pertinent to middle and late Hellenistic Macedonia.

Based primarily on the evidence provided by the imagery (main components of the theme, supplementary iconographic elements and motifs) and the inscriptions of the tombstones with banqueters, seen in the light of the funerary iconographic and epigraphic habits in Hellenistic Macedonia as a whole, discussion will seek to sketch the social profiles that the deceased and/or their families wished to appropriate for themselves through them. The modern idea that scenes of or including banqueters could function on more than one level of meaning being a basic premise of this paper, the specific question of the commonly termed 'heroisation of the ordinary dead', with which the iconography and the inscriptional formulas of this genre of Macedonian figured tombstones confront us, will also be addressed.

Maria Stamatopoulou, University of Oxford

## *Banquets in the Painted Stelai of Demetrias*

The theme of the solitary banqueter is very popular among the corpus of the painted tombstones of Demetrias. More than 35 examples survive, dating from the third to the late second – early first century BC. They belong to two iconographic types: a) stelai where a solitary banqueter is shown reclining on a couch and served by an attendant, and b) stelai depicting a couple, as a rule a man and his wife, where the man reclines on a couch and the woman sits by the feet of the bed or on a stool.

As has been pointed out by numerous scholars, there appears to have been a marked reluctance to add 'heroizing' features on the Demetrias stelai. These relatively simple scenes depict a wealth of features such as fabrics, furniture, various types of vessels that perhaps allude to the deceased's life and status. Moreover, a large percentage of the persons commemorated by such stelai seem to have been of foreign origin, mainly from the eastern Mediterranean. This paper will briefly present the aforementioned monuments, discuss their iconographic features and their epitaphs, and attempt to trace the motives behind the choice of the motif. It will discuss the scenes with the 'Totenmahl' against the corpus of the Demetrias stelai as a whole, but also in comparison to the contemporary tombstones of Thessaly and Macedonia (since Demetrias was a Macedonian foundation). It will seek to address the question posed by this conference, namely whether it is sensible or viable to attempt to trace a single meaning of the image of the banqueter on funerary monuments of the late Classical and Hellenistic periods.

Anthony Tuck, University of Massachusetts Amherst

## *Dining with the Dead: Practice and symbol in Etruscan funerary ritual*

During the late eighth and seventh centuries BC, cities throughout Etruria, especially the large coastal centres, adopt site specific, distinctive funerary forms and architectures designed to communicate familial association with a given emergent city state. In the inland region of Etruria, especially the area surrounding Chiusi, this political self-expression takes the form of a burial ritual that evolves directly out of the common Iron Age tradition of conceptualising the deceased through subtly anthropomorphized cineraria.

Throughout the territory of Chiusi during the early to mid-seventh century, elite burials often take the form of subterranean chambers containing banqueting equipment, tables and the cineraria itself, enthroned at a meal. This type of context allows for a consideration of the manner in which the construction of the funerary chamber by the surviving community reflects the idea that the deceased, through the effigy of the cineraria, is physically present at the funeral itself, and remains symbolically engaged at banquet once the transitional funerary rituals are complete – rituals in part involving the consumption of a meal by the actors constructing and performing these events. The expression of the deceased at a meal is thus both literal and symbolic. This view helps inform interpretation of later images of funerary banquets such as those associated with Tarquinia, where depictions of funerary events and their attendant ritual meals both depict the body of the deceased surrounded by the surviving community and are also understood as acceptable iconography for the interior of the tomb wherein the dead are imagined as engaged in the banquet of the afterlife.

Tina Mitterlechner, University of Vienna, Bankett und Grab Projekt

## *The Banquet in Etruscan Funerary Art and its Underlying Meaning*

The motif of the banquet plays an important role in Etruscan sepulchral art from 7th – 1st century BC. The theme is found in Etruscan tomb painting, funerary reliefs and funerary sculpture.

While there is no doubt about the importance of the theme in Etruria, its meaning is open to debate. Do the images represent banquets connected to the funerary-ritual, do they show a banquet of the blessed in the netherworld, or do they depict characteristic moments of an upper-class life? In any case, the Etruscan banquet-imagery has to be understood in terms of self-representation. The images also experience a change in their underlying meaning: the earliest images showing a single banqueting figure may be interpreted in terms of heroising the dead. Representations in tomb-painting of the late sixth and fifth centuries BC, however, are more likely to show real-life banquets which can be deduced from the combination of the banquet motif itself with other imagery (athletic and music contests, dance etc.). The owners of the tombs represent themselves on equal terms together with other participants of the banquet. In the late fifth century BC, another shift of meaning occurs, as some of the banquets in Etruscan tomb-painting clearly take place in the afterlife: dark clouds surround the deceased who eat and drink together with their ancestors. The presence of underworld-demons or the rulers of the netherworld stresses the otherworldly character of the scenes. In these images, the aspect of heroisation and the glorification of the family gains in importance, as can also be inferred from long inscriptions honouring the dead and their deeds.

This contribution will trace the evolution of the banquet motif in Etruria especially with regard to its underlying meaning.

Katherine M.D. Dunbabin, McMaster University

## *'Merrily Reclining after his own Demise': The banquet in Roman funerary art*

The banquet is one of the most common themes in funerary art of the Roman period, found over much of the empire and in a wide range of media, from sculpture in the round and in relief to paintings and grave mosaics. Its treatment may include highly traditional elements, notably the so-called Totenmahl motif, but can also be extremely diverse, both in detail and in overall composition. A major distinction appears to separate images of the individual banqueter from scenes of the convivial banquet with numerous participants; yet the distinction is not absolute, and a good deal of mutual contamination and influence can be found between the two motifs. At the same time, the convivial banquet scenes frequently do not differ in any important respect from similar scenes in non-funerary contexts; and even in the more traditional 'Totenmahl' scenes new elements may appear that reflect contemporary dining practice, and that are also found in non-funerary contexts. Scholars have attempted to establish broad categories of significance, distinguishing for instance between scenes of funerary cult and those with a euergetistic reference, or between the hedonistic banquet, symbol of pleasure in life, and the eschatological banquet in the next world. Written evidence exists for all these possible interpretations, and occasionally internal evidence (such as an inscription) associates an image securely with one or another of them; but for the most part attempts to establish clear criteria for such distinctions have proved inadequate, and the subject retains its essential multivalence.

My paper will give a rapid overview of this wide range of material, attempting to bring out the diversity of treatment which the subject of 'the banquet' could receive in Roman funerary contexts, and to establish the main recurring features. I will discuss some methodological approaches to questions of interpretation and significance, and the criteria that have been proposed. Although I do not believe that there can be any hard and fast system of interpreting these images, I will indicate a spectrum of ways in which evidence suggests that they might have been read by those who commissioned and viewed them.

Eric C. Smith, Iliff School of Theology/University of Denver

## *The Eschatological Banquet: 'Hidden transcripts' in the funerary banquet scenes of the Christian catacombs*

Like most images found in the Christian catacombs of Rome, the banquet scenes came into Christian use after long employment in other Greco-Roman contexts. The funerary banquet frescoes are iconographically similar to the "symposium" motif found in non-Christian contexts, and their Christian meaning would seem at first to be in continuity with others of the type. This continuity has led many to understand the image's function just this way, as continuous with similar non-Christian uses in antiquity,[2] and to conclude that there was nothing particularly Christian about Christians' use of the motif – it was just rote reproduction, or at best adapted reproduction.

This paper, however, will argue that the Christian use of the banquet scenery in the Roman catacombs was intentional and starkly different from other ancient uses, both in its implementation and its eschatological undertones. It will understand the banquet scenes as an example of what James C. Scott calls a "hidden transcript of the subordinate," in which a subordinate group (Christians, in this case) produce "transcripts," or discourse, about a dominant group (the Roman Empire, in this case) in such a way that the transcripts are unintelligible to anyone outside of the subordinate group.[3]

This paper will read the early Christian banquet images as such transcripts, employed as instruments of resistance to imperial persecution. It will view the banquet scenes as a Christian re-appropriation of culturally current imagery to express Christian solidarity and purpose in the face of persecution, and to affirm eschatological hope in the midst of trouble.

[2] For example, see Smith. Dennis Edwin Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist: The Banquet in the Early Christian World* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 2003).
[3] James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Transcripts* (Ann Arbor: Edwards Brothers, 1990).

Peter Stewart, Courtauld Institute of Art

***Image and Reality in the Roman Totenmahl***

During the Roman imperial period, the 'Totenmahl' became one of the most frequently represented subjects in funerary art, appearing especially in sculptural reliefs in Europe and the Near East. The consistency of key elements in the iconography serves to highlight variations and departures from the norm in particular regions, and it is clear that the imagery was highly versatile. This paper explores the tension between the highly conventional iconography and the reality of its use by different people in different places and times, posing the follow questions: how should we interpret the surprising correspondence of this very ancient iconography to the *realia* of Roman material culture and dining practices? To what extent did the imagery make sense in relation to people's lives in the provinces, rather than merely as an abstract evocation of a comfortable afterlife? Above all, can ideological significance be detected in the choices about how and when to represent women at the feast? For instance, women are prominent as recipients of dining stelae and as participants in the imagined feast on stones found in Britain, whereas in the military *Totenmahl* scenes of the Rhine they are consistently marginalized, while elsewhere, and in the earlier Greek tradition, both options are employed. Is this the result of ideological differences or degrees of ignorance about elite dining practices? Should it be connected to debates about the decorum of dining in Rome itself? Where, in the end, does reality meet art in the Roman provincial reception of the classical tradition?

Michael Nylan, Berkeley

## *Funerary Banquets in Classical-era China*

For a topic so central to the all-important notions of health, pleasure, and sociality, it is shocking how little scholarly work currently relates to the topic of food in early China. Two general works devoted to the topic (that edited by the archaeologist K.C. Chang and by the anthropologist Eugene N. Anderson, in 1977 and 1988 respectively) appeared too early to take full advantage of the wealth of evidence that gradually surfaced after the close of the Cultural Revolution in 1976. Given the enormous range of archaeological evidence made available during the last thirty years, it is now possible to revise and supplement those two general works by reference to a huge range of materials, from accounts specifying the precise rations to be given conscript laborers and imperial artisans (male and female) to inscribed bronze and silver vessels forged for imperial and aristocratic banquets and burials, wall murals depicting food preparation and presentation in kitchens and banquet halls, the first cookbook manuscript, and inventories of gifts of food offered to the high-ranking dead.

Among the most interesting of the food-related materials that have been found to date are murals depicting lavish banquets (and, occasionally, guests arriving in carriages to attend the banquets). Almost always, the Chinese archaeologists have assumed that such murals represent "scenes from daily life" drawn from the individual lives of the tomb occupants. The entirely formulaic nature of the scenes renders such a reading suspect, however. A few archaeologists have therefore proposed that the banquets represent neither scenes from daily life, nor a summary of aspirations for the afterlife, but a strong statement attesting the worldly connections of the family of the deceased charged with superintending the funeral.

This paper will review the early Chinese materials devoted to the allied subjects of the body and soul, the potential for commensality, and the chief pleasures envisioned for this life and the next, as well as specific changes in tomb structure that encouraged the proliferation of such murals.

Lukas Nickel, SOAS and Institute of Archaeology, UCL

***Banquets and Tombs in Han Dynasty China: Luoyang as a case study***

From about 400 BC tombs in China were increasingly designed as a living place for the dead. From the beginning of the Han dynasty (206 BC – 220 AD) some elite tombs became equipped with a dining area as well as cooking and feasting utensils. During the first century BC the banqueting theme became a general feature of Chinese tombs and can be noticed even in burials of occupants of moderate social status. Murals suggest that the occupants were expected to preside over banquets inside the chamber, with dignitaries and family members attending.

To more precisely trace the emergence and development of banquet settings in tombs the current paper will discuss archaeological evidence from the area of Luoyang in Central China. The mostly non-elite owners of the tombs adopted and modified the theme which soon began to influence layout and architecture of the chambers. The paper will investigate the relationship between murals and the display of grave goods inside the chambers in Luoyang tombs, and will identify beliefs and ideas the local population may have connected with the murals and banquet equipment. It will further inquire if household and eating utensils are evidence for feasting rituals inside the chamber, and if banquets may have been part of the funerary procedure.