

Eleonora Romanò

Book review

Javier Andreu Pintado (ed.), *Las cupae hispanas: origen, difusión, uso, tipología*, Tudela, UNED - Fundación Uncastillo, 2012, pp. 564.

The volume edited by Javier Andreu Pintado, published in 2012, collects the proceedings of the I Coloquio de Arqueología e Historia Antigua de Los Bañales held in Uncastillo (Zaragoza) between 16 and 18 April 2010¹. For a long time a meeting which can provide an overall view of the funeral type classified as "*cupae*" in Hispanic-Lusitanian territories has been awaited.

Among the many qualities of the text, first of all there is that of having collected and illustrated reports and evidence already known (or presented for the first time) with a good topographic punctuality, thus creating a conscious point of departure for the study of specimens found in *Provinciae* Hispania Citerior, Baetica and Lusitania. These are the areas examined, to which correspond three separate sections arranged in geographical order; the same way is used to describe the findings too.

The first paper is that by Charlotte Tupman who, resuming part of his text published in 2011, aims to outline the main features of the Hispanic *cupae*. Her text does not seem to reach the target because of some deficiencies emerging from both her bibliographic analysis and the discussion of the many points mentioned with no depth. Furthermore, the Author does not consider the Hispanic specimens in the light of the Mediterranean perspective, but she focuses primarily on a local vision of the phenomenon.

A more complete analysis is placed at the end of the book: Javier Andreu Pintado examines the phenomenon in a more general way also adding socio-economic aspects related to the use of *cupae*. If the two papers were associated together at the beginning of the publication, the discussion would have been more comprehensive in order to understand the different typological and structural characteristics found in environments exposed by other Authors. Of note is the general framework proposed by Francisco Beltrán Lloris (*cupae* of the Cinco Villas): although bibliographically not up to date, it clarifies other aspects, especially those related to the geographical distribution in the Western Mediterranean

¹ See also the book review written by G. Baratta, "Sylloge Epigraphica Barcinonensis" 10 (2012), pp. 449-454, for a useful summary of all articles in the publication. My review is, instead, a further general evaluation of the text with the commentary of a selection of contexts of personal interest. The critical readings of the text expressed by Baratta and myself are also in connection with the Authors' interest in the type of the *cupae* developed in their previous publications: G. Baratta, *Alcune osservazioni sulla genesi e la diffusione delle cupae*, *L'Africa Romana*, 16, 2006, pp. 1669-1682; E. Romanò, *Le tombe "a cupa" in Italia e nel Mediterraneo. Tipologia architettonica, committenza e rituale*, "Studi Classici ed Orientali" 7 (2006, 2009), pp. 149-219. See also L. Bacchielli, *Monumenti funerari a forma di cupula: origine e diffusione in Italia meridionale*, *L'Africa Romana*, 3, 1986, pp. 303-319, among the first in Italy to deal with this funeral type.

basin.

Then the discussion on individual sites in the Iberian Peninsula follows: Hispania Citerior specimens of Tarraco (Diana Gorostidi Pi and Jordi López Vilar), Barcino (Julia Beltran de Heredia and Isabel de Rodà Llanza), Carthago Nova (Alejandro Sánchez Quevedo and Sebastian F. Ramallo Asensio), Cinco Villas - Zaragoza (Francisco Beltrán Lloris, Ángel Lorenzo A. Jordán, Javier Andreu Pintado), Complutum (Joaquín L. Gómez-Pantoja and José María Rubio Fuentes), Talavera de la Reina (Miguel Ángel López Novillo), Legion and Pallantia (Jorge Sánchez and Pérez Lafuente), Beturia Celticorum (Ángel A. Jordán Lorenzo); Baetica: Italica (Antonio Caballos Rufino), Rio Tinto (Juan Aurelio Pérez Macías), Corduba (Armin U. Stylow); Lusitania, Mérida (Trinidad Nogales Basarrate, José Luis Ramírez and José María Sádaba Calles Murciano), Ávila (María del Rosario Hernando Sobrino), Cáceres (Joaquín L. Gómez-Pantoja, Antonio González Cordero, María del Rosario Vidal Hernando José Sobrino and Madruga Flores), Conventus Pacensis (José d'Encarnação), Ager Olisiponensis (Ricardo Campos).

The numerous locations proposed in the volume offer a rich geographical framework of documents and allow us to detect a substantial disparity between the quantity of monolithic *cupae* and the *structiles* ones, which are fewer. As already partially revealed in previous studies, the lithic specimens have several points of typological connection with the *cupae* of *Provincia Sardinia* (especially in cases of barrel forms): this issue is not always well regarded in the formal analysis of the type and in the historical factors that might help to clarify the origin of the territorial forms in stone. Those masonries are more complex in this direction, because of the numerous structural variants that the built form allows (much more than the realization in stone, which appears forced in limited typological choices); references to traditional African and Italic *cupae structiles* already known from time to time do not solve doubts about their geographical origin.

Full of interest and research perspectives are the typological studies on *cupae* of Mérida: less than 280 specimens, especially in masonry and stone, counted among the cases found *in situ* (with the underlying stratigraphic connections of the burial) or re-used in the boundary walls of the Alcazaba.

Especially in the latter case, little information can be drawn about the socio-economic conditions of the categories of use of *cupae*: the few epigraphic data recoverable, because just only one side is visible (very often not the one with the *laterculus*), confirm the humble social conditions (servile or slavish) as those in Africa and Italic (as for the latter it is important to remember the numerous examples related to roman soldiers). The study then analyzes the specimens characterized by the presence of stone hollows for small anthropomorphic or completely non-iconic shapes such as those examined from Baelo Claudia (see the study by A. Jiménez Díez 2007 cited in the bibliography).

The *cupae* of Cáceres show an interesting variation in the realization of the structure: the Authors propose a new category, namely the "*cupa sectilis*", different from the *cupa structilis* because it consists of several sections of stones inserted in the remaining part of the masonry. This particularity will be very important to understand the building technique and the type of material used (whether new or reused).

Compared to the other documents closer to the well-known characteristics of *cupae*, the specimens of the Ager Olisiponensis allow to detect a different type of assembly of monolithic rows, until now never found: the *cupa* is composed of two stone elements placed one on another, with a block of stone hollow inside for the deposition of the ashes; the *cupa* itself acts as cover/*segnaculum*.

Onomastic data of the inscriptions make R. Campos consider that joint the result of a stylization of an architectural model, probably coming from Italy; the hypothesis is very striking, considering the geographical location, not close to the Italian territory, and should be undoubtedly deepened and supported by further evidence.

Several findings, *in situ* or out of context, as proposed in the publication are affected not only by the material fragmentation. For some of them the study was based solely on the epigraphic data (almost all of them are already published in *CIL*) in order to identify the social components behind the choices of the funerary type under analysis. Not always the findings appear to be similar to the Italic and African ones: in most cases the choice of the *cupa* seems to go beyond the socio-economic possibility / will, but instead it appears as a formal collective adhesion to a model.

It should be added that epigraphic documents do not always allow to extract many data: often there aren't palaeographic elements, possibly connected to symbols, which could help in the understanding of special rituals and/or ethnic minorities.

Finally, the book lists a bibliography of all the studies reviewed and unified into a single final list.

The images of specimens, however, are distributed among papers according to the good principle of avoiding the gathering of examples sometimes very similar and complex topographical references at the end of the text.

In conclusion, as already stated, the text is a good starting point to re-examine in a more comprehensive way (and not only by *Provinciae*) the phenomenon of *cupae*: only regular updates and similar meetings will allow us to discuss and understand the many aspects of rituals (which were not subject of the *Coloquio*) attributable to local circumstances or to the more extensive circulation of men and ideas.

Eleonora Romanò
romano.ele@gmail.com