

# Presentation of a Database for funerary Analysis and Proposals for its Increments and Developments

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*Abstract: This note presents a database application for funerary analysis. It shows the database structure, some examples of the analysis which can be obtained with a such structured database and some proposals for its increment and development.*

## Introduction

This brief note presents a database application of funerary analysis of early Iron Age cemeteries of Latium Vetus.

The database is aimed at studying and reconstructing the evolution of late Bronze Age and early Iron Age Latin society and better understanding the well known phenomenon of Orientalizing princely tombs and their predecessors in a period which is crucial for the development of proto-urban and urban centre in middle-thyrrhenian Italy<sup>1</sup>.

This research constituted my thesis dissertation<sup>2</sup>, and has been conducted in the tradition of the studies of the so-called Archeology of Death<sup>3</sup>, paying a particular debt to the theoretical approaches of Processual and Post-Processual Archaeology (Contextual Archaeology)<sup>4</sup>.

On this occasion it might not be possible to refer to the historical implications and ramifications of this study, which demonstrates the precocious rising of social differentiation in early Iron Age Latin communities, as it is intended to present the methodological approach and its computer applications.

## Database structure

The database system has been created for *Windows 95* using the *Access* program in the version of *Office 97 Professional*. It consists of two related data-sets:

- 1) The first, BURIALS, concerns the dead and their tombs. It comprises these fields: site, ID-tomb, period and dating of the context; sex and age of the dead; funerary ritual, orientation and structure of the tomb, eventual presence of *semata*, enclosures or *tumuli*; modality of deposition of the corpse or of the cremated remains, modality of deposition of the funerary equipment; spatial relationship between the tombs: at the end, fields devoted to the registration of eventual traces of cult related to the dead (objects, pottery, animal or faunal remains etc.).
- 2) the other, EQUIPMENT, concerns the objects accompanying the dead in the tomb and includes the following fields: pottery-class or material of the object, definition, type, miniature or normal size, local or imported production, position of the object in relation to the corpse

in inhumation-tombs or in cremations which imitate inhumations.

The two related data-sets are accessible through the same data-entry mask (Figure 1).

## Data analysis examples

Using *Queries* in *Access* or exporting data in *Excel* and correlating them in *Pivot* tables it is possible to present different analysis of the data:

- 1) diagrams showing the correlation between variables such as, for example, the age of the dead and the length of the ditch-grave (Figure 2);
- 2) diagrams and curves of demography (Figure 3);
- 3) systematic tables correlating different ritual aspects of the burials to the sex and the age of the individuals (Figure 4):
  - A) funerary ritual;
  - B) orientation of the tomb;
  - C) structure of the tomb;
  - D) presence or absence of external *semata*, enclosures or *tumuli*;
  - E) modality of deposition of the corpse or of the burned rests;
  - F) elements indicating ritual activity or veneration of the dead;
- 4) diagrams and curves of wealth which might be considered as a sign of social status (Figure 5).

## Proposals for further developments of the database system

The database presented is quite simple and was elaborated to study edited tombs of Latium Vetus in the Iron Age period. However it could be improved using any of the following (Figure 6):

- 1) being enriched with GIS applications in order to include spatial analysis;

- 2) being added and related to other more analytical data-sets not only to record but also to classify archaeological finds (pottery and other equipment-objects), anthropological and faunal remains etc.;
- 3) being associated with sites data-sets in order to study sites related to their cemeteries and compare archaeological evidence from different contexts. It would be interesting, for example, to compare pottery and other finds from different contexts (funerary, domestic or religious) considering both the functional and the symbolic aspects of the objects;
- 4) evolving into a software for both studying edited burials and documenting new excavated necropolis.

### End notes

<sup>1</sup> For the formation of urban society in middle-tyrrhenian Italy see A. Carandini, *La nascita di Roma. Dei, Lari, eroi e uomini all'alba di una civiltà*, Roma 1997 and A.M. Bietti Sestieri, *The Iron Age Community of Osteria dell'Osa. A socio-political*

*development in central tyrrhenian Italy*, Cambridge 1992 with their rich bibliography. The two authors shows different points of view on the problematic subject.

<sup>2</sup> F. Fulminante, "*Princely tombs*" in *Latium Vetus between the end of early Iron age and the beginning of Orientalizing Age*, thesis dissertation in Archeology and greek-roman Art History, Faculty of Letter, University of Rome "La Sapienza", November 1998. The study was conducted under the guide of prof. Andrea Carandini and prof. Gilda Bartoloni of the University "La Sapienza" of Rome and prof. Alessandro Guidi of the University of Verona. My special gratitude is due to prof. Paolo Carafa of the University of Calabria (Cosenza).

<sup>3</sup> I. Morris, *Burial and Ancien Society. The rice of the Greek City-State*, Cambridge 1987 and I Morris, *Death-Ritual and Social Structure in classical Antiquity*, Cambridge 1992.

<sup>4</sup> I. Hodder, *Reading the past*, Cambridge 1986, and I. Hodder, W. Proucel (edd), *Contemporary Archaeology in Theory*, Oxford Cambridge 1996; with particular regard to funerary archeology a useful summary of the story of the studies in .M. Cuozzo, *Prospettive teoriche e metodologiche nell'interpretazione delle necropoli: la post-processual archaeology*, in *AION(archeol)*, n.s.3, 1996, p.1-38.



# Figures

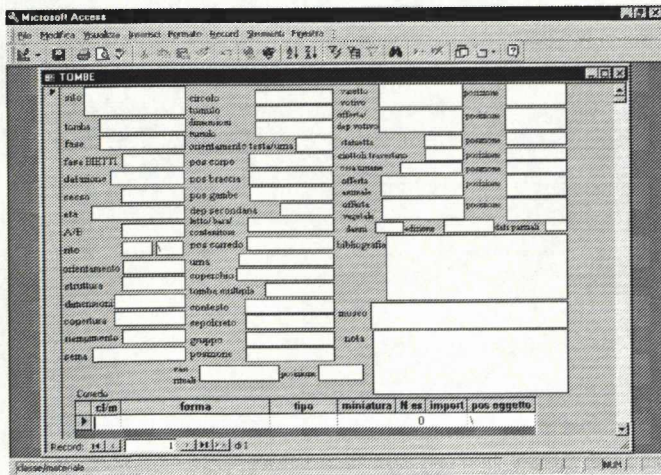


Figure 1. Data-entry mask which describes the burials with the dead and their equipment

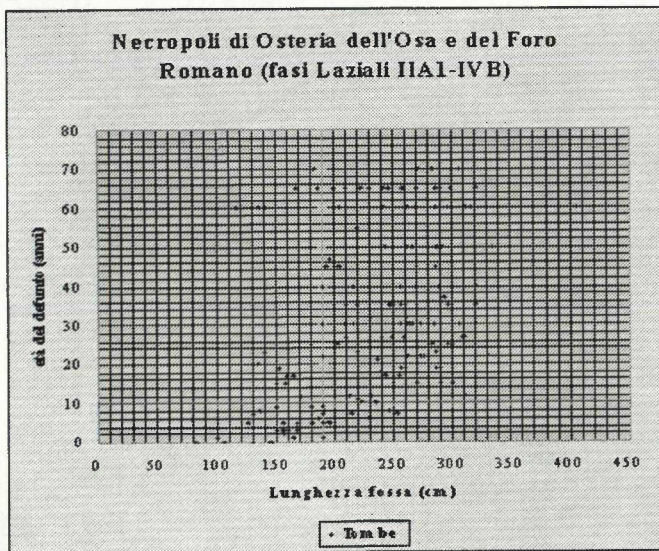


Figure 2. Diagram relating the age of the deaths and the length of the ditch-grave

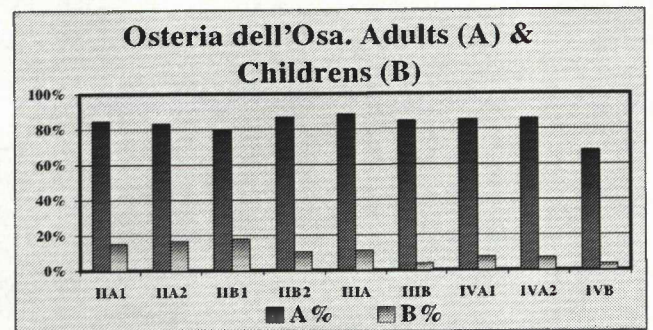
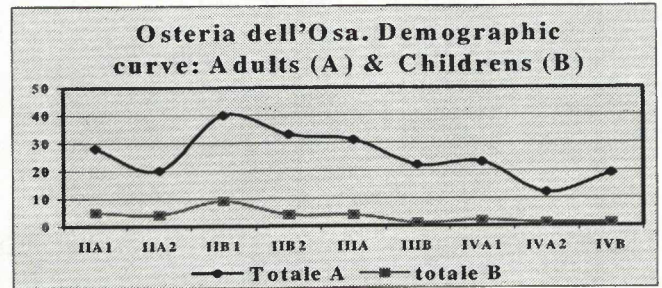
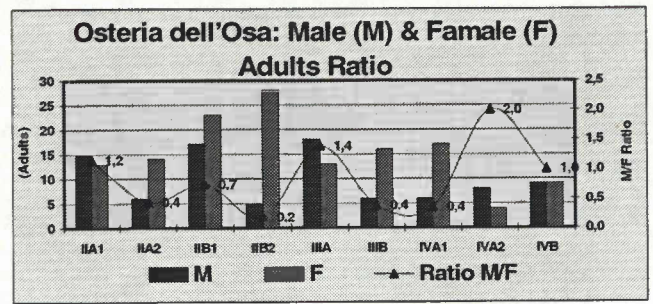


Figure 3. Examples of diagrams and curves of demography



sito	Gobbi
contesto	NE
sepolcristo	Osa
fase	B/E/II/IA1

Conteggio a/b	sesso		Totale
	A	B	
rito	F	M	
C	0%	69%	0%
I	100%	31%	100%
Totale comp	100%	100%	100%

Conteggio di tomba				a/b		sesso		Totale	
struttura	copertura	riempimento	urna	A	B	F	M		
PR	ST	ST-P	\						
		dolio-capanna		0%	0%	0%	0%	3%	
	Totale ST-P		0%	6%	0%	0%	3%		
	ST	olla ovoidale	dolio-cap LT	0%	6%	0%	0%	3%	
	capanna	dolio-cap disc	dolio	0%	19%	0%	0%	9%	
Totale ST			0%	19%	0%	0%	9%		
Totale PR				0%	44%	0%	0%	21%	
P	ST	ST-P	capanna	dolio	0%	6%	0%	0%	3%
		Totale ST-P		0%	6%	0%	0%	3%	
Totale P				0%	6%	0%	0%	3%	
F2	ST	ST-P	\	sarc le	23%	9%	0%	0%	9%
			\	\	38%	19%	0%	0%	24%
	Totale ST-P		62%	19%	0%	0%	33%		
	ST	\	\	38%	13%	0%	0%	21%	
Totale ST			38%	13%	0%	0%	21%		
Totale F2				100%	31%	0%	0%	55%	
F1	ST	ST-P	capanna	\	0%	13%	0%	0%	6%
			\	sarc le	0%	0%	50%	0%	3%
	Totale ST-P		0%	0%	0%	100%	6%		
	ST	\	\	0%	13%	50%	100%	15%	
Totale ST			0%	0%	50%	0%	3%		
Totale F1				0%	13%	100%	100%	18%	
Totale complessivo				100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	

Figure 4. Example of a systematic table regarding rite and tombs-structure

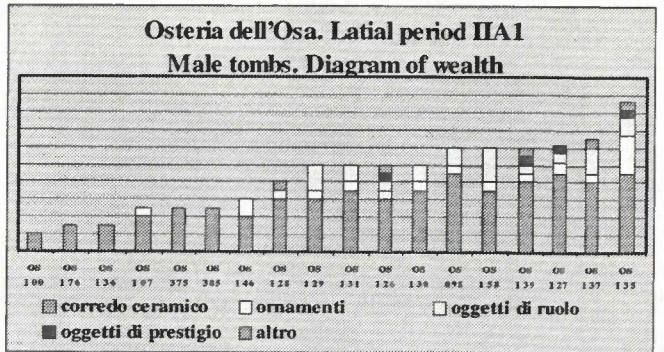
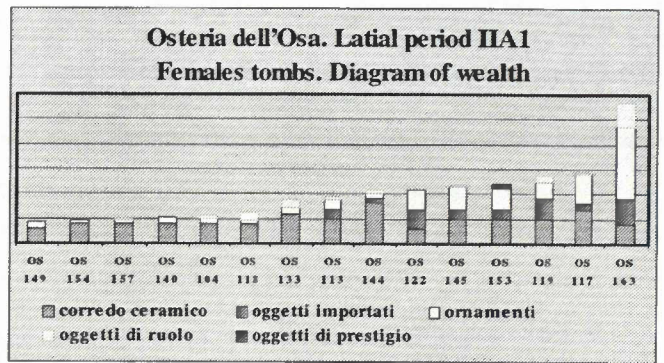


Figure 5. Examples of diagrams illustrating the wealth of the tombs

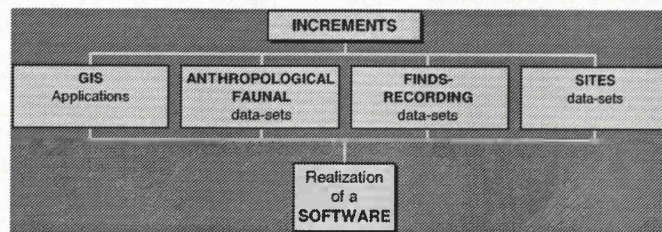


Figure 6. Schematic proposal for further developments