

FUNERAL BANQUET, PROCESSION OR AN OFFERING SCENE – A FEW REMARKS ON ROMAN PROVINCIAL PAINTING

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Keywords: Late Roman funerary painting, banquet, funeral procession, offering scene, Viminacium, Beška

Cuvinte cheie: pictură de epocă romană târzie, banchet funerar, procesiune funerară, scena ofrandelor, Viminacium, Beška

Introduction

Research on Roman funerary painting is inevitably associated with the reminiscences of real-life events – customs, practices and rites, and shaped by the overall concept of the philosophy of death and artistic traditions. In the case of provincial funerary painting, specific, local interpretations have been noticed so far that often lead toward a simplification of the known patterns and developed models, as well as the stronger influence of symbolism. Because of this local comprehension of artistic solutions and pictorial content, scenes with figural motifs of servants depicted with various gifts to the deceased need to be elaborated and explained through the lens of a dual perspective on funeral rites of the time. The basis for this research are scenes from the territory of today's Serbia, which are compared to ichnographically or symbolically rendered scenes mostly known from the Eastern Mediterranean.

Known scenes from Roman paintings in Serbia are depicted in graves from Viminacium- Tomb with Cupids (G-160) and the Pagan tomb (G-2624) as well as Beška (and possibly Čalma). Other scenes that can be associated with funeral rites are depicted in tombs and graves of Plovdiv (Philippopolis), Osenovo, Silistra (Durostorum), Constanta (Tomis), Thessalonica, Sidon and in the west in several catacomb paintings. All of them are dated to the late 3rd or the beginning of the 4th century, when inhumation was the only method of funeral and the philosophy of death was predominated with the idea of the afterlife, and

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fresco painted tombs testified not only the taste of the commissioners, but their material and social status as well¹.

With all of the mentioned painted graves/ tombs, the common impression is that the figures of servants are usually accompanied by portraits of the deceased in a sort of paradisiac ambient. In order to answer the exact nature and possible origin of the scenes with the depiction of servants we will present representative examples from Serbia and their analogies.

Description

Aiming to explain the origin and inspiration of scenes with servants and to name them properly, in this chapter we will consider the scene itself and how it co-relates to other painted scenes and motifs.

Tomb with Cupids (G-160) from Viminacium²

The Tomb with Cupids (G-160), as with the majority of Viminacium graves, has a trapezoidal section, which affected the shape of the painted fields, with the two in the east and west in the shape of a trapezium and the two northern and southern, rectangular and longitudinally inclined³. Within these four walls, scenes and motifs are designed according to the patterns of smaller fields with borders resembling frames.

On the eastern wall two small cupids are depicted in the lower trapezoidal field, after whom the grave was named. They are holding bands and garlands in their hands, and a *kalathos* filled with fruits and/or flowers is depicted between them. This is the only representation of cupids in the Roman funerary painting from the territory of Serbia. Most certainly these mythological figures represent the psychopomps for the deceased on their path towards the afterlife. Also, their presence in the overall context of the ideological pictorial narrative can point to the cults of Venus Funerariae or of Dionysus, which the deceased worshiped⁴.

The western wall is damaged and the paintings are hardly visible. What is possible to observe is the frame line that divided the upper and lower zones, the same as on the eastern wall. According to M. Korać, in the upper field, in the time of the grave discovery, several letters that belonged to the three row inscription were visible TROP (in the second line) and TIA.N (in the third line)⁵. Bearing in mind that the western wall usually contained the portraits of

¹ Спасић-Ђурић 2002, 186; Зотовић 2000, 15–16.

² Grave G-160 was discovered in 2003 during archaeological excavations at the Pirivoj necropolis.

³ Anđelković Grašar *et alii* 2013, 73–100; Korać 2007, 125–140.

⁴ Anđelković Grašar *et alii* 2013, 90–93.

⁵ Korać 2007, 131.

the deceased, besides their supposed religious beliefs, the inscription, if it was preserved, probably would have testified valuable information on their identity. Another important element that can support this assumption is the depictions of servants on the northern and southern walls.

The iconography of the northern and southern walls is almost identical in the design layout, but set up in a mirror projection with regard to the axis of the grave space. There are four frames. A grapevine stretches along the longitudinal upper friezes of both walls. Two fields are beneath, in the one towards the eastern wall peacocks are depicted, facing west, and two *kalathoi* are painted in front of and behind the bird. In the other field, a pair of birds over a vessel are depicted, they are identified as doves or quails⁶. Finally, in the largest rectangular frames next to the western wall, standing human figures are depicted, identified as servants. On the northern wall, a male servant is depicted in a short blue tunic, slightly turned towards the west and with a cup or goblet painted in his raised right hand. A female servant is painted on the southern wall, also slightly facing west. She has long hair and is dressed in a long blue dress and a white *palla*, with black shoes. In her hands she holds an oval plate bearing ritual breads⁷. According to analogous examples and considering these figures of servants, it would be possible to suppose the deceased, depicted from the waist up, in larger dimensions on the western wall⁸ (Fig. 1).

Pagan tomb (G-2624) from Viminacium⁹

The Pagan tomb from Viminacium is known for the portrait of the mistress of the tomb depicted on the western side. This is one of the most impressive late antique portraits of a matron depicted in her young age, probably immortalised before her death, as anthropological analysis has suggested¹⁰. This portrait represents an idealised image of the deceased and is in accordance with the portrait practice known from various artistic solutions throughout the Empire. She is dressed in a richly decorated *stola* and *palla* and adorned with expensive jewellery¹¹.

A square, blue field behind her head is identified as a sort of a *nimbus* and,

⁶ Anđelković Grašar *et alii* 2013, 87–89.

⁷ Ritual breads or *panis corona*, food for body and soul, are depicted in the tomb (G-2624) from Viminacium (Korać 2007, 95–96), as well as in the tomb from Beška, (Marijanski-Manojlović 1987, 29).

⁸ Anđelković Grašar *et alii* 2013, 82–83, with the reference 43.

⁹ The tomb is built in a trapezoidal section, discovered during archaeological excavations in 1983 on the site of Pećine (first half of the 4th century) (Korać 2007, 69–101).

¹⁰ Anđelković Grašar 2015, 270–272; Anđelković Grašar, Tapavički-Ilić 2015, 17–19.

¹¹ Korać 2007, 101, 105; Raičković, Milovanović, 2010, 83.

thus, related to her Eastern origin¹². In her right hand it is supposed that she holds glass *balsamarium*, although it is now hardly visible¹³. Garlands above her head continue on the southern and northern walls, where peacocks over *kantharoi* are depicted facing west, also in a mirror projection with regard to the axis of the grave's space¹⁴.

On the opposite, eastern, wall, a male, standing figure is depicted as a servant. The figure is inclined towards the south, suggesting movement and is proportionally smaller than the figure of the mistress. He is dressed in the short white tunic, with a white *palla* over his left shoulder and blue trousers (*anaxyrides*), while on his feet leather shoes (*calceus*) are depicted. In his hands he holds a tray bearing two ritual breads¹⁵ (Fig. 2).

*The tomb from Beška*¹⁶

On the western wall, standing figures of the deceased couple are painted, probably representing spouses. The husband is depicted in a frontal, solemn pose, and on the oval portrait his big eyes dominate. He is dressed in richly decorated white *chiton* and a purple *chlamys* is on his right shoulder, pinned with a fibula. S. Đurić expressed an opinion that on his feet red boots were painted¹⁷. The female figure is depicted on his right side. Her portrait is badly preserved while on her head a grey headwear, a sort of a turban with dark spots, is depicted¹⁸. She wears a light coloured dress, while a white *palla* is folded over her left shoulder. In her right hand she holds a whitish flower, which resembles the lily in tomb no. 7 from Sophia¹⁹. S. Đurić gave an opinion that in her left hand a bluish, glass vessel is painted²⁰. Above the couple's heads, garlands are depicted, while on the ground close to the male figure there is a *cornucopia* or *kalathos*²¹ filled with fruits and flowers, while similar, but smaller, motifs are painted next to the female figure²². The representation of the deceased couple is very similar to that painted in a tomb from Silistra²³.

¹² Јанићијевић 2007, 97; Đurić 1985b, 156.

¹³ Korać 2007, 120.

¹⁴ Anđelković Grašar *et alii* 2012, 257.

¹⁵ Korać 2007, 96.

¹⁶ At the site of Brest in Beška (Indija) in 1965, a late antique painted tomb was discovered. It is dated to the 4th century (Marijanski-Manojlović, 1987, 17; Đurić 1985a, 5–18; Špehar 2017, 13–24).

¹⁷ Đurić 1985b, 2.

¹⁸ Marijanski-Manojlović 1987, 17.

¹⁹ Đurić 1985a, 6,8; Marijanski-Manojlović 1987, 17.

²⁰ Đurić 1985b, 2.

²¹ Mc Cown 1939, 1–30.

²² Marijanski-Manojlović 1987, 17.

²³ Pillinger *et alii* 1999, 22–28.

On the eastern side there is a representation of the three Parcae, mythological figures who represent psychopomps – guides for the deceased to the after-life. Their faces are damaged, while the standing figures are represented solemnly and frontally, with sceptres in their hands and halos behind their heads. Halos were the artistic means for showing the divine light of the three Parcae, goddesses of obvious great importance to the owner of the tomb²⁴. The figure in the middle is dressed in a yellow tunic, a dark blue *chiton* and an ochre *chlamys*, she is holding a scroll, while the figures on her left and right are dressed the same as each other, in a blue tunic, a red *chiton* and a green *chlamys*, the one on the left holds some scales while the one on the right holds a spindle²⁵. The three Parcae are represented in tomb No. 11 at Isola Sacra, from the 2nd century²⁶.

The northern, longitudinal wall is divided into three zones. The lower one contains three fields for a pictorial imitation of marble plates in black linear frames. The middle zone is decorated with the motif of a meander, which corresponds with the architectural context of the ceiling beams (the same as on the southern wall)²⁷, while in the upper zone, three peacocks are depicted, suggesting a paradisiac ambient, two of them facing each other, while the third one is facing the eastern wall (possibly with the head turned towards the other two peacocks).

The southern wall is divided into five zones. The first one contains four metopes in which four human figures are depicted. Those figures are servants who are holding various items, mostly associated with food and drink. According to initial interpretations, they represent the earthly life of the deceased²⁸. In the first metope (on the right) a maidservant is depicted, dressed in a dark red dalmatic with a wide dark clavi and a white *palla*²⁹. Her hair is gathered into a bun. In her hand she holds a basket filled with fruit. In the second metope, a young male servant in a white tunic and a short *chlamys* with a cylindrical hat is depicted. In his right hand he holds grapes, and in the left a *flabellum*³⁰. The

²⁴ Špehar 2017, 15.

²⁵ The scales are to measure the deceased deeds, on the scroll is written his destiny and the spindle thread represents life. In detail in Marijanski-Manojlović, 1987, 19, 29.

²⁶ http://www.ostia-antica.org/vmuseum/decor_paint.htm; E16996,E41085. E16994,E41114. The *nimbus* is a late antique attribute, which originates from the divinization of the imperial dignitaries; Greco-Roman gods are also depicted with it. Christ is depicted with the *nimbus* from the 4th century onwards and, later, saints as well (Đurić 1985b, 177).

²⁷ Николић *et alii* 2017, 175–216.

²⁸ Đurić 1985b, 163.

²⁹ Anđelković Grašar 2015, 272.

³⁰ Bearing in mind that, according to the funeral rites, the dead body was displayed (*expositio*) on the deathbed in the house *atrium*, standing next to it was a slave or a hired person, for the purpose of keeping watch over the body, who waved a *flabellum*.

male servant in the third metope is dressed in a blue tunic and a white *chlamys*, in his right hand he holds a goblet and in the left a jug. In the fourth metope, a male servant is dressed similarly to the two others and in his hands there is a tray bearing ritual breads, similar to Viminacium grave G-160³¹. As with the previous examples, it is noticeable that the figures of the deceased are of larger dimensions than the servants. According to I. Popović, the smaller dimensions of the servants in the procession points to the idea that they do not belong in the same context or precisely the same sphere of life as their masters³².

Above all of the figures, garlands decorated with a wavy vine ending with red fruits and green leafs or flowers with green flower cups are painted³³. In the fourth metope, next to the garlands a white curtain with green and red decorations is depicted. A second zone with a meander again imitates the ceiling beams, similarly rendered as the beams from the Brestovik tomb³⁴. In the third, upper frieze, a greenish-blue vine with grapes, which birds are pecking, is painted, symbolically referring to the paradise to which the deceased are approaching, which is comparable with the zone with peacocks on the northern wall³⁵. The fourth frieze contains light grey spirals with red dots. The fifth frieze is also decorated motifs of yellow spirals (Fig. 3).

Although S. Đurić considered the female figure on the eastern wall of the tomb from Čalma to be a maidservant, according to the position of her hands, in which she could have possibly been holding gifts³⁶, and, thus, the bust on the longer wall to be the deceased's portrait, the lack of other motifs which could support this notion, or at least provide basis for further research on the topic³⁷, mean that this tomb will not be considered as a representative example for the research of a scene of a funeral procession or an offering scene, especially given that the authors agreed with a second opinion given by Ivana Popović, that the female figure actually represents the deceased, while the bust (and probably one more next to it) represent hermas within the railings of paradise³⁸ (Fig. 4).

³¹ Marijanski-Manojlović 1987, 18–19.

³² Popović 2011, 238.

³³ Рогоћ, Анђелковић 2011, 95

³⁴ Nikolić *et alii* 2018, 195–286.

³⁵ Marijanski-Manojlović 1987, 18–19.

³⁶ Đurić 1985b, 170.

³⁷ Tomb from Čalma is dated in the first half of the 4th century. It is discovered during the archaeological excavations in 1969. Paintings of the tomb are conserved and presented in the Museum of Srem (Milošević 1973, 95; Đurić 1985b, 133).

³⁸ Popović 2011, 242; Popović 2012, 77–78.

Discussion

In order to define the aforementioned scenes, it is necessary to compare them with real life events and determine the level of similarity to them or to seek their symbolic connotation. There are three possible funeral rites with which these funerary scenes could be compared.

The first one is a funeral procession – *pompa funebris* (*exsequiae*) and, considering the article's topic, it is important to stress that poor people were buried at night because they could not afford to have any funeral procession³⁹. Among others, attendants of the funeral procession included slaves who had been freed by their master after his death⁴⁰.

Another important funeral rite is the sacrifice performed at the cemetery. The sacrificial offering was offered to the chthonic deities and then to the attendants of the procession. The offerings at a funeral depended on the social status of the deceased and the family but usually included a libation of wine, incense, produce or grain⁴¹. On the same day of the funeral, a funerary feast, the *silicernium*, was eaten at the grave in honour of the dead and a *cena novendialis* was eaten at the grave on the ninth day after funeral, usually set on a triclinium and open to the sky, which corresponds to images of funeral banquets, even with the attendants dressed in white⁴². A libation to the Manes was poured upon the actual burial and offerings of food were left at the tomb for the dead and were sometimes eaten by the hungry⁴³.

Finally, an important part of funeral rites were commemorations, specific and important for Roman cult and intended to pay continuous honour to the dead. These involved regular visits to the grave and feasts, at which the deceased, too, was “fed” with gifts of food⁴⁴. During these commemorations, Romans offered sacrifices and various gifts to their relatives, along with oblations consisting of sacrifices, wine, milk, garlands of flowers, and other items⁴⁵. The commemoration was usually held in February (at the end of the year) during the nine-day festival of Parentalia, when families gathered at the cemeteries and offered meals to the deceased and ancestors and then shared wine and cakes among themselves.

³⁹ Smith 1875, 559. Although this refers to funeral practices in Rome it would be possible to suppose that provincial funeral practices differ.

⁴⁰ Dionys. IV.24.

⁴¹ Scheid 2011, 264, 270–271.

⁴² Smith 1875, 562; Cic. c. Vatin. 13.

⁴³ Toynbee 1982, 51.

⁴⁴ Cilliers 2005, 141.

⁴⁵ Smith 1875, 562 with quoted sources.

Scenes of funerary banquet

Besides the domestic banquet, the funerary banquet was one of the most common motifs represented in various forms of artistic media associated with funeral rites and commemorations of death practiced in classical Antiquity and, later, Christianity, when it became better known as Agape. The iconography of the banquet usually contains a traditional Roman *triclinium* or a single semi-circular couch known as a sigma or *stibadium*⁴⁶.

The Greek prohibition against the presence of respectable women at a banquet lasted a long time, and was seen as contrasting with the Roman practice, where women participated in banquets reclining together with the men. Although they took no active part in the banquet, they are clearly to be understood as the consort of the hero or the wife of the dead man⁴⁷.

A scene of a funerary banquet is represented in a tomb from Philippopolis (Plovdiv, Bulgaria)⁴⁸. This image belongs to an old tradition of representing a reclining couple on a couch (*kline*), which was the most characteristic of all Greco-Roman art for more than a thousand years, from the late 7th century BC to the 5th century AD⁴⁹. Two human figures are lying on the couch beneath a garland, in front of them there is a table with three legs, while four servants are offering plates with fish, bread and fruits, as well as a jug⁵⁰. One of the lying figures is hard to distinguish as male or female, but, since female jewellery was discovered within the tomb, it could be supposed that a woman is represented along with her husband. The figures of servants in this tomb are larger than the deceased, which was probably conditioned by their being enclosed within the frames and as a sign of the abandonment of the symbolical iconography of heroization. Additionally, these servants are depicted in much more modest clothes than other analogous examples from the same period. The tunics of these figures follow the Egyptian fashion⁵¹ (Fig. 5). The meaning of this scene in the tomb from Plovdiv, with the depiction of a fruitful family feast, represents the idea of afterlife welfare. The symbolical rather than realistic sense is reinforced by the fact that everything occurs in a heavenly ambient.

Fish depicted on the table and on the plate is an almost unchanged element in scenes of funeral banquets in Late Antiquity. Fish in the secular life of

⁴⁶ Dunbabin 2003b, 6, 36–63

⁴⁷ Dunbabin 2003b, 22–23; Вълева 1985, 47.

⁴⁸ The tomb discovered in Graf Ignatiev Street, has since been destroyed (Ovcharov, Vaklinova 1978, 26–27).

⁴⁹ Dunbabin 2003b, 14, 103–125; Вълева 1985, 46.

⁵⁰ Pillinger *et alii* 1999, 42–43; Valeva 2001, 180.

⁵¹ Вълева 1985, 48.

wealthy Romans was one of the favourite dishes⁵², while symbolically, in many myths, it is associated with the world of death, and the resurrected God – the *ichthys*.

Another image of the funerary banquet of the so-called “sigma type” is painted in the lunette of the tomb from Tomis (Constanta, Romania), which is named after the scene as the Tomb of the Banquet, while the lower zones are decorated with marble imitations and the three other walls with decorative paintings that include birds, peacocks, hares and grapes, baskets and *kantharoi*, etc.⁵³. Five men, dressed in white tunics, recline on a *stibadium* type couch, while two of them hold goblets. On the table in front of them are a series of lyre shaped bread and a dish, perhaps with a cake. Servants approach from either side; on the left is the wine server in his long tunic, with a small ewer and two schematic triangular glasses. On the right, with short hair and a shorter tunic, is the water carrier, ready to wash the guests’ hands; he holds a *pathera* and an *oenochoe*, and there is a towel over his shoulder. Proportionally, the servants and the banquet attendants are of a similar size, although similarly dressed, six men at the table are of higher social status. Possibly belonged to the same funerary *collegium* and religious allegiance⁵⁴ (Fig. 6). This banquet scene is associated with a commemorative funerary banquet⁵⁵.

In pagan art, the funerary banquet was a very common depiction, while later it acquired a Christian eschatological character. In the 4th century, banquet scenes along with motifs of Orants or figures with a nimbus, as is the case with the Tomb of the Orants, also from Constanza, could not be precisely identified as pagan or Christian, but what is certain is the continuous aspect of pleasure and display regarding the banquet, deeply rooted among the belief of the people concerned⁵⁶. During Late Antiquity, a transformation of this subject occurred under the influence of new ideas and spirituality. In Christian art there are no depictions of the deceased reclining on a couch (*kline*) but, based on the elements of the composition, the depiction of the Theotokos and the adoration of Magi, whereby Magi came to the place of the servants with gifts, actually inherited an iconographical scheme. In Christian iconography, the scheme of the feast on a triclinium is appropriated for the scene of the Last Supper⁵⁷. Christians adopted the banquet scene from pagan art, with the main difference

⁵² Вълева 1985, 48.

⁵³ Barbet 1994.

⁵⁴ Barbet 1994, 36; Mureşan 2016, 130–131.

⁵⁵ Dunbabin 2003b, 168.

⁵⁶ Dunbabin 2003b, 168–169.

⁵⁷ Вълева 1985, 50.

being that within the Christian context, the banquet became a symbolic depiction of the Eucharistic feast⁵⁸.

Scenes of feasts were often used in the art of catacombs. A banquet scene is painted in the Complex of San Sebastiano: in the mausoleum of Claudius Hermes⁵⁹, as well as in the Catacombs of St Peter and Marcellinus - where the banquet is represented as a Christian agape, in the Catacomb of Callixtus and in the so-called Cappella Greca in the Catacomb of Priscilla⁶⁰. Later the banquet scene was adopted in Byzantine painting, as can be seen in representations of the Last supper in a *triclinium*⁶¹.

Funeral procession or the offering scene

The procession of servants originates from an old eastern iconography whose roots were gradually lost after the 4th century when it became the glorious incarnation of the scene of The Adoration of Magi⁶². The scene of the *cena funebris* includes the deceased and a procession of servants, or a single figure of a servant, represented as gift bearers⁶³. Usually, among them is a significant difference in the size of the figures, with the depiction of the deceased being larger. Several examples from the eastern Mediterranean region show various versions of the servants' procession scene.

In a tomb from Sidon (Lebanon), known only from the nineteenth century drawings, the procession of servants is depicted together with their inscribed names (nicknames), who are holding trays bearing fish, bird meat and cakes⁶⁴.

The wall painting of a tomb from Osenovo (Bulgaria) contains the largest procession, four figures of soldiers on one side and four figures of servants, gift bearers, on the other side. The soldier figures symbolise the triumphal character, but the profession of the deceased as a military officer as well. This small group of soldiers is often represented in the art of the later empire. The maidservants are approaching the mistress of the tomb, who is depicted as an orant, and the three soldiers are approaching the master of the tomb⁶⁵. One of the maidservants holds an object similar to a jug in her hand, and behind her an architectural structure is depicted, probably a reference to the estate of the master,

⁵⁸ Kapitanović 2006, 105; Milburn 1988, 34.

⁵⁹ Flocchi Nicolai *et alii* 2002, fig 125.

⁶⁰ Dunbabin 2003b, 175–191.

⁶¹ Вълева 1985, 50.

⁶² Вълева 1985, 52.

⁶³ On the relationship and topic of the mistress of the tomb and the maidservants in Anđelković-Grašar 2015, 269–275.

⁶⁴ Barbet *et alii* 1997, 141 – 160.

⁶⁵ Valeva 2001, 182.

while the other maidservant holds a tray above her head, on which three objects are depicted⁶⁶. Christian symbols that are depicted in the lunettes of the narrower wall give a Christian character to the painting, although the content itself results from a pagan artistic tradition, which can be explained as one of the best examples of the religious syncretism of the 4th century. A Christian symbol, the Christogram, on the eastern wall indicates a Christianised couple, who, in a period of religious syncretism, did not break with their pagan traditions⁶⁷.

In a tomb from Durostorum (Silistra, Bulgaria), the wall painting is very complex, containing a procession of servants, hunting scenes together with motifs of animals and vegetative motifs on the ceiling, the deceased, the master and mistress of the tomb, who are depicted larger than the figures of the servants⁶⁸. The master of the tomb holds a *rotulus*, a symbol of social status, while his wife holds a flower, which symbolises the happiness of their wedlock⁶⁹. The procession of servants is approaching the master and mistress. Maidservants offer ladies toiletries: a jug with water, a towel, a vessel containing scents, and a mirror, while servants offer trousers (*anaxyrides*) and shoes, a *chlamys*, a cloak and a belt⁷⁰ (Fig. 7).

A simplified version of the servants' procession can be seen in the tomb of Thessalonica (Thessaloniki, Greece). The deceased couple is depicted on the wall at the eastern end, standing and both richly dressed, holding laurel and, according to the preserved inscription, they can be identified as Flavios and Eustorgia. A reduced servant procession scene represents, simultaneously, an offering scene and a libation, which is brought by two smaller figures between the couple, who have usually been taken to be their children, but the gesture with the wine jug shows that they could be attendants serving their masters wine⁷¹. In the middle of the scene, a small table is also located, on which a glass vessel is depicted. A larger servant holds a conical vessel in his right hand, which is used in the libation rite, while the smaller one holds the handle of the glass vessel. The whole group of people is surrounded by structures that could be understood be an estate. An older woman also participates in the ceremony and is depicted on the northern wall with the inscription: “κε Αυρηλία Πρόκλα μητρί πάντων”. Above the central scene on the western wall, within a laurel wreath, there is also an inscription: “+Φλ(αβί/ω/κε Αυρηλία/Ευστοργία/

⁶⁶ Pillinger *et alii* 1999, 13–14.

⁶⁷ Đurić 1985b, 165–67.

⁶⁸ Dimitrov, Chichikova 1986; Danov, Ivanov 1980, 105–121; Atanasov 2007, 450–451; Pillinger *et alii* 1999, 27–28.

⁶⁹ Valeva 2001, 181.

⁷⁰ Atanasov 2007, 449–450; Pillinger *et alii* 1999, 23–42.

⁷¹ Dunbabin 2003a, 454.

υγιένετε πα/ροδίτε”. According to the inscription, the tomb was built for Flavius and Aurelia Procla. The whole scene is set outside, with the walls on the right and left decorated with wreaths.

By presenting these aforementioned analogous examples it can be said that the procession from the Beška tomb, with four servants wearing festive clothes and holding gifts: a basket with fruit, grapes and a *flabellum*, a glass and jug and a tray with pastry, belongs to the developed servants procession, and is, for that reason, similar to one from Silistra⁷².

On the other hand, in tomb G-160 only two servants are represented, a male with a goblet or cup and a maidservant with a tray on which breads are shown, while in tomb G-2624 only one servant is represented and he also holds a tray bearing breads. If we accept the former identification of the female figure from Čalma as a maidservant, according to the position of her hands it could be supposed that she could also have held a tray. All three scenes can be considered as simplified versions of the servants’ procession.

Conclusions

In certain epochs, all artistic media refers to the fashion of the time, and the dominant taste for certain topics, types or plots⁷³. The economic development of the provinces led to the fact that art became available to the provincial high social class. In art, the coupling of late antique cosmic representations and imperial religious iconography often occurred. The inspiration for these representations can be traced in the imperial iconography, where servants serve rulers, which accentuates the hierarchy⁷⁴.

During the tetrarchy, the banquet version with the *kline* was not compatible with the new ideology and aesthetics. The heroization of the deceased, surrounded by servants, was a pagan idea, and servants’ procession had a prominent position within the content of the funeral banquet because it showed the wealth of the deceased and the easy life that he had during his terrestrial life⁷⁵. The iconography of the funeral banquet with a *kline* gradually disappeared from the iconography of late antique painting, while the procession of servants emerged as more important scene. It is also important to note that the size of the servants and the deceased figures was harmonised. The whole range of Balkan tombs, within their paintings, contain scenes of servants who are approaching their masters and all can be dated the 4th century⁷⁶. The representation of mar-

⁷² Marijanski-Manojlović, 1987, 18–19; Špehar 2017, 17–18.

⁷³ Вълева 1985, 53.

⁷⁴ Đurić 1985b, 163.

⁷⁵ Valeva 2001, 181.

⁷⁶ Valeva 2001, 181.

ried couples or women in scenes with a *kline* is a sign of change regarding the feminine position in late antique society⁷⁷. The funeral banquet with a *kline* is one of the rare depictions of this kind in this period, while figures of servants in the tombs discussed before, brings a new, eschatological content⁷⁸.

According to the discussed examples, servants can be represented in several compositions within the banqueting scenes, along with the deceased reclining on a couch (*kline*) or next to banqueters, placed in a *triclinium*. This scene is an unambiguous reference to a real event known from funeral rites, the banquet, a feast which would take place after the funeral or within some of the later commemorations. The banquet in a funerary context also serves as a representation of the ideal of human life, conveying, on the one hand, concepts of status and self- presentation, and, on the other hand, of conviviality and good fellowship, since in the ancient world, to lie down to eat and drink while others stood to serve you was a sign of power, of privilege and of prestige⁷⁹. Although these images did not mirror the reality but only referred to it, it is noticeable, for instance, that, according to sources, the banquet attendants were all dressed in white, which coincides with all the aforementioned images of a banquet scene. The banquet scene, although so convenient for pagan art, later acquired a new meaning and became associated with Christian eschatological symbolism⁸⁰.

The same symbolism of power, social status and self-presentation, with references to the terrestrial life of the deceased, is also associated with the procession of servants, in both versions, either the developed form or its simplified version, the latter of which is much more associated with Viminacium paintings. The developed form of the servants' procession can be associated with the funeral procession, especially knowing that servants/slaves were participants, often together with soldiers, if it was the funeral of a military officer, as can be seen in the paintings from the Osenovo tomb, or by holding master's or mistress's insignia and personal belongings, as can be seen in the tomb from Silistra. Male servants carry garments, the official costumes of the late Roman state, while the female servants pay the customary compliments to the beauty of the lady⁸¹. Bearing in mind that the master of the Silistra tomb was a dignified military officer and that the servants present, among the offerings, his military insignia, we can conclude that the importance of these status insignia remained in art according to the custom whereby servants also carried before the corpse the crowns or military rewards that the deceased had gained. The same conclusion

⁷⁷ Вълева 1985, 47.

⁷⁸ Вълева 1985, 54.

⁷⁹ Dunbabin 2003b, 11, 168.

⁸⁰ Valeva 2001, 180.

⁸¹ Dunbabin 2003a, 462.

can be made regarding the other offerings, since some of them, such as meat, again suggest status and are in accordance with rites, when, after the funeral of great men, there was, in addition to the feast for the friends of the deceased, a distribution of raw meat to the people, called the *Visceratio*⁸², and sometimes a public banquet⁸³.

Such a procession thus can be the motif represented in the tomb from Beška. As already mentioned, a simplified version of this scene can be reduced to two or sometimes only one participant(s). This would mean that from the whole procession only the specific detail is taken and painted with a highly symbolical connotation. It is interesting that when it comes to this reduced scene, only food and drink is depicted among the offerings. Thus, it would be logical to think that this detail could have represented an offering scene with the sacrifice of food and drinks dedicated to the deceased, which could have occurred at the grave after the funeral or during some of the later commemorations.

No matter which of these two scenes, either the entire scene or the specific detail, is represented, the presence of servants within the tomb painting beside the reference to the deceased's wealth and high social status during their terrestrial life can be associated with the custom when the deceased master freed all of his slaves, who were usually servants. Their images in tombs would actually continue to serve the masters in the afterlife and for eternity. These images are important with their symbolical meaning – the participation in the everlasting feast.

A well-known scene known as the Totenmahl, or meal of the dead, in many different variations occurred in tomb wall painting decorations, the 'Pannonian banquet' variant, common in what is now Hungary, omits the reclining figures themselves, and shows only the table with vessels and food flanked by attendant servants, while a separate panel above contains the frontal busts of the deceased⁸⁴. Balkan variants of the scene are usually of the Pannonian banquet type. The theme of the procession of servants seems to have been especially popular in Illyricum and the Danube provinces⁸⁵. On the Lower Danube the iconographic motif of conviviality has a direct continuity from the Hellenistic period, recorded without interruptions in the Greek cities on the left bank of the Black Sea⁸⁶. If we look at the figures of the servants, their number and their position within the composition, it is not possible to make a specific definition. Three graves from Serbia show three different types. In Beška there is the whole

⁸² Liv. VIII. 22.

⁸³ Suet. Jul. 26.

⁸⁴ Dunbabin 2003b, 108.

⁸⁵ Dunbabin 2003a, 451.

⁸⁶ Mureşan 2016, 130.

procession of servants approaching the deceased, represented in the lowest zone of the southern wall, which corresponds with the depiction of marble in the lowest zone of the northern wall. In such a context, marble was defined as reminiscence of the expensive decoration of the villa, the estate and the earthly wealth of the deceased couple, the same context to which servants belonged, with a strong reference to the social and material status of the masters during their lifetime⁸⁷. Thus, this procession can be interpreted, according to O. Špehar, as an image of the real banquet/procession transferred to eternity, which is further testified by the painted imitation of the marble revetment on the lowest part of the opposite wall of the tomb⁸⁸.

Two servants from Viminacium grave G-160 are oriented toward the wall where a representation of the deceased should have been depicted, thus fitting the concept of the simplified version of the procession, but the possibility of this being an offering scene should not be neglected. In the third example there is a male servant on the opposite wall from the mistress of the tomb in the most simplified version of the procession/offering scene, making it more intimate and intriguing. Since the lady holds a glass toilette bottle in her hands, according to the concept of the scene of the lady's toilette, it should be logical to expect a maidservant as a participant.

Looking back at the manner of the servants' depictions, it can be noticed that both servants and, especially, maidservants are, in most examples, depicted with an elegant appearance and in a fashionable form, almost like their masters and mistresses. They participated in their masters' terrestrial life and, in order to reinforce the idea of eternal wealth, they appeared in the mural paintings of the tombs, most probably dressed and ornamented purely for this purpose, since it would be hard to imagine real life slaves dressed as *dominus* and *domina*⁸⁹. Finally, it could be said that all three variations only from the territory of Serbia provide enough information for the conclusion that variations of the scene in question depended on many factors and that provincial painting was even more susceptible to individual comprehensions, interpretations and simplifications⁹⁰. As K. Dunbabin, a great researcher of the topic in question, pointed out: "Indeed, the motif's appeal may have been due, in no small part, precisely to its ambivalence and lack of a single, clearly definable content; it was open to observers to interpret it as they thought fit, according to their cultural predispositions or their own individual preferences", we can only express a couple of

⁸⁷ Nikolić *et alii* 2018, 195–286.

⁸⁸ Špehar 2017, 18–19.

⁸⁹ Clark 1994, 105–06.

⁹⁰ About the local workshops' artistic productions in Anđelković Grašar *et alii* 2020, 63–90; Rogić, Anđelković Grašar 2015, 201–210.

new insights⁹¹. It is already known that some motifs were used more for their symbolic connotations, as is the case with the depiction of the meander⁹² or birds⁹³, without the specific need for mimesis or realism, probably because their long lasting meaning and significance did not need any elaborated pictorial rendering in a world of symbols known to everyone. This would mean that even the tradition of painting the motif was strong, the life of art and the shifting of philosophical or religious notions provided artists with the freedom to be more creative and to produce more artistic variations of this common scene⁹⁴. The commissioners knew their wishes and how they wanted to reflect them in the afterlife. For us, the researchers, interpretations can bring us to associations with memories of the terrestrial life of the deceased, their earthly realm and the importance of accentuating their social status, funeral rites and pictorial reminiscences of them or the deceased's wishes for the afterlife and a continuation of their wellbeing and welfare.

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⁹¹ Dunbabin 2003b, 109

⁹² Николић *et alii* 2017, 175–216.

⁹³ Andelković Grašar *et alii* 2013, 73–100.

⁹⁴ On the relationship between grave goods and motifs in funerary painting in Tapavički-Ilić, Andelković Grašar 2013, 65–84.

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BANCHETUL FUNERAR, PROCESIUNE SAU OFRANDĂ – CÂTEVA NOTE ASUPRA PICTURII ROMANE PROVINCIALE

Rezumat

Articolul de față pune în discuție diferite imagini care conțin servitori și decedați, prezenți în pictura murală romană târzie, mai cu seamă pe teritoriul de astăzi al Serbiei, făcând comparații cu exemple similare cunoscute în întreaga lume mediteraneană. Acestea reprezintă atât servitori în procesiune, cât și versiuni restrânse, cu doi sau chiar un singur servitor pictat. Interpretările binecunoscute privind reminiscentele statutului social prestigios al celor decedați și dorințele lor de bunăstare și în viața de apoi sunt discutate împreună și în legătură cu riturile de înmormântare confirmate, care includ banchetul funerar și procesiunea, acordând o atenție specială poziției și rolului servitorilor în cadrul acestora. Pentru scenele restrânse din cimitirele C-160 și G-2624 de la Viminacium se introduce interpretarea acestui motiv ca referindu-se la tradiția ofrandelor la mormânt, după sau în timpul actelor de comemorare care urmează celui funerar.



Fig. 1. Figures of servants from grave G-160 from Viminacium (Photo documentation of the Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade, drawings by D. Gavrilović). / Figuri de servitori din inventarul mormântului G-160 de la Viminacium (Fondul foto-documentar al Institutului de Arheologie din Belgrad; desene de D. Gavrilović).



Fig. 2. Figure of a servant from grave G-2624 from Viminacium (Photo documentation of the Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade). / Figura unui servitor din inventarul mormântului G-2624 de la Viminacium (Fondul foto-documentar al Institutului de Arheologie din Belgrad).



Fig. 3. Figures of servants from Beška tomb (After: Marijanski – Manojlović 1987, fig. 6, 7, 8 and 9). / Figuri de servitori din inventarul cavoului de la Beška (după: Marijanski – Manojlović 1987, fig. 6, 7, 8 și 9).



Fig. 4. Female figure/ servant? from the grave from Čalma (Photo by D. Gavrilović). / Figura feminină/ servitoare? din inventarul mormântului de la Čalma (Photo: D. Gavrilović).



Fig. 5. Figures of servants from the tomb from Philippopolis (Pillinger, Popova, Zimmerman 1999, Tafel 59. Abb. 79, 80 i 81). /
Figuri de servitori din inventarul cavoului de la Philippopolis (Pillinger, Popova, Zimmerman 1999, Tafel 59. Abb. 79, 80 și 81).



Fig. 6. Funerary banquet from the tomb from Tomis (After: Barbet 1994, Planche A). /Banchet funerar din inventarul cavoului de la Tomis (după: Barbet 1994, Planche A).



Fig. 7. Procession of servants from the tomb from Silistra (source: <http://romulusbg.net/?page=monumenta>, accessed on 30.09.2020). / Procesiune de servitori din inventarul cavoului de la Silistra (sursa: <http://romulusbg.net/?page=monumenta>, accessed on 30.09.2020).