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The Jewish Ossuary Phenomenon
Cultural Receptivity in Roman Palestine

Dina Teitelbaum

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Abstract

The discovery of Jewish ossuaries in the nineteenth century raised a host of questions, paramount among them the questions of the origin and purpose of the ossuaries. It was also realized that ossuaries were a short lived phenomenon, appearing and disappearing relatively suddenly. A number of theories were proposed: The ossuaries were thought to have to do either with transport or space-saving, protection, martyrdom, resurrection, atonement, individuation, or Roman convention. All of these theories focused on Judea as the origin of the phenomenon. However, no one theory was satisfactory in itself. The dissertation presents a fresh examination of all available evidence in the light of ancient Jewish burial customs from the First Temple period to the Hellenistic and Roman times, using the approaches of archaeology, anthropology, and socio-rhetorical analysis. It concludes that foreign influence triggered the adoption of the ossuary in Judea during the Herodian period and that Judeans adopted the Greco-Roman ash chest as a model, modifying an aniconic version for use with bones alone. A comparison of the Jewish ossuary with the Greco-Roman ash urn reveals parallels and striking similarities in terms of ritual, material culture, terminology, manufacture and time lines. In particular, the temporal distribution of ossuaries and ash chests points to a general diffusion of the concept throughout the Empire over a long period of time, with ossuaries appearing relatively late in Judea. Using the innovation-diffusion theory of Roberts, the dissertation argues that, once implanted, the idea of ossuaries, in conjunction with ossilegium, spread rapidly throughout Judea, each special interest group or individual adopting it for their own unique reasons. Ultimately it became a fashionable secondary burial instrument. The disappearance of the Judean ossuary can be explained in terms of the adoption of the subsequent fashion in the Roman Empire to bury the dead in coffins or sarcophagi. In conclusion, it has been shown in the dissertation that Jews of the Second Temple Period were attracted to, adopted, re-invented and reconfigured a foreign convention in such a way that it became consistent with their Torah laws and their beliefs.

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Table of Contents

Abbreviations	XIII
List of Illustrations	XIX
 <i>Introduction</i>	 1
1. News: “Neu aufgefundene Grabaltherthümer bei Jerusalem.”	1
2. Scope and Thesis of this Study	3
3. Filling in the Lacuna in the Ossuary Discourse: Identifying the Problem	5
4. Approach of this Study: Methods and Sources	7
5. Outline	15
 <i>Part One - Ossuary Burial, the Novelty</i>	 17
Introduction	19
Chapter 1 - The Jewish Ossuary	21
1.1 Definition of Ossuary and Ossilegium	21
1.2 Terminology	21
1.2.1 Semitic Terms	22
1.2.2 Greek Terms	24
1.3 The Ossuary Industry	28
1.4 General Description of the Ossuary	31
1.4.1 Material	32

1.4.2 Shapes	34
1.4.3 Dimensions	34
1.4.4 Craftsmanship	35
1.4.5 Ornamentation	37
1.4.6 Decorative Motifs	39
1.4.7 Inscriptions	41
1.4.8 Types of Ossuaries	50
1.5 The Appearance of the Ossuary in Palestine	52
1.6 Geographical Distribution and Chronology	55
 Chapter 2 - Literary Sources Pertaining to Secondary Burials	 75
2.1 Rabbinical Writings	75
 Chapter 3 - The Tomb Setting of the Ossuary	 83
3.1 Survey of Jewish Burial Customs in Palestine	83
3.2 Burials of the First Temple Period	83
3.3 Burials of the Second Temple Period	85
3.3.1 Second Temple Period Tombs and Their Layout	86
3.3.2 Primary and Secondary Burial in Tombs	88
3.3.3 Burial Procedure	92
3.3.4 Primary Burials in Individual Graves	93
3.4 Burials in Late Antiquity	94
 Chapter 4 - Burial traditions in the region: The roots of ossuary burial	 101

7.1.3 The Ossuary provides an honourable reburial	158
7.2 Early Discussion in the Literature	159
7.2.1 The Ossuary as a means of preserving bones in purity for resurrection ..	165
7.2.2 Resurrection of the space-saving hypothesis	169
7.2.3 The ossuary functions as a means of personalized and individual burial ..	171
7.2.4 The ossuary burial as a foreign social convention	173
Chapter 8 -	
Critical Analysis of Previous Scholarship into the Origin of Ossuary Burial	175
8.1 The various reasons for ossuary burial	175
8.2 Association of ossuaries with the transport of human remains	177
8.3 Association of ossilegium / ossuaries with belief in resurrection	181
8.4 The space-saving hypothesis	188
8.5 The Protection Hypothesis	190
8.6 The Honourable Reburial Hypothesis	190
8.7 Association of ossuaries with developing notions of individuation	191
8.8 Foreign Influence	193
 <i>Part Three - Pagan Ash Urn and Jewish Ossuary - a Parallel?</i>	
Introduction	201
Chapter 9 - The Parallel: Secondary Burial Container	203
9.1 Introducing the similar context of ash urn and ossuary	203
9.2 Cremation	204
9.2.1 The nature of the cremated remains	205

9.2.2 The burial place of the ashes	206
9.2.3 Secondary cremation, prelude to the ash urn	206
9.2.4 The final location of the ash urn	207
9.3 (Dis)similarities in the burial rite of cremation and cave deposit	208
9.3.1 Stage I: disposal of the corpse	208
9.3.2 Stage II: disposal of the remains	209
9.4 Commonality in both secondary burial rites	210
9.4.1 Handling the same kind of remains	210
9.4.2 Proceeding in the same manner	211
9.4.3 Objects for the same purposes	211
9.4.4 Burial containers with the same functions	212
9.4.5 The same treatment of remains	212
9.4.6. The same final resting place	213
9.4.7 Being in a state of mourning	213
9.5 Discussion: The language of gathering into an individual container as the source of influence	213
Excursus: The Burial Rite of Exposure and the Associated ‘Astodan’ - A Relevant Parallel?	217
9.6 Summary of the parallel phenomenon of secondary burial containers	225
Chapter 10 - Parallel - Material Culture	227
10.1 Ash urn and ossuary	227
10.2 The corpus of secondary burial containers in the Empire	228
10.2.1 The Rhodian ostothe kai	229

10.2.2 Roman cineraria or ash chest	231
10.2.3 The Asia Minor ostothekei	232
10.3 Similarity of the material culture	239
10.4 Similarity of the manufacturing process	251
10.5 Summary	251
 Chapter 11 - The Parallel: Evidence of Terminology	253
11.1 σορός	253
11.2 θήκη and ὀστοθήκη	254
 Chapter 12 - The Parallel Phenomenon of Secondary Burial Container	257
12.1 The Parallel: Appearance and Disappearance	257
12.2 Conclusion	266
 <i>Part Four - From Abroad To Jerusalem</i>	268
Introduction	270
Chapter 13 - Exchanging new Ideas	273
13.1 Contact with the Ossuary Concept from Asia Minor	273
13.1.1 Jews in Asia Minor between 280 BCE and 190 CE	273
13.1.2 Jews of Asia Minor and ossuaries	278
 Chapter 14 - Receptivity in Jewish Society	286
14.1 Second Temple Jerusalem: A Jewish and Hellenistic metropolis	286
14.2 Evidence of Receptivity in Life	288

14.3 Evidence of Receptivity in Death	292
14.4 Limits to Hellenization in Jerusalem	293
 Chapter 15 - The Origin of the Jewish Ossuary	 297
15.1 The Pagan ash urn, a new idea	297
15.2 The making of the Ossuary: An Innovation-Decision Process	300
15.2.1 The Knowledge Stage	301
15.2.2 The Persuasion Stage	302
15.2.3 The Rhetoric of the Ossuary	310
15.2.4 Decision Stage	312
15.2.5 Implementation Stage	313
15.2.6 Confirmation Stage	314
15.2.7 Discontinuance	315
 Chapter 16 - The Disappearance of the Ossuary Phenomenon	 316
 <i>Part Five - The Ossuary - an Honourable Burial</i>	 323
Introduction	325
Chapter 17 - “Honour due to the Bones of the Dead.” (Sem 13.1)	328
17.1 The honorific Function of Ossuaries	328
17.1.1 Honour resides in the Name	330
17.1.2 Parents and Family Relations	332
17.1.3 Honour resides in Status	333
17.1.4 Honour Resides in Occupation/Offices	336

17.1.5 Honour Resides in Accomplishments	337
17.1.6 Honour Resides in Places of Origin	337
17.1.7 Honour Resides in Age	338
17.2 The Change in Perception of Honour	339
17.3 Conclusion	340
Summary and Conclusion	342
Bibliography	346

Abbreviations

Modern

<i>AA</i>	Archäologischer Anzeiger. Beiblatt zum Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts
<i>AASOR</i>	<i>Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
<i>ABD</i>	<i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> (D.N. Freedman, ed.; 6 vols., New York: Doubleday, 1992)
<i>AGJU</i>	<i>Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums</i>
<i>AJA</i>	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
<i>AJAA</i>	Hachlili, <i>Ancient Jewish Art and Archaeology in the Second Temple Period</i>
<i>AJCL</i>	<i>American Journal of Comparative Law</i>
<i>AJPh</i>	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
<i>ANAS</i>	<i>Annals of the New York Academy of Science</i>
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i>
<i>AR</i>	Archaeological Researches in Palestine During the Years 1873 - 1874, Clermont-Ganneau
<i>ASOR</i>	<i>American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
<i>‘Atiqot (HS)</i>	<i>‘Atiqot</i> . Journal of the Israel Department of Antiquities, Jerusalem, (Hebrew Series, with English summaries)
<i>‘Atiqot (ES)</i>	<i>Atiqot</i> . (English Series)
<i>BA</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
<i>BAR</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>

<i>BASOR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
<i>BBR</i>	Bulletin for Biblical Research
<i>BibOr</i>	<i>Biblica et Orientalia: Sacra scriptura antiquitatibus orientalibus illustrata</i> , Pontificio Inst. Biblico, Rome
<i>BIES</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Israel Exploration Society</i> , Jerusalem, continuing:
<i>BJPES</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Jewish Palestine Exploration Society</i> , Jerusalem
<i>BJRL</i>	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i> , Manchester
<i>BR</i>	<i>Biblisches Reallexikon</i> . Handbuch zum Alten Testament. Reihe I,I, ed. Kurt Galling, 1977 ² (orig.: 1937)
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
<i>BZAW</i>	<i>Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>CIJ</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Judaicarum</i> , ed. J.B. Frey
<i>CJZC</i>	<i>Corpus jüdischer Zeugnisse aus der Cyrenaika</i> . Beihefte zum Tübingen Atlas des Vorderen Orients: Reihe B - Geisteswissenschaften 53; Wiesbaden: L. Reichert, 1983
<i>DJD</i>	<i>Discoveries in the Judaean Desert</i>
<i>DJO</i>	<i>Decorated Jewish Ossuaries</i> , Figueras
<i>DMOA</i>	<i>Documenta et monumenta orientis antiqui</i> , Leiden
<i>EAEHL</i>	<i>Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land</i>
<i>EH</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia Hebraica</i> (Hebrew)
<i>EI</i>	<i>Eretz-Israel</i>
<i>EJ</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia Judaica</i> , Jerusalem, 1971
<i>ER</i>	<i>Encyclopedia of Religion</i>

<i>ERE</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics</i>
<i>ESI</i>	<i>Excavations and Surveys in Israel</i> (English translation of <i>HA</i>)
<i>ET</i>	<i>Etudes Biblique</i>
<i>HA</i>	<i>Hadashot Arkheologiyot</i> (Archaeological News, Hebrew)
<i>HNT</i>	<i>Handbuch zum Neuen Testament</i>
<i>HST</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Studies</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i> , Cincinnati
<i>IAA</i>	Israel Antiquities Authority
<i>IES</i>	Israel Exploration Society
<i>IDB</i>	<i>The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>IES</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Society</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JFC</i>	Hachlili and Killebrew, <i>"Jewish Funerary Customs During the Second Temple Period, in the Light of the Excavations at the Jericho Necropolis"</i>
<i>JJPES</i>	<i>Journal of the Jewish Palestine Exploration Society</i> , also <i>Qobetz</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i> , London
<i>JORR</i>	<i>Jewish Ossuaries: Reburial and Rebirth</i> , Meyers, 1971
<i>JPOS</i>	<i>Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JRS</i>	<i>Journal for Roman Studies</i>

<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies, Manchester</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JSOTSup</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series</i>
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal for Semitic Studies</i>
<i>LA</i>	<i>Liber Annuus : Studii Biblici Franciscani</i>
<i>MGWJ</i>	<i>Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums</i>
<i>MDPV</i>	<i>Mitteilungen und Nachrichten des Deutschen Palästina Vereins</i>
<i>NEAEHL</i>	<i>New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land,</i> E. Stern, 1993
<i>NEA</i>	<i>New Eastern Archaeology</i>
<i>OEANE</i>	<i>The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East, ed.</i> <i>Meyers, 1997</i>
<i>PEF</i>	<i>Palestine Exploration Fund</i>
<i>PEQ</i>	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly, continuing:</i>
<i>PEFQSt</i>	<i>Palestine Exploration Fund, Quarterly Statement</i>
<i>PEQ</i>	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
<i>PSBF</i>	<i>Pubblicazioni dello studium biblicum Franciscanum</i>
<i>QDAP</i>	<i>Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine</i>
<i>RA</i>	<i>Revue archaéologique</i>
<i>RAC</i>	<i>Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum</i>
<i>RAO</i>	<i>Recueil d'archéologie orientale, Clermont-Ganneau</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
<i>RC</i>	<i>Revue critique d'histoire et de littérature</i>
<i>RCat</i>	<i>A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries in the Collection of the State of</i>

Israel, Rahmani

<i>REG</i>	<i>Revue des études grecques</i>
<i>REJ</i>	<i>Revue des études juives</i>
<i>RES</i>	<i>Revue des études semitiques</i>
<i>RGG</i>	<i>Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart</i>
<i>RQ</i>	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
<i>SBF</i>	<i>Pubblicazioni dello Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, Collectio maior</i>
<i>SCI</i>	<i>Scripta Classica Israelica</i>
<i>SWPM</i>	<i>Survey of Western Palestine. Memoirs of the Geography, Topography, Hydrography and Archaeology, C.R. Conder and H.H. Kitchener, London, 1881-1883</i>
<i>SWPJ</i>	<i>Survey of Western Palestine, Jerusalem, Palmer, E.H. and Walter Besant, London, 1884</i>
<i>TSAJ</i>	<i>Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum</i>
<i>TRE</i>	<i>Theologische Realenzyklopädie, G. Krause and G. Mueller, Berlin</i>
<i>WZKM</i>	<i>Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes</i>
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZDPV</i>	<i>Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins, Leipzig 1878.</i>

Ancient Abbreviations of Orders and Tractates in the Talmud and Related Literature

<i>Ant</i>	Josephus, <i>Jewish Antiquities</i>
b	Bavli (Babylonian Talmud)
J	Yerushalmi (Palestinian Talmud)
m	Mishna
BB	Bava Bathra
Ber	Berakoth
Hag	Hagigah
MQ	Mo'ed Qatan
Ohol	Oholot
Pes	Pesahim
Sanh	Sanhedrin
Sem	<i>Semahot</i>
t	Tosefta
<i>Vita</i>	Josephus, The Life
<i>War</i>	Josephus, The Jewish War

List of Illustrations

Illustration of an <i>Arcosolium</i> above <i>Loculi</i> . Israel Antiquities Authority, "From the Diaspora to Jerusalem," Book cover of <i>Akeldama Tombs</i>	18
Fig. 1.1 The Different Forms of the Ossuary	59
Fig. a: RCat, 5, fig. 4; Fig. 10b: RCat, 5, fig. 5.	
Fig. c: RCat, 5, fig. 3.	
Fig. d: RCat, 5, fig. 2.	
Fig. e: Avigad, "Rock-Cut Tombs," 136.	
Fig. 1.2 Ossuary Ornamentation	60
Fig. a: RCat, 37, fig. 60, #203.	
Fig. b: RCat, 48, fig. 108, #269.	
Fig. c: Avigad, "Rock-Cut Tombs", 126.	
Fig. d: DJO, fig. 332, Plate 24.	
Fig. e: DJO, fig. 117, Plate 22.	
Fig. f: DJO, fig. 359, Plate 23.	
Fig. 1.3 Ornamental Motifs - Rosettes	61
Fig. a: RCat, 47, fig. 106, #65.	
Fig. b: RCat, 40, fig. 76, #69.	
Fig. c: RCat, 40, fig. 74, #44.	
Fig. d: RCat, 41, fig. 77, #74.	

Fig. e: RCat, 41, fig. 84, #454.

Fig. f: RCat, 41, fig. 78, #378.

Fig. g: RCat, 41, fig. 80, #133.

Fig. h: RCat, 41, fig. 79, #42.

Fig. i: RCat, 41, fig. 81, #399.

Fig. j: RCat, 41, fig. 83, #207.

Fig. k: RCat, 41, fig. 82, #163.

Fig. l: RCat, 41, fig. 85, #49.

Fig. 1.4 Ornamental Motifs - Plants 62

Fig. a: RCat, 49, fig. 113, #442.

Fig. b: RCat, 50, fig. 118, #82.

Fig. c: RCat, 50, fig. 120, #367.

Fig. d: RCat, 40, fig. 75, #350.

Fig. e: RCat, 42, fig. 89, #27.

Fig. f: RCat, 44, fig. 94, #181.

Fig. g: RCat, 43, fig. 93.

Fig. h: RCat, 50, fig. 125, #817.

Fig. i: RCat, 50, fig. 126, #431

Fig. 1.5 Ornamental Motifs - Architectural 63

Fig. a: RCat, 45, fig. 101.

Fig. b: RCat, 29, fig. 14, #90.

Fig. c: RCat, 45, fig. 102, #185.

Fig. d: RCat, 32, fig. 28, #601.

Fig. e: RCat, 31, fig. 26, #231.

Fig. f: RCat, 33, fig. 31, #262.

Fig. g: RCat, 29, fig. 17.

Fig. h: RCat, 35, fig. 42.

Fig. 1.6 Ornamental Motifs - Geometric 64

Fig. a: RCat, 37, fig. 57, #203.

Fig. b: RCat, 37, fig. 59, #120.

Fig. c: RCat, 36, fig. 47, #34.

Fig. d: RCat, 36, fig. 51, #324.

Fig. e: RCat, 39, fig. 70, #315.

Fig. f: RCat, 38, fig. 64, #599.

Fig. 1.7 Ornamental Motifs - Varia 64

Fig. a: RCat, 34, fig. 38, #378.

Fig. b: RCat, 34, fig. 37, #213.

Fig. c: RCat, 34, fig. 39.

Fig. d: RCat, 34, fig. 41, #815.

Fig. e: RCat, 51, fig. 127, #815.

Fig. 1.8 Personal Names 65

Fig. a: RCat, 224, #706.

Fig. b: Tal, "Inscriptions," 57, fig. 3.5.

	Fig. c: RCat, 104, #107.	
	Fig. d: RCat, 113, #140.	
	Fig. e: RCat, 101, #95.	
	Fig. f: RCat, 225, #716.	
	Fig. g: RCat, 222, #701.	
	Fig. h: RCat, 180, #461.	
Fig. 1.9	Different Scripts	66
	Fig. a: RCat, 123, #198.	
	Fig. b: RCat, 240, #794.	
	Fig. c: RCat, 187, #490.	
	Fig. d: RCat, 125, #202.	
	Fig. e: RCat, 188, #498.	
	Fig. f: RCat, 94, #70.	
	Fig. g: Tal, "Inscriptions," 65, fig.3.17.	
Fig. 1.10	Family Relationships	67
	Fig. a: RCat, 80, #18.	
	Fig. b: RCat, 201, #572.	
	Fig. c: RCat, 115, #150.	
	Fig. d: RCat, 243, #800.	
	Fig. e: RCat, 197, #559.	
	Fig. f: RCat, 80, #21.	
	Fig. g: RCat, 198, #561.	
	Fig. h: RCat, 94, #71.	

Fig. i: RCat, 93, #67.

Fig. j: RCat, 244, #801.

Fig. 1.11 Personal Attributes 68

Fig. a: RCat, 145, #290.

Fig. b: RCat, 124, #200.

Fig. c: RCat, 263, #893.

Fig. d: RCat, 259, #871.

Fig. e: RCat, 77, #12.

Fig. f: RCat, 198, #560.

Fig. g: Tal, "Inscriptions," 66, fig.3.19.

Fig. h: RCat, 239, #789.

Fig. 1.12 Special Inscriptions 69

Fig. a: RCat, 115, #151.

Fig. b: RCat, 178, #455.

Fig. c: RCat, 103, #100.

Fig. d: RCat, 151, #322.

Fig. e: RCat, 221, #696.

Fig. 1.13 Formulae 70

Fig. a: RCat, 197, #559.

Fig. b: RCat, 239, #787.

Fig. 1.14	Consolatory Inscriptions	70
	Fig. a: RCat, 132, #226.	
	Fig. b: RCat, 129, #217.	
Fig. 1.15	Location of Ossuaries in Israel	71
Fig. 3.1	Plan of a <i>Loculi</i> Tomb. Hachlili, "Qumran", 259, fig. 9.	97
Fig. 3.2	Decorated Tomb Façade of the Cave of Umm el-'Amed.	
	AJAA, 105, fig. 6.	98
Fig. 3.3	Monumental Tombs in the Kidron Valley. AJAA, 108, fig. 11	98
Fig. 3.4	Monumental Tomb in Jericho. JFC, 112, fig. 3	99
Fig. 3.5	<i>Ossuary</i> Burials in <i>Loculi</i> , Plan and Section.	
	Avigad, "Rock-Cut Tombs," 130	100
Fig. 3.6	Collected Secondary Bone Burial in <i>Loculi</i> . JFC, 123, fig. 13	100
Fig. 3.7	Plan of Shaft Tomb in Qumran. Hachlili, "Qumran", 251	100
	Second Temple Period Tombs in Jerusalem. Map. Geva, "Tombs," 748	113
	Jerusalem Ossuary and Asia Minor Ostothekai (Provenance in text)	199
Fig.10.1	Cinerary casket from Rhodes,	
	Fraser, <i>Rhodian Funerary Monuments</i> , Plate 25 (a)	230
Fig.10.2	Ostothekai in Asia Minor,	
	Koch, <i>Sarkophage der römischen Kaiserzeit</i>	235
	Fig. a: Koch, p.157, fig.85	

Fig. b: Koch, p.160, fig.88

Fig. c: Koch, p.156, fig.83

Fig. d: Koch, p.161, fig.90

Fig. e: Koch, p.158, fig.86

Fig. f: Koch, p.161, fig.89

Fig. g: Koch, p.156, fig.82

Fig. 12.1	Phenomenon of ash urns in Ostia	258
Fig. 12.2	Phenomenon of ash urns in Ephesus	260
Fig. 12.3	Phenomenon of ossuaries in Judea	262
Fig. 12.4	Rise and Fall of the Phenomenon in the Empire	263
Fig. 12.5	Rise of Sarcophagi in the Empire	265
Eastern Mediterranean World (Provenance in text)		269
Ossuary of Joseph, son of Caiaphas. <i>BAR</i> , 18/5 (1992) 34		324

Introduction

1. News: “Neu aufgefundene Grabalterthümer bei Jerusalem.”¹

On December 15, 1866, the *Leipziger ‘Illustrierte Zeitung’* made a sensational announcement: “Newly found ancient funerary monuments near Jerusalem.” The author, Conrad Schick, an architect and longtime resident of Jerusalem, was interested in all matters antiquarian. Recalling that rock-hewn tombs around Jerusalem had been, on many occasions, the subject of archaeological investigations, he was happy to report the discovery of twenty funerary chests (“Todtenkisten”) recovered from a Jewish burial cave in the north of the city.

The announcement goes on to detail the circumstances of the find - how Schick was approached by an Arab with an offer to buy a vineyard and, during an inspection of the property, was told about a cave containing stone chests. While working the land, the proprietor had chanced upon an opening in the rock, which was blocked by a large stone. With the help of other men, he had removed the stone and thus discovered the cave and the stone chests therein. Hoping to find treasures, the Arab had then opened and searched the chests, but had found - to his great disappointment - merely some bones. Schick added that the Arab knew of other similar caves containing this kind of small chest, thus implying that one could expect to hear of more finds like this one in the future.

The news report continued with a description of the small ‘sarcophagi,’ five of which were illustrated. They were soft, white limestone chests, with sizes ranging between 40 to 70 cm in length, 20 to 29 cm in width, and 25 and 50.5 cm in height, and they came equipped with either flat, gabled, or vaulted lids. While about half of all chests was plain, the other specimens featured various incised decorations, all drawn with a ruler and a compass. Some of these decorated samples had the front panels painted red, leaving the ornamentation white. In the illustrations, the reader sees a rosette motif and inscribed Greek letters prominently displayed on the chests’ front panels. Schick remarked with regard to the two inscriptions that he was able to clearly make out the name ‘Yosephos.’ The author then confirmed that

¹“Recently Discovered Funerary Antiquities Near Jerusalem,” title of the publication by Conrad Schick, “Neu aufgefundene Grabalterthümer bei Jerusalem,” *Leipziger Illustrierte Zeitung*, Nr. 1224 (15. December 1866) pp. 408-409.

he had indeed found the chests filled up to a third with rotted bones, which he identified as clearly belonging to adults. Additional finds within the chests, were thin, long flasks of green glass ("Thränenfläschchen").

In ending the letter, Schick also addressed the significant issues of date and purpose of the artifacts by stating: "While I leave the dating of these caskets, on which no cross or even the hint of one was obvious to me, up to more competent people, I would like to remind you that about a year ago the skeletal remains of Professor Johannes Roth (from Munich), who had passed away in Hasbeia, had been transported in a small chest the size of a child's cradle from the above-mentioned town in Lebanon to Jerusalem in order to be buried here in the Protestant cemetery. Let us [also] recollect what is said of Saul's skeletal remains, namely that, after his corpse and those of his sons' had been burnt, they were gathered and then buried (1.Sam .31,12 ff. and 1.Chron. 11,12). Thus it is proven that at all times similar customs have taken place."

This news report of December 1866 allows us to peer into mid-nineteenth century Jerusalem - then under Ottoman rule - where previously unknown material culture, the *Herodian Ossuary*, was only just coming to light, in often the most haphazard circumstances. The letter raises subjects of concern to this doctoral thesis: One is the history of the discovery of ossuaries; another - Schick's speculations as to the reason for Jews using bone chests at the time is, in essence, the beginning of a debate which is still with us today. In 1866, Schick could not have anticipated that these 'small sarcophagi' were but part of a corpus of thousands buried in Jewish family tombs, thereby suggesting that ossuary burial was a popular and widespread mode of burial in first century Jerusalem - then under Roman rule. But such realization would only unfold afterwards, with the discovery of more ossuaries of the kind described above. This transient, popular phenomenon obviously demands an explanation more complex than that suggested by Schick. This work will shed further light on this fascinating puzzle.

2. Scope and thesis of this study

This study presents a comprehensive examination and interpretation of the Jewish ossuary phenomenon in Judea during the Late Second Temple Period. Ossuaries are inextricably linked with the practice of reburial of collected bones, known as ossilegium, all within a tomb setting. Previously, the traditional mode of cave deposit along with post-burial bone disturbances, did not preserve an individual burial. However, with the emergence of ossuary burial, preservation was possible. Concurrent with ossuary burial, post-cremation burial into ash urns was prominent in the Hellenistic and Roman worlds, of which Judea was also a part. This study therefore explores the theory that Jewish society in Judea adopted the idea of a secondary burial container in the context of inhumation. The cultural model of the Empire, the attraction of the actual receptacle itself, the receptivity by individuals in Jerusalem to certain ideas and conventions prevalent in the Empire, and the special quality of “honour” which the ossuary evoked, are all elements of an equation which led to a process of diffusion of innovative ideas not only to Judea but also to other provinces. The parallel usage of ash chests in Rome, Asia Minor, and Judea gives us a glimpse into the macroscopic mechanism by which a secondary burial container made its way into Jerusalem. At the microscopic level, this thesis examines and assesses the many reasons which explain why ossuaries became a widespread phenomenon and eventually disappeared, as manifested in a variety of theories propounded by modern scholars.

The central thesis of this study is that Judeans adopted the new idea of a secondary burial container manifested in the foreign convention of an ash urn that was currently in vogue. As a point of departure, the thesis establishes that the pattern of the indigenous mode of tomb burial precluded any compelling reason for Judeans to suddenly invent the concept of a bone- chest. Cremation spread as a fashion throughout the Greco-Roman Empire, and production of a particular type of ash chests, *ostothekai*, occurred in many locations. Knowledge of this phenomenon reached Jerusalem. Judeans were attracted to a secondary burial container that was stylish in the Empire and thus could guarantee social approval, while at the same time serve to optimize and to ameliorate the existing mode of secondary burial. This motivated Judeans, during the last decades of the first century BCE, likewise

to produce stone chests and to use them as bone repositories. In time, many individuals in Jerusalem, each for their own reasons, decided to use ossuaries to bury the dead; thus, the innovation spread throughout the province. With the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE, the diffusion was impeded but still continued on a smaller scale and to the Galilee. As a corollary to this thesis, the ossuary disappeared when the upper class society in Palestinian urban centers took part in the imperial shift from cremation to inhumation. Just as other peoples in the provinces gave up secondary obsequies, so too did the Jews in Palestine opt for primary burial. As a consequence of this changing form of burial, the ossuary lost its *raison d'être* and fell into disuse and eventually even into oblivion, in people's memory.

3. *Filling in the Lacuna in the ossuary discourse: Identifying the problem*

The newness of a Jewish ossuary discovered in the nineteenth century signaled a lacuna in scholarship, even perplexed amazement that ancient Jews had manufactured such an artifact for such a purpose. Over the past 140 years, scholars, intrigued by the discovery, have investigated the material culture and the underlying burial practice that these containers presuppose; in particular, they wrestled with and debated the question of the origin, the appearance and the disappearance of the phenomenon.

The ossuary discourse addressed the following issues, and reached the following conclusions, thus slowly beginning to fill in the gaps in our knowledge. The discourse reveals that a) indeed, *Jews* did collect bones; b) that Jews collected bones *customarily*, not only in exceptional circumstances; c) that Jews collected bones in *this particular kind of bone receptacle*; d) that Jews decorated and inscribed the receptacles in certain ways for certain reasons; e) that Jews had *removed and gathered bones* in various ways already in the First Temple Period, not just in Late Second Temple times; e) that Jews *collected* bones differently once they used ossuaries; and f) that Jews intensively used containers within a certain *time* period. The ossuary discourse also addressed the issues of g) the origin of ossuaries in terms of their functions or developments in society; h) the origin of ossuaries in terms of foreign influence. Finally, the discourse had established that i) the ossuary was not unique to the Judeans; other societies in the Near East had utilized individual receptacles as well, since high antiquity.

As a consequence of all these studies, today, one certainly feels familiar with the Herodian ossuary. Nevertheless, scholarship has never actually achieved a general consensus as to the origin and reason for this phenomenon. It is precisely because these issues have never been fully and satisfactorily resolved that the present study is warranted. This thesis will hopefully contribute to a comprehensive interpretation of the ossuary phenomenon while simultaneously shedding light on its origin, its appearance and ultimately its disappearance. In order to fill in some of the lacuna in our knowledge, this study addresses the following questions:

1. What is the significance of introducing an individual container for Judean society?
2. How do we explain the emergence of a secondary burial container in Judea at the same time as secondary burial containers in other parts of the Empire, in the form of ash urns, were being employed. Is this chance or influence?
3. How is it possible to claim foreign influence on the ossuary from a different looking material culture, given that those cultures cremated their dead?
4. If, in fact, the phenomenon came about by foreign influence, what was the mechanism and the motivation for adopting the foreign convention?
5. If the phenomenon is correlated with eschatological notions, what is, in fact, the value of the bone box?
6. Can this phenomenon be connected to any general phenomenon in the whole Empire?

4. *Approach of this study: Methods and Sources*

The strategy which I have adopted for addressing the question of the origin of something new (in this case the Judean ossuary) is to consider the broad picture. There are generally two possible forces which can trigger a new phenomenon in human society. The first one is the drive to invent an object which will solve a particular problem or answer a particular need. The second force is the drive to create an arbitrary new style. Because it turns out that burial-related problems in Judea could be solved by existing techniques, it is difficult to identify any single reason why the ossuary might have evolved independently from “within” to fulfill a particular need. This leaves only the style-driven urge to invent. One cannot *a priori* rule out the possibility that the Judean ossuary was an innovative idea born on the spur of the moment in Judea in the absence of any real need. One must still decide between that possibility of evolution from within and the possibility of foreign influence. This can only be addressed by analyzing the local data quantitatively. Consequently, in this thesis, I have attempted to employ a multi-dimensional, scientific approach consisting of a critique of previous scholarship, the acquisition of raw data, the presentation of preliminary observations, data reduction leading to the extraction of underlying information and an analysis thereof, followed by a verification of the initial hypothesis.

As a point of departure, I began with an extensive literature search, examining the ancient literary sources, as well as the extensive modern literature dealing with ossuary discoveries, as presented by archaeologists; additionally, I examined the varied and often conflicting interpretations and speculations about the origin and significance of the ossuary, the material culture, as presented by all of the scholars involved. Additionally, this early phase of the research included interviews with key researchers as well as museum visits, the latter opening our eyes to the possibility that the solution to the scientific problem did not necessarily reside in ancient Judea. All this comprised, therefore, the raw material - the acquired data. A comparative and critical analysis of the conflicting conclusions of previous scholars led me to the tentative conclusion that archaeology and theology alone were insufficient to address the problems satisfactorily.

With the raw data in hand, I was able to carry out a statistical analysis of the secondary burial chest distributions over time - not only in Judea, but also in other parts of the Greco-Roman world and beyond. This kind of data reduction was only one component of a larger comparative analysis of burial customs in the Greco-Roman world. However, it was to prove an *extremely significant component*, as it revealed the bell-shaped frequency curve typical of an innovation-diffusion phenomenon in general. Although the Judean diffusion distribution alone could not distinguish between home-grown innovation and foreign influence, the comparative analysis for other societies confirmed that the diffusion occurred over space as well, and permitted me, at least in principle, to determine the direction of flow of influence to Judea from the outside world. When foreign influence is involved, it is vital to compare with the practices of several other external societies. Therefore, I undertook to seek numerous parallels among other aspects of secondary burial into receptacles. This technique revealed patterns which reinforced the correct-ness of the initial deduction.

I continue with a modern theoretical approach to interpreting archaeological artifacts.² It considers the ossuary to be meaningful material culture constituted by social beings. It is recognized today that people produced artifacts for a purpose with a purpose in mind. By definition, emphasis on human agency therefore requires us to use social scientific concepts and theories in interpreting the ossuary phenomenon.

Next, accepting that the ossuary speaks an object language as a means of communication with suasive functions, suggests the use of the all-encompassing approach of socio-rhetorical analysis - a new method that has been developed by Vernon K. Robbins for interpreting literary texts.³

² For such approaches see Ian Hodder, *Reading the Past: Current Approaches to Interpretation in Archaeology* (2nd edition, NY; Cambridge University, 1991).

³ Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996) 1-4: This method brings “a wide range of skills together to interpret” ancient texts in terms of speech and in terms of values, convictions, and beliefs that underlie speech. It advances the thesis that language is “a tool of communication but also that it is a tool “among people

Scholars increasingly use the conception of rhetoric even more broadly and more inclusively than the traditional rhetor-orator-audience model of persuasion. For example, George Kennedy thus defines rhetoric as “the energy inherent in communication”⁴ and views rhetoric as “present also in physical actions, facial expressions, gestures, and signs generally.”⁵ In interpreting material culture, archaeologists have previously encouraged the notion that artifacts “speak” or that we “read” artifacts, as if they were text and communication, and that they act as a “tool among people”, as is current in the ossuary discourse. This particular programmatic analysis appears to be rewarding for interpreting the ossuary phenomenon, and I therefore ‘reconfigured’ it for my purpose.

Our socio-rhetorical analysis treats the material culture as a many layered “text” which itself communicates messages through inner-, inter-, social, cultural, religious, as well as ideological filters, permitting the observer to view all the factors within a single framework. Socio-rhetorical analysis, being so wide-ranging, involves many disciplines. This study has its place where Archaeology, Social Sciences, Jewish Studies, Classics and Religious Studies meet, and their methods and sources reflect this interdisciplinary character. These disciplines have spawned the following theories which I found useful and which I applied to the data:

Theory of foreign influence

One indicator of probable foreign influence, in the general theory propounded by Bernard S. Jackson,⁶ is the appearance of a novel phenomenon which does not fit the cultural

in society.”

⁴ George A. Kennedy, “A Hoot in the Dark: The Evolution of General Rhetoric,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 25 (1992) 2.

⁵ Kennedy, “A Hoot,” 4.

⁶ Bernard S. Jackson, “On the Problem of Roman Influence on the Halakah and Normative Self-Definition in Judaism,” in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*, ed. E.P. Sanders with A.I. Baumgarten and Alain Mendelson (3 vols.; London: SCM Press, 1981) 2: Aspects of Judaism in the Graeco-Roman Period, 157-

pattern evolving within a given society, while at the same time, with evidence of contact, this phenomenon exists in another society. For this theory to be properly applied, it is necessary to show the existence of parallels in the time period of interest and the existence of channels for the transmission of ideas. It is also necessary to ask what the causative elements of the influence were, if the influence was in part or in whole, whether it was on the form or on the content, which element of society was involved, and what was the deciding factor for the adopting society to make these choices. Accordingly, and following Jackson, I first demonstrate that there was no compelling reason for Judeans to invent an ossuary for solving a problem in the mode of cave burial that could not be fulfilled using other options already in place. Next I demonstrate that lidded stone chests already existed outside of Judea, in fact in the Greco-Roman world, for the purpose of preserving a secondary burial. Finally I demonstrate, using realia and literature, that there was indeed contact between Judea and the rest of the Greco-Roman world, thus fulfilling all of the preconditions applying to the theory of influence. Consequently, I am justified in applying this theory to the appearance of the Judean ossuary.

Theory of diffusion

Once influence is indicated, the theory of diffusion⁷ becomes helpful and is used to explain the mechanism for the adoption of the ossuary from abroad. The spread of secondary burial containers over time on a global scale can be understood as an innovation-decision process, elaborated by Everett M. Rogers.⁸ Diffusion researchers have conceptualized five stages - knowledge, persuasion, decision-making, implementation, and confirmation, which I applied on a microscopic level for an individual, that is to the presumed Judean innovator, and partly to Judean society as a whole. Diffusion theories have been used to understand, for example,

203. See also Jackson, "Evolution and Foreign Influence in Ancient Law," *AJCL* 16 (1968-69) 372-390.

⁷ See Ronald W. Perry, "Diffusion Theories," *Encyclopedia of Sociology*, 674-681.

⁸ Rogers, Everett M., *Diffusion of Innovations* (Fourth Edition; New York: Free Press, 1995 [orig. 1961]).

the spread of ideas or the dissemination of tangible things, and recently, the spread of religion. Just as Montgomery⁹ is justified in applying a diffusion theory to the spread of Christianity, so too do I feel justified in applying it to a stone chest.

Rational choice theory

In the decision-making stage of the diffusion mechanism the innovator has to make a choice - should he or should he not adopt the idea of a secondary burial container? His choice, leads to the “pay-off,” considered by rational choice theorists like Durk Hak¹⁰ to be a self-evident axiom. In our case, the potential adopter imagines that the choice to adopt the innovation would lead to the acquisition of or maximizing of opportunities of an honorific, ideological, solidaristic, and affective nature of the funerary rituals.¹¹ He also expects his own personal reward in the form of social recognition and prestige.

Social identity theory

Any person has memberships in several social groups, and therefore has several complementary identities. Social identity theorists such as Hogg and Abrams¹² look at the interactions of groups leading to changes in one or more of these identities. Tajfel,¹³ for

⁹ Robert L. Montgomery, *The Lopsided Spread of Christianity. Towards an Understanding of the Diffusion of Religions* (Westport, CT, London: Praeger, 2002).

¹⁰ Durk H. Hak, “Rational choice theory,” *Encyclopedia of Religion and Society*, 402-404 .

¹¹ Antigone Samellas, *Death in the Eastern Mediterranean (50-600 A.D.). The Christianization of the East: An Interpretation*. ([Studies and Texts in Antiquity and Christianity, 12]. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002) 178-244.

¹² See Michael A. Hogg and Dominic Abrams, *Social Identifications. A Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations and Group Processes* (London, New York: Routledge, 1988); further *Group Motivation. Social psychological Perspectives* (New York - London - Toronto: Harvester/Wheatsheaf, 1993).

¹³ Henri Tajfel, *Human Groups and Social Categories* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1980) 256.

example, argues that “people will change (or resist changing) one aspect of their social identity in order to enhance another valued aspect of their social identity (e.g. their ethnic, national, status, or gender identities).” In this thesis, I take ‘cultural identity’ to be the key factor. As a “cultured person” he or she will partake in the pervasive imperial culture, which serves as the model for the provincials. This is taken to mean the Hellenistic culture, which was perpetuated under Rome’s hegemony in her provinces.

An innovator is identified by Rogers as a cosmopolitan, as an educated person, and as a wealthy person.¹⁴ Such a person will always know and replicate the way of life of the other members belonging to such elite and wealthy circles in the Hellenistic orbis, thus enhancing one’s status.

On the other hand, as a member of the Jewish ethnos, the innovator is encultured in his own traditions. Cultural or root principles¹⁵ within a given tradition may signify constraint when contemplating foreign fashions.

It is the social sciences that provide us with insights into such questions as to why and how it was that Judeans buried the dead in ossuaries for a historically short period of time. This world, a Mediterranean culture, was illuminated by Bruce Malina’s work and provided us with insights into First century CE societies, cultural dynamics, and first century CE personality.¹⁶ The impact - or the lack - of foreign dominion on Jewish society, recently treated by Seth Schwartz,¹⁷ ultimately affected the material culture, and it explains the aniconic nature of the ossuary as well as the decor of the successor sarcophagi.

¹⁴ Rogers, *Diffusion*, 257-259.

¹⁵ For the concept of ‘root’ principle, see Rik Pinxten, *When the Day Breaks. Essays in Anthropology and Philosophy* (Frankfurt-Berlin-Bern-NY-Paris-Wien: Peter Lang, 1997) 87- 92.

¹⁶ Bruce Malina, *The New Testament World. Insights from cultural Anthropology* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981).

¹⁷ Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* (Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2001).

I used the literary sources as if they are kernels of ideology, reflecting and promoting the world view of their authors. Further, Rabbinic rulings may be prescriptive, descriptive, or idealistic. They are carefully examined when interpreting First or Second Temple period burial manners.

Reflecting upon the activities and research undertaken in preparation for this thesis, I can now see that the chosen methodology was a complex and multi-faceted one, involving induction, deduction, statistical analysis, comparison with other cultures and a socio-rhetorical analysis which treats the material culture as a many layered “text” which itself communicates messages, permitting the observer to view all the factors within a single framework. All of these approaches, taken together, allowed me to verify and indeed, to solidify my hypothesis that the Judean ossuary’s appearance and disappearance were functions of the prevalent fashion in the Empire. Finally, the connection between imperial fashion, prestige and honour, was made heuristically.

The archaeological sources used in this study were, on the one hand, the material culture itself, as well as the archaeological reports (listed in the bibliography) on the other hand. Levi Yitzhak Rahmani’s *A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries in the Collection of the State of Israel* (Jerusalem: IAA, 1994) is here indispensable; it describes 897 ossuaries, a general introduction to the material culture, interpretation, and bibliography. Other Jewish ossuaries are featured in the older work by Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, vol. 1, 2, and 3. Eric Meyer’s *Jewish ossuaries: Reburial and Rebirth: Secondary Burials in their Ancient Near Eastern Setting* (BibOr, 24; Rome: Pontifical Institute Press, 1971) was important for synthesis and interpretation. An extremely significant contribution to the body of knowledge of Jewish ossuaries, and the chronology of funerary practices during late Second Temple times is that of Rachel Hachlili and Ann Killebrew, *Jericho. The Jewish Cemetery of the Second Temple Period*. (IAA Reports, No.7; Jerusalem: IAA; Civil Administration in Judea and Samaria - Staff Officer of Archaeology, 1999).

The literary sources for ossuaries and for the ritual of ossilegium are few and scattered throughout Rabbinic writings. Predominant among them is the extra-Mishnaic tractate, Semahot: Dov Zlotnick (ed.), *The Tractate "Mourning" (Semahot). Regulations to Death, Burial, and Mourning* (Yale Judaica Series, 17; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966). Its date is disputed. Zlotnick considers it to be as early as the 3rd century CE; others as late as the 8th century CE. Although these texts do not explicitly mention the origin or the disappearance of the ossuary, the question of interest to this thesis, they are instructive for their rhetoric.

5. Outline

The thesis is organized as follows:

Part One simply reviews the burial customs of ancient Jews during the First Temple Period, the Hellenistic Period and the Late Second Temple Period. Within this framework, this section describes the burial caves, tombs, *loculi* and ossuaries. A brief description of the ossuaries themselves as material culture, as well as the geographical distribution within Judea of the artifacts as discovered over the last 150 years is provided.

Part Two of the thesis begins with a history of the discovery of the Judean ossuary in modern times along with the associated rhetoric. It continues with a survey of previous scholarly interpretations of the origin and purpose of the ossuary. Included in my discussion are the transport, space-saving, protection, martyrdom, resurrection, atonement, individuation, and Roman convention theories - all treated in detail. Given the inadequacies of and problems with each theory, I contend that the ossuary must have originated from a source outside of Judea.

Part Three of the thesis deals with the pagan¹⁸ ash urn within the Greco-Roman Empire. After a brief description of cremation in general, this section continues with a comparison of cremation and cave burial in two stages: disposal of the corpse and disposal of the remains. While differences will be noted in the first stage, striking similarities will be seen to prevail in the second. This section of the thesis continues with a detailed examination of the parallels in the two societies in terms of ritual, material culture, terminology, manufacture, and time lines.

In Part Four, I present evidence to establish contact between Jews in Judea and their coreligionists in Asia Minor. I then provide proof to demonstrate the receptivity of Jews during the Second Temple Period in general to foreign ideas and to Hellenistic ideas in particular, as long as these concepts and fashions were not in conflict with the basic values

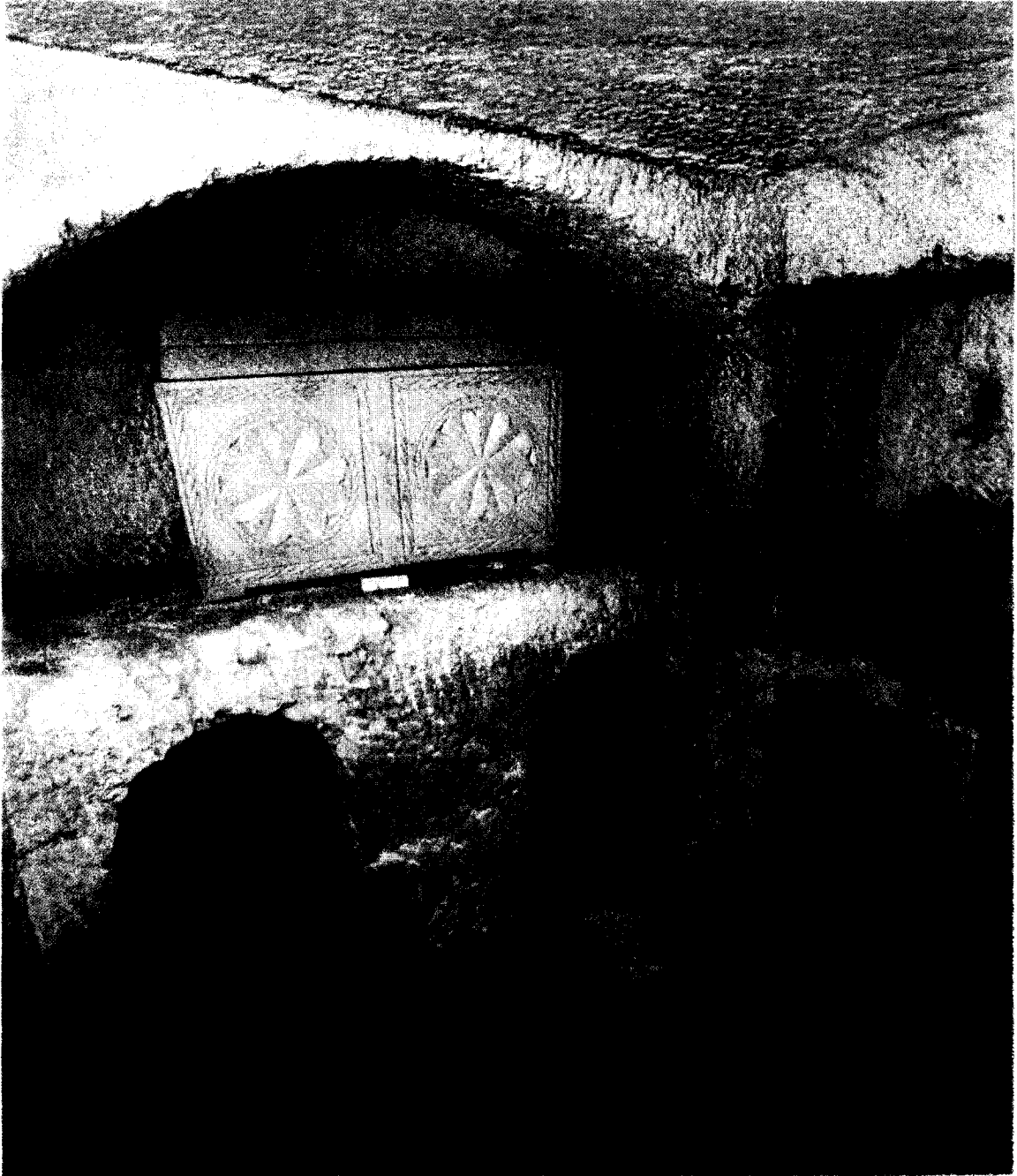
¹⁸ Henceforth, the term pagan is not meant in a derogatory sense but rather as an attribute of those people who were not ethnically Jewish.

and laws of their religion. Therefore, taken together, these two chapters set out the preconditions necessary for “triggering” the transplantation of the ossuary idea into Judea. I then make use of Rogers’ five-stage theory of innovation-diffusion to trace how the ossuary idea came to Judea, how it was disseminated among the population, how it was reconfigured into a distinctly Judean product which made it acceptable and ready to be embraced by so many divergent groups within the populace, and ultimately, how it disappeared as yet another fashion or burial custom took hold.

Finally, in Part Five, I discuss the significance of ossuary burial as a means of conferring honour upon the deceased as well as “acquiring” honour for the living. It will be shown that through the inscription of names, status, social class, occupation, origin and age, onto ossuaries, children not only memorialized their parents, but also bestowed honour upon them. Additionally, in so demonstrating their loyalty and in the discharge of their responsibility to the deceased, the living in turn “acquired” honour- itself a value and concept which resonates deeply within Judaism.

Part One:
Ossuary Burial, the Novelty

Illustration of an *Arcosolium* above *Loculi*



Introduction

The rocky regions of the Southern Levant, where hollows abound, had encouraged cave burial since the dawn of history. People disposed of the dead bodies, or the desiccated bones, in natural and reworked caves; they cut artificial cavities of various forms and styles into the living rock for this purpose. A deceased member of a social unit was removed from the settlement of the living to the facility, and positioned - with provisions - within the cave and was left there, to decay. Thus, the person was buried.

Caves were the traditional place of burial, particularly for the highland population, while in the lowlands, foreigners had introduced individual graves dug into the loess. The common use of caves for multiple inhumation would lead to the accumulation of dozens or more individuals on the premises. Burials at the time remained usually not undisturbed in their original position, but rather were moved or handled in order to reuse a particular location for a subsequent burial.

Cave deposit constituted a tradition in urban centers in the Levant, in Jericho and Jerusalem, already by the time the Israelite people crystallized as a nation in the highlands some time during the Late Bronze Age. The patriarchal narratives in the sacred writings of the Jewish people reflect the burial custom of the region to which the Bible refers to as the 'Land of Canaan.'¹⁹ Abraham, wandering along the central mountain ridge from Shehem to Hebron, acquired "East of Mamre" the 'Cave of Machpelah' as an inheritance on the occasion of his wife's death (Gen 23:19).

The interpretation of the Jewish ossuary phenomenon takes us back to these early burial traditions of the Southern Levant. In their cultural past, the Jewish people formed attitudes and principles that henceforth guided their ways to bury the dead. I venture the opinion that the roots of ossuary burial ultimately lie here. While subsequent parts of this study will argue that the design of a bone *container* was emulated from foreign conventions

¹⁹ Amihai Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1990) 224, places the setting of the patriarchal sagas in the cultural milieu of the Middle Bronze Age (MB IIB-C), i.e. about 1800/1750-1550 BCE.

abroad, in Part One I shall suggest that this cultural choice was only possible because of the longstanding traditions and burial patterns in the region. It allowed bones to be *handled*. Thus a secondary burial container was of potential use, and the fact that the collected remains were neither burnt, nor de-fleshed by any method other than *natural decay* in cave space, would be attractive.

The tradition to bury in caves remained with the population in the hill country until Late Antiquity when the concept of individual graves in cemeteries gained prominence. The realia of the longstanding tradition is manifest in large necropolises in Jerusalem, Jericho, and Bet Shea'rim. At some point in time, a bone container made its short-lived appearance. Was the bone container unique? Was the practice of ossilegium into an ossuary a novelty? These are questions of interest in Part One of this thesis.

The first chapter introduces the Jewish ossuary by presenting its physical features, its chronology and provenance. The opening section defines ossuary and ossilegium, and acquaints the reader with the terminology of the bone chest as far as is known from textual evidence in literary sources and from the inscribed artifact itself. The delineation of the basic elements of the corpus of the artifacts serves to establish the data needed for comparison to those artifacts used in the wider world of the Roman Empire. The second chapter recalls the rabbinic sources which directly relate to the artifact and the associated ritual of bone collecting. The following chapter gives a description of the tomb setting of ossuary burial, with the focus on the archaeological evidence of the location of the artifact within tombs. A survey of tombs and burial techniques prior to the advent of a bone chest and after it fell into disuse, establishes the ossuary as a passing phenomenon and as a manifestation of change. The significance of this change within the framework of Jewish funerary practices is analyzed in Chapter 4. This concluding chapter concerns the burial traditions in the Southern Levant and thus the cultural past of the Israelite people; in turn this means the longstanding tradition for Jerusalem society. Of interest to us, then, is knowing in which way ossuary burial represents both continuity and change.

Chapter 1

The Jewish Ossuary

1.1 *Definition of Ossuary and Ossilegium*

Ossuary (Latin: *ossuarium* from *os*: bone) defines a special container that holds collected human bones. The ossuary presupposes the practice of ossilegium or bone collecting after an initial interment that allowed the flesh to decay. The skeletal remains are gathered from their initial place of burial and re-buried in a container. Hence the term secondary burial. In the archaeology of Israel,²⁰ an ossuary refers to a specific type of receptacle either of stone or clay, which was utilized during two widely separated archaeological periods: the Chalcolithic period (c. 4500-3200 BCE) and the Herodian period (c. 30 BCE-70 CE). The significant point at issue is the reintroduction of an individual, man-made bone receptacle in the Southern Levant. This practice stands in contrast to a primary burial, where the deceased is laid to rest permanently, without further handling of the remains.

1.2 *Terminology*

In a multilingual society, it is not surprising to find everyday words from diverse languages. During the Hellenistic-Roman era in Palestine, a number of terms for ossuary, in the then current languages (Aramaic, Hebrew, and Greek) were employed. An analysis of the terminology associated with ossuaries will be useful, later in this work, in tracing the possible influence of other cultures on Jewish burial practices.²¹

²⁰ Neil Asher Silverman, "Ossuary: A Box for Bones," *BAR* 17/3 (1991) 73-74; Michael Avi-Yonah, "Ossuary," *EH* X (1955) 799-801[Hebrew]; Brian McCane, "Ossuary," *OEANE* 4 (1997) 187-188.

²¹ Meyers, *JORR*, 49-70: "Terminology of Ossuaries and Secondary Burials," who has conveniently collected the material.

1.2.1 Semitic Terms

The term חלתה (*halta* or חלת *halt*), with its specific meaning as bone container, is recorded on several ossuaries, such as: חלתה מרים ברת שמעון, "the ossuary of Miriam, daughter of Shim'on",²² or חלת שלום, "the ossuary of Salome."²³ Again, *halta* is evidenced in the *Qorbân* (offering) inscription²⁴: "All that a man may find to his profit in this ossuary (חלתה) (is) an offering to God from him who is within it." The dating of these terms, at least as early as the Herodian period, is argued on linguistic and paleographic grounds²⁵ and on the dating of the tomb.²⁶ These inscriptions are significant in proving the existence of an original Semitic term for ossuary.

In Jewish epigraphy the familiar term ארון: *aron*²⁷ is recorded for the first time on a sarcophagus in Beth She'arim (second to fourth century CE) functioning as a bone container in secondary burials. "This is the sarcophagus (ארון) of the three sons of Rabbi...."²⁸ ארון is preserved in this spelling in Tosephta Sanhedrin 9.8. Elsewhere, variants (probably resulting from scribal errors or metathesis) can be found, for example:

²² RCat, #502.

²³ RCat, #226, see p. 62 n.228; חלת also on #461, see p. 63 n.239.

²⁴ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Aramaic Qorbân Inscription from Jebel Hallet et-et-Tûrî and Mark 7:11 / Matt 15:5," *JBL* 78 (1959) 62.

²⁵ Fitzmyer, "Qorbân Inscription," 61 n.2, gives the date 30 BCE.

²⁶ Vassilios Tzaferis, "Jewish Tombs at and near Givat ha-Mivtar, Jerusalem," *IEJ* 20/1-2 (1970) 32.

²⁷ Marcus Jastrow A Dictionary of the Targumin, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashim Literature (2 vols.; NY: Pardes Publishing Company, 1943; [orig.: 1886-1900]) I:116, gives for ארון the meanings: chest, box, coffin, and Holy Ark. In the Torah ארון in the sense of "coffin" is used when Joseph's bones were transported from Egypt to Israel (Gen 50:26).

²⁸ Nahman Avigad, "Excavations at Beth She'arim, 1955: Preliminary Report," *IEJ* 7 (1957) 245. The term *aron* occurs on numerous *sarcophagi* with primary burials.

ארזין,²⁹ כארזים,³⁰ רזים.³¹ It has also been argued that ארזין is the interpretive gloss,³² as chests and coffins were made of cedar wood, ארז. Archaeological evidence in Beth She‘arim and rabbinic sources attest, when dealing with ossilegium, that the term *aron* is applied to both, a *sarcophagus* (coffin), or an ossuary.

Meyers has asserted³³ that the term איסטרון as well as its variant אסטן,³⁴ are terms which have been used for ossuary, based on the following quotation in Semahot³⁵:

Whoever finds bones in a tomb should place them in an arcosolium, so Rabbi Akiba. The Sages say: one should not move them from their place. If one found them in a kokh or איסטרון³⁶, he should not move them from their place. (Sem 13.6)

In this tractate another term, *goren*, was identified as an ossuary.³⁷ Meyers' reference to the term's older Semitic meaning, to "pile up" or "gather,"³⁸ encourages the association with ossilegium into a receptacle. I read it, in agreement with Zlotnick, as urn.³⁹

²⁹ Sem 12.8 as read by Zlotnick, "Mourning," 36, in the Hebrew section.

³⁰ Sem 12.8 as read by Michael Higger, *Semahot* (New York: Bloch, 1931, Hebrew) 197.

³¹ Jerusalem Talmud to Moed Qatan 1.5.

³² Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim*, 117, gives box, chest [for collecting bones].

³³ JORR, 61.

³⁴ This variation seems to be identical with ὀστῶν.

³⁵ All Hebrew and English citations from the tractate Semahot are taken from Zlotnick, "Mourning."

³⁶ Zlotnik, 164 note 6, reads איסטרון as 'istron and conjectures it to be a 'loculus'. Meyers properly ascribes the term to an ossuary, but prefers to identify it with a Persian ossuary, the *astodan*, after identifying the 'resh' with a 'dalef', and after transposing the 'waw' and the 'resh'.

³⁷ Higger, *Semahot*, 204.

³⁸ JORR, 63 n.68.

³⁹ Zlotnick, *Mourning*, 165 n.2; in fact, archaeologists have excavated urns and jars dating to the Second Temple Period in connection with secondary burials, see Moshe Stekelis, "A Jewish Tomb-Cave at

All funeral urns that are inherited [גורני הנחלות] may be moved from place to place and transferred from family to family. (Sem 14.2)

Finally, the phrase, מִחֲפֵי יָאִיר, on an ossuary lid has been translated by Renan⁴⁰ as the THECA JAIRI (*theke* of Yair), based on the prevalence of the Greek word in Jerusalem (Christian) tomb inscriptions, and it was thus interpreted by him to mean ‘that which covers’ or ‘container of’ Yair’.

1.2.2 Greek Terms

The Greek term σορός (*soros*) has been identified to designate an ossuary.⁴¹ Archaeological evidence stems from an ossuary inscription from Jericho. It reads:

Θεοδότου ἀπελευ-/θέρου βασιλίσσης-/Ἀγριππείνης - σορός

Theodotos, Freedman of Queen Agrippina - ossuary⁴²

For my purposes, it may be assumed that σορός was the conventional term during Herodian times, identifying a burial container for collected remains.

Ramat Rahel," *JJPES* 3 (1934-35) 25-27.

⁴⁰ Ernest Renan, "Nouvelles et mélanges [coffrets funéraires]," *Journal Asiatique* (6e série) 11 (1868) 539-540. But the letter Ϸ is uncertain and may be a ϱ instead. If so, Jastrow *A Dictionary of the Targumim*, 758, provides a word with the meaning: destroyed [possibly: when the flesh is desolved]. See the comments by Charles Clermont-Ganneau, "Nouveaux ossuaires juifs avec inscriptions grecques et hébraïques," *RA* 25 (2e série; mai-juin 1873) 410-411, and M.A. Levy, "Epigraphisches auf neuerdings gefundenen Denkmälern: III, Ossuaries," *ZDMG* 23 (1869) 441-442. For the first publication and wrong deciphering, see de Saulcy, "Caisses funéraires," 24.

⁴¹ Zlotnick, *Mourning*, 160, n.8; Saul Lieberman, *Tosephta Kifshutah* (5 vols.; New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary, 1955-62, Hebrew) V (1962) 1235.

⁴² Rachel Hachlili, "The Goliath Family in Jericho: Funerary Inscriptions from a First Century A.D. Jewish Monumental Tomb," *BASOR* 235 (1979) 33 and figs. 40-43; Hachlili and Killebrew, *Jericho*, 143-145. See also RCat, # 789.

Next, one particular ossuary discovered in the Kidron Valley features the designation ΟCΤΟΦΑΓΟC (*ostophagos*).⁴³ On grounds of paleography, the inscription was dated not earlier than the Late Herodian period (ca. 30-50 CE) era.⁴⁴ Ὅστοφάγος, which means literally ‘bone-eater’, is clearly coined in parallel with the common word σαρκοφάγος (*sarko-phagos*), that is, ‘flesh-eater’, by reference to the verb ὅστο-φαγέω: ‘eat bones.’⁴⁵ It seems logical to take it as the *terminus technicus* employed during this era; indeed, this was surmised by Sukenik, the excavator,⁴⁶ as well as by Avi - Yonah.⁴⁷ Meyers rejected this conjecture by pointing out the term's apparent rarity and its absence from standard Greek lexicons;⁴⁸ yet one might argue that this term had been in use in the vernacular, but simply had not been inscribed more often. (It is interesting that Conder, who was not aware of Sukenik’s discovery, apparently knew of this term as he reported ossuary finds, or fragments thereof, by referring to them as *osteophagi*⁴⁹).

⁴³ Eleazar L. Sukenik, "A Jewish Tomb in the Kedron Valley," *PEFQSt* (1937) 130; See RCat, #85.

⁴⁴ JORR, 49.

⁴⁵ Henry- George Liddell and Robert Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon. Revised Supplement*, ed. P.G.W. Glare (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996)

⁴⁶ Sukenik, "Kedron Valley," 130: "The word ὅστοφάγος; was evidently the designation for ossuaries at this period."

⁴⁷ Avi-Yonah, "Ossuary," 801.

⁴⁸ JORR, 49.

⁴⁹ Conder, "Rock-cut Tombs," *PEF* (1876) 18, see also Conder and Kitchener, *SWPMI*, 351; Warren and Conder, *SWPJ*, 403-4. Meyers, JORR, 49 n.4, conjectures that additional evidence was known to the earlier explorers but has become lost over the years and that Conder might have been familiar with the term from a Byzantine context; see Liddell and Scott's listing the term as "Byzantine" in the 1897 Eighth edition. Sukenik's conjecture might have been based on the impact of the early explorers' significant work and thus taking heed to Conder's terminology, which was surely derived from knowledge about these antiquities. This possibly explains why Sukenik promotes the term "ostophagoi" over "ossuaries," see his article "Kedron Valley," 130.

Another Greek term, ὀστόν (*oston*), will be advanced for my analysis. In the course of the discussion of the word ὀστών in an inscription from Beth She'arim⁵⁰ (plural genitive of ὀστόν), it has been suggested that *oston* is the terminus technicus for ossuary. However, in the light of the term ὀστᾶτων on an ossuary (late Herodian era) in the Nicanor inscription⁵¹ this seems debatable. An interesting proposal has been advanced: the original term might actually have been *ostaton*. Then *oston* is accounted for as a haplology.⁵² Neither is recorded in the lexicons, but again it may be argued that they were vernacular words. Clermont-Ganneau⁵³ emphasized the affinity of the proposed *ostaton* to אֶסְתֹּדָנָה of the Limyra (Persia) inscription which has been dated to the fifth to fourth centuries BCE, designating a sepulchre. The word אֶסְתֹּדָנָה, taken as a Persian loanword,⁵⁴ seems to be a cognate of *astodan*, the Persian ossuary.⁵⁵

An analysis of the terms connected with ossuary does not provide any unequivocal terminus technicus but shows that Semitic, as well as Greek terms, were used. Because of the absence of first century literary evidence and the few (only two) inscribed examples on ossuaries, the use of a vernacular term cannot be established. Due to the pervasive multicultural milieu it seems that different terms, originating in different languages, at different times, were being used for an item of mundane purpose.

⁵⁰ Moshe Schwabe and Baruch Lifshitz, *Beth She'arim*. Volume II: *The Greek Inscriptions* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press on behalf of the Israel Exploration Society and the Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University, 1974) 117-8, translate inscription #131 with ossuary, vessel.

⁵¹ Robert A. S. Macalister, "Further Observations on the Ossuary of Nicanor the Alexandrian," *PEFQS* (1905) 256, translates ὀστᾶ τῶν tentatively as: "bones of..."; Nahman Avigad, "Jewish Rock-Cut Tombs in Jerusalem and the Judean Hill-Country," *EI* 8 (1967) 124-5 [Hebrew].

⁵² JORR, 51.

⁵³ Charles Clermont-Ganneau, "Archaeological and Epigraphic Notes on Palestine: The 'Gate of Nicanor' in the Temple of Jerusalem," *PEFQS* (April 1903) 31.

⁵⁴ Franz Rosenthal, *Die aramäische Forschung* (Leiden: Brill, 1939) 25.

⁵⁵ This has been pointed out by Meyers, JORR, 52.

Finally, one more Greek term, γλωσσόκομον (*glossokomon*), has been employed to describe an ossuary. It is a term later than *soros* or *ostophagos* and was not seen before the end of the second century CE.⁵⁶ Its original meaning was case.⁵⁷ In the New Testament, *glossokomon* is the word only for chest, coffer or money-box and never implies the particular meaning of ossuary. *Glossokomon* in the Aramaic transliteration גלוסקמא (*gloskoma*)⁵⁸ occurs only in late Jewish epigraphy⁵⁹ and in Rabbinical sources.⁶⁰ There, it denotes either case, chest, or coffin.⁶¹ גלוסקמה (*glusk^ema*) is the present-day Hebrew term for ossuary.

⁵⁶ Zlotnick, *Mourning*, 107 n.2. In late antiquity *aron* was translated with the Greek term γλωσσόκομον (*glossokomon*).

⁵⁷ Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 353.

⁵⁸ Samuel Krauss, *Griechische und lateinische Lehnwörter im Talmud, Midrasch und Targum* (2 vols.; Berlin: S. Calvary, 1898) II: 175-6; JORR, 53, refers to the Syriac גלוסקמא: relic chest, ossuary.

⁵⁹ Schwabe and Lifshitz, *Beth She'arim*, report the inscription # 78, which is inscribed on the wall of an *arcosolium*. It refers to a secondary burial and is dated to the Amoraic period.

⁶⁰ mOhol 9.15. This mishna, see *Mishnayoth VI: Order Taharoth* (1955) 246, gives two terms: לסקוס *gloskos* which should be גלוסקם: *gloskom(a)* for a case and קמטרא: *kamtra* for a chest or box. *Gloskoma* occurs also in the tractate Semahot where it denotes either "casket" (Sem 3.2) or ossuary (Sem 12.9); see Zlotnick, *Mourning*, 5, 82; in Sem 12.9 גלוסקמא is found, probably on grounds of scribal error, with ט instead of ל thus, דלוסקמא: *dloskoma*.

⁶¹ Jastrow *A Dictionary of the Targumim*, 247.

1.3 The Ossuary Industry

It has been noted that societies that concentrated on producing significant pottery vessels in a burial context, also used clay vessels for secondary funerary purposes. One might then suggest the analogous scenario in Judea: Jews engaged so much in the stone vessel industry⁶² that they also engaged in using this material for funerary purposes. Alternatively, wooden containers, too, might have existed followed by a transition to stone. One might expect that in a dry climate like that of Jericho, wood would be preserved. However, in the vast necropolis of Jericho no wooden ossuary has been found, and one can assume that Jericho immediately started its production of ossuaries directly out of stone. If Jericho did not make ossuaries out of wood, then neither would Jerusalem have done so.

The Herodian ossuary was locally manufactured. Some scholars initially speculated that the limestone chests had been imported articles but without doubt one can regard them as local products. Proof of local ossuary production, specifically in Jerusalem, came from a cave on Mount Scopus (East) that served during the first century CE as a quarry and workshop for chalk vessels.⁶³ dislodged stone blocks (on average 0.7m x 1.5 m) were still on the premises as well as ossuaries among broken stone vessels such as cups, bowls, kraters, and basins. At Hizme, the largest cave quarry and stone-vessel manufacturing site just north-east of Jerusalem, wasters included an ossuary fragment.⁶⁴ Certainly ossuaries had been cut in a number of sites operating during the Herodian period. Telltale indicators are the complementary cavities, left in the rock by stone cutters, that are similar in form and size to

⁶² Yitzhak Magen, *The Stone Vessel Industry in the Second Temple Period. Excavations at Hizma and the Jerusalem Temple Mount* (Jerusalem: IES, 2002).

⁶³ David Amit, Jon Seligman, and Irina Silberbod, "Jerusalem, Mount Scopus (East)" *HA/ESI* 111 (2000) 86-88 [Hebr.; 65*-66*]. Mention is made of Greek letters on the pillar of bedrock, and floral pattern executed in charcoal drawing.

⁶⁴ Shimon Gibson, "The Stone Vessel Industry at Hizma," *IEJ* 33 (1983) 176-188, see fig.1:14.

ossuaries, as well as the resemblance of tool marks on unfinished stone vessels and on the underside of numerous ossuaries.⁶⁵

Because Jerusalem was a metropolis with a large population, it is understandable that it would produce the greatest number of artifacts. The large demand would be coupled with a large supply. I agree with Rahmani that “[T]he manufacture of Jewish ossuaries should be regarded as the response of Jerusalem’s artisans to a local demand in the late-first century.”⁶⁶ But one cannot rule out the possibility that Jerusalemites were particularly interested in or particularly exposed to ossuaries. For example, the large number of masons employed in the construction of the Herodian Temple, fostered a subsidiary industry of stone vessels of all kinds. The availability of masons, however, was merely a catalyst for and not the cause of the centres of ossuary production. Masons were merely facilitators. Jerusalem was not the only metropolis that had the know-how and the available masons and artisans needed to manufacture this particular product. Hebron, for example, must have had a large resident population of masons engaged in the construction of Herod’s enclosure of the Cave of the Machpelah, similar in style and magnitude to that of the Temple. However, no major quarries nearby have yet been identified as production centres for ossuaries. Stone vessel debris, especially of the ‘measuring’ cups, were reported from many sites near Nazareth in the Lower Galilee,⁶⁷ but also without evidence of ossuaries. Jericho, by virtue of its large numbers of ossuaries and necropolis, could very well have been a place of ossuary production - as had been suggested - but so far, confirmation of any nearby quarry sites has been elusive.

⁶⁵ For this information, see RCat, 3 and for the technique involved, see reference n..3. Rahmani holds it for possible that the ossuaries had been prepared in the quarries although received their finish in the city’s workshops.

⁶⁶ RCat, 2.

⁶⁷ Zvi Gal, “A Stone-Vessel Manufacturing Site in the Lower Galilee,” *Atiqot* 20 (1991) 25*-26* [Hebrew; 179-180 English summary, pp. 179-180].

Assuming that the novelty of ossuary burial first appeared in Jerusalem, this city became the centre of diffusion, from an ideational and geographical point of view, at least in the beginning. Rahmani, who has categorized ossuaries chronologically according to a) pre- 70 CE, b) 70- to 135 CE, and c) late-second to ca. mid-third century CE specimens,⁶⁸ links the geographical distribution of the ossuaries to the political situation in Judea. For the first group, Rahmani indeed takes Jerusalem as the centre of production and distribution “within a radius of 20-25 km from that city, including Jericho.”⁶⁹ Although, conceding a local production at Jericho as well, Rahmani characterizes the second and the third categories as the only locally made artifacts. Rahmani sees the spread to the other areas a consequence of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. “The custom of ossilegium was probably introduced into these areas by refugees from Jerusalem who influenced the local population and created a demand for ossuaries.” This seems to me to be an oversimplification, as the adoption of an innovation in society is a complex process. The spread of ossuary burial is not only the consequence of refugees. I am of the opinion that, already before 70 CE, certain clients used ossuaries, not because of the influence of refugees but as a result of their own contacts with Jerusalem. Use of ossuaries was the consequence of social inter-relations. Furthermore, I doubt that one can differentiate between artifacts made before 70 CE and those made around 100 CE. It is true, as Rahmani has noted, the cheaper variety of ossuaries and inferior execution of the later versions, can be explained as the consequence of the reduction in numbers or the elimination of the skilled Jerusalem artisans in the aftermath of the two wars against the Roman overlords.⁷⁰ While surely the stone industry had suffered a blow by the destruction of Jerusalem, there is no reason to assume that secondary burial container production would not have started to radiate from Jerusalem even before 70 CE.

⁶⁸ RCat, 21-24.

⁶⁹ RCat, 21. This is also suggested by Hachlili, “A Jericho Ossuary and a Jerusalem Workshop,” *IEJ* 47 (1997) 247.

⁷⁰ RCat, 21.

One concludes that Judeans manufactured individual stone containers locally, rather than imported them. This is true for the stone as well as the clay versions.⁷¹ Jerusalem was doubtless the original production centre for the former and served its environs. After 70 CE, when Jerusalem was devastated economically, a small clay ossuary industry developed. It was a cheaper alternative to stone chests. The expected demand by customers outside of Jerusalem - after some time - must have been met by local workshops that copied the custom from Jerusalem by employing local craftsmen and resources. Clay ossuaries were produced locally in association with crude limestone versions (prior to the emerging of clay and stone coffins). Material and craftsmanship seems to indicate a modest status of the owner. Some locations in the Galilee were known as pottery production centers. One might be justified in assuming that production took place in those places, especially after 135 CE,⁷² even though we have not yet found the evidence.

1.4 *General Description of the Ossuary*

In Figueras' evaluation, ossuaries are a product of craftsmanship rather than works of fine art. Nonetheless, they are relevant to the history of art because of their profusion. By virtue of their very abundance, they are perfect examples of how the attributes of major art have been absorbed and steadfastly preserved on a popular level.

... three elements - Eastern tradition, Western influences and local religious regulations - form the artistic frame of ossuary composition and style in ossuary decoration.⁷³

⁷¹ In contrast, there was a flourishing clay coffin import to western Galilee from Cyprus or Southern Turkey, see Mordechai Aviam and Danny Syon, "Jewish Ossilegium in Galilee," in *What Athens has to do with Jerusalem. Essays on Classical, Jewish, and Early Christian Art and Archeology in Honor of Gideon Foerster*, ed. Leonard V. Rutgers (Leuven: Peeters, 2002) 185.

⁷² Aviam and Syon, "Jewish Ossilegium in Galilee," 184-185.

⁷³ DJO, 24.

The requirement for the ossuary to be a covered chest, as well as the available raw material, moulded the expression of these elements.

At this point, a review of the physical features of ossuaries and their craftsmanship is in order, followed by an account of their ornamentation and their inscriptions. Finally, the question of their peculiarity and their originality will be considered.

1.4.1 *Material*

Ossuaries were primarily constructed from limestone. Stone cutters were employed to carve out the rectangular box from a block of stone. Almost exclusively, they used the local white calcareous *nari* stone which is so abundant in the Jerusalem region. This soft limestone permitted easy cutting and carving. Less frequently, varieties of the hard pinkish, greyish-white limestone were utilized and rarely the heavy porous type which was usually quarried for building blocks. Marble is not to be found in this region.

The ossuaries highlighted in this study are the ones fashioned from limestone. Those made from other materials should also be mentioned because their extent may help in the dating of the ossuaries.

Stone, of course, evokes the language of purity because it is a material which is not susceptible to contracting impurity. In particular, it has often been asserted that there was a connection between Pharisees and purity. Since the origin of ossuary burial has been ascribed by some scholars to Pharisees, this link made sense. Although this might have been true for other vessels, as we shall see below, the usage of stone for reasons of purity in the context of ossuary burial is actually incorrect.

Stone was simply a widely available material. Easily workable, and durable enough to keep human remains safe, it was preferred to cloth in Rabbinic circles which stated that degradable material led to the intermingling of the bones, something which was apparently undesirable for the authors of the Rabbinic text. To work in stone was thus practical and, for many, affordable.

Debate among scholars centred on whether there had ever been a prototypical wooden ossuary.⁷⁴ Archaeologists have recently claimed evidence for wooden ossuaries in En-Gedi. The one preserved example is a plain pine chest (with grooves to guide the lid) which does not represent a chip-carved "prototype".⁷⁵ However, wooden ossuaries, similar to the limestone samples, have not been discovered. Jericho, which provides a clear chronology of burial containers made out of wood and stone, lacks any pre-70 CE wooden ossuaries. Therefore, it is my view that wooden ossuaries, as in the case of clay ones, were post-70 CE artifacts.

Occasionally clay was used to fashion ossuaries.⁷⁶ Only one such clay ossuary was discovered in Jerusalem.⁷⁷ As mentioned above, a small number of reddish-brown, frequently coarse clay exemplars were recovered in the Galilee and in the Judean foothills. Some of these ossuaries can be dated from the late first century well into the second century CE, while a further group date to the period between 135 CE until the middle of the third century CE. With few exceptions, they are undecorated and uninscribed.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ It has been suggested on grounds of three details. First: Avigad, "Jewish Rock-Cut Tombs," 124, recovered nails which could be attributed to a disintegrated wooden ossuary. Second: The chip carve technique of stone ossuaries is thought to simulate a presupposed wooden ossuary fashioned in the same manner as the wood carvings characteristic of European folk-art. But Rahmani, RCat, 4, refutes this conjecture with the argument that there is no evidence of chip carving in wood before the Byzantine period in Israel. (Hadas' publication, "En Gedi," *ESI* 7/8 (1988/89) 4, shows a rosette decoration on Coffin 11 in Tomb 5). Third: Linguistic arguments - as already mentioned - may suggest that the term *arazin* was derived from the word cedar wood.

⁷⁵ Hadas, "En-Gedi," 2,3.

⁷⁶ See RCat, 10 (introduction) and 22 (tabular summary with chronology and distribution). The catalogue lists 15 clay exemplars. DJO, 25 n.9.

⁷⁷ Eleazar L. Sukenik, "A Jewish Tomb in the North-West of Jerusalem," *Tarbiz* 1/3 (1930) 122-124 [Hebrew]. This ossuary is now lost. Its early dating has been challenged by Avigad, "Jewish Rock-Cut Tombs," 140 n.48, and been attributed to the latest use of the tomb, presumably between 70-135 CE.

⁷⁸ Aviam and Syon, "Jewish Ossilegium in Galilee," 155.

1.4.2 *Shapes*

The ossuaries described here are rectangular boxes, hollowed from a single block, and covered with a lid. They may or may not have four low feet. The externals of the ossuaries are very similar to each other though the lids come in different forms: gabled, vaulted or flat (fig.1.1a,b,c). Usually the lid rests on the upper edges of the chest or on an inner ledge cut into the rim. A different technique was used when manufacturing the flat lids - the rim of one of the chest's narrow sides was cut down to enable the lid to be slid into place along grooves cut into the three remaining edges of the chest (fig.1.1d). Another technique was to affix the lid to the rim of the chest on one side by means of iron nails, rivets or ropes. Many lids show depressions cut into the narrow sides, which seem to be finger grips needed for easier handling. All this special care was apparently applied to the lids in order to avoid an easy, unwanted or accidental opening of the ossuary.

It has been suggested that the ossuaries are copies of household chests, used throughout the whole ancient Mediterranean world, whose size could be adapted to the function they now served.⁷⁹ The one group of ossuaries, which does not fit the prototype of a household chest, is the one covered by a gable lid. This has often degenerated to a mere ridge with a corner - or central - *acroteria* (fig.1.1e). These ossuaries are dated to the third century CE and seem to have taken the sarcophagi of that period as their model.⁸⁰

1.4.3 *Dimensions*

The proportions of an ossuary (just as in the case of the Chalcolithic clay bone receptacle) were guided, to a greater or lesser extent, by the need to have a container long enough to accommodate the largest human bone, the femur (50.8 cm), high enough to give space to the accumulated bones with the skull on top (25.4 cm), and wide enough to hold the pelvis (25.4

⁷⁹ RCat, 5.

⁸⁰ RCat, 6 n.13, #'s 553, 681, 690.

cm)⁸¹ while taking into account the total number of bones which were to be placed in the receptacle.⁸² Therefore, the size could vary considerably depending on the dimensions of the skeletal remains. In fact, ossuaries do measure 42-75 cm in length, 23-30 cm in width and 25-40 cm in height.⁸³ In the case of multiple burials the chests had larger dimensions: 62-89 cm. in length by 27-31 cm. in width by 32-41 cm. in height. Variations in the size of the people account for the cited ranges. A substantial number of small versions for children have come to light.⁸⁴ An ossuary for a little child could be as small as 29.5 cm. length x 16 cm. width x 20 cm. height.

The dimensions of numerous chests decrease toward their base.⁸⁵ The walls are usually ca. 3 cm. thick. Hard limestone chests are 7-8 cm. thick and even more massive at their bases.

1.4.4 *Craftsmanship*

The most available resource, limestone, determined the two different trends in craftsmanship and the variant techniques which the artisans employed. Genuine masonry skills were required for the hard limestone ossuary.⁸⁶ The stonemasons and artisans utilized mallet, chisel, and measuring instruments in affecting the high relief technique. Many ossuaries

⁸¹ Amos Kloner, *The Necropolis of Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period* (Ph.D. Diss., Hebrew University Jerusalem, 1980 [Hebrew; English abstract, pp. I-XIX]) 249.

⁸² RCat, #776.

⁸³ B.A. Mastin, "Chalcolithic Ossuaries and Houses for the Dead," *PEQ* 97 (1965) 155, gave the measurements for the domi-form ossuaries 52x27-8x 48 and others 54x28x30.

⁸⁴ RCat, #'s 49, 803; more examples were found at Dominus Flevit, see P.B. Bagatti and Jozef Tadeusz Milik, *Gli Scavi del Dominus Flevit [Monte Oliveto - Gerusalemme]* (PSBF, 13; 2 vols.; Jerusalem: Tipografia dei PP. Francescani, 1958-1964) Parte I: *La Necropoli del Periodo Romano*, Plate 6, figs. 11 and 12.

⁸⁵ RCat, #609, #793, #826.

⁸⁶ RCat, #'s 60, 153, 154, 294, 308, 408, 893; see fig. 3 bottom right.

feature a comb-dressed surface.⁸⁷ As a rule, rosettes, wreaths, leaves, fruits, and concentric circles or flat discs are the ornaments protruding from the polished surface, very similar to the ornamental elements on buildings, tomb façades and local *sarcophagi* of the same material.⁸⁸

The soft limestone was uniquely suitable for thin-lined incisions and the technique called "chip carving".⁸⁹ These kind of ossuaries make up the overwhelming contingent of all ornamented receptacles.

Occasionally some free-hand designs were done. In a few instances red, red-brown or ochre paint was applied to the ossuaries, either as the first or the last stage of the decorating process. Only in two cases have traces of painted objects been recorded.⁹⁰

When looking at the production of ossuaries over a period of time, a difference in the quality of craftsmanship may be detected.⁹¹ In the aftermath of 70 CE the number of skilled artisans in Jerusalem declined. The manufacture of hard limestone ossuaries and chip-carved specimens of soft limestone had come to an end. The samples of outstanding craftsmanship found in the vicinity of Jerusalem after 70 CE may have come from refugee artisans. A

⁸⁷ RCat, #13, #14.

⁸⁸ Leen and Kathleen Ritmeyer, "Akeldama. Potter's Field or High Priest's Tomb?" *BAR* 20/6 (1994) 32-33, feature a mammoth rosette which decorates the carved domed ceiling of the main chamber of the triple-gated tomb at Akeldama. Thirty-two petals surround a small whorl rosette at center and stylized acanthus leaves fill the corners. The authors consider this rosette and a Doric frieze, with rosettes and grape bunches, copies of the decorative style on Herod's Temple mount. Examples of similar decorations on sarcophagi are the ones found in the Akeldama Burial cave #2, in the Nazarite Burial cave and in the Tomb of Herod's family.

⁸⁹ Levi Y. Rahmani, "Chip-Carving in Palestine," *IEJ* 38 (1988) 59-75 - a) the furrow cut, 2) the leaf cut, 3) the triangular cut, and 4) the zigzag cut. The craftsman sketched charcoal guidelines on the smoothed surface of the chest using a ruler or a string and a carving knife. The compass enabled him to circumscribe circles, curves and also to mark the exact distances and intersecting points of other elements in a symmetrical pattern. Carving tools included the carving knife or a chisel, a gouge and veining-tools.

⁹⁰ DJO, 29.

⁹¹ RCat, 21-23.

cheaper variety of incised soft limestone ossuaries were made thereafter. The high quality of finely incised embellishment had eventually declined to clumsily fashioned and crudely decorated bone-boxes after the year 135 CE.⁹² That clay was being used more extensively is also an indication of the deterioration of a skill based craft.⁹³

Around fifteen percent of the ornamented ossuaries show only partly finished components. The reason may be lack of time rather than sloppiness on the artist's side.

1.4.5 *Ornamentation*

Most ossuaries found are plain and uninscribed. Ornamentation has been explored by Rahmani⁹⁴ and particularly, by Figueras⁹⁵ who have established the following elements:

Style and composition: Generally the decorations consist of incised designs in the polished surface of the chest and of the lid. In most cases, only the long side, the face, is decorated. Sometimes also the lateral faces, but rarely all sides, display adornment.

Symmetry and placing of motifs: The most common type of ossuary ornamentation is a schema consisting of a frame of zigzag lines or ornamental fringes (fig.1.2a). Generally this frame is subdivided into two panels or *metopes*, though there could be as many as five (fig.1.2b). Usually the metope is occupied by a six-petalled rosette. The triglyphs in this schema may be empty or they could contain additional marks or motifs (fig.1.2 c). Occasionally motifs cover the entire side(s) of the chest, as well as the lid (fig.1.2 d). The appreciation of symmetry is discernible in the decorations of this category. Therefore, the occurrence of asymmetry (fig.1.2e) was considered with particular regard and was seen to "manifest a special intention".⁹⁶

⁹² RCat, #23.

⁹³ RCat, #754 or fragments #'s 755, 756.

⁹⁴ RCat, 25-55.

⁹⁵ DJO, 27-77.

⁹⁶ DJO, 31, n. 32.

Horror vacui: Some of the workshops show a strong tendency to fill all available space in the four corners of the *metopes*, inside the circles and in the triglyphs. This might suggest the characteristic "horror" of empty spaces, the *horror vacui*, of Oriental art (fig.1.2f).

Thematics: The repertoire of forms is quite numerous - about thirty-five forms were inventoried, but the themes are rather limited to plant, geometric and architectural motifs. One large hard limestone ossuary features bucrania decoration in relief.⁹⁷ This is considered unique in the repertoire of Second Temple period ossuaries.⁹⁸ The refusal to make human or animal figures is deduced from Jewish scriptures (Ex 20:4; Deut 4:16-18, 5:8) and was complied with strictly during this period up to the end of the first century CE.⁹⁹

Originality of Forms: Of six-hundred samples, only fifteen have a parallel.¹⁰⁰ The artisans apparently did not produce assembly-line like works, but strove for originality. The motifs are similar to the ones appearing in other artifacts of the Second Temple period. Hachlili assumes that workshops probably had repertoires of patterns from which to select

⁹⁷ It is pictured by Tamar Shadmi, "The Ossuaries and the Sarcophagus," in *The Akeldama Tombs: Three Burial Caves in the Kidron Valley, Jerusalem*, ed. Gideon Avni and Zvi Greenhut, ([IAA Reports, No.1], Jerusalem: IAA, 1996), 45, fig. 2.12. See also Avni and Zvi Greenhut, "Akeldama. Resting place of the Rich and Famous," *BAR* 20/6 (1994) 41. The author identified the owners as immigrants from the diaspora, presumably, Syria. This ossuary was part of an exhibition at McMaster University, see p. 139 below.

⁹⁸ Bucrania appear on third century sarcophagi at Bet She'arim, published by Nachman Avigad, *Beth She'arim: The Excavations 1953-1958* (3 vols.; New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1976) III: 101-102, Pl. 42.

⁹⁹ On the issue on figural art, see Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.-A.D. 135)*. *A New English Edition* (3 vols. in 4; rev. and ed. by Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, and Matthew Black [vol. I and II], and Martin Goodman [vol. III]; Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark Ltd., 1973-1987) 58-59, and ns.175, 176, and 177, with references. The Jewish attitude to figural art varied in strictness at certain times in history. Art during Late Temple times was aniconic but this changed in the second and third century CE.

¹⁰⁰ DJO, 34.

their designs.¹⁰¹ Figueras asserts that the "Hellenistic taste of the region in that period" was inescapable in Jewish art, though uniquely adapted to the form required. Thus, he refutes Rahmani's view that "the form of the ossuary and its decoration do not show any direct foreign influence."¹⁰²

Stylization: The art of the Palestinian ossuaries is mainly decorative rather than representative and therefore displays stylized elements. On the one hand, stylization may occur wherever artists lack the time or the skills to produce more realistic forms and this art would in the end resemble graffiti drawings. On the other hand, stylization, as an artistic technique, wants to present the object in its essential elements (fig.1.3 c,e). Both forms are found on ossuaries and Figueras wants to trace the feature of stylization to the "Eastern taste for stylization and pattern-following." However, as a decorative art, "many of its stylistic forms can be found wherever purely ornamental, non-figurative, motifs are used."¹⁰³

Decorated ossuaries have gained unique attention regarding symbolism and representation within the disciplines of Fine Art and Theology.

1.4.6 *Decorative Motifs*

Among the plant motifs, the principal ornamental element is obviously the rosette, an *Allerweltsmotiv*.¹⁰⁴ It appears, in different forms and sizes, anywhere on the chest and the lid, but mainly on the front panel. Frequently rosettes fill the various metopes on the panel. They may form rows and fill the spaces between multipartite panels. They may flank central motifs which may consist of a bigger rosette itself. The rosette is compass-drawn and carved out or, in a more elaborate technique, hollowed out. The simple six-petalled rosette was the

¹⁰¹ AJAA, 111.

¹⁰² DJO, 34.

¹⁰³ DJO, 33.

¹⁰⁴ Carl Watzinger, *Denkmäler Palästinas. Eine Einführung in die Archäologie des Heiligen Landes* (2 vols. in 1 vol.; Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1935) II: 74-76, 158-159.

most common form.¹⁰⁵ A profusion of varieties - some more floral, some more geometrical - decorate the ossuaries (fig.1.3). The whirling wheel sometimes takes the place of the rosette (fig.1.3 l).

Plants¹⁰⁶ in the form of trees, especially palm-trees (fig.1.4a,b,c), leaves (fig.1.4 d) and branches (fig.1.4e) occur on ossuary lids or are frequently seen in the triglyphs. Fruits of the Land (fig.1.4f) and flowers, such as lilies (figs.1.4 h,i), are represented. Seldom were acanthus leaves depicted (fig.1.4g). Sometimes a vine scroll motif, in a frame or frieze, with grape clusters, pomegranates, figs or olives, is chosen. Lotus and palmette appear side by side in a frame, or with other motifs. The palmette is preferred as a central (fig.1.4 c) or as a corner motif. Ivy leaves are often used as an angle ornament (fig.1.6 e). Wreaths (fig.1.4) usually adorn the narrow sides of the chest or the lid. They seem to be common among Diaspora Jews.¹⁰⁷

Among the architectural motifs¹⁰⁸ several façades or portals were represented (fig.1.5 a-c), most of the time by a columned porch. The outer court and the gates, very similar to the original, may be depicted. A type of lattice gate, which has not survived in actuality, can be found delineated on an ossuary. Frequently, the *nephesh* was a chosen pattern, often in the form of an obelisk (fig.1.5d) or a column (fig.1.5 e). The column, besides being part of the portico motif, stands on steps (fig.1.5f). The fluted columns have either Ionic, Doric or Corinthian capitals (fig.1.5g), or also various elements such as, rosettes, palmettes, lilies or discs. Ashlar walls (fig.1.5h), which were common in tomb façades and contemporaneous buildings, are depicted, either unadorned or overlaid with circles or rosettes. The steps on a column base, or the pyramid cap of a *nephesh*, may bear an ashlar motif.

¹⁰⁵ The technique is described in RCat, 39-41.

¹⁰⁶ RCat, 42-44, 48-50.

¹⁰⁷ RCat, 41.

¹⁰⁸ RCat, 28-34, 45-46.

From among the geometric motifs¹⁰⁹ the most common is the zigzag line, either singly or double (fig.1.6 a), used as a frame or as a filler. The designs, which resemble cursive script (fig.1.6b), became most prevalent on the finely incised ossuaries. Another favourite pattern for frames consists of interlaced semi-circles, often used as a frieze or to encircle rosettes. Patterns, such as a leaf, a leave-and-dart (fig.1.6c), a running dog,¹¹⁰ a fluted frieze composition (fig.1.6c), are employed as frames or on cornices. The disc motif (fig.1.6f), easily drawn with a compass, was used by itself either in a whole form or halved or quartered. It can be a space-filler in metope corners, or encircle a rosette. Discs can be utilized as frames, or they can form an all-over decoration (fig.1.6 d).

Among the varia motifs the amphora is a favorite one (fig.1.7 a-b). It is assumed that amphorae surmounted some of Jerusalem's tomb monuments,¹¹¹ and an amphora set on a trumpet foot pictured on a nephesh may be an indication of such a trend.¹¹² Generally, it appears singly, adorned (fig.1.7a) or combined with other motifs, more or less stylized (fig.1.7b,c), or overlaid with zigzags (fig.1.7 d). The latter technique was also applied on the *menorah* motif (fig.1.7e), which was represented on ossuaries a few times.¹¹³

1.4.7 Inscriptions

A considerable number of ossuaries bear inscriptions. The ratio of inscribed specimens to the total of discovered ossuaries is best determined within a specific tomb group.¹¹⁴ In some

¹⁰⁹ RCat, 36-39.

¹¹⁰ RCat, #779.

¹¹¹ RCat, 34.

¹¹² RCat, #325.

¹¹³ Levi Y. Rahmani, "Representations of the Menorah on Ossuaries," in *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed*, ed. Hillel Geva (Jerusalem: IES, 1994) 239-243.

¹¹⁴ Rahmani, RCat, 11. Of the 897 specimens mentioned in the catalogue about 233 are inscribed. However, this number does not reflect the original proportion since plain specimens were excluded.

cases none of the ossuaries are inscribed, in others up to 81% yield inscriptions, so that no specific correlation can be discerned with regard to the quantity of ossuaries or the workmanship of the tomb. Ossuaries with inscriptions outside the Jerusalem region are rare,¹¹⁵ the monumental tomb in Jericho and the burial caves in Modi'in are exceptions.

The reasons for inscribing and marking ossuaries may have been from among the following: making sure the lid fitted properly onto the container; identifying the dead to the visitor; demonstrating the social standing of the deceased and his kinsfolk, protecting the skeletal remains; and, finally, consoling the bereaved.

The engravings were incised, in the manner of graffito, horizontally, vertically, on a slant and even inverted, anywhere on the box or the lid and even on the rim when it served as an aid for aligning the lid with the container. A name could be repeatedly scratched on one piece, up to seven times.¹¹⁶ The inscriptions appear clumsily spaced, haphazardly executed (fig.1.8d), inverted (fig.1.8f) and even contain spelling mistakes (fig.1.8 g). This lack of skilful execution is surprising, especially on an otherwise magnificently ornamented ossuary, or on one indicating eminent rank, such as the ossuary belonging to Caiphas (See the photograph introducing Part Five).¹¹⁷ The reasons may have been the adverse circumstances under which the inscriber etched the epitaph: at the time of the burial, inside the tomb, or even after the receptacle had been placed into the narrow *loculus*, using a nail or a piece of charcoal.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ RCat, 11. Only eight specimens are included in the catalogue. For a discussion about clay specimens, see Aviam and Syon, "Jewish Ossilegium in Galilee," referred to above.

¹¹⁶ RCat, #'s 236, 383. Schwabe and Lifshitz, *Beth She 'arim*, II: 83, explain the repetition of the names with expression of grief.

¹¹⁷ Ronny Reich, "Caiaphas Name Inscribed on Bone Boxes," *BAR* 18/5 (1992) 42.

¹¹⁸ Reich, "Caiaphas," 42, and RCat, 11. Some fine examples of script appear on #789 or those picked out in colour as #'s 32, 396 or 403 in RCat.

Inscribed Ossuaries	Total Number of Ossuaries	Percentage	Location
0	13	0	Jerusalem, ¹¹⁹ Shmuel Hanavi(a)
1	24	0.5%	Jerusalem, ¹²⁰ Shmuel Hanavi(b)
7	38	18%	Jerusalem, ¹²¹ Mt. Scopus(a)
43	123	35%	Jerusalem, ¹²² Dominus Flevit
5	12	41%	Jerusalem ¹²³ , Caiaphas Tomb
23	40	57%	Jerusalem, ¹²⁴ Akeldama
9	11	81%	Jerusalem, ¹²⁵ Kidron Valley(a)
14	22	63%	Jericho, ¹²⁶ 'Goliath' Tomb
0	19	0%	Horvat Tilla (Kibbutz Lahav) ¹²⁷

Table 1.1 The Distribution of Inscribed Ossuaries according to Tomb Groups

¹¹⁹ RCat, 307.

¹²⁰ RCat, 307.

¹²¹ RCat 306.

¹²² Bagatti and Milik, *Dominus Flevit*, 100-109.

¹²³ Zvi Greenhut, "Burial Cave of the Caiaphas Family," *BAR* 18/5 (1992) 32.

¹²⁴ Tal Ilan, "The Ossuary and Sarcophagus Inscriptions," in *The Akeldama Tombs* (IAA Reports, No.1; ed. Gideon Avni and Zvi Greenhut; Jerusalem: IAA, 1996) 57.

¹²⁵ RCat, 305.

¹²⁶ For the number of ossuaries and inscriptions, see Hachlili and Killebrew, *Jericho*, 100-111, Tomb H ('Goliath Tomb'). See also Hachlili's earlier publication, "Goliath Family," 31-66.

¹²⁷ Gophna Ram and Varda Sussman, "A Jewish Burial Cave of the Roman Period at the Foot of Tel Halif," *Atiqot* (HS) 7 (1974) 69-76 [Hebrew; English summary, p. 11*].

The languages displayed are Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek and sometimes Latin. Some of the epitaphs are bilingual. In Jerusalem almost half of the inscriptions are in Greek.¹²⁸ This has led to the inference that for a great part of the Jewish population Greek was a familiar language. "We may assume that most Jewish Jerusalemites who saw the inscriptions *in situ* were able to read them."¹²⁹

Jewish	Greek	Bilingual	Location
2	7		Kidron Valley
12		1	Kidron Valley
6	1		Kidron Valley ¹³⁰
	5		Giv'at Hamivtar
4	2		Giv'at Hamivtar
	8	1	Akeldama, ¹³¹ Cave 2
5	5	4	Cave 3
4	7	3	Jericho, ¹³² Goliath Tomb

Table 1.2 The Distribution of Jewish and Greek Inscriptions in Tomb Groups

¹²⁸ These calculations are based on RCat, Table of Tomb-Groups, 304-307. There are a total of 774 ossuaries recorded from Jerusalem, of which 52 bear Greek inscriptions, 107 Hebrew or Aramaic and 7 are bilingual: Greek and Semitic. Whereas in the later necropolis at Beth She'arim, the Greek inscriptions outnumber the Semitic ones by more than three times.

¹²⁹ Pieter W. van der Horst, "Jewish Funerary Inscriptions. Most are in Greek," *BAR* 18/5 (1992) 48; Baruch Lifshitz, "Jérusalem sous la domination romaine. Histoire de la ville depuis la conquête de Pompée jusqu'à Constantin (63 a. C.- 325 p. C.)," *ANRW II. Principat* 8 (1977) 459: "La proportion des textes épigraphiques grecs par rapport à la quantité des inscriptions découvertes à Jérusalem témoigne de l'emploi de la langue grecque par une partie assez considérable de la population de la ville."

¹³⁰ RCat, Table 2: Table of Tomb-Groups, 305.

¹³¹ Ilan, "Ossuary and Sarcophagus Inscriptions," 57.

¹³² Hachlili and Killebrew, *Jericho*, 10-111.

Usually epitaphs on ossuaries consist of the buried individual's name. In the ossuary collection of the Israel Antiquities Authority Jewish names constitute about half of all names. The majority of these occur in Jewish¹³³ script (fig.1.9 a) only, the rest are in Greek (fig.1.9 b) or in both scripts (fig.1.9g). Two Jewish names are in Latin (fig.1.9d) and one in the Palmyrene script. The collection features only slightly fewer Greek names of which about half the number are written in Greek script (fig.1.9c) exclusively, five in Jewish script (fig.1.9 f), the rest in both. One Nabataean name and seven Latin names are written in Greek characters (fig.1.9 e), one also occurs in Jewish script. In a few cases one finds ligatures in Jewish as well as in Greek script.¹³⁴ Some inscriptions display an interesting feature: cursive letters are used together with lapidary forms.¹³⁵

Presumably, the ossuaries feature the personal names of the buried individuals (fig.1.10a).¹³⁶ Extremely popular female names were Shlomzion (fig.1.10h,j)¹³⁷ and Mariah with its variations (fig.1.8d,g; 1.10e). Very common in Jewish Palestinian circles also was

¹³³ See RCat, 12-13, for scripts. The term "Jewish" is applied here to differentiate this script from ancient Hebrew script. The alphabet derived from the Aramaic script and was employed during the Second Temple period for writing both Aramaic and Hebrew; compare Gabriel Barkay, "Another Palaeo-Hebrew Ossuary Inscription," *IEJ* 39 (1989) 201-203. Rahmani suggests that the choice of script may be determined by the geographic origin of the dead.

¹³⁴ RCat, #57: *beth-resh* for b(a)r, #98: *tau-eta-rho*, #349: *tau-rho*.

¹³⁵ Ilan, "Ossuary and Sarcophagus Inscriptions," 57.

¹³⁶ An inscription published by Joseph Naveh, "The Ossuary Inscriptions from Giv'at ha-Mivtar," *IEJ* 20/1-2 (1970) 37, has been read: "Ossuary of Shalom daughter of Sha'ul who failed to give birth. Peace [Shalom] daughter!" The anthropologist Nathan Haas, "Anthropological Observations on the Skeletal Remains from Giv'at ha-Mivtar," *IEJ* 20/1-2 (1970) 48, identified the remains as a young woman with her unborn child.

¹³⁷ Tal Ilan, "Notes on the Distribution of Women's Names in Palestine in the Second Temple and Mishnaic Period," *JJS* 40/2 (1989) 191-192, 198-199. She maintains that Shelamzion (Shlomzion) is not the same name as Salome; but see fig.1.10d (Salome) and fig.1.10j (Shlamzion) which are one and the same person ("Ossuary and Sarcophagus Inscriptions," 70).

Martha (fig.1.10i; 1.11a).¹³⁸ Among the male names Joseph (fig.1.11a,c,e) and Simon (fig.1.10a,c; 1.11b,e,f; 1.12a) were the most favoured, followed by Yehuda (fig.1.10g; 1.11g), Lazarus, Yohanan = John (fig.1.11d), Ananias, Yehoshua and Mattathias (fig.1.10e; 1.11f; 1.13a).¹³⁹ Some ossuaries display double names, such as Sorra Aristobola (fig.1.8e) or Shimon Thaddaeus, or contracted forms such as Yesu and Yesu'a (fig.1.8b,d).

Approximately twenty-eight percent of men recorded had one of only four names.¹⁴⁰ Therefore, the use of nicknames or appellatives (fig.1.8c) is understandable in order to distinguish among people with the same personal names,¹⁴¹ such as the 'Elder' (fig.1.11e), the 'Mute'¹⁴², the 'Amputated'¹⁴³, the 'Small'¹⁴⁴, 'Oil Cake'¹⁴⁵ 'Balsam' (fig.1.8h)¹⁴⁶ and the 'grasshopper' (fig.1.9e). The name 'Goliath' in Jericho was adapted as a family name (fig.1.10d,j).¹⁴⁷ Family relationship was a frequent datum in epitaphs, "... mother of" (fig. 1.10j), "... mother" (fig.1.10h), "... mother of..." (fig.1.10j), "... father" (fig.1.10g). The

¹³⁸ Ilan, "Notes," 197.

¹³⁹ RCat, 14, listed the names in the order of their frequency out of 147 names; according to Bagatti and Milik, *Dominus Flevit*, 108, the male names occur in this order: Zacharia, Jesu, Eleazar, Menachem, Josef, John, Jehuda; the female names: Salome, Maria, Martha, Johanna.

¹⁴⁰ Tal Ilan, *The Names of the Jews in Eretz-Israel in the Second Temple and Mishna Periods. A Statistical Study* (unpublished diss., Hebrew University, Jerusalem 1984, Hebrew) 45. See also her *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity* (TSAJ 91; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002).

¹⁴¹ Apparently Caiaphas was a nickname: Josephus, *Ant.* 18.95: "Joseph who was called Caiaphas of the High priesthood."

¹⁴² RCat, #117.

¹⁴³ RCat, #62.

¹⁴⁴ RCat, #'s 421, 552.

¹⁴⁵ RCat, #198.

¹⁴⁶ RCat, #461; 'Aloe' #114, 'Cinnamon' #803.

¹⁴⁷ Hachlili, "Goliath Family," 52, indeed discovered that four male family members were "exceptionally tall," i.e. 188,5cm.

father's name was commonly used as a family name for a man or an unmarried woman: "... son of ..." (fig.1.10a), "... daughter of ..." (fig.1.10b,i), or the husband's name for a married woman: "... wife of ..." (fig.1.10e, 1.13a). Sometimes the proper name of the deceased is left out and appears as "wife" (fig.1.10c), "mother" (fig.1.10f). In multiple ossuary burials mention is made of husband and wife (fig.1.10e), mother and son,¹⁴⁸ mother and infants¹⁴⁹ and brothers (fig.1.11f, 1.12c).

Frequently mentioned was the deceased's place of origin (fig.1.11a)¹⁵⁰. On ossuaries from Jerusalem tombs, "Papias and Salomich(!) the Scythopolitans"¹⁵¹, "Simon of Ptolemais"¹⁵² are mentioned, and in Jericho, "Pelatya from Jerusalem".¹⁵³

Occasionally reference is made to the deceased person's profession, his or her accomplishments. There is "Simon, the Builder of the Sanctuary" (fig.1.11b)¹⁵⁴, "Nicanor from Alexandria who made the [Temple]gates", "Yehosef son of Hananya the scribe"

¹⁴⁸ Bagatti, and Milik, *Dominus Flevit*, 79. 8: "Shalom and her son".

¹⁴⁹ RCat, #'s 73, 800, 868.

¹⁵⁰ Hachlili AJAA, 103, rightfully emphasizes that during the Herodian period inscriptions on ossuaries mentioning the dead person's place of origin, do not indicate a re-interment. The skeletal remains belonged to a local person who originally came from someplace else.

¹⁵¹ RCat, #139.

¹⁵² RCat, #99.

¹⁵³ RCat, #777.

¹⁵⁴ Vassilios Tzaferis, "The Burial of Simon the Temple Builder," in *Jerusalem Revealed. Archaeology in the Holy City 1968-1974*, ed. Yigael Yadin (Jerusalem: IES, 1975) 71-72.

(fig.1.11c)¹⁵⁵, "Mathia and Simon, masters of the tomb" (fig.1.11f). "Aza who made it" (the ossuary) denotes an artisan.¹⁵⁶ A physician,¹⁵⁷ a potter¹⁵⁸ or a weaver¹⁵⁹ are also alluded to.

Names were sometimes distinguished by the personal status of the deceased or that of his/her kin. The mention of the priesthood within the family served to enhance the prestige of a descendant: "Yehohanah, granddaughter of the High Priest Theophilus"¹⁶⁰ (fig.1.11d), "Menahem of the sons of Jachim - priest".¹⁶¹ Hanania who had been the son of the Nazir Jonathan¹⁶², Judah (fig.1.11g)¹⁶³ and Salome¹⁶⁴ had been proselytes, Theodotos who had been a freedman of Queen Agrippina (fig.1.11h),¹⁶⁵ and Kynoros, (son) of Diodothos, *protopolites* (First Citizen)¹⁶⁶, displayed their family pride in these inscriptions.

The age of the deceased is twice recorded in Greek. Greek letters representing the numbers are preceded by the sign L, standing for ἐτῶν, years (fig.1.12c).¹⁶⁷

¹⁵⁵ Varda Sussman, "A Burial Cave on Mount Scopus," *Atiqot* 21 (1992) 89-96.

¹⁵⁶ Ilan, "Ossuary and Sarcophagus Inscriptions," 60-61; see also: Bagatti and Milik, *Dominus Flevit*, 83.35.

¹⁵⁷ RCat, #80.

¹⁵⁸ Nave, "Ossuary Inscriptions," 35; RCat, #222.

¹⁵⁹ Bagatti and Milik, *Dominus Flevit*, 94.27.

¹⁶⁰ Dan Barag and David Flusser, "The Ossuary of Yehohanah granddaughter of the High Priest Theophilus," *IEJ* 36 (1986) 39-44; F.M. Abel, "Tombeau et ossuaires juifs récemment découverts," (*Chronique*) *RB* 10 (1913) 268.

¹⁶¹ Bagatti and Milik, *Dominus Flevit*, 73, 89-92.

¹⁶² Nahman Avigad, "The Burial Vault of a Nazarite Family on Mount Scopus," *IEJ* 21 (1971) 197.

¹⁶³ Ilan, "Ossuary and Sarcophagus Inscriptions," 66.

¹⁶⁴ Bagatti and Milik, *Dominus Flevit*, #'s 31, also 13, 21, 22.

¹⁶⁵ Hachlili, "Goliath Family," 45, 62.

¹⁶⁶ RCat, # 282.

¹⁶⁷ RCat, 17.

About half of all ossuaries show marks (fig.1.12a)¹⁶⁸ which could be direction marks, emblems, price tags (fig.1.12e), or protective marks. The identical direction marks whose purpose was to position the lid for the best fit on the chest, usually occur in pairs, one on the lid and the second one either on the rim, the narrow or the long side of the chest (figs.1.12d). One mark especially, the chi-ro mark, has aroused controversy. Bagatti and Milik regard it as Christogram, which has not generally been accepted.¹⁶⁹ Alternatively, it may stand for the word *χαράσσω* in the sense of "sealed."¹⁷⁰

Some marks seem to represent insignias of the family of the deceased and may occur as part of the ornamental design or also appear as independent elements. Occasionally formulae for protection¹⁷¹ of the skeletal remains (fig.1.13a) or magic formulae (fig.1.13b)¹⁷² are recorded.

Consolatory epitaphs, found in abundance in Jewish burials from this time in Rome and in Egypt¹⁷³ (and later on in Beth She'arim in the Galilee) are missing on ossuaries and

¹⁶⁸ RCat, 19-21.

¹⁶⁹ Bagatti and Milik, *Dominus Flevit*, 6, 178; refuted by Nahman Avigad, "Review of Bagatti B. and Milik J.T. *Gli scavi del 'Dominus Flevit'. Parte I: La necropoli del periodo romano*," *IEJ* 11 (1961) 94; also Roland de Vaux, "Review of Bagatti B. and Milik J.T. *Gli scavi del 'Dominus Flevit'. Parte I: La necropoli del periodo romano*," *RB* 66 (1959) 300.

¹⁷⁰ Pasquale Colella, "Les abréviations χ et (XP)," *RB* 80 (1973) 547-558.

¹⁷¹ RCat, #70: "Do not open," (Hebrew); #259: "I adjure: let no one take away," (Greek); #142: "whoever moves it, breaks his vow," (Greek); #559: "whoever moves these (bones) away, may blindness strike him."

¹⁷² Hachlili, "Goliath Family," 62, attests to an abecedary in Greek script on a lid in Jericho; RCat , #787. See further, Alice J. Bij de Vaate, "Alphabet-Inscriptions from Jewish Graves," in *Studies in Early Jewish Epigraphy*, ed. by J.W. van Henten and P.W. van der Horst (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994) 148-161.

¹⁷³ Pieter W. van der Horst, *Ancient Jewish Epitaphs: An Introductory Survey of a Millennium of Jewish Funerary Epigraphy (300 BCE-700 CE)* ([Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology, 2] Kampen, Netherlands: Kok Pharos Publishing House, 1991) 112, 123.

only one occurrence in the Tomb of Jason¹⁷⁴ (fig.1.14a). The now typical Jewish epitaphs נפש נרח - "Rest of the soul",¹⁷⁵ "peace" (shalom) and "hélas" (khaval), only became frequent at Beth She'arim and are rarely found inscribed on ossuaries (fig.1.14b).¹⁷⁶

Lastly, significantly absent are ossuary inscriptions that refer in any way to the belief in an afterlife or in the resurrection.¹⁷⁷ This kind of content, labeled by Park, upwards? has been looked for in vain. On the contrary, two Jerusalem inscriptions give expression to very sobering musings, one of which reflects: "No one can go up [from the grave] (fig.1.12b),¹⁷⁸ and the other beseeches the visitor to enjoy himself in this life by eating and drinking

1.4.8 *Types of Ossuaries*

Concluding the general description of the ossuaries one might distinguish between several types.¹⁷⁹ Hachlili¹⁸⁰ advances the following three general types of ossuary ornamentation:

- a. Two symmetrical rosettes enclosed in a frame constitute the standard type of ossuary decoration. The variety of rosette styles is extensive, from simple, incised six-petalled rosettes ... to chip-carved ..., and to elaborately designed and executed rosettes The majority of the decorated ossuaries have depictions of two or more rosettes.

¹⁷⁴ One rare example is described by Nahman Avigad, "Aramaic Inscriptions in the Tomb of Jason," *IEJ* 17/2 (1967) 108; Pierre Benoit, "L'inscription grecque du tombeau de Jason," *IEJ* 17/2 (1967) 112-113.

¹⁷⁵ G.H. Dalman, "Inschriften aus Palästina," *ZDPV* 37 (1914) 135-136; 144-145.

¹⁷⁶ RCat, 17-18.

¹⁷⁷ This was particularly noted by Park,

¹⁷⁸ Frank Moore Cross, "A Note on a Burial Inscription from Mount Scopus," *IEJ* 33 (1983) 245-246. See also the interpretation given by Joseph Nave, "An Aramaic Consolatory Burial Inscription," *Atiqot* 14 (1980) 55-59.

¹⁷⁹ Pau Figueras, *Decorated Jewish Ossuaries (DMOA 20)* Leiden: Brill, 1983, 26, groups ossuaries into eight different categories.

¹⁸⁰ AJAA, 111.

b. Another group of ossuaries portrays the standard rosettes flanking a central motif consisting of various patterns, for instance a tomb facade ..., a column ... or an amphora

c. The third group of ossuaries is rendered with a design which covers the entire front of the ossuary but lacks rosettes; for instance, the ossuary with an ashlar motif, with arches, columns and with other designs Occasionally several rosettes are incorporated into this general design ..

1.5 The Appearance of the Ossuary in Palestine

Since the beginning of this century archaeologists and scholars have advanced very different dates for the appearance of Jewish limestone ossuaries, as the following table illustrates:

Vincent	200 - 150 BCE ¹⁸¹
Goodenough	around 150 BCE ¹⁸²
Avigad	100 BCE ¹⁸³
Avi-Yonah	100 BCE ¹⁸⁴
Sukenik	First century ¹⁸⁵
Kahane	40 BCE ¹⁸⁶
Meyers	50 BCE ¹⁸⁷
Cross	Late first century BCE ¹⁸⁸
Rahmani	20-15 BCE ¹⁸⁹ in Jerusalem

¹⁸¹ L.H. Vincent, "Sur la date des ossuaires juifs," *RB* 43 (1934) 567.

¹⁸² Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols*, I (1953) 114, 115.

¹⁸³ Nahman Avigad, "The Necropolis of Jerusalem in the Days of the Second Temple," in *Sepher Yerushalayim*, ed. Michael Avi-Yonah (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1956, Hebrew) 320.

¹⁸⁴ Avi-Yona, "Ossuary," 800.

¹⁸⁵ Eleazar L. Sukenik, *Jüdische Gräber Jerusalems um Christi Geburt* (Jerusalem: Azriel Press, 1931)

3.

¹⁸⁶ B. Ravani and P. Kahane, "Rock-Cut Tombs at Huqoq: Notes on the Finds," *'Atiqot* 3(1961) 132.

¹⁸⁷ JORR, 44.

¹⁸⁸ Cited by Meyers in JORR, 43 n.127.

¹⁸⁹ RCat, 21. Rahmani's previous publications stated earlier dates, "Jewish Rock-cut Tombs in Jerusalem," *'Atiqot* 3 (1961) 116: "We arrive at a date in the thirties of the 1st cent. B.C.E. for the first collection of bones into ossuaries." He proposes 40-30 BCE in his review of JORR, *IEJ* 23 (1973) 126, and 30/20 BCE in "Ancient Jerusalem's Funerary Customs and Tombs. Part One," *BA* 44 (1981) 175.

Nowadays, many discredit the early dates and tend to accept Rahmani's dating¹⁹⁰ as well as his claim that the ossuaries "were introduced in Jerusalem ca. 20-15 BCE," although Meyers strongly rebutted this statement on the grounds of paleography and ceramic evidence.¹⁹¹

Meyers' position is supported by reports from burial sites containing ossuaries which are dated by the excavators considerably earlier than 20 BCE, for instance those in En-Gedi¹⁹² or Modi'in.¹⁹³ However, these interpretations of the archaeological data are tenuous¹⁹⁴ and do not provide proof to move up the introductory date for stone ossuaries to the early first century BCE.

The establishment of a precise *terminus a quo* for the Jewish limestone ossuary is very difficult for a variety of reasons. Many family tombs had been in use before the

¹⁹⁰ Previously the archaeologist Kloner opted for an earlier date, see RCat, 21 n.5.

¹⁹¹ JORR, 42.

¹⁹² In Hadas' view, "En Gedi," 7, ossilegium into stone ossuaries may be moved up to the early first century. He claimed that the various modes of burial in the Hellenistic tombs do not depict chronological differences. Primary burials in coffins were found to have been placed in such a way that they blocked access to the ossuaries in both *loculi*.

¹⁹³ Steven Feldman, "The Case of the Missing Maccabee," *BAR* 22/2 (1996) 12-14, describes the tomb complex in Modi'in. Each cave consists of a number of *loculi* which contained a total of 22 ossuaries and the remains of an estimated 30-35 burials of an extended family. Coins dating to the reign of John Hyrcanus (134-104 BCE) were found outside the caves.

¹⁹⁴ Modi'in: The find of three coins outside the tombs cannot definitely be connected to the ossuary burials inside. En-Gedi: Hadas bases his claim for an earlier use of ossuaries on the observation of obstructed access to the ossuaries by primary coffin burials (which are early). It is correct to state that if item A blocks item B, item B is to be dated contemporaneously or even earlier. However, this is only true if no later rearranging of the receptacles had taken place in order to accommodate in an optimal way as many burials as possible within the tomb. In Tomb 4 the original cut and stone-lined *loculi* were extended by a small recess, and in each niche a long coffin and an ossuary were placed, see Hadas, "En-Gedi", plan 4 on p.20 in the Hebrew section. We have no proof, though, that the receptacles, as discovered *in situ* now, were not rearranged in antiquity. Rahmani, in a personal communication, on March 21, 1997, maintains his dates.

individual receptacle became a mode of burial and the ossuary therefore cannot be directly dated by them. However, there are burial sites without ossuaries which had ceased to be used in late Hellenistic or early Herodian times and which show evidence for burials into communal charnels. They suggest a *terminus a quo* for the use of ossuaries, but they alone cannot be the criteria for dating since various burial practices were employed concurrently during the same era.

Important for dating ossuaries are those inscriptions and artifacts such as coins and the frequently accompanying pottery that are discovered in a clear context. As paleography and ceramic analysis provide the external controls for dating, it is crucial that both disciplines be executed carefully. It has been noted by Meyers that the former tendency in archaeology not to dig stratigraphically nor to separate pottery into definable *loci*, "has hindered the process which could have greatly refined the ceramic typology of Hellenistic-Roman times."¹⁹⁵ Moreover, in spite of having been carefully excavated, ceramic evidence is often insufficient for providing a precise date "since so many individual forms have no fixed *termini ante quem*."¹⁹⁶ On these grounds Meyers rejects Rahmani's proposed dating of the limestone ossuaries which is based on a large number of "Herodian" lamps and their varied styles. However, if one is left with reservations about this dating method, then one also has to take into consideration that the results of more recent excavations have clearly refined the differentiation between Hellenistic and Herodian types of pottery. Rahmani testifies with confidence that "no Jewish ossuaries have been found in tombs which contain exclusively Hellenistic pottery,"¹⁹⁷ and therefore deduces that the introduction of ossuaries has to be dated to the Herodian period. In the absence of newer, contradictory data, this conclusion carries conviction.

¹⁹⁵ JORR, 41.

¹⁹⁶ Meyers, JORR, 41, refers to the so-called "Herodian" lamps which have been recorded by Paul W. Lapp, *Palestinian Ceramic Chronology, 200 BC.- A.D. 70* (New Haven: ASOR, 1961) 193, as being as early as 75 BCE. However, according to Rahmani, "Review of Meyers," 125, this fragment had been intrusive.

¹⁹⁷ Rahmani, "Review of Meyers," 125.

The second external control for dating is provided by paleography. Weaknesses in this discipline have frustrated a precise dating at the present time.¹⁹⁸ Further study is deemed necessary to scrutinize the manifold styles of cursive and semicursive script from Hellenistic-Roman times.¹⁹⁹ Nevertheless, allowing for reservations about present paleographic techniques, the appearance of ossuaries points to King Herod's reign. Yet, ossuaries without epigraphic testimony may well have been used before the inscribed objects. The evidence for material culture that can be ascribed to the Herodian period is merely proof that by that time, the Jewish ossuaries had become numerous.

In summary, the evidence currently tends to favour Rahmani's dating that ossuaries were introduced during the Herodian period; however, one cannot rule out an earlier origin.

1.6 *Geographical Distribution and Chronology*

Figure 1.15 (and the accompanying map co-ordinates) shows the geographical distribution of the ossuaries. It demonstrates that they were not confined to Jerusalem, but rather that they were used at various sites in Palestine, all of which were inhabited by Jews. On this map, the absence of entries for the region of Samaria is immediately noticeable. Admittedly, there is a report²⁰⁰ about a significant number of ossuary fragments discovered in a pillaged tomb in Nablus (Herod's Sebaste) and further, about disseminated special specimens all over town. These artifacts could have belonged to Jews living in Sebaste or else, to Samaritans.

¹⁹⁸ See for instance Avigad, "Aramaic Inscriptions," 108. He defends a date of 100 BCE based on a paleographic study of an inscribed ossuary lid from Bethpage (late first century BCE); see Meyers' reply, JORR, 43-44, and his proposal of "a date of 50-0 B.C." for Jason's inscription; but see Rahmani's critique on Meyers' epigraphic analysis in "Review of Meyers," 125.

¹⁹⁹ JORR, 42.

²⁰⁰ L.H. Vincent, "Un hypogée antique à Naplouse - Nouvelles diverses," *RB* 29 (1920) 128, 133.

But in the face of the uncertainty of who was buried in those chests, I did not include Nablus on the map that shows the distribution of Jewish ossuaries.²⁰¹

As mentioned above, Jerusalem was the place where individual bone boxes were first introduced. The fact that the largest body of ossuaries has been discovered in such a major urban centre as Jerusalem was, is not surprising. Undoubtedly, Jerusalem's skilled artisans were the *avant garde* in craftsmanship, and their products had been distributed from their workshops to other places.²⁰² It could be argued that Jerusalem, as the spiritual and cultural metropolis of the country, might well have been where ossuaries originated as a new mode of burial among certain classes. From there, the cosmopolitan influence reached Jericho and rural settlements in Judea. Cultural contacts even brought the Herodian ossuary to Alexandria.

The provenance and chronology of the ossuaries must be viewed partly in light of the political situation in Judea. After Archelaus, ethnarch of Judea, Samaria and Idumaea had been removed from power in 6 CE, the Jewish state lost its autonomy, and Judea became a Roman province under the procurators. During the first Jewish Revolt (in 68 CE), Jericho including its industrial and workshop areas was destroyed. After a span of only three generations, ossuary burials in the necropolis of Jericho came to an end.²⁰³

In Jerusalem, the war and the destruction in the summer of 70 CE was a national tragedy. The subsequent depopulation resulted in fewer burials and therefore in a diminishing number of ossuaries in the city's necropolises. Some evidence for tomb burials and

²⁰¹It would be of interest to find out via future excavations in Samaria, whether secondary burial in ossuaries was characteristic of Jewish society alone or was also adopted by other religio-ethnic groups in Palestine.

²⁰² Rahmani, RCat, 21, argues that after the custom of ossilegium had developed there, which took at least one generation, did it spread to other population centers, for example, Jericho in ca.10 CE. The novelty, however, could have been adopted in Jericho concurrently with Jerusalem.

²⁰³ RachelHachlili and Ann Killebrew, Jewish Funerary Customs during the Second Temple Period, in the Light of the Excavations at the Jericho Necropolis," *PEQ* 115 (1983) 125 (henceforth JFC).

ossuaries after this date is provided by the finds within the area of present day Dominus Flevit.²⁰⁴ A clear absence of ossuary burials in Jerusalem can be observed only after 135 CE.²⁰⁵ We can agree that "[T]he inaccessibility of Jerusalem after the founding of Aelia Capitolina thus made other places in Palestine likely centers for reburial."²⁰⁶

Outside of the metropolis proper, the number of ossuary burials increased not only because of a diffusion process over some generations, but also because a possible influx of Jerusalemites to these other places.²⁰⁷ It meant a temporary increase in rock-cut tombs and thus potential ossuary customers outside Jerusalem's boundaries. These reasons account for the distribution of ossuaries in the Hebron district, as well as in the foothills (Shephelah), in Southern Judea, in the region between Gezer and Jaffa, and in the Galilee. A substantial contingent of ossuaries is dated to the period 70-135 CE, when the Jewish population was still sufficiently large to require a supply of ossuaries for burials.²⁰⁸ Among the decimated population in the wake of the Bar Kokhba Revolt there are still indications of ossuary burials in some places.²⁰⁹ A small collection of ossuaries may be dated to the late second to mid-third century CE after which they finally disappear.²¹⁰

²⁰⁴ Rahmani, RCat, Table 1, gives 70 CE as the year that ossuaries ceased to be used in Jerusalem.

²⁰⁵ RCat, Table 1.

²⁰⁶ JORR, 38-39.

²⁰⁷ See also Rcat, 21-24.

²⁰⁸ RCat, 23; the second group of ossuaries in Table 1.

²⁰⁹ RCat, 23; the third group of ossuaries in Table 1.

²¹⁰ Rahmani, "Ossuaries", 204. Yohanan Aharoni has published an ossuary from the vicinity of Jerusalem, *Excavations at Ramat Rahel - Seasons 1961 and 1962* (Roma: Centro di Studi Semitici, Istituto di Studi del Vicino Oriente-Università, 1964) 80-82, which seems to be one of the last recorded finds dating to the third century CE.

There are no expectations that substantial numbers of ossuaries might still be discovered which could be dated to a later time. Meyers has suggested,²¹¹ albeit on the basis of some seriously disturbed remains, that the practice of ossilegium continued into the fourth century CE. Kloner,²¹² as well as Gophna and Sussman,²¹³ also argue for the early fourth century date, based on glass vessels found in one of the tombs which contained ossuaries. Rahmani refutes these conclusions by stating:

This proves merely that the tomb was used up to this period. There seems to be no evidence for any *terminus ad quem* for secondary burial in ossuaries at this site or elsewhere in the region.²¹⁴

Today, scholars usually date the ossuaries from the last quarter of the first century BCE to as late as the mid-third century CE. The disappearance of the ossuaries was the result of abolishing the secondary burial custom to somewhere between the second and fourth century CE, in favour of primary burial, which from then on became the accepted burial practice.

²¹¹ Eric Meyers, Thomas A. Kraabel, and James F. Strange, "Ancient Synagogue Excavations at Khirbet Shema', Upper Galilee, Israel 1970-72," *AASOR* 42 (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1976) 142.

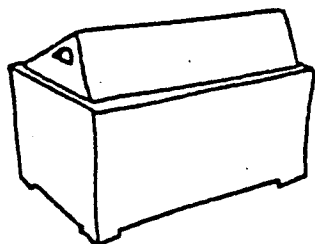
²¹² Amos Kloner, "The Cemetery at Horvat Thala," *EI* 17 (1984) 326 [Hebrew].

²¹³ Gophna and Sussman, "Tel Halif," 69-76.

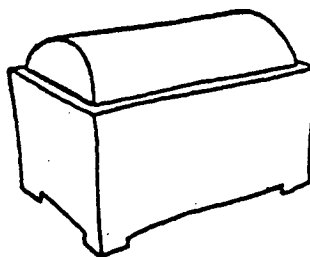
²¹⁴ RCat, 24.

Fig. 1.1 **The Different Forms of the *Ossuary***

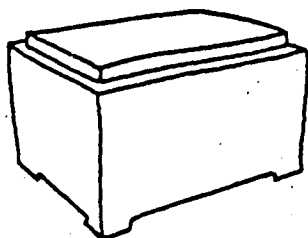
a) Gabled Lid



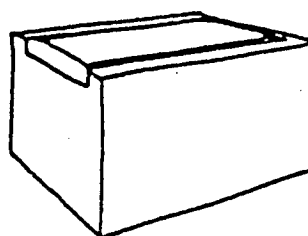
b) Vaulted Lid



c) Flat Lid



d) Inserted sliding Lid



e) Acroteria

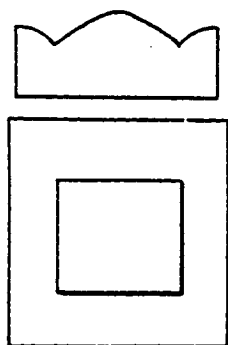
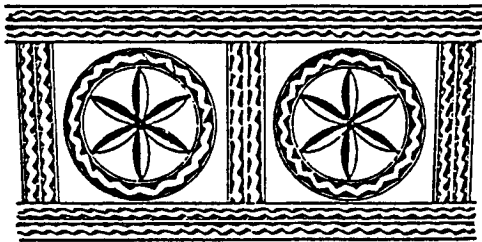
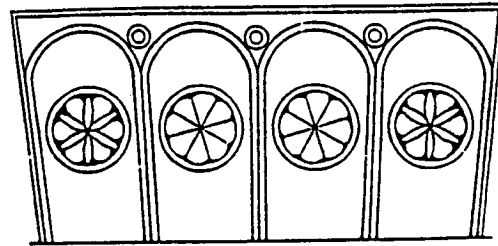


Fig. 1.2 *Ossuary Ornamentation*

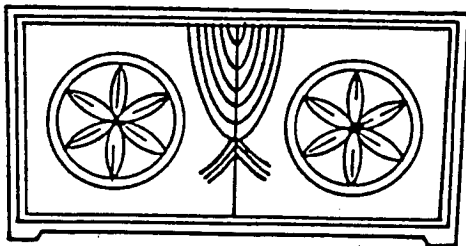
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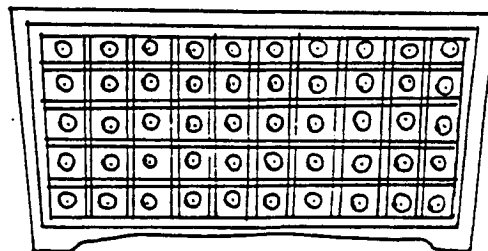
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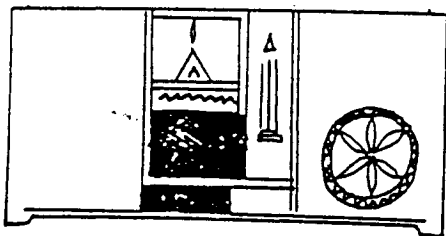
c)



d)



e)



f)

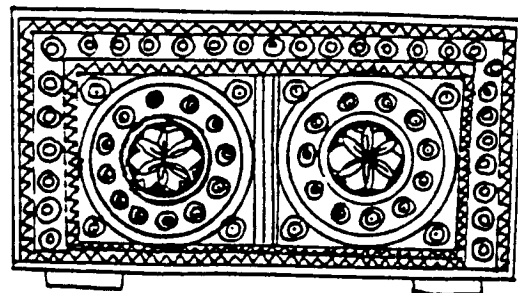


Fig. 1.3 Ornamental Motifs - Rosettes

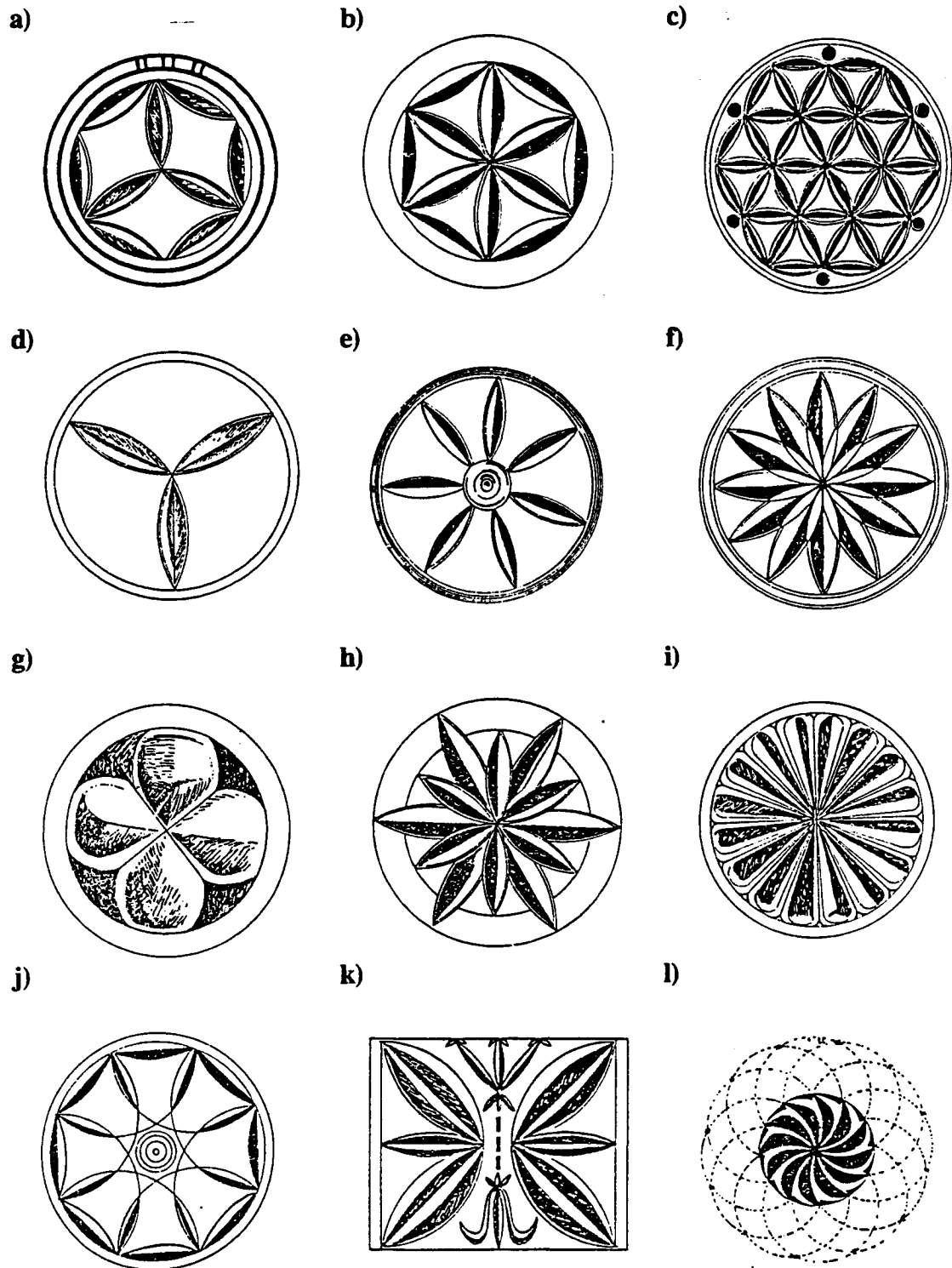
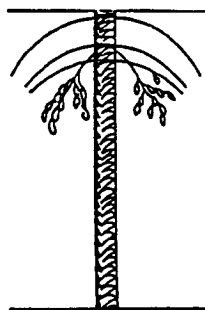
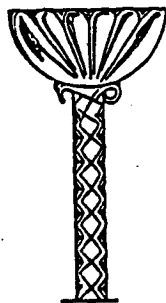


Fig. 1.4 **Ornamental Motifs - Plants**

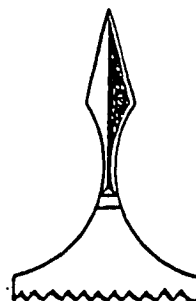
a)



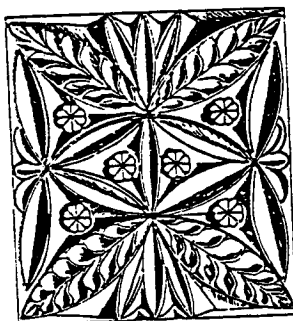
b)



c)



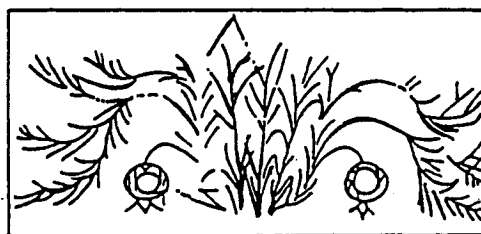
d)



e)



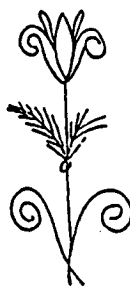
f)



g)



h)



i)

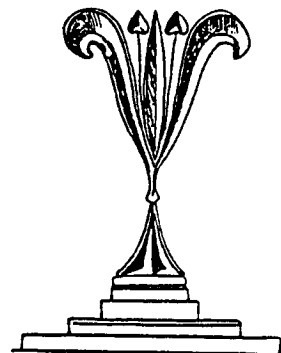
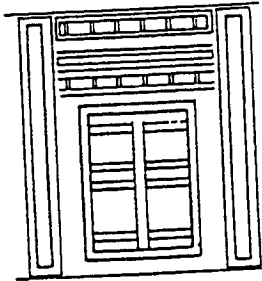
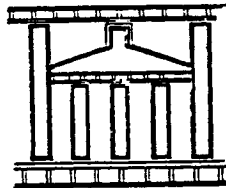


Fig. 1.5 Ornamental Motifs - Architectural

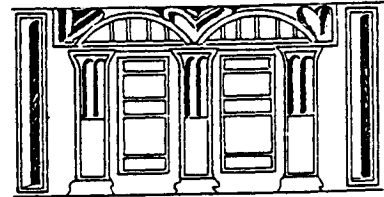
a)



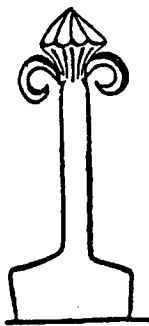
b)



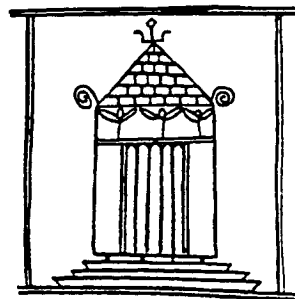
c)



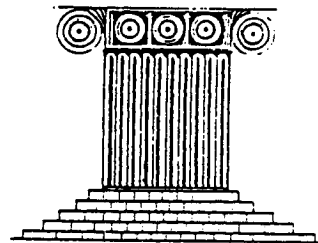
d)



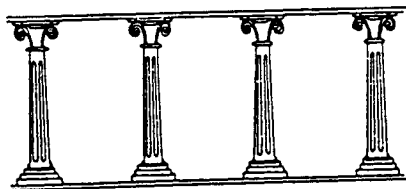
e)



f)



g)



h)

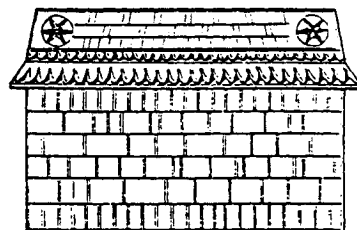


Fig. 1.6 **Ornamental Motifs - Geometric**

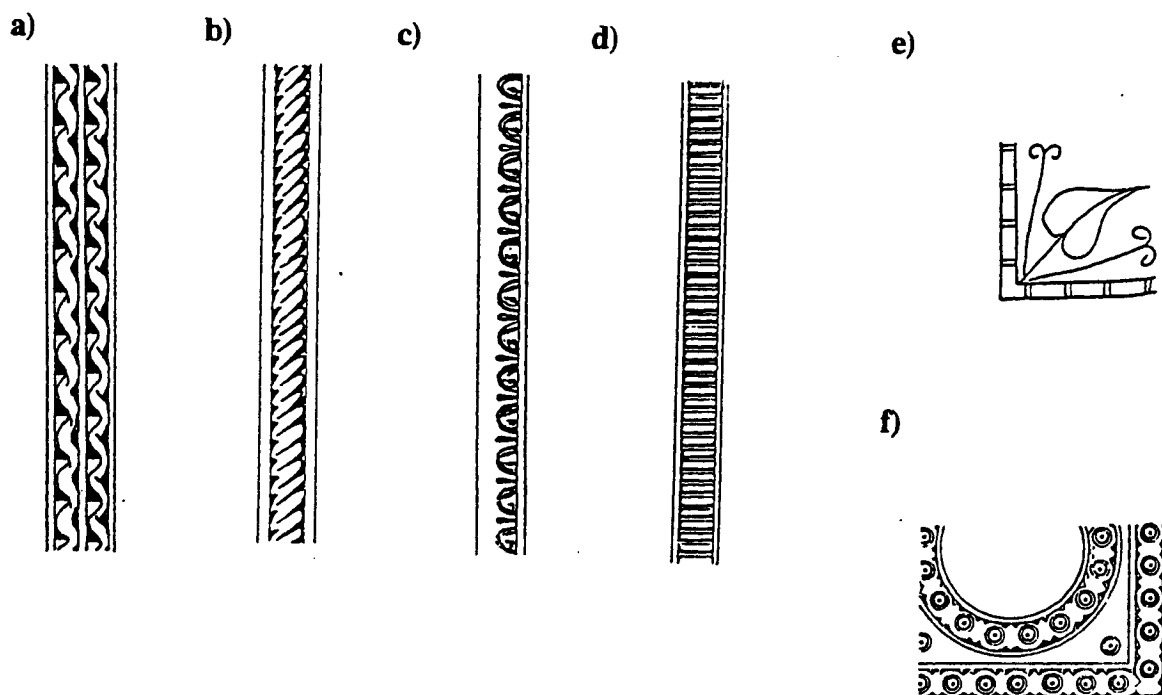


Fig. 1.7 **Ornamental Motifs - Varia**

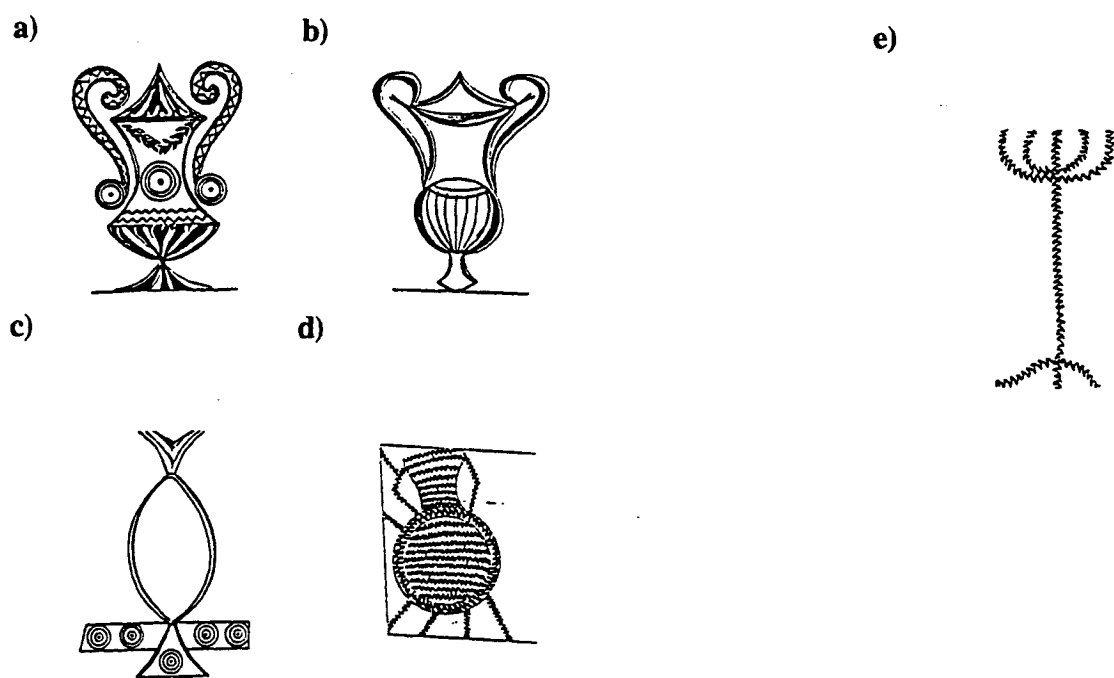


Fig. 1.8 Personal Names

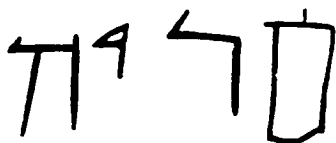
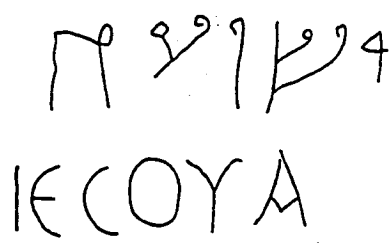
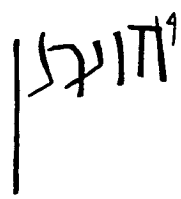
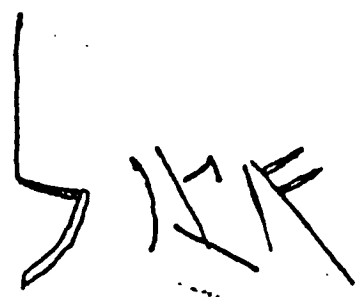
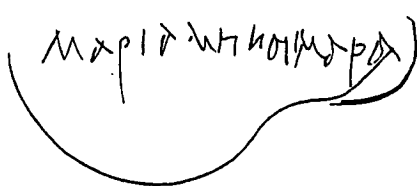
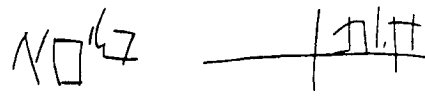
- a) 
מריה Marya
- b) 
IECOTYA יֵסוּעָא
IECOTYA יֵסוּעָא
Jeshuah; Jesua
- c) 
יהונתן Yehonatan
- d) 
ישוע Yeshua'
- e) 
Σόρρα/Ἀρριστοβόλα Sôrra Arristobola
- f) 
שאול Sha'ul
- g) 
Μαριαμήνου (ή) Μάρα of Mariamene, who is (also called) Mara
- h) 
חלת בלזמא ossuary of Balzama

Fig. 1.9

Different Scripts

a)

שפירא בת יהוחנן בן רביך

Shappira, daughter of
Yehoḥanan, son of Revikh(?)

b)

Μανᾶημος

Manahem

c)

ΚΑΙ ΕΙΦΙΓΕΝΕΙΑΣ

καὶ Εἰφιγενείας and of Iphigenia

d)

ΙΟΗΑΝΑ

e)

ΙΟΥΛΙΑ ΤΡΩΞΑΛΛΙΚ

Ἰουλία Τρωξαλλίς Julia Grasshopper

f)

דאָס איז אונזער פאטער

Dostas, our father, and not to
be opened

g)

CEALMCIN

CEALMCIN

Σελμσίν

שלמציא בת אריסטון

Sealmsin; Shelamzion daughter (of) Ariston

Fig. 1.10 Family Relationships

a)

אֶלֶּכְסָא בֶּר שִׁמְעוֹן

Shim'on, son of Alexa

b)

נָדָב בֶּת יְדִית

Judith, daughter of Nadav

c)

שִׁמְעוֹן וְיָמָה

Shim'on/and (his) wife

d)

Σαλώμη γυνή Ἰωέζρου Γολιάθου/καὶ Ἰσμάηλος
καὶ Ἰωέζρος υἱὸς Σαλόμε καὶ
Ἰωέζρος υἱὸς

Σαλώμη γυνή Ἰωέζρου Γολιάθου/καὶ Ἰσμάηλος
υἱὸς καὶ Ἰωέζρος υἱὸς Salome, wife of Joezer, of
Goliath's, and Ismael (her) son and Joezer (her) son

e)

מַרְיָם אִשְׁתּוֹ מַתְיָא

Maryam, wife of Matya

f)

אִמָּה

mother (or Imma)

g)

יְהוּדָה אֲבִי

Yehud, our father

h)

שְׁלַמְצִיּוֹן אִמָּה

mother Shlamzion

i)

סָרְתָא
כַּדָּם
חַנְנִיָּה

Martha, daughter of

j)

שְׁלַמְשִׁיּוֹן אִמָּה דִּי יְהוֹעֶזֶר גִּלְיָת

Shlamshion, (his) mother
of Yeho'ezer, of Goliath

Fig. 1.11 Personal Attributes

a)

ברית חבת בת יחוספ
בן יחוספ
מנחם

Marta, daughter of Yehosef, son of Ya'aqov, wife of Yehosef, from Hin

b)

סביו
בניא חבלה

Simon, builder of the sanctuary.

c)

יחוספ פברח גיתחם

Yehosef, son of Hananya, the scribe

d)

יחוספ

יחוספ בת יחוספ
בר חפלוס חכחן הגל

Yehohana/Yehohana daughter of Yehohanan/son of Thophlos, the high priest

e)

יחוספ
אביו
אביו
אביו

our father, Shim'on (the) Elder, Yehosef his son

f)

MAΘAKAI CIMWN
ADAL ΦΟΥΛΙΑΙΕΡΕ
ΚΥΡΕΤΥΣ ΤΟΥ ΤΟΥ

Mathia and Simon, brothers; sons of Ya'ir. The masters of the tomb

g)

ΑΡΙΣΤΩΝ
ΑΡΙΣΤΩΝ
ΑΡΙΣΤΩΝ

ΑΡΙΣΤΩΝ 'Aristōn
אריסטון אפמי
יחוספ
Ariston; Ariston of Apamea; Judah the proselyte.

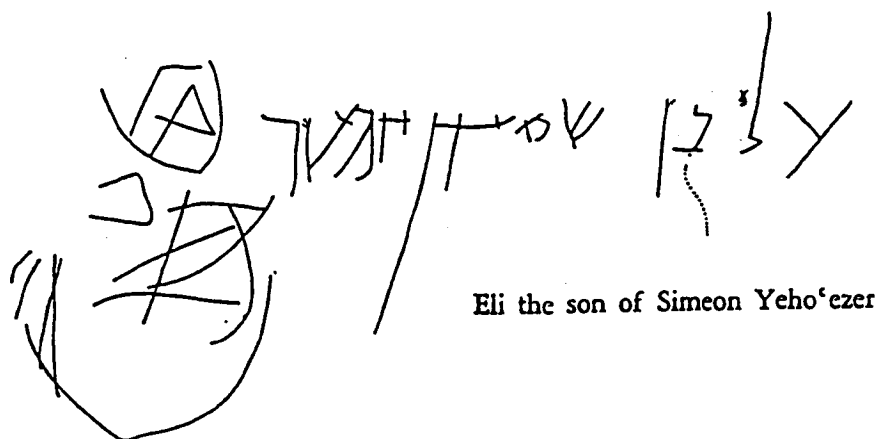
h)

ΘΕΟΔΟΤΟΥ ΑΠΕΛΕΥ-
ΘΕΡΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΙΣΣΗΣ-
ΑΓΡΙΠΠΕΙΝΗΣ-ΣΟΡΑΣ

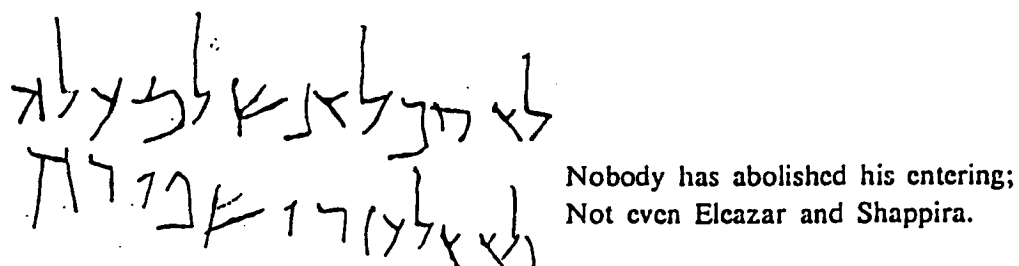
Θεοδότου ἀπελευ-/θέρου βασιλίσσης-/Ἀγριππείνης
- σοράς ossuary of Theodotos, Queen Agrippina's
freedman

Fig. 1.12 Special Inscriptions

a)



b)

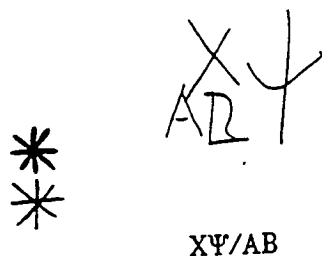


c)

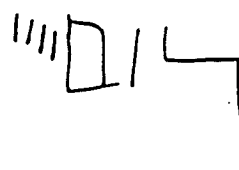
ΘΑΛΙΑΡΧΟΣ ΛΚ
ΘΑΛΙΑΡΧΟΣ ΛΚ
ΔΩΣΙΘΕΟΥ

Θαλιάρχος ΛΚ/Θαλιάρχος ΛΚ/Δωσιθέου
Thaliarchos, aged 20/Thaliarchos, aged 20/son of
Dositheos

d)



e)



4 drachma 1, obol 4

Fig. 1.13 Formulae

ΜΑΡΙΕΑ ΜΗΜΑΘΙΑΣ
ΓΥΝΗ ΑΝΤΙΣΚΙΝΗΣ
ΑΥΤΑΠΑΤΑΙΣ ΕΑΥΤΟΥ
ΟΥ ΟΥΝ

Μαριάμη Μαθίας/γυνή ὁ ἀντισκινήσ(ας)/αὐτὰ
πάταξε αὐτοῦ/οὐρουν Maryame, wife of Mathia;
who(soever) moves these (bones) away, may
blindness strike him

AB
F
H
1
Φ

ΑΒΓΔ/ΕΖ/ΗΘ/ /Φ

Fig. 1.14 **Consolatory Inscriptions**

Handwritten notes:

9x8 = 720

H = 100

osuary of
Shalom, daughter of Sha'ul/who failed to give birth.
Peace, daughter!

11/2

peace(?) שלום

שלום שלום

peace peace(?) שלום שלום

יום יום

peace peace(?) שלום שלום

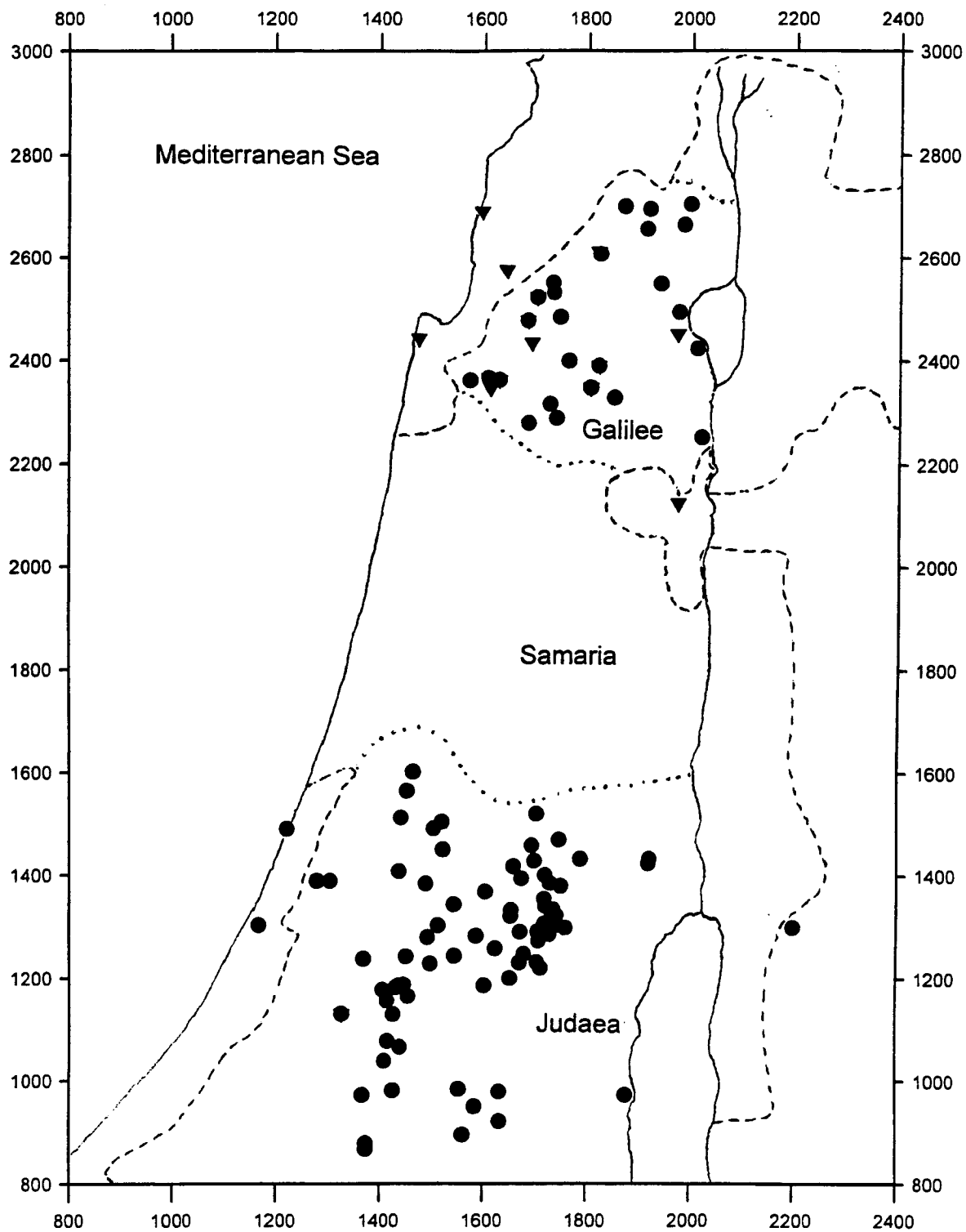


Fig. 1.5 Locations in Israel where ossuaries have been discovered. The circles correspond to stone ossuaries, while the triangles correspond to clay ossuaries. Note that ossuaries were found in those areas of ancient Palestine where Jews were living - Judaea and the Galilee, with very few outside those boundaries. The identity of each location is shown in the table of co-ordinates.

Map co-ordinates for Ossuary Locations in Israel (see Fig.)		
Location	Longitude	Latitude
Abu Dis	1760	1300
Abu Tor	1717.7	1304.1
Ai (et-Tell)	1748	1471
Road to Anathot, el-Aissawiyeh	1732	1331.5
bab Hetta Quarter (Mawlawiyeh)		
Battir	1625	1260
Beit Jala	1680	1249
Beit Nattif	1500	1230
Beit She'an	1975	2125
Beit Shearim / Sheikh Abreik	1612.52	2347.63
Ben Shemen	1442.4	1513.7
Bet Zayyit	1654.2	1322.5
Bethany (El-Aizariyah)	1745	1305
Bethlehem / El-'Atn	1671	1232
Dabburiyya	1851	2330
Ein Gedi	1877.4	973.7
el-Gib	1675	1396
El Jish (Gesher)	2020	2253
el Midiah	1506	1493
El-Kirmil (Hebron Hills)	1633.5	922
El-Maghar (Ramle)	1305	1390
Emmaus	1491	1385
er-Ram	1721	1402
Eshtemo'a (Es-Samu)	1563	896
et-Tur	1743	1323.6
Gezer	1439	1409
Ginnegar	1740	2290
Givat Ram / Sheikh Badr	1169	1304
Giv'at Shamma	1436	1186
Gush Halav	1918	2696
Har Nebo (Jabal Naba)	2200	1300
Hizma	1751	1381
Horvat Benaya	1427	982
Horvat Egoz	1440.5	1067.2
Horvat Illin	1495	1281
Horvat Kishor	1367.5	973.1
Horvat Lavnin	1456	1167
Horvat Ofrat (Khirbet et Taiyiba)	1692	2435
Horvat Qasra	1410	1040
Horvat Qastra	1482	2441
Horvat Rimmon (S. of Lahav)	1374	868
Horvat Thala / Tille (near Lahav)	1374	879
Horvat Uza / Khirbet Aiyadiya	1643	2576
Horvat Yavnit (near Safed)	1985	2665
Horvat Zed (near Giv'at Yeshayahu)	1448	1189
Horvat Zefiyya	1370	1239
Huqoq	1940	2550
I'bellin	1684	2478
Issawiya (Isfiya)	1573	2362

Iyye Nahash (near Beit Guvrin)	1427.2	1131.6
Jebel el Mukkabil (south Jerusalem)		
Jericho	1920	1425
Jerusalem, Ben Hinnom	1721.4	1306.1
Jerusalem, Giv'at Ha-Mivtar	1721.5	1341.9
Jerusalem, Mount Scopus (E)	1736.9	1335.2
Jerusalem, East Talpiyyot	1728.95	1287
Jifna (ancient Ophni, Gophna)	1704	1522
Kabul	1702	2523
Kafr Kanna	1821	2391
Kafr Sajur	1823	2608
Karm es-Sheikh (Jerusalem)		
Katane (near Kiryat Anavim)	1605	1370
Kaukab	1746	2485
Kefar Barukh (Jezreel)	1686	2280
Kerak (al-Karak)	2170	670
Kfar Hittin	1973	2452
Khallat Qeis	1406	1179
Khirbet Beit Bassa	1713	1222
Khirbet Deir Salaam (Neve Yaakov)	1730	1387
Khirbet Durusiye / Horvat Midras	1432	1183
Khirbet el-Basha	1415.9	1078.8
Khirbet el-Hadab (Hebron Hills)	1555	985
Khirbet el-Latatin (near Ramallah)	1659.5	1419
Khirbet el-Marmita - Bet Shemesh	1515	1304
Khirbet Es-Sharia	1452.5	1243.5
Khirbet Habra (Kefar Hebron)	1280	1390
Khirbet Qusatin (Hebron Hills)		
Khirbet Sarissa / Horvat Sharisha	1545	1345
Khirbet umm el Qat'a	1653	1202
Khirbet Umm Kalkha - Ramle	1327	1132
Malha (Manahat)	1673	1292
Massuot Yishaq	1603	1188
Matta	1545.9	1245.6
Meirot	1997	2705
Meqor Hayyim	1706	1292
Meron	1913	2657
Migdal	1975	2495
Migdal Ha'emeq	1727	2317
Mod'in	1524	1452
Moza Illit	1655	1334
Mukhmas	1789.5	1433.5
Nahal Yoel	1588	1284.2
Nahariyah	1595	2690
Na'lin	1522	1506
Nazareth	1805	2349
Qiryat Tiv'on	1629	2363
Qula	1465.8	1603
Ramallah	1695	1460
Ramat Eshkol (Jerusalem)		
Ramat Rahel	1708	1275
Sajur	1820	2612

Sasa	1870	2701
Sepphoris	1764	2400
Sha'ab	1732	2551
Sha'ar Ha'amaqim	1608	2366
Shaf'at	1720	1356
Shoham	1453.8	1566
Tel en-Nasbeh (Mizpe)	1700	1430
Tel Goded	1415	1158
Tel Zif	1633	980
Tiberias, Qiryat Shmuel	2010.8	2424.4
Wadi Beit Sahur	1705	1233
Wadi en nar (Kidron)	1725	1300
Wadi en nar (Kidron)	1725	1310
Wadi Nu'eima	1922	1434
Wadi Qaddum (Silwan)	1720	1308
Wa'r abu es Safa		
Ya'ad	1733.7	2532.7
Yatta	1585	951
Yavne-Yam	1222	1491
Yavnit	1985	2665
Zikhron Moshe (Jerusalem)		

Chapter 2

Literary Sources Pertaining to Secondary Burials

2.1 Rabbinical Writings

When Rabbinic texts describe ossilegium, we take them to express the world view of their authors. As such they tell us how ossilegium had been done or was perceived to be done in a particular group of people. This may add to information, or confirm information we obtain from the archaeological data and thus broaden my understanding what ossuary burial meant for various kind of people at the time.²¹⁵ Having said this, we look at the information that these texts communicated to their readership which their interests in mind. These texts may but also may not reflect how other Jerusalemites performed the ritual.

What does the text evidence tell us about ossilegium? The non-canonical tractate Semahot especially, provides detailed information concerning the practice of bone-gathering, in Hebrew ליקוט עצמות. The full text of the relevant passages is given below.²¹⁶ Here, I merely summarize the contents.

Sem 12.5 describes the priorities in connection with the major life-cycle events of a Jew's life. Although ranking last, ossilegium was, nevertheless, numbered among the major events. It was considered so important that, according to Sem 13.1, one was temporarily exempted, indeed forbidden, from compliance with the positive precepts of the Torah when engaged therein. Sem 12.9 teaches the reader to fulfill the family responsibility towards the elders and to carry out ossilegium. It essentially also entreats the reader to transmit the practice from generation to generation. Some important rulings and customs with regards to secondary burials are gleaned from this text:

²¹⁵ The historian Josephus does not mention ossilegium, therefore rabbinic texts are the only ancient source that describes us the ritual, see p.79-82.

²¹⁶ See pp.80-82. Text and translations are taken from Zlotnick, *The Tractate Mourning*, referred to above.

A temporary, primary inhumation in a b'kia²¹⁷ precedes the final burial. The bone-gathering is done "in the course of time", meaning when the flesh has completely disintegrated.²¹⁸ Any interference with the natural process of decomposition, or a premature bone-gathering, was explicitly forbidden. Although the term, "in the course of time" is somewhat vague, scholars believe that the decomposition of the flesh was completed within a twelve month period, though external conditions surely influenced the process. People apparently may have hastened the permanent burial for a variety of reasons.²¹⁹ This must have been of genuine concern to the rabbis of that time for them to have to address the issue on several occasions in different places of the same tractate (e.g. Sem 12.6, Sem 12.7).

The obligation of initiating the ceremony of ossilegium lay with the next of kin, usually the son, who also had a certain role to perform within the ritual itself. The actual act of collecting the bones of one's parents was to be done preferably, not by the offspring himself but, by someone else.²²⁰ Thus, it was ruled by Rabbi Akiba (Sem 12.7) that a person may collect the bones of all dead except those of his father and his mother. It has been supposed that this ruling had been made in order to protect the child from emotional

²¹⁷ See p.82. Variants: *mahamara*, *nibrekheth*, translated with: fosse, pit, mound, also arcosolia.

²¹⁸ This is also mentioned in mSan 6.5, see text below, p.79. All Hebrew and English citations from the Mishna are taken from Philip Blackman, *Mishnayoth* (in 6 vols. and supplementary vol. VII; pointed Hebrew Text, Introductions, Translation; London, UK: Mishna Press; Lasar M. Schoenfeld, 1951-1955).

²¹⁹ In some cases, anthropological studies on the skeletal remains in ossuaries do in fact show that the bones had not fallen apart before they were collected for permanent burial; see Haas, "Giv'at ha-Mivtar," 20/1-2 (1970) 38-39.

²²⁰ For this task, bone collectors were engaged, see Zeev Weiss, "Social Aspects of Burial in Beth She'arim: Archaeological Finds and Talmudic Sources," in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*, ed. L. I. Levine (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992) 363, who refers also to Genesis Rabbah 89:2: *The Midrash Rabbah* I: 820, reports about a "professional" bone-collector R. Simeon bar Abba who said: "There was a certain man in Sepphoris ... who gathered up bones. When he saw black ones he would say: These are of a person who drank water. When they were red, he would say: These are of a person who drank wine; when they were white, he would say: These are of a person who drank hot beverages."

suffering. But my contention is that it safeguarded the boundaries between a parent and a child, and it may well be that this ruling reflected the private space of a parent.

Rulings observed during the rite of the ossilegium were usually as exacting as those conformed to at the time of death. If the clothes had been rent for a person at the time of his death, then they were to be rent again at the time of the ossilegium (Sem 12.3). This ritual, as well as the following custom, were the prerogative of the son.

Dried herbs were sprinkled after the ceremony of ossilegium on top of the collected bones. Apparently, people used various spices and ointments, for example wine, oil, myrrh and aloes.²²¹ However, according to Sem 12.9, eventually after some debate, only dried herbs were permitted in order not to attract worms.

Ossilegium had to be performed in such a way that the bones of one individual remained separate from those of other people. It was permissible to carry out the ossilegium of more than one corpse at a time, but according to Rabbi Johanan ben Nuri, special care had to be taken, and certain directives complied with, because of the prohibition of placing corpses or bones of different individuals in close proximity to each other.²²² In fact, according to Sem 12.8, Rabbi Akiba explicitly rules that the collected bones should be placed into ossuaries in order to avoid intermingling. Notwithstanding this admonishment, often archaeologists found multiple burials in ossuaries, usually in recognizably separate piles. This text also confirms that ossilegium was practised concurrently with and without an ossuary.

Ossilegium caused a change of status. It rendered the mourner ritually impure, because he had come in contact with the skeletal remains.²²³ The state of impurity was very

²²¹ Bunches of withered flowers were found in ossuaries among bones - Haas, "Giv'at ha-Mivtar," 38-40. See also Zlotnick, *Mourning*, 161 n.9.

²²² Eventually it was ruled by Rabbi Judah: "Whomsoever a person may sleep with, when he is living, he may be buried with when he is dead " (Sem 13.8).

²²³ Num 19:16.

undesirable, contagious, and caused severe restrictions.²²⁴ Nevertheless, it was considered a good deed to bury or re-bury the dead in spite of the subsequent defilement. Thus, regulations connected to secondary burial were sometimes less severe than those which applied at the time of death. The Mishnah (mPes 8.8) allows, for example, the son to immediately take a ritual bath and eat the sacrifices. Sem 12.4 states that the ritual of ossilegium was concluded after no more than a single day, close to sundown and, with that, the mourning obligations formally came to an end.

With time, theological expectations were built around the rite of ossilegium. In Late Antiquity, rabbinic circles envisioned not just death as a means of obtaining atonement of sins, but also the decomposition of the flesh as corresponding to the purification of the soul (bSan 47b). The occasion of the performance of the ritual was cause for great joy, perceived by Rabbi Meir (mMQ 1.5) as it signalled the end of a post-mortem fate of divine judgement.

²²⁴ For example, the Temple Mount could not be entered under penalty of death; partaking of the Hallowed food was forbidden (see Sem 6.1).

Literary source material from the Mishna, the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmud, and Tractate Semahot ("Mourning").

1. Sources from the Mishna

- Pes 8.8¹ A mourner has a ritual bath and may eat of his Passover offering in the evening, but not of the sacrifices. He who learns of the death of his kinsman, and he who assembles the bones [of his parent], has a ritual bath and may eat the sacrifices.
- אונן טובל ואוכל את פסחו לערב, אבל לא בקדשים. השומע על מתו, והמלקט לו עצמות, טובל ואוכל בקדשים.
- MQ 1.5² And Rabbi Meir said further. A man may collect the bones of his father or of his mother because this is a joyful duty to him. But Rabbi Jose says, it is a mournful obligation for him.
- ועוד אמר רבי מאיר, מלקט אדם עצמות אביו ואמו, מפני ששמחה היא לו. רבי יוסי אומר, אבל הוא לו.
- San. 6.5³ And they used not to bury him in the burying-places of his ancestors, but two places for burial were maintained in readiness by the court, one for those who were beheaded or strangled, and the other for those that were stoned or burned.
- ולא היו קוברין אותו בקברות אבותיו, אלא שתי בתי קברות היו מתוקנין לבית דין, אחת לנהרגין ולנחנקין, ואחת לנסקלין ולנשרפין.
- San. 6.6⁴ When the flesh had decayed away they collected the bones and buried them in their place.
- נתעכל הבשר, מלקטין את העצמות, וקוברין אותן במקומן.

2. Sources from the Jerusalem Talmud (Yerushalmi)

- MQ 1.5⁵ Moreover, Rabbi Meir said: "A man may gather together the bones of his father or mother, since this is to him an occasion for rejoicing." At first they would collect the bones and bury them in mounds¹ [במהמרר]. When the flesh had

1. Philip Blackman, *Mishnayoth*, 2 (1952) 208
2. Philip Blackman, *Mishnayoth* 2 (1952) 470
3. Philip Blackman, *Mishnayoth* 4 (1952) 264
4. Philip Blackman, *Mishnayoth* 4 (1952) 265
5. Jacob Neusner, *Talmud*, Volume 20: Hagigah and Moed Qatan (1986) 1.45

putrefied, they would collect the bones and bury them in cedar chests² [ברזים]. On that day the mourner would engage in the rite of mourning. The next day he would rejoice, saying that his ancestors would free him from judgment.

3. Sources from the Babylonian Talmud (Bavli)

San 47b Both death and burial are necessary. Rabbi Adda ben Ahaba objected: "But should you think that having been [shamefully] buried, he attains forgiveness, they should observe mourning rites! -The decay of the flesh too is necessary. This also follows from what he [the Tanna] teaches: 'When the flesh was completely decomposed, the bones were gathered and buried in their proper place.'

מיתה וקבורה בעינן. מוטיב רב אדא בר אהבה: 'לא היו מתאבלין אלא אונינן שאין אנינות אלא בלב'. ואי סלקא דעתך כיון דאיבור הוא להו כפרה? ליאבלו. בעינן נמי עיכול בשר. דיקא נמי עקתנן: 'נתעכל הבשר מלקטין את העצמות וקוברין אותן במקומן'. שמע מינה.

4. Sources from the Tractate Semahot

Sem 12.1 The day one hears of a death is like the day of burial, so far as rending clothes and mourning, the precepts of *shiv'ah* and the precepts of *sheloshim* are concerned. As for eating hallowed food, it is only like the day of *ossilegium*: both in one case and in the other, hallowed food may be eaten.

יום שמועה כיום קבורה לקריעה ולאיבול, למצות שבעה ולמצות שלשים אבל לאכילת קדשים אינו אלא כמלקט עצמות. אילו ואילו אוכלין קדשים.

Sem 12.3 Whenever clothes are rent for a person at the time of his death, they must be rent for him at the time of *ossilegium*. Whenever clothes rent in the event of death may not be mended, they may not be mended in the event of *ossilegium*.

כל שקורעין עליו בשעת מיתתו, קורעין עליו בשעת ליקוט עצמות. וכל שאינו מאחה עליו בשעת מיתתו, אינו מאחה עליו בשעת ליקוט עצמות.

Sem 12.4 In the case of *ossilegium*, mourning must be observed for only one day. As a consequence, the bones are gathered only near nightfall. If while gathering them all that day, night falls, a man is released from the obligation of mourning on the very next day. There should be no standing in line, and no comforting of mourners, but personal words of sympathy may be extended to them. The *chavar ir* should not participate in their rites, but the meal may be prepared for them in the mourners' house. Rabbi Simeon ben Eleazar says: "If night falls while the comforters are going around the inverted beds offering personal words of sympathy, the beds need not be set upright."

ליקוט עצמות אינו אלא יום אחד בלבד. לפיכך אין מלקטין אלא עם חשיכה. ליקטן כל אותו יום, חשיכה - מותר באותו יום של אחריו. ואין עומדין בשורה עליהן, ואין אומרינן תנחומין עליהן, אבל אומרינן תנחומין לעצמן, ואין אזלין עליהן בחבר עיר, אבל מברין עליהן בתוך ביתו של אבל, רבי שמעון בן אלעזר: היו סובבין מיטות כפופות, חשיכה - הרי אינו זקפן.

Sem 12.5 This is what societies used to do in Jerusalem: some went to a mourner's house, others to a wedding feast; some to a circumcision, others to an ossilegium. To a mourner's house or to a wedding feast? The wedding feast comes first. To a circumcision or an ossilegium? The circumcision comes first.

כך היו עושים חבורות בירושלים: אילו לבית האבל, ואילו לבית המשתה, ואילו לשבוע הבן, ואילו ללקט עצמות. לבית האבל ולבית המשתה - בית המשתה קודם. לשבוע הבן וללקט עצמות - לשבוע הבן קודם.

Sem 12.6 The bones of a corpse should not be taken apart, nor the tendons severed, unless the bones had fallen apart of themselves and the tendons of themselves had been severed.

אין מפרקין את העצמות, ואין מפסיקין את הגידין - אלא אם כן נתפרקו העצמות מעצמן, ונתפסקו הגידין מעצמן.

Sem 12.7 A person may collect the bones of all dead except those of his father and mother.

כל העצמות האילו מלקט חוץ מעצמות אביו ואמו.

Sem 12.7 Rabbi Akiba says: "The bones may not be gathered until the flesh has wasted away; once it has, the features are no longer recognizable in the skeleton."

רבי עקיבא אומר: אחר ליקוט עצמות אינו עד שיכלה הבשר - כלה הבשר אין הצורה ניכרת בעצמות.

Sem 12.8 The *ossilegium* of two corpses may take place at the same time, as long as the bones of the one are put at one end of a sheet and those of the other at the other end of the sheet. So Rabbi Johanan ben Nuri. Rabbi Akiba says: "In the course of time, the sheet will waste away; in the course of time, the bones will intermingle. Let them rather be gathered and placed in *ossuaries* [בירזין]."

מלקט אדם עצמות שני מתים כאחד, ונותן אילו בראש אפיקריסין מיכאן, ואילו בראש אפיקריסין מיכאן - דברי רבי יוחנן בן נורי. ורבי עקיבא אומר: סוף אפיקריסין להתאכל, וסוף עצמות להתערב, אבל מלקטן ונותן אותן בירזין.

- Sem 12.9 "The bones may be sprinkled with wine and oil." So Rabbi Akiva. Rabbi Simeon ben Nannas says: "Oil, but not wine, because wine evaporates." "Neither wine nor oil", say the Sages, "because these only invite worms, but dried herbs may be put on them."
- מרבצין עליהם יין ושמן - דברי רבי עקיבא. רבי שמעון בן ננס אומר: שמן, ולא יין מפני שהיין נודף. וחכמים אומרים: לא שמן ולא יין, מפני שמרבין עליו את הדירה, אבל נותנין עליהן ספירין יבשין.
- Sem 12.9 Rabbi Eleazar bar Zadok said: "Thus spoke father at the time of his death: 'My son, bury me at first in a fosse [*b'kia*]. In the course of time, collect my bones and put them in an ossuary [*dloskema*]; but do not gather them with your own hands'. And thus did I attend him: Johanan entered, collected the bones, and spread a sheet over them. I then came in, rent my clothes for them, and sprinkled dried herbs over them. Just as he attended his father, so I attended him."
- אמר רבי אלעזר ברבי צדוק: כך אמר אבא בשעת מיתתו: בני, בתחילה קוברני בביקעה, ובסוף לקט את עצמיי ותנם בדלוסקמא - ואל תלקטם אתה בידך. וכן עשיתי לו: נכנס יוחנן וליקטן, ופירס עליהן אפיקריסין, ונכנסתי וקרעתי עליהן, ונתתי עליהן ספירין יבשין. כשם שעשה לאבא כך עשיתי לו.
- Sem 13.1 A person engaged in *ossilegium* or in guarding the bones is exempt from reciting the *S(h)ema*, from the *Tefillah*, from *tefillin*, and from all the commandments written in the Torah. Should he wish to exact more of himself, he may not do so, because of the honour due to the bones of the dead.
- המלקט עצמות והשומר עצמות פטור מקריית שמע. ומן התפלה, ומן התפילין, ומן כל מצות האמורות בתורה. ואם רצה להחמיר עליו, לא יחמיר מפני כבוד עצמות.
- Sem 13.6 Whosoever finds bones in a tomb should place them in an arcosolium, so Rabbi Akiba. The Sages say: He should not move them from their place. If he found them in a *kokh* or in a *loculus* [איסטרוך], he should not move them from their place.
- המוציא עצמות בקבר הרי זה נותן בקמורות - דברי רבי עקיבא. וחכמים אומרים: לא יזיז ממקומם. מצאן בכוך או באיסטרוך, לא יזיז ממקומן.
- Sem 14.2 All funeral urns that are inherited [גורני הנחלות] may be moved from place to place and transferred from family to family.
- כך גורני הנחלות עוברות ממקום למקום, ונעקרות ממשפחה למשפחה.

Chapter 3

The Tomb Setting of the Ossuary

3.1 *Survey of Jewish Burial Customs in Palestine*

Archaeology has provided *de facto* evidence of secondary burial practices within Judaism well into the Talmudic period, in terms of the layout of tombs and the ossuaries within. Caves, either natural or, more commonly, hewn into the rock,²²⁵ had been utilized for a long time for entombment. For interpretative purposes my survey of the burial customs will consist of three stages: first, a report on the First Temple period (Iron Age II) burials from the eighth to the sixth century BCE; second, an outline of Second Temple period conventions; and third, a perusal of the Jewish necropolis in Beth She'arim, dating to between the second and the fourth century CE.

3.2 *Burials of the First Temple Period*

The typical Israelite rock-cut tombs of the pre-exilic period²²⁶ exhibit the following layout: a passage leading to a main chamber, and additional side rooms, used when the need for more space arose.²²⁷ Well-carved benches lined the walls and sometimes rectangular troughs were cut into the walls parallel to the sides of the chamber.²²⁸ Often a headrest was carved

²²⁵ Gen 50:5 - "In the tomb that I hewed out for myself in the land of Canaan, there you shall bury me."

²²⁶ David Ussishkin, *The Village of Silwan. The Necropolis From the Period of the Judean Kingdom* (Jerusalem: IES and Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1993).

²²⁷ The most elaborate First Temple period burial caves known to us in Judah were discovered at St. Etienne. One complex with eight side rooms covers about 10,000 sq. ft.; see these characteristic features in Gabriel Barkay and Amos Kloner, "Jerusalem Tombs from the Days of the First Temple," *BAR* 12/2 (1986) 22-39.

²²⁸ These hewn *sarcophagi* were a feature in some special First Temple period tombs of the upper classes. The corpses were placed there for primary burial; a chamber with three such troughs exists in Cave

either onto the benches or directly into the floor. The shrouded corpse was laid out on a bench (or floor) accompanied by funerary gifts such as jewelry, vessels and lamps. Each tomb was the property of one family²²⁹ and contained the remains of its members. In an extended family this frequently amounted to a great number of individuals. When the tomb had reached full capacity, the previous burials were pushed aside or relocated in order to make room for additional burials. The skeletal remains were never removed from a family tomb. The bones, as well as the grave goods, were transferred either into a special recess, a pit, or a depository beneath the floor of the tomb-chamber, or possibly into a separate chamber. All of these final locations can be designated as charnels. The repository was an integral part of the Israelite family tomb.²³⁰ This concept of collective retention of the skeletal remains of former burials continued to the end of the Hasmonean period.²³¹

The recurrent Biblical idiom for death and burial: "to lie down"(*skb*) with one's ancestors" or "to be gathered" (*nsp*) to one's kin,²³² is often taken to express the realia: the dead are gathered to their ancestors in the family tomb; moreover, that the sweeping of desiccated remains into a communal depository illustrates this idiom of gathering (uniting)

complex 1 in St. Etienne. Barkay and Kloner, "Jerusalem Tombs, 33, propose that the original, important owners of the tomb were buried in this chamber.

²²⁹ Gen 49:29 - "Bury me with my fathers in the cave which is in the field ...that Abraham bought...for a burial site"; Judg 2:9 - "and was buried on his own property."

²³⁰ Levi Y. Rahmani, "Ossuaries and Ossilegium (Bone-Gathering) in the Late Second Temple Period," in *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed*, ed. Hillel Geva (Jerusalem: IES, 1994) 191.

²³¹ Levi Y. Rahmani, "Ancient Jerusalem's Funerary Customs and Tombs. Part Four," *BA* 45 (1982) 118.

²³² Gen 25:8, 35:29, 49:29; Num 31:2; Deut 32:50; Judg 2:10; 1 Kgs 14:31, 15:24, 2 Kgs 8:24, 13:13, 22:20; 1 Chron 17:1.

very well.²³³ However, it seems to me more reasonable that this formula refers rather to a reunion in the hereafter, as argued by other scholars.²³⁴

3.3 *Burials of the Second Temple Period*

Archaeologists based their research pertaining to Second Temple period funerary customs mainly on the findings in the cemeteries in Jerusalem,²³⁵ Jericho,²³⁶ En Gedi,²³⁷ and Qumran.²³⁸ They observed a great variety of tomb architecture and burial technique. Evidence for primary and secondary burial has been found in diverse contexts. The most

²³³ This is, for example, Meyers' position, "Secondary Burials in Palestine," *BA* 33 (1970) 17.

²³⁴ There is a detailed analysis pertaining to these texts in Karl-Johan Illman, *Old Testament Formulas about Death* (Abo Finland: Abo Akademy, 1979), and recently, Philip S. Johnston, *Shades of Sheol. Death and Afterlife in the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 2002) 33-35. For example, the statement in 1Kgs 2:10 - "So David slept with his fathers" seems to contradict Meyers' view, since David's forefathers were buried in the rural homeland.

²³⁵ Hillel Geva and Nahman Avigad, "Jerusalem: Tombs," *NEAEHL* II (1993) 747-757. The necropolises, from the Second Temple period, surrounding Jerusalem are concentrated to the north, east and south of the city. From surveys and excavations more than eight hundred tombs are known to exist within a radius of 5 km. around the city limits. The tombs do not display a central plan, but they were hewn into the rocky banks of the valleys and slopes of the hills encircling the city. Cemeteries were located outside the town limits (mBB 2.9). At the end of the Second Temple period, the few tombs situated within the walls of Jerusalem had presumably been cleared before the city walls were extended.

²³⁶ See *Jericho*, the final report on a series of salvage excavations between 1975-1979 by Hachlili and Killebrew, and preliminary reports, such as "Jewish Funerary Customs during the Second Temple Period, in the Light of the Excavations at the Jericho Necropolis," *PEQ* 115 (1983b) 109-132.

²³⁷ En-Gedi in the Judean Desert near the Dead Sea is an important site which broadened our knowledge of burials; see Gideon Hadas, "Abstract: Nine Tombs of the Second Temple Period at 'En Gedi", *Atiqot* 24 (1994) 1-8.

²³⁸ The cemetery, close to the ancient ruins of Khirbet Qumran, is situated on a terrace overlooking Wadi Qumran. The necropolis consists of about 1200 individual graves of which 61 were excavated.

remarkable observation is the use of an individual receptacle for the dead - the long coffin (*sarcophagus*) and the short version (ossuary).

3.3.1 *Second Temple Period Tombs and Their Layout*

The most common type of Second Temple period tomb²³⁹ is the loculi tomb (fig.3.1). It incorporates a main chamber and vaulted burial niches, called loculi, which branch off from the walls.²⁴⁰ Often, cut into the floor, there is a central depression²⁴¹ whose edges form benches on each side of the tomb. The entrance to the burial chamber, less than a meter high, can be sealed, either with a square slab set in a depressed frame, or with a circular "rolling stone"²⁴² that moves in a fixed track cut between two rock walls. The earliest local appearance of the loculi type tomb was in the third/second century BCE Maresha and about 150 BCE in Jerusalem.²⁴³ The majority of these tombs seem to have been cut in the first century BCE and, with exceptions, were used up to and beyond the destruction of the city until Jews were finally forbidden access to Jerusalem by Hadrian in 138 CE.

A second tomb plan, the *arcosolia* type,²⁴⁴ was introduced slightly later than the loculi type and is found in about a hundred Jerusalem tombs,²⁴⁵ often those which belonged to

²³⁹ For a description of tombs and their layout see JFC, 109-115; Levi Y. Rahmani, "Ancient Jerusalem's Funerary Customs and Tombs. Part Three," *BA* 45 (1981) 43-53.

²⁴⁰ The number of *loculi* in each tomb could range from one to a dozen. Each measured about 2 m. in length by 0.5 m. in width by slightly more than 0.5 m. in height.

²⁴¹ Each measured about 1.3 to 1.6 m in length, 1 m. in width and 30 cm to 1 m in depth.

²⁴² Matt 27:60, 28:2; Mk 15:46, 16:3-4; Lk 24:2; Jn 20:1.

²⁴³ Eliezer D. Oren and Uriel Rappaport, "The Necropolis of Maresha - Beth Govrin," *IEJ* 34 (1984) 150; some scholars favour the opinion that the mode of burial in *loculi* originated in Ptolemaic Alexandria.

²⁴⁴ For a description see Rachel Hachlili, *Ancient Jewish Art and Archaeology in the Land of Israel* (Leiden: Brill, 1988) 92; also Gideon Avni and Zvi Greenhut, "Architecture, Burial Customs and Chronology," in *The Akeldama Tombs (IAA Reports, No.1; ed. Gideon Avni and Zvi Greenhut; Jerusalem: IAA, 1996)* 12.

²⁴⁵ Geva, "Tombs", 749.

richer families. Eventually *arcosolia* became the prevalent type of burial from the third century CE on.²⁴⁶ An *arcosolium* is a bench-like aperture with an arched ceiling hewn into the burial chamber's walls (See photograph introducing Part One).²⁴⁷ An *arcosolium* may also be carved in the shape of a trough, thus forming a kind of sarcophagus covered by a slab.

Occasionally tombs do not display any installations for interments, such as niches. They consist of burial chambers alone in which the interior walls are faced with finely dressed stones, ashlar.²⁴⁸ They served as depositories for ossuaries,²⁴⁹ for sarcophagi,²⁵⁰ or for both.²⁵¹

The "typical" tomb is generally quite plain in its design, but a few dozen, belonging to the wealthy, are finished in an elaborate manner. They display richly ornamented façades, adorned with carved floral decorations in Eastern Greek or Egyptian style and outer courts (fig.3.2).²⁵²

In addition, some extraordinary tombs discovered in Jerusalem and Jericho have been classified as monumental tombs.²⁵³ This tomb category, typically features a memorial or

²⁴⁶ Geva, "Tombs," 753, notes that about twenty *arcosolia* tombs were cleared at Dominus Flevit which supposedly date to the third century CE.

²⁴⁷ Its standard length is about 2 m. and its height from the floor is 1 m.

²⁴⁸ See in Geva, "Tombs", 753-4, the illustration of chamber II in the Nazirite tomb.

²⁴⁹ Nahman Avigad, "A Depository of Inscribed Ossuaries in the Kidron Valley," *IEJ* 12/1 (1962) 1-12.

²⁵⁰ Herod's family Tomb; see Geva, "Tombs", 752.

²⁵¹ Avigad, "Burial Vault of a Nazarite Family."

²⁵² Geva, "Tombs", 751-756 features the Cave of Umm el-'Amed, the Frieze Tomb, and the Sanhedrin Tombs as examples.

²⁵³ AJAA, 107-110; Geva, "Jerusalem," 749-752; examples in the Kidron Valley: the Tomb of Zachariah (late first century CE), the Bene Hezir Tomb (Hasmonean period, early first century), the Absalom Tomb (1st century CE), and the Cave of Jehoshaphat; in other locations in Jerusalem: the Tombs of the Kings (Tomb of Queen Helene of Adiabene, 50 CE), Jason's Tomb (early 1st century BCE), and the Tomb of the Family of Herod; in Jericho: The Goliath Tomb; see Rachel Hachlili, "The Goliath Family."

nephesh in the shape of a pyramid or tholus, standing beside or above the tomb itself (fig.3.3). The monumental tombs are always lavishly ornamented with Doric and Ionic capitals and friezes, floral motifs, acanthus leaves and fruit. The wall painting (vine trellis and birds) in the Goliath Tomb (fig.3.4)²⁵⁴ and the graffiti drawings (ship) in Jason's Tomb²⁵⁵ are considered unique in Jewish funerary art. Obviously, monumental tombs belonged to prominent, affluent families.²⁵⁶

3.3.2 Primary and Secondary Burial in Tombs

Approximately at the same time when the *loculi* type tomb was adopted by Jews, the individual receptacle was introduced.²⁵⁷ It is generally assumed that originally the burial niches were designed and used for primary (permanent) inhumation in wooden coffins: each *loculus*, in Hebrew כֹּחַ (*kokh*), was to hold a single 2-metre long coffin.²⁵⁸ Although this may very well be true, archaeologists could not present a corresponding number of coffins for each *loculus* in all burial complexes.²⁵⁹ For instance, the Late Hellenistic tombs in

²⁵⁴ See JFC, 113-114, where Hachlili points to similar decorative frescos in Herodian villas and and furthermore refers to Greco-Roman tomb paintings.

²⁵⁵ Levi Y. Rahmani, "Jason's Tomb," *IEJ* 17 (1967) 61-100.

²⁵⁶ Simon, one of the famous Maccabaeans, built an elaborate monument over the tomb of his father (1Macc 13:27-30).

²⁵⁷ For a description of the different burial types see JFC, 115-124.

²⁵⁸ The coffins were fabricated from sycamore, cypress, cedar, pine, and jujube wood; see Hadas, "En-Gedi", 5.

²⁵⁹ Coffin burials in Jericho support this opinion. According to the excavators, who base the dating on the finds of coins, inscriptions, pottery and stratigraphy of the necropolis, primary burials in coffins precede secondary burials and they are dated from the mid-first century BCE to c.10 CE. Secondary burials, with and without ossuaries, date from c.10 CE to 68 CE - JFC, 110, 124.

Jerusalem (late second / beginning of the first century BCE)²⁶⁰ completely lacked receptacles. There, the *loculi* had been used for primary burials but were freed from the skeletal remains, which were transferred into an adjacent communal charnel.²⁶¹ In the *loculi* tombs where in fact coffin burials had taken place, the absence of wooden coffins may be due to poor conservation in a damp climate for 2000 years. On the other hand, a considerable number of coffins are deposited in En-Gedi's Hellenistic tombs, sometimes stacked on top of each other, in tomb chambers which completely lack *loculi*.²⁶² It may be safely stated, though, that the *loculus* or *kokh*, in general, served as the place for receiving a corpse.²⁶³

The *loculi* type tomb plan was extensively employed also in conjunction with ossuary burial. Temporary interment of the dead took place in the *kokh* before *ossilegium*. In many cases, following the bone-collecting, it was used for depositing the ossuary. Frequently, several ossuaries were placed on top of or next to each other within these niches (fig.3.5). Archaeologists have provided evidence that the *loculi* often served as depositories for piles of bones without any container (fig.3.6). In that case, the *kokh* itself constituted the ossuary. Since secondary burials predominate in the rock-hewn tombs, some scholars even deny a connection between *loculi* and permanent primary interment and prefer to associate the *kokh* with ossuary burial alone.²⁶⁴ Following this line of thought Figueras links the new *loculi*

²⁶⁰ Examples are the already mentioned Jason's tomb, or a tomb at French Hill (Amos Kloner, "A Tomb of the Second Temple Period at French Hill," *IEJ* 30 [1980] 99-108), and a tomb at Wadi Yazul (Avigad, "Rock-Cut Tombs").

²⁶¹ Rahmani, " Tombs. III", 45, notes that Hellenistic tombs, which continued to be employed into the Herodian period, testify to secondary burial into ossuaries or into the *loculi* during their late stage of usage.

²⁶² Only Tomb 4 features two *loculi*, each containing one coffin and one ossuary; see Hadas, "En-Gedi", 2.

²⁶³ Oren and Rappaport, "Maresha," 151; Geva, "Jerusalem," 748-749.

²⁶⁴ They based their opinion on linguistic data and inscriptions, i.e. Yehezkel Kutscher, "Kwk and its Cognates," *EI* 8 (1967) 279 (Hebrew); Lieberman, *Toseftah* V (1962) 1235 nn. 22-23, argues that the primary interment, according to Rabbinic literature, took place in a *mahamara*, a *nibrekheth* or a *b'kia* (see p.76 n.217) and does not use the word *kokh*. It is conceded that the exact meaning of those words is not known. Eleazar

tomb plan to secondary burial and claims "that individual, or quasi-individual, secondary burials, either in ossuaries or not, influenced the reshaping and architectural evolution of the Jewish tomb of the period in question."²⁶⁵

Other distinct attributes of the Second Temple period tombs can be established. An important feature was the central depression in the burial chamber. Several purposes have been deduced, for instance that it functioned as a charnel.²⁶⁶ The objective however, may have been simply to provide standing room for the mourners.²⁶⁷ According to yet another view the pit served as the place where the corpse was laid out for decomposition before the bones were collected for the final burial. As a testimony to this last function benches are seen to run along the walls of the tomb chambers in many instances. In the course of time they were used for depositing ossuaries. An early feature in several tombs was a small vault or pit hewn ad hoc in the tomb floor that seemed to continue the function of bone-storage under the benches of the First Temple period tomb; this feature contained mixed bones of several bodies.²⁶⁸ Sometimes small niches were hewn into the wall or branched off the loculi. They received the collected bones of individual secondary burials and thus may

L. Sukenik, "Verschlussstein mit Inschrift aus einer Grabhöhle bei Jerusalem," *ZDPV* 55 (1932) 124-128, assumes that the inscription on a *loculus* slab which read "Our parents: Never to be opened", refers to secondary burials. Hachlili, *JFC*, 110, argued: "If the loculi tomb had been designed for 70 cm. long ossuaries there would be no reason to dig a 2 m. long *kokh*." Nevertheless, it may be countered that the length of 2 m. would still be required for the primary interment before the secondary burial. Meyers, *JORR*, 69, blames these incompatible opinions on the early excavators who "took so little care in reporting skeletal remains or in relating the inscriptions themselves to the actual tomb contents."

²⁶⁵ *DJO*, 9.

²⁶⁶ This has been inferred layers of bones were found in the pit, for example in the French Hill Tomb in its late Hellenistic use; see Patrica Smith and Joseph Zias, "Skeletal Remains from the Late Hellenistic French Hill Tomb," *IEJ* 30/3-4 (1980) 109-115.

²⁶⁷ *JFC*, 110; Tzaferis, "Giv'at ha-Mivtar," 30.

²⁶⁸ Tzaferis, "Giv'at ha-Mivtar," 19.

perhaps be seen as a transitional feature between the charnel chamber and the later ossuaries.²⁶⁹

In the *arcosolia* tomb the corpse was laid onto the bench or into the trough. The burial troughs were employed for primary burials, prior to the collection of the bones and their deposition into ossuaries. Sometimes, after *ossilegium*, the bones were redeposited into the trough. During later stages, in Bet Shearim, the *arcosolia* were then used for permanent primary burials.

Occasionally tombs feature a rectangular cavity, cut into the floor, the pit grave.²⁷⁰ This denotes the simplest burial installation for an individual, primary inhumation.

The discussion of the Second Temple period tombs may be concluded with the observation that the layout of the common *loculi* tomb provides the possibility of continuing the tradition of a family tomb.²⁷¹ At the same time an individual burial is ensured, whether in the *kokh*, in the *arcosolia* or in the pit, with or without receptacles.

²⁶⁹ DJO, 8; see Tzaferis, "Giv'at ha-Mivtar", 18.

²⁷⁰ The burial complex of Dominus Flevit features thirty-eight pit tombs; see Geva, "Tombs", 753.

²⁷¹ Amos Kloner, "A Burial-Cave of the Second Temple period at Giv'at Hamivtar, Jerusalem," in *Jerusalem Revealed. Archaeology in the Holy City 1968-1974*, ed. Yigael Yadin (Jerusalem: IES, 1975) 69, refers to Dr. Patrica Smith of the Hebrew University-Hadassa Medical School who provided the proof of the relationship of interred individuals in a family tomb. It has been asserted, as pointed out by Rahmani, "Jason's Tomb," 95, that the concept of "family tomb" assured the individual of him/herself being taken care at the time of his/her death. As in life, the individual felt that he/she "remained provided for in the afterlife" by family.

3.3.3 Burial Procedure

The Jews subjected to primary burials were wrapped in shrouds²⁷² and mats with spices²⁷³ and laid either into the coffin or onto the floor. Based on the archaeological data in Jericho, the manner of burial was as follows:²⁷⁴

All the bodies were extended, face upwards, in the coffin, usually with the head to one side and hands close to the side of the body. Most coffins contain one individual... There are several occurrences where one or two bodies have been added to a coffin... Orientation of the bodies in the *kokh* and tomb does not seem to be significant as the heads face various directions.

The bodies were prepared for secondary burial by being temporarily interred in order to allow the flesh to decay. Then the bones were deposited in the ossuary in the following order:

Long bones lengthwise at the bottom with the bones of the arms and hands on one side and those of the legs and feet on the other side. The remaining bones of the body were placed on top of them and the skull was placed on top of all the bones at one end.²⁷⁵

Most coffins contained grave goods which were the personal belongings of the dead, such as beads or sandals, or objects of daily use. Once the coffins were deposited in the *loculi*, storage jars were placed outside the tomb entrance.

Grave goods discovered with ossuary burials include *unguentaria*, bowls, cooking pots, glass vessels and lamps. Small juglets and bottles were apparently used for funerary spices and the lamps may have been placed there to provide light for the visitor. Personal

²⁷² Avigail Sheffer, "Abstract: Textiles from Tomb 2 at 'En Gedi," *Atiqot* 24 (1994) 9, analyzed two kinds of fabric, fine and coarse, and alludes to Jn 11:44: "The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth"; see Jn 20:5-7; Sem 12.10 mentions the binding in shrouds.

²⁷³ Mk 16.1; Lk 23.56; Jn 19.39-40.

²⁷⁴ AJAA, 93.

²⁷⁵ AJAA, 97.

objects of the individual were not placed into ossuaries, but rather were usually placed nearby or in the pit. In a few rare cases coins were discovered, as for example in a secondary burial in Jericho. A controversy has arisen over whether or not the placing of coins in the skull can be considered a common Jewish burial custom from the Second Temple period. Hachlili concluded that, because of the rarity of cases where coins were found in the mouths or over the eyes, that such a claim cannot be substantiated for Jews.²⁷⁶

3.3.4 *Primary Burials in Individual Graves*

Qumran, a much debated necropolis with about 1200 primary interments,²⁷⁷ and the small sites in En el-Ghuweir and Hiam el-Sagha²⁷⁸ in the Judean Desert exhibit graves distinct from the tombs discussed above. Individual graves are arranged in ordered rows and are marked by oval-shaped heaps of stones. Broken storage jars were found placed on top of or beside the graves.

The basic tomb layout (fig.3.7) consists of a rectangular shaft dug into the ground to a depth of between 1.20 m. and 2m. At the bottom, usually along the eastern wall, a cavity

²⁷⁶ Rahel Hachlili and Ann Killebrew, "Was the **COIN-on-EYE** Custom a Jewish Burial Practice in the Second Temple Period?" *BA* 46 (1983) 152.

²⁷⁷ For the layout and interpretation of the Qumran cemetery, see Zdzislaw Jan Kapera, "Some Remarks on the Qumran Cemetery," in *Methods of Investigation of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Khirbet Qumran Site. Present Realities and Future Prospects*. ([ANAS, 722] New York, NY: New York Academy of Sciences, 1994); Hanan Eshel, Magen Broshi, Richard Freund, and Brian Schultz, "New Data on the Cemetery East of Khirbet Qumran," *Dead Sea Discoveries* 9/2 (2002) 135-165; Rahel Hachlili, "Burial Practices at Qumran," *RQ* 62/16 (1993) 247-264; see also Norman Golb's interpretation in *Who Wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls? The Search for the Secret of Qumran* (New York: Scribner, 1995) 16, 31-35.

²⁷⁸ Pessah Bar-Adon, "Another Settlement of the Judean Desert Sect at 'En el-Ghuweir on the Shores of the Dead Sea," *BASOR* 227 (1977) 2-25, excavated 17 interments. In close vicinity and less than 20km. south of Qumran similar graves were identified in Hiam el-Sagha by Bar-Adon. Two of the twenty tombs were studied by Hanan Eshel and Zvi Greenhut, "Hiam El-Sagha, a Cemetery of the Qumran Type, Judean Desert," *RB* 100 (1993) 252-259.

was cut horizontally to accommodate the corpse. This cavity was often closed with flat stones or mud bricks. The dead lay supine with the head oriented to the south and the face turned towards the east.²⁷⁹ It is my contention that this type of burial is regional, meaning that it is indigenous to this area around the Dead Sea²⁸⁰ and had a long since a tradition that originated with pit and shaft burial commencing in the coastal area through the inner valley systems and the Jordan valley. In this way it relates to my study.

3.4 *Burials in Late Antiquity*

The last burial place relevant to my survey of Jewish funerary customs in Palestine is the one at Beth She'arim.²⁸¹ Carved into the southern foothills of Lower Galilee, this immense necropolis served as the principal burial ground from the second to the fourth century CE. The number of graves which date from the Herodian period to the second century is small. Since the burial of the revered Rabbi Judah I,²⁸² his family and his followers, Beth She'arim became a magnet for Jews of importance in Palestine and in the entire Diaspora of the Middle East. Their bodies were brought to be buried near the Rabbi.²⁸³ Therefore, the

²⁷⁹ As in Jericho and En-Gedi, reports Hachlili, JFC, 126, there is evidence of shrouds and mats (at En el-Ghuweir) and idem., "Qumran", 250, remnants of coffins in two of the graves (at Qumran).

²⁸⁰ For example, the cemetery at Khirbet Quazone yields over 3500 shaft tombs, see K.D. Politis, "The Nabataean Cemetery at Khirbet Quazone." *NEA* 62/2 (1999) 128.

²⁸¹ Nahman Avigad and Benjamin Mazar, "Beth She'arim," *NEAEHL* I (1993) esp. "Excavation of the Necropolis," 241-248.

²⁸² Also called "Judah the Prince" or simply "Rabbi." Juda I (135-219 CE) was a prominent Tanna and redactor of the Mishna.

²⁸³ According to Isaiah Gafni, "Reinterment in the Land of Israel: Notes on the Origin and Development of the Custom," in *Jerusalem Cathedra: Studies in the History, Archaeology, Geography, and Ethnography of the Land of Israel*, ed. L. I. Levine (vol. 1; Jerusalem: Yad Izaak Ben-Zvi Institute; Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 1981) 104, Jews did not practice this custom of reinterment in the Land of Israel until the third century CE. Reinterment in the Land of Israel was the exception to the general injunction in Jewish law against transferring the remains of the dead.

necropolis expanded tremendously in the third century and featured twenty-seven catacombs by the time the site was destroyed by an earthquake in the year 352 CE. Burials ceased completely during the Byzantine period.

The catacombs impress us with their frontal courtyards and portals which had been constructed as stone doors imitating wooden doors. As a matter of fact, the catacombs have been as much a cause for admiration as well as for bafflement due to the interior and exterior artistry. The motifs, frequently so obviously Pagan in their content²⁸⁴, have confounded the student who believes in the aniconic theory of all Jewish art. The crypts of Beth She'arim, just before their devastation, display considerable vitality, and they are a testimony to the synergism of Greek art with Jewish tradition.

The entrances opened onto several hewn burial halls.²⁸⁵ Some of these consist of several rooms. The graves in the halls are mostly of the *loculi* or *arcosolia* type. Within the labyrinth of the underground caves a full range of funerary practices is depicted: *loculi* with or without ossuaries, *arcosolia* which received the corpse or a receptacle, pit graves dug into the floor, charnels, and decorated marble or clay *sarcophagi* standing in the corridors. There were family tombs as well as public tombs. In the course of time burials had become a commercial enterprise, directed by the public Burial Society, which sold the places for interment.²⁸⁶ Numerous inscriptions, mainly Greek, indicate that the interred were important people such as rabbis, officers, craftsmen, merchants and scribes.²⁸⁷ Epitaphs record the tomb owners in order to identify the graves to visitors.

With the help of archaeology it has been demonstrated that in some significant ways the burials of the Second Temple period deviated from earlier mores as well as from later

²⁸⁴ For illustrations, such as Leda and the Swan and the Roman Eagle, see Avigad and Mazar, "Beth She'arim," 242-245.

²⁸⁵ Catacomb 11 consisted of sixteen halls containing four hundred burial places, see Avigad and Mazar, "She'arim," 235.

²⁸⁶ AJAA, 103.

²⁸⁷ Avigad and Mazar, "Beth She'arim," 234.

funerary conventions. During the First Temple period the bones of the deceased were piled indiscriminately onto prior skeletal remains. At the turn of the Common Era the human remains of an individual were kept separate. As noted above, two different forms of burials were customary in Palestine: 1. primary burial and 2. secondary burial. For Primary Burial, the deceased was interred either in a wooden coffin (which was deposited in a rock-cut family tomb or in an individually dug grave in the ground) or, the corpse was placed directly onto the tomb floor or into a shaft tomb, wrapped in a shroud. For Secondary Burial, the skeletal remains were collected and piled into heaps in different locations in a tomb or, importantly, in ossuaries (occasionally in wooden coffins or *sarcophagi*). During Late Antiquity a shift in burial customs occurred again: the practice of ossilegium and ossuary burial disappeared. Permanent primary interment in tomb installations and in a variety of receptacles emerged as the prevalent type of inhumation.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁸ Today, the norm for orthodox Judaism in the Diaspora is primary burial in a very plain wooden coffin for everyone, rich or poor. In Eretz-Israel, the shrouded corpse is interred without coffin.

Fig. 3.1 Plan of a *Loculi* Tomb

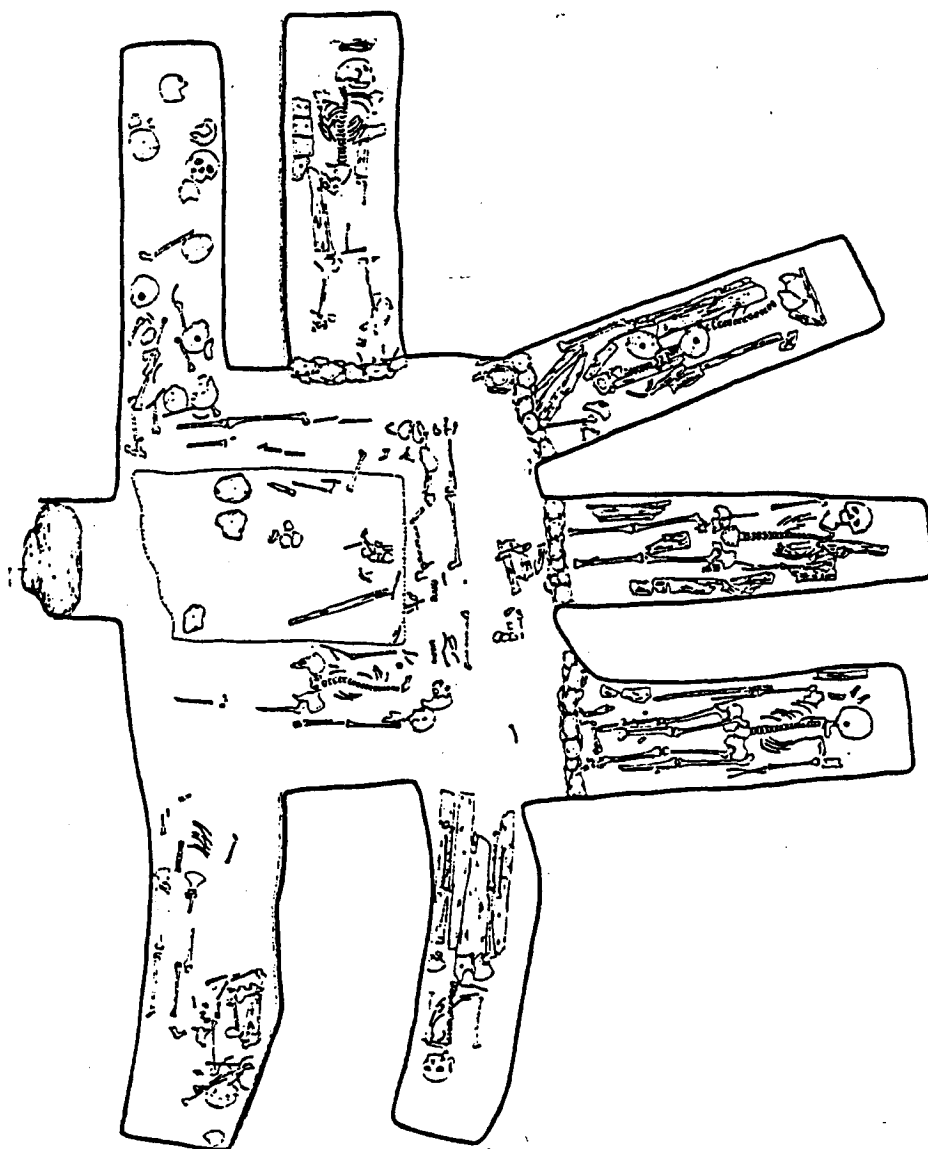


Fig. 3.2

Decorated Tomb Façade: Cave of Umm el-'Amed

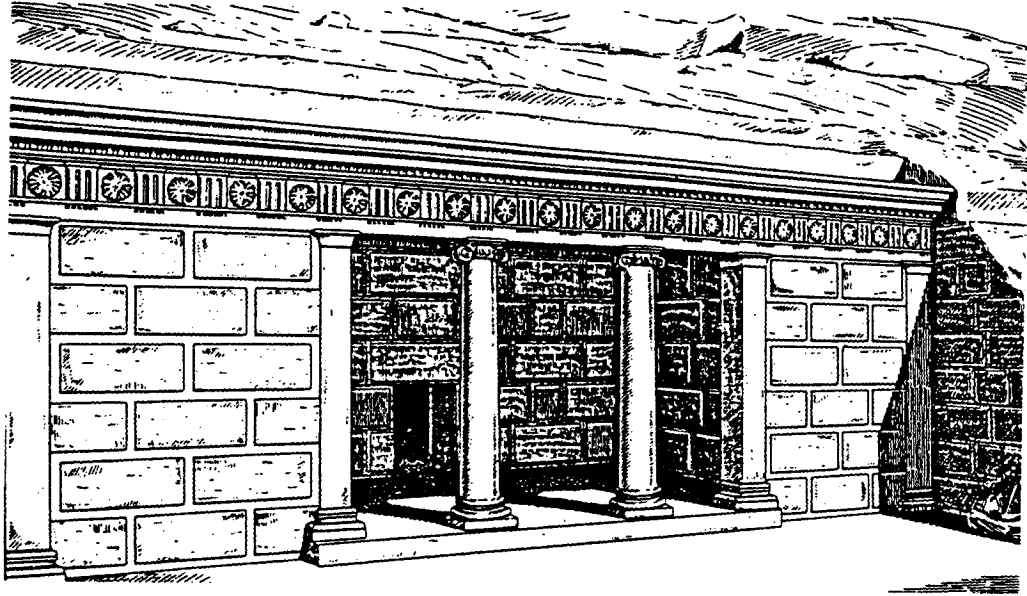


Fig. 3.3

Monumental Tombs in the Kidron Valley

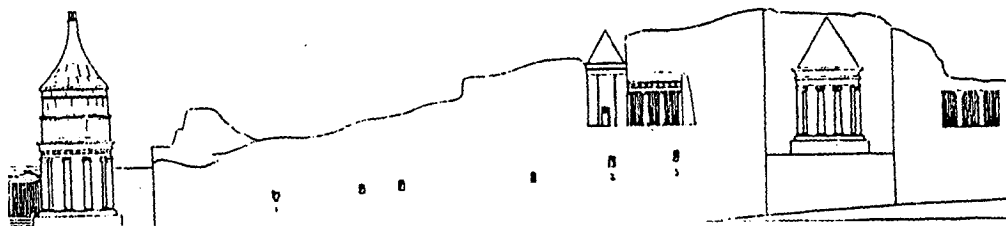


Fig. 3.4

Monumental Tomb in Jericho

The Goliath Tomb



Fig. 3.5

Ossuary Burials in Loculi

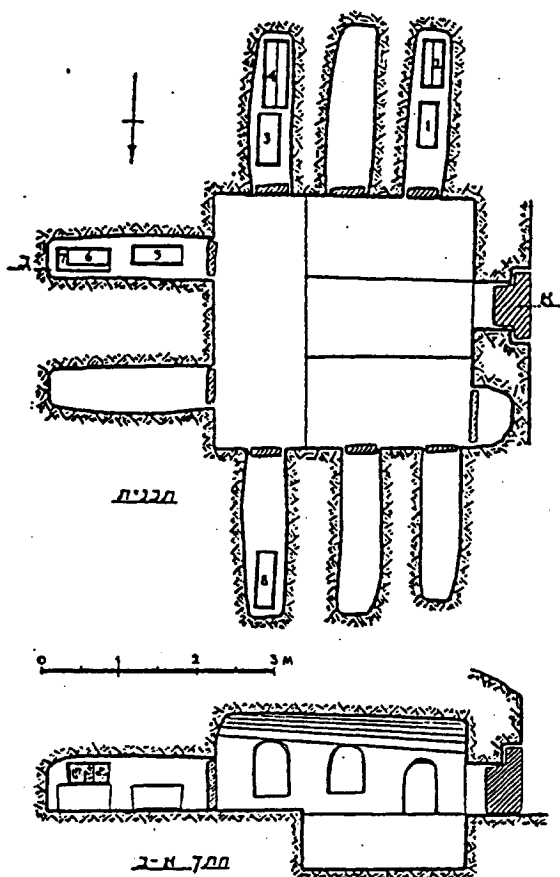


Fig. 3.6

Collected Secondary Bone Burial in Loculi

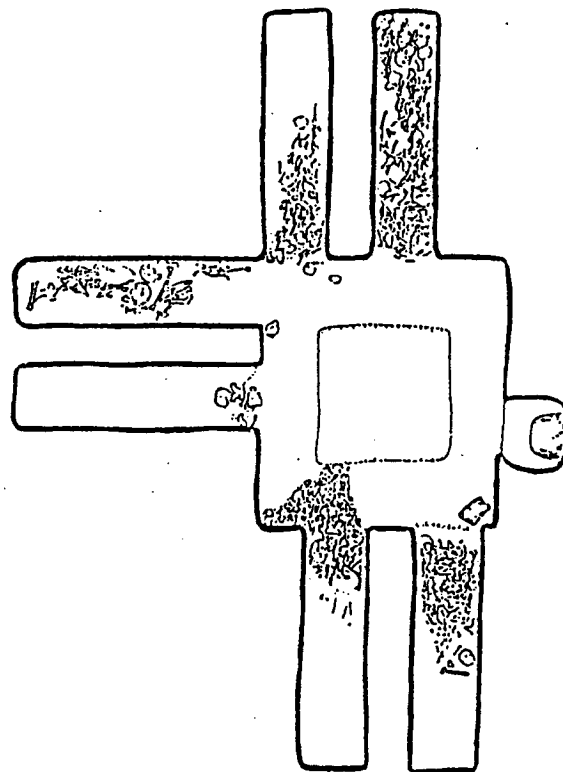
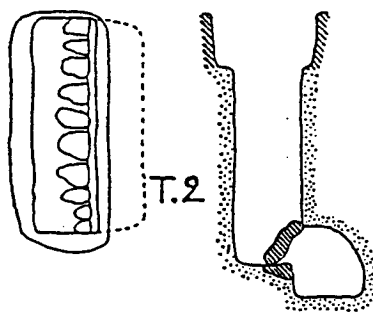


Fig. 3.7 Single Shaft Tomb in Qumran



Chapter 4:

Burial traditions in the region: The roots of ossuary burial

4.1 *Tradition of inhumation*

The earliest populations in the region habitually buried the dead in close proximity to the living, in shallow pits beneath floors of caves or built-up structures. Along with provisions, the corpse was placed into the pit grave intact- that is, neither burned nor defleshed. The same principle applied when caves became the exclusive disposal facilities. The dead body was placed in a crouched or supine position; however now it was placed above the floor and left there to decay. The person was thus buried. This is commonly designated as 'inhumation,' and it was the hallmark of Semitic peoples.

In cremating societies, too, pits and caves served as disposal facilities, which would house layers of ashes or collected calcined bones. The archaeological record of pits and caves housing articulated or disarticulated skeletons or bone piles, however, testifies to the inhumation practice of the majority of groups of Semites in general coming to the Southern Levant. Over time, the general pattern was consistent, and although during the Bronze Age some foreigners introduced cremation, the latter practice never gained momentum. The evidence of cremation pits or secondary cremations into vessels,²⁸⁹ mainly in the coastal area,²⁹⁰ remained limited in time and space. Jews, specifically, settled in the Levant, and they too inhumed. They developed a revulsion towards cremation. Their burial behaviour was strengthened and re-enforced while in the Levant. This suggests to me a 'root principle' for the Jewish people that guided their ways of burial henceforth to this day. The prevailing behaviour of simply placing dead bodies into the ground or into caves apparently instilled

²⁸⁹ Elizabeth Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices and Beliefs about the Dead* ([JSOTSup, 123] Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992) 137-8.

²⁹⁰ Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices*, 138, noted only isolated cremation strata from inland cave tombs.

habits, formed attitudes and grew principles among the populace not to cremate, given a choice.²⁹¹

The concept of 'root principle' was introduced by the anthropologist Rik Pinxten²⁹² to describe a particular sensitivity in the past or tradition of a people, which grows, takes hold, and directs people's subsequent choices:

"This sensitivity takes form in one or more 'root principles' which are explicitly or subliminally active as a basic perspective on life and the world (ideology, cosmology), or as a feeling about which way of approaching a problem is right and which way will 'cause trouble' or is out of step with tradition (morality, knowledge)".²⁹³

If we apply this understanding of 'root principle' to the case at hand, a particular sensitivity - with respect to the disposal of a body - would have to have gradually grown within Israelite society starting from the cultural past of these highland dwellers. Their attitude to decay then would have guided the group's choices and tastes and formed the 'root principle' of subjecting the dead body to the activity of decay (inhumation) while hiding the process. If we take the evidence found in realia and text, we learn that the corpse is laid out to decay, but it is hidden, particularly by the use of winding sheets. Thomas sees this desirable but hidden approach to "controlling decay"²⁹⁴ as playing itself out in funerary rites, demonstrating that the natural decomposition of flesh, leaving rot and desiccated bones, was accepted.

²⁹¹ If, in high antiquity some people might have initially disposed of the corpse by means of exposure to the elements and to animals of prey, it also did not take hold in the Southern Levant in the same way it gained prominence in Asia.

²⁹² Pinxten, *When the Day Breaks*, 87- 92.

²⁹³ Pinxten, *When the Day Breaks*, 91.

²⁹⁴ Louis-Vincent Thomas, "Funeral Rites," in *Death, Afterlife, and the Soul*, ed. Lawrence E. Sullivan (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1989) 39-43, surveys the different approaches to decay.

According to Rabbinic sources, this process was even accelerated by applying limestone onto the dead body before closing the coffin for theological notions which I shall address later in this study.

Promoting the decay of a corpse can also be expressed as a refusal to hinder or to deny decay by resorting to other practices such as cremation (as in dominant societies where Jews lived, whether in their homeland or in diaspora communities), despite acculturation in other realms.²⁹⁵ Having said that, it should not come as a surprise if Jews did emulate the Hellenistic-Roman limestone chest while adhering to their root principles. We find this idea manifested in the desiccated bones within the ossuary; furthermore, it provides the reason or explanation why the hypothesized adoption of a cinerary casket did not lead to adoption of cremation but rather to the adaptation and modification of the artifact and to the longstanding tradition of bone collecting embedded in the Jewish attitude to decay.

We conclude that any individual Jewish innovator, instilled with this attitude, would have had to adapt his invention to the context of inhumation, lest he betray his root principles.

4.2 Tradition of caves as places of burial

Space provided by natural caves served as dwellings for the living and evolved into space reserved for the dead. The habit of using caves or rock-cut tombs as burial facilities, rather than in individual graves, was endemic in the region and remained so until Late Antiquity. Apparently, it was the cave itself which was the focus of any honour, ritual and associated preparations. Notwithstanding the following, cave burial was the norm for any individual.

²⁹⁵ As René Dussaud, *Les Monuments palestiniens et judaïques du Musée du Louvre* (Musée du Louvre. Département des antiquités orientales; Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1912) elaborated in the introduction: “La répugnance à adopter l’incinération ne peut s’expliquer que par la notion de résurrection et l’on retrouve dans la théologie juive tardive cette idée que le corps se reformera autour d’un os ayant la propriété de ne pas périr.”

Besides the mode of cave burial, we find from the Middle Bronze Age onwards²⁹⁶ a second type of burial in the region, namely pit burial. Simple graves dug into loess or sand (occasionally cut into bedrock) were clustered some distance from the settlement. This type of burial applies to the inhumation of usually one individual,²⁹⁷ and thus is different from cave burial which involves multiple burials. This mode of burial has been identified as foreign and is evidenced in the coastal area, in the valley systems (Jezre'el, Beth Shean, and the Jordan River) and at some urban centres. It has been assigned to a distinct group of people representing a different culture than the highland dwellers. (It seems reasonable to identify the former with the 'Canaanites' in the Hebrew Bible and the latter with the Israelites). The pattern towards the end of the Late Bronze Age shows²⁹⁸ that caves remained prevalent as places of burial, almost exclusively in the central hill country, from the Upper Galilee to the southern part of Judah.

4.3 Tradition of caves as collective places of burial

Although occasionally caves have been found containing only one burial within, most of the time cave space was used for multiple burials.²⁹⁹ The average number of burials was between 15 and 20. Larger numbers were exceptional.³⁰⁰ Caves served typically as collective burial facilities for members of a social unit, for example, a tribe, a clan, an extended or a large immediate family. Caves developed as family tombs in urban

²⁹⁶ See Rivka Gonen, *Burial Patterns and Cultural Diversity in Late Bronze Age Canaan* (Winona Lake, Indiana, 1992) 15-20, on pit burial as a type of burial, physical features, and sites.

²⁹⁷ Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices*, 133.

²⁹⁸ See Gonen, *Burial Patterns*, 32-40, for the spatiotemporal analysis and the geographically differentiated cultural change.

²⁹⁹ Gonen, *Burial Patterns*, 9, defines burial caves as a type of burial for multiple interments for Middle Bronze Age continued into the Late Bronze Age; see p.13, for number of interments and form of burial.

³⁰⁰ Elizabeth Bloch-Smith, "Life in Judah from the Perspective of the Dead," *NEA* 65/2 (2002) 126, names as exception the Lachish Cave with 1500 burials.

settlements.³⁰¹ This led to an accumulation of burials within the facility and to a consequential lack of floor or burial space. Continued usage then resulted in post-burial disturbance of various sorts.

4.4 Traditions of secondary burial and post-burial disturbances: Is there a difference?

The normal way of burial generally was inhumation in the shallow pit or in cave space. An articulated corpse is found by archaeologists in a sitting or crouching position, or lying on its side. However, certain lifestyle circumstances or interests led to the disturbance of the burial. The archaeological evidence is a disarticulated skeleton, or bone deposits in pits and caves. The former is the consequence of disturbance caused not for the sake of this burial; the latter is the consequence of interest in these remains for their treatment or for their relocation to a different place for permanent burial. As a result, ultimately, the remains are repositioned in a collected state. Let us now consider the practice of reburial or secondary burial in the Southern Levant for these two circumstances.

In high antiquity certain social units, typical of Chalcolithic societies, habitually displaced bones of previously buried people. Bones were apparently collected in baskets and reburied in the final location, significantly, into stone and clay ossuaries. It seems appropriate to address these receptacles in some detail, as scholars have occasionally tied these ossuaries to the Herodian ossuaries. At sites in the Negev, disarticulated corpses in secondary burials were contained in built-up round burial structures.³⁰² At Teleilat Ghassul they were found in cist graves, dolmens, and tumuli.³⁰³ In the coastal area (eg. Hadera, Azor) and in the Galilee, bones were collected interestingly, into clay containers and then deposited

³⁰¹ Mazar, *Archaeology*, 98-99.

³⁰² Mazar, *Archaeology*, 82.

³⁰³ Mazar, *Archaeology*, 82.

in caves.³⁰⁴ North of Azor, at Tell Asawir in EB bones were found packed in pottery jars.³⁰⁵ It has been suggested that secondary burial in pre-historic times fits the lifestyle of a semi-nomadic, pastoral population interested in a central cemetery.³⁰⁶ As a result, bones may have been exhumed from a temporary grave, collected, and brought to the final destination. This could be a larger marked area with individual smaller burial spaces. It could even be a cave that served as the communal burial plot, and the individual burials were then brought there and kept safely in a container. With a subsequent change to a permanent settlement, a shift to primary burial was noted at this site.³⁰⁷ There was no longer any need for or interest in relocation and thus no longer any need for bone collection.

Other than the nomadic lifestyle mentioned above, bone deposits in high antiquity might be evidence of the burial mode of exposure, which some social units, migrating into the region, for example from Anatolia, had practiced. After the bones were denuded, the remains were collected and placed according to ritual into a final repository. If there had been such a group, it was a minority among the Semitic tribes which, as noted above, placed a corpse into a facility and allowed it to decay. However, the non-Semitic mode of disposal was, in any case, not perpetuated in this region under study.

The scholarly debate underlying the mystery of the ossuary forces us to question whether there was a difference between post-burial disturbances in caves and secondary burials. Both customs, after all, signify a disturbance of the burial. However, it is found that these disturbances occurred in different ways and for different reasons. Secondary burial focuses ritually on the bones of one particular individual even if the permanent repository is communal or collective. Ritual is here defined as specific procedures being repeated in that society so often that, taken together, they become a custom. Post-burial disturbance is usually a process simply for the purpose of freeing up burial space.

³⁰⁴ Mazar, *Archaeology*, 84 and 85, fig.3.20. 321.

³⁰⁵ Mazar, *Archaeology*, 99.

³⁰⁶ Mazar, *Archaeology* 100.

³⁰⁷ Mazar, *Archaeology*, 139.

4.4.1. *The tradition of relocating to a permanent burial facility of the group*

In essence, such bone handling in the Levant was for ritual secondary burial, but only in high antiquity or for special treatment of the remains or during the Herodian period, the reasons for which are addressed in this thesis. When relocating burials from facility to facility, the ritual focus occurred during the burial and the reburial stages. When relocating for special treatment of the remains or the intentional re-positioning of the remains, the ritual focus was on the treatment and on the reburial of the bones per se, as well as on the tangible space at the re-burial site, one version of which was the ossuary.

Meyers and his followers were not correct in claiming a long-standing tradition of secondary burial practice in the region. A ritual collection did not exist prior to the ossuary. And the reason in the latter case, it turns out, was for the sake of the container, not for relocating into the permanent collective burial facility, cemetery or cave. Therefore, ossuary burial was unique in Jewish practice as well as in the region. I agree with Rahmani's assertion that the handling of bones in ways leading to post-burial disturbance was not the *ליקוט עצמות*, to which the rabbis had attached ritual behaviour. However, I do not agree with his claim that Jewish ossilegium evolved on its own (at the initiative of the Pharisees). There was no evidence of a pattern or repeated behaviour towards burials. This happened only with the introduction of the ossuary which, at least, catalyzed the process.

4.4.2 *The tradition of special treatment of the skull*³⁰⁸

Another case of collecting skeletal remains and repositioning them elsewhere involved the severance of the cranium for safe keeping separate from the rest of the corpse. The collected skulls were permanently deposited, for example, in round built-up structures, or laid out in

³⁰⁸ In the Neolithic period, special treatment involved, for example, plastering and decoration of the skull, aside from the preservation of the skulls, thereby neglecting the rest of the skeletal remains.

a distinct position,³⁰⁹ for example, in a row, while the long bones were piled together.³¹⁰ In other cases, if a collection had been carried out in the cave itself, the remains were simply collected and sometimes placed onto a mat. Some societies in Jericho and the Dead Sea region had the distinct practice of severing the cranium from the skeleton for special treatment.

In conclusion, I may say that in both of these aforementioned scenarios, there was a collection of all or parts of the skeletal remains as a habit. However, it is clear that there was no universal or prescribed way to treat the collected remains. Let us now investigate the situation of cave burial and post-burial disturbances which cannot a priori be designated as reburial or secondary burial.

4.4.3 Tradition of freeing primary burial space in tombs

In the sepulchral method, the initial burial place of an individual depended partly on the tomb plan. In the simplest, formless tomb, it might be the floor itself. In rich burial caves from Jericho,³¹¹ MB IIB-C, the corpse was laid on a wooden bed in the centre of the cave.³¹² In caves that featured benches or ledges the corpse would be laid on the bench. In caves with loculi, the individual was laid inside the loculus. Older burials were pushed aside in order to allow room for new ones on the bed or near it. This was deduced from evidence in reused MB I shaft tombs, the purpose being to clear way for new burials.³¹³

³⁰⁹ See Mazar, *Archaeology* 99 and fig. 4.3, for Bad edh-Dhra. In the Early Bronze Age (EBIB), circular structures housed primary multiple burials.

³¹⁰ Mazar, *Archaeology* 139, and references therein.

³¹¹ For Jericho see Kenyon, *Excavations at Jericho* (2 vols.; London: British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, 1960, 1965) I: 263-518, II: 167-478.

³¹² Mazar, *Archaeology* 213.

³¹³ Gonen, *Burial Patterns*, 13.

The evidence suggests to me that in normal cave burial, emphasis was placed on the provision of a personal burial space for the dead body of a recently deceased individual. Whether this space was a bed of pebbles, a hewn stone or a wooden bed, the first burial place was demarcated, distinct, and prepared in some fashion. However, once the flesh had wasted away, the skeletal remains were moved on the bed or nearby in order to allow for room for new burials; the intermingling of skeletal remains was inevitable and seemingly of no concern. There is, however, evidence of articulated skeletons which have not been disturbed. However, they were either the only burial in the cave, or else the last ones that therefore did not need to be disturbed. The private place of burial was, therefore, not preserved. The ritual focus was placed on the funeral and on the initial place of burial. For example, in the Iron Age, the time of the Israelites, we deal with the ideas or concepts of death and dying and the post-mortem fate centering on the first and only funeral. The text evidence in the Bible uses terms or language which concerns only the terms for dying and for whatever else happens at the time of death. In secondary burial practice, the nature of the final place of burial is arbitrary - a collected pile, a communal secondary repository etc. The key is the lack of uniformity. Arbitrariness is neither a ritual nor a habit which lends itself to special meaning.

In conclusion, when the reason for moving bones was simply to create space for a new corpse, there was no individual identifiable burial place for a person. The ritual *foci* were on primary burial and on the place of the primary burial. The emphasis was on care and expenditure. The significance to us is the realization that there was no stigma attached to the handling of bones and that bones were allowed to mingle freely with others; also, there was no pattern to the re-positioning of the relocated bones.

4.5 Ossuary burial - continuity and change

The appearance of the ossuary in Judea had profound effects on the behaviour of survivors at the time of death of their loved ones. In distinction to pre-ossuary days, all of a sudden, individuals were confronted with ritual foci of a ceremony and an object that represented a personal burial space or miniature tomb. There was a brand new dramatic life cycle event,

which incurred both material costs (the box itself and the associated labour), as well as emotional costs involving mental preparations for the ritual of ossilegium. Evaluation of the worth of the deceased was translated into decisions regarding the level of honour that was to be accorded: how many herbs to sprinkle, if any; what to inscribe; or how ostentatious to make the decor of the box. The survivors' anticipation of a ritual at a more or less predictable point in time, that is when the flesh had wasted away, certainly weighed very much on people's minds. This was not necessary in the days when it was known that bones would simply be swept aside, unceremoniously, on the occasion of the next burial in the family tomb, or when there had been a coffin burial. On a societal level, the consequences were equally monumental. A new source of income that benefitted masons and artisans became available. A new vehicle that carried the culture of the time had emerged. There was a new social institution, through which recognition was publicly accorded to the deceased and to his family. Groups and organizations were engaged in the new social event. In terms of ideology, there arose an additional occasion to acquire impurity which entailed consequences with respect to the cult. There was suddenly a defined moment when the pending fate of the deceased was believed to have been decided positively. By extension, when ossuaries and ossilegium eventually disappeared in favour of primary burial, the focus shifted back to the first funeral. The disturbance of the burial remains was no longer permitted, and the object of honour was now the full-sized burial container.

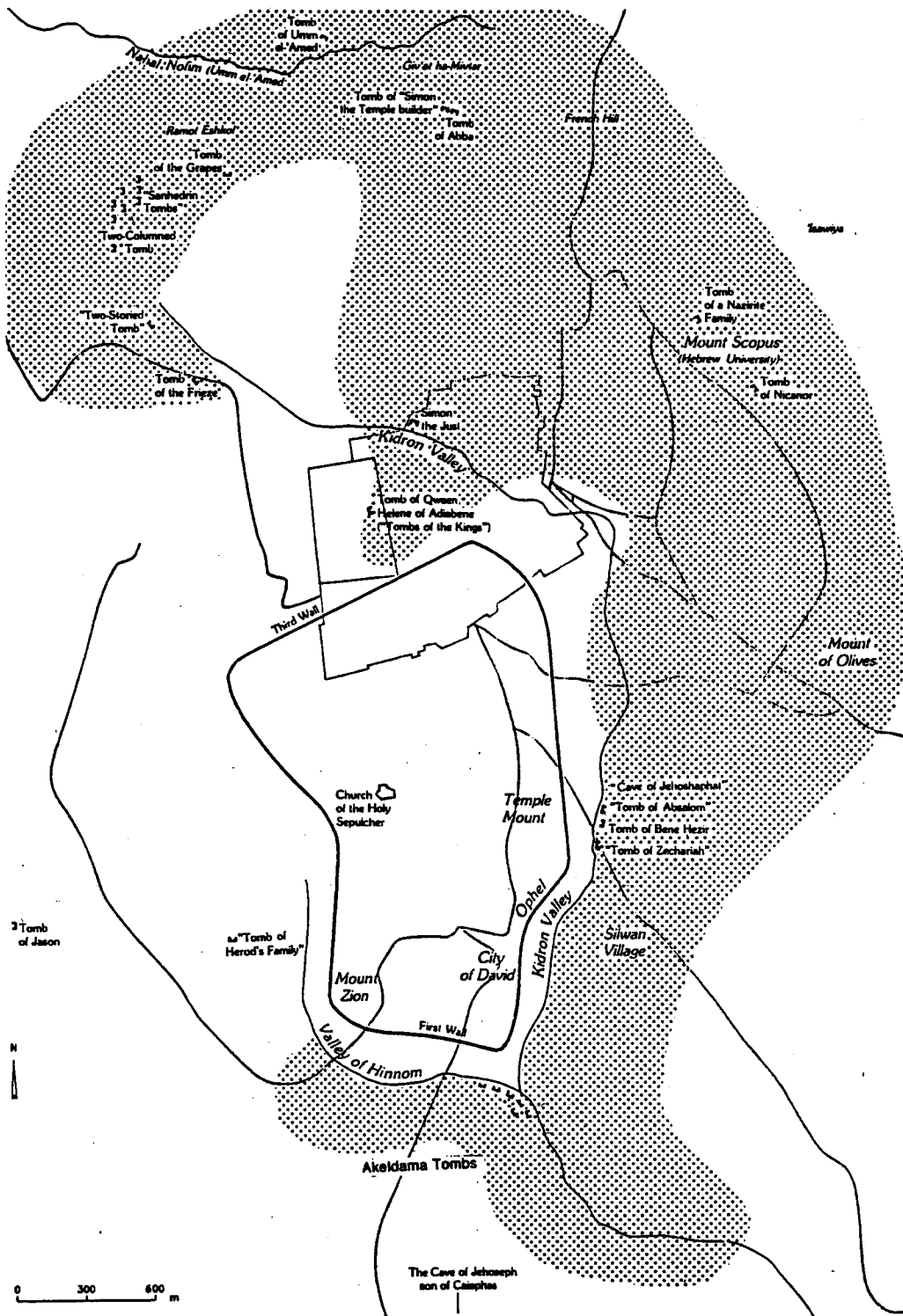
We conclude this chapter by addressing a matter of dispute in scholarship. Was Jewish ossuary burial unique? Was it "original" in the sense of being exclusively Jewish? It is true that a bone container was invented initially in Chalcolithic times. However, the ossuary was nevertheless a unique phase in Jewish customs during the late Second Temple period, because bones were not collected by Jews either before or after this period in time. The Herodian ossuary was also unique in its day, because, as Hachlili noted, no other society re-buried bones into stone chests at that time.

Although there is no evidence of continuity of ritual re-burial of bones throughout the ages, there was continuity in terms of the handling of bones, at least for those engaged in the predominant practice of cave burial. Underlying all of this, though, is the constancy and

continuity of the Jewish root principle that forbids cremation. It was this combination, then, which was the source of the uniqueness of the Jewish ossuary.

Part Two
Bones of Contention

The Necropolis of Jerusalem



Chapter 5

Recovering the Artifact: The History of Ossuary Discoveries

For almost two millenia, buried in overgrown Jewish family tombs, ossuaries and their underlying significance had fallen into oblivion, in both the tradition and the memory of people. This changed in the mid - 19th century when a stirring interest in the 'Holy Land' brought explorers, immigrants, missionaries, travelers, and researchers to the region. The influx of all these people naturally increasingly fostered the discoveries of the artifacts. As far as can now be established, the first finds occurred in the 1860's.³¹⁴

5.1 *The Earliest Ossuary Discoveries*

The French savant, Felice de Saulcy, was the first Westerner to encounter ossuaries and to report on the artifacts. Unfortunately, though perhaps understandably, he did not realize what they were. In 1863, some three years before Conrad Schick's announcement, while exploring a magnificent group of tombs popularly known as the 'Tombs of the Kings',³¹⁵ de Saulcy found not only splendid full-sized sarcophagi but also some heretofore unfamiliar miniature versions - our ossuaries under discussion. Reasoning that these chests were too small for normal human remains (ie. skeletons) and expecting royal treasures to be interred along with the Judean kings, de Saulcy wrote in his travel report, *Voyage en Terre Sainte*: "Ces caisses n'ont certainement pas contenu des débris humains, elles sont trop petites pour

³¹⁴ Also established by D. Schütz, "Die Ossuarien in Palästina," *MGWJ* 75 (1931) 286-292. Victor Schultze, "Sarkophage und Grabinschriften aus Jerusalem, I," *ZDPV* 4 (1881) 9, had the first discovery incorrectly credited to the American traveler Edward Robinson in 1852. However, the "small sarcophagi" referred in one occasion simply to rectangular hollows in the crypt's floor and in the other case to the opening of a vault beneath.

³¹⁵ Actually, this tomb belonged to Queen Helena of Adiabene.

cela. ... : c'étaient des caisses à trésor."³¹⁶ Thus, the first known publication about ossuaries in 1865 wrongly identified them as 'pretty, small treasure boxes.'³¹⁷

It was only in 1866, with Conrad Schick's letter in a German newspaper, that the public at large became aware of the existence of Jewish bone chests. These twenty ossuaries were first located, as was to become commonplace, by ordinary working people going about their daily chores on their own private property before an official agent or scholars-in-residence would learn about the find.

However, as the exciting news was still being retold in scholarly circles, the twenty artifacts in question had already suffered the fate of many antiques: interested parties had divided the artifacts, keeping some in Jerusalem and sending a contingent abroad, whereby chests were damaged and lids mismatched, while some disappeared without leaving a trace.

By the end of 1867, de Saulcy published an account of the ossuaries (his find from the "Tomb of the Kings" and Schick's lot) in the possession of the Musée Parent in their first bulletin: "Caisses funéraires ou ossuaires judaïques."³¹⁸ Obviously, by then, he had retracted his original mistaken identity of the ossuaries. As well, by this time, the first chapter in the history of ossuary discovery was drawing to an end, though it would not be long before more ossuaries would be found and even more intense debate among the scholars would be sparked.

³¹⁶ Félicien de Saulcy, *Voyage en Terre Sainte* (2 vols.; Paris: Didier, 1865), 1.368; 2.198.

³¹⁷ Furthermore, on the occasion of visiting the museum of the English Literature Society (housed in the former English Consulate) the Frenchman wrote annoyed, *Voyage*, 1.372, that there were "three or four small treasure boxes" similar to the pieces he had discovered; de Saulcy accused the English of having had these particular pieces secretly removed from the Tomb of the Kings, scoffing at the information that gave their provenance as Mount of Olives. (We know today that this location was a prominent burial site and yielded many ossuaries.)

³¹⁸ F. de Saulcy, "Caisse funéraires ou ossuaires judaïques," *Bulletin archéologique du Musée Parent*, October 1867.

By the 1870's, more ossuaries would be found due to an upsurge in interest- often termed a "scientific interest" - in the Holy Land, on the part of not only private researchers but also those who were sent as part of official missions from governments and organizations in France, England and Germany. In 1871, the English Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF), probably the most prominent such organization, reported more discoveries by its agents Wilson and Warren. Entitled *The Recovery of Jerusalem*,³¹⁹ this report was incorporated in the Fund's *Our Work in Palestine*. It featured "three sepulchral chests of the Christian Period"³²⁰ as being among the most interesting relics found in Jerusalem between 1867 and 1870. Their provenance was given as the east side of the Mount of Olives (near Bethany), north of the Russian Building, i.e. near Mar Elias, and in the Valley of the Convent of the Cross.³²¹

The chest found at the last of these three sites was actually discovered accidentally by Captain Walker and Mr. Hay, the acting consul for the United States,³²² in a rock-cut tomb near the Monastery of the Cross. Although the tomb had been opened for some time, the "sarcophagus" had not been removed as the Arab proprietor had thought it to be Moslem. Warren was amused that the "fella Serjeant Birtles took with him to remove it was the owner of it and the soil, and had often wished to make a little money out of his property."³²³ This particular ossuary became quite famous among the first

³¹⁹ C. Wilson, and Charles Warren, *The Recovery of Jerusalem. Exploration and Discovery in the City and the holy Land*, ed. Walter Morrison (NY: D. Appleton & Company, 1871). This discovery report was subsequently repeated in the Fund's account *Our Work in Palestine: being an Account of the different Expeditions sent out to the Holy Land* (London: Bentley & Son, 1873) 156-157. The descriptions of the chests by Greville J. Chester appear in the appendix pp.493-494: "Notes on Miscellaneous Objects found in the Excavations."

³²⁰ They were possibly exhibited in the "Palestine Museum" (connected to the Department of Science and Art) at South Kensington, which according to the Conder and Kitchener, *SWPM* I, 16, was to open in 1867 with objects partly collected by the agents of the Fund.

³²¹ *Recovery of Jerusalem*, 238; also 387.

³²² *PEFQSt* 7 (1870) 152; see also *Recovery of Jerusalem*, 237-238.

³²³ Wilson and Warren, *Recovery of Jerusalem*, 238.

finds. Its illustration was featured in a number of subsequent publications.³²⁴ It was of considerable elegance and Warren found this richly carved ossuary to be “more skillfully cut than any I have seen.”³²⁵

Furthermore, by late 1872, Conder, another agent of the PEF, who was in charge of the Survey of Western Palestine, had made significant ossuary finds. Intrigued by a mound in the Lower Galilee, known as Tell Beit She’arim, Conder had begun to explore its extensive system of tombs. Known as “The Great Caves” he had found considerable fragments of “osteophagi” and so proved that a widespread and extensive existence of these artefacts.

Clermont-Ganneau

The French scholar Clermont-Ganneau was also prominent in the discoveries and research of ossuaries. Residing in Jerusalem as an interpreter for oriental languages at the French Consulate in Palestine (1865-1872), Clermont-Ganneau participated in official missions for the Palestine Exploration Fund, and acted as French Consul in Jaffa (1881-2). His interest in inscriptions led him to ossuaries, which were being discovered at that time on the private property of individuals or institutions. For example, in 1868 he was shown a slab of calcareous rock in the hands of a priest of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. It had been found at Viri Galilaei. Clermont-Ganneau correctly identified it as an important ossuary fragment.³²⁶ It was through his publishing initiative that we today have a record of their existence, even though many of the artifacts have since disappeared.

Besides studying the artifacts in the possession of various people and institutions, Clermont-Ganneau engaged in archaeological enterprises in the region. He explored tombs around Jerusalem and its vicinity, and in the process was often told by Arabs of the

³²⁴ The ossuary is featured in Chester, “Notes on Miscellaneous,” 386; further in *Our Work in Palestine*, 156.

³²⁵ Wilson and Warren, *Recovery of Jerusalem*, 238.

³²⁶ AR II, 417-418.

whereabouts of ossuaries. He marked down the information, searched the sites and often found additional specimens. In December 1870, he heard a peasant woman talking about “a little sandûk of soft stone (an ossuary)” from Bettîr.³²⁷ Another time he wrote: “One workman from Na’lîn³²⁸ engaged in our excavation brought me some fragments of an ossuary of soft limestone, ornamented with rosettes of an ordinary type engraved with a point, which he had found in an old tomb near the village. I went there myself to make sure of the fact, and saw there another ossuary in a complete state...”. He also recorded a number of specimens in the vicinity of Modin,³²⁹ and in Lydda.³³⁰ He had also been made aware, by his friend G. Colonna-Cecaldi, of two similar Jewish ossuaries from Alexandria.³³¹

One of the most interesting specimens which Clermont-Ganneau encountered during his tour in the spring of 1871³³² was a large inscribed ossuary previously found in a tomb in Lydda.³³³

³²⁷ AR II, 463, recorded in a notebook from 1870.

³²⁸ AR II, 377, see also above.

³²⁹ AR II, 373: “We have such a number of examples of coffin-shape and I have found them existing in the immediate vicinity of Midieh.”

³³⁰ AR II, 377. On this occasion he remarked: “... interesting, as it shows that the use of these ossuaries, which properly belong to Jewish archaeology, extended at least as far as these parts.”

³³¹ Aside from the find in Buchrion, additional ossuaries surfaced between 1874 and 1875 in the Jewish Catacombs in Alexandria. See Néroutsos-Bey and Tassos Dēmētrios, *L'ancienne Alexandrie* (Paris, 1888) 83, comment about similar ostothekei excavated in Jerusalem. They advance the hypothesis, too, that bones were collected in order to make room for new burials. Ernst Sieglin (ed.), *Ausgrabungen in Alexandria unter Leitung von Theodor Schreiber. Band I: Die Nekropole von Kôm- Esch-Schukâfa* (Leipzig: Giesecke & Devrient, 1908) 188 and 208 n.36, mentions Jewish ossuaries in Schatby (Chatby).

³³² see AR II, Appendix I, 478-479.

³³³ Wilson and Guérin had described it as sarcophagus, see AR II, 478.

He “secured the consent of the owner for a few piastres,”³³⁴ cleared the top of the vaulted roof (as the entrance was too deeply buried in soil) and jumped through the hole in the roof into the tomb which was choked up with earth. Clermont-Ganneau located the ‘sarcophagus’ upside down in the middle of the burial chamber. It turned out to be “merely an ossuary of more than usual size.”³³⁵ Then and there he could have acquired this “interesting object for a mere thirty piastres or so.”³³⁶ But to his chagrin he could not actually afford this meagre sum. Therefore he merely took a “squeeze” of the inscription and left the ossuary where it was. Three years later, Clermont-Ganneau returned in order to make an exact plan of this remarkable stone-built tomb and to have another look at the ‘unusual’ ossuary.³³⁷ The owner of the property, Daûd Hajîr, agreed hesitantly to the superficial excavation of the tomb, which took several hours and was “a most troublesome task” in suffocating heat.³³⁸ Afterwards, Clermont-Ganneau followed the Arab’s invitation to a repast, hoping to convince him to sell this precious ossuary for a reasonable sum; but meanwhile, the owner’s “ideas on the subject had undergone a remarkable expansion.” Finally, at dessert, he agreed to sell the garden with the article in question as he was in debt, and Clermont-Ganneau “could take the offer or leave it.”³³⁹ He left it. Years later, in 1879, M. Chevarrier, French Vice-Consul at Jaffa convinced Daûd Hajîr to listen to reason, and Chevarrier acquired the ossuary to be added to the collection in the Louvre.³⁴⁰

³³⁴ AR II, 478.

³³⁵ AR II, 479. It was originally placed in an arched loculus at the back.

³³⁶ AR II, 479.

³³⁷ See AR II, 345, for the description of the ossuary. See also *Mission en Palestine. Archives des Missions Scientifiques et Littéraires. Choix de rapports et instructions* (3e série; Paris 1885) 245.

³³⁸ AR II, 349.

³³⁹ AR II, 349.

³⁴⁰ AR II, 479.

On March 28, 1873, Clermont-Ganneau read a pivotal memoir to the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres in Paris addressing ossuary inscriptions.³⁴¹ At this point, Clermont-Ganneau still considered Jewish ossuaries to be rare artifacts. He came to this conclusion apparently on the basis of hardly more than the two dozen ossuaries mentioned above. However, Clermont-Ganneau's assessment of the rarity of the artifacts would change a few months later when the Palestine Exploration Fund commissioned him to undertake a scientific mission to the Holy Land during the fall of 1873 and spring 1874, and during which enterprise a substantial number of ossuaries came to light.

Just before his expedition a significant chance find occurred in July 1873.³⁴² An Effendi of the city, while building himself a country house on the Mount of Offence, had broken into a burial cave that was full of interesting ossuaries. Unfortunately, the cave had been ransacked by rough workmen.³⁴³ Dr. Thomas Chaplin, a surgeon in Jerusalem who was interested in all matters antiquarian,³⁴⁴ was the first European permitted by the authorities to examine this tomb (later labeled a "Jewish-Christian" tomb) and the thirty ossuaries it contained. In a short note to the Palestine Exploration Fund he described the mortuary chests as "neatly executed, but none so elaborately carved as that figured on page 494 of '*The Recovery of Jerusalem*'."³⁴⁵ As soon as Clermont-Ganneau arrived, he went without delay to examine this exciting discovery. He started to bargain with the landlord for the antiquities but had to give up due to the latter's exorbitant demands. The scholar, luckily, took

³⁴¹ Subsequently published in the June issue of the *Revue Archéologique*, titled: "Nouveaux ossuaires juifs avec inscriptions grecques et hébraïques" (*RA* 25 [2e série; 1873] 398-412).

³⁴² See AR I, Chapter XV, 382-412: "Jewish Ossuaries and Sepulchers in the Neighborhood of Jerusalem. I. On the Mount of Offence."

³⁴³ AR I, 381: "They carried off the ossuaries, changed their lids, and broke many of the boxes. They also broke or threw away the bones which they contained."

³⁴⁴ He was in charge of the Sanatorium of the London Jews Society (North); from the mid-1860's he assisted expedition members of the PEF with their archaeological work.

³⁴⁵ *PEFQSt* (1873) 155-156: "Letters from Dr. Chaplin, August 1st, 1873." Chaplin found that the "absence of Christian emblems, and the presence of Hebrew characters, is interesting."

precautions and made accurate reproductions of the inscriptions and ornamentations carved upon the ossuaries, as he had anticipated the artifacts' eventual disappearance.³⁴⁶ The drawings were subsequently published.³⁴⁷

During his actual mission in the fall of 1873 and spring 1874,³⁴⁸ Clermont-Ganneau discovered ossuaries on the Mt. of Offence,³⁴⁹ on the Mt. of Olives,³⁵⁰ on Mons Viri Galilaei,³⁵¹ in Wadi Yasul,³⁵² and in Wadi Beit Sahur.³⁵³ Certainly, the great number of finds was by now enough to cause Clermont-Ganneau to reconsider his original assessment that the artifacts were extremely rare!

During a visit to Shu'afat in February 1874, he was told by a village boy of a cavern which he had entered while tracking a porcupine, and where he had found several stone 'sanadik' with bones therein.³⁵⁴ Clermont-Ganneau immediately went there with his group, examined it, and decided to have the entrance to the tomb cleared. Returning the next day,

³⁴⁶ AR, I, 381.

³⁴⁷ The ossuary find was reported first in *PEFQSt* (January 1874) 7-10: "The Jerusalem Researches: Letters from M.C.-G.; II. 'Sarcophagi', Jerusalem, November 13-27, 1873." For their detailed description see AR I/ 383-412.

³⁴⁸ AR II, 488, lists ossuaries, fragments, and single lids from the neighborhood of Jerusalem. See the publication of some specimens in Clermont-Ganneau, *Mission en Palestine*, 3/II Paris 1885 (3e série) 168, 205-208, 219-221, 243-245.

³⁴⁹ See *SWPJ*, 404.

³⁵⁰ See the letter in *PEFQSt* (1874) 93-97, dated Jerusalem, October 5-10, 1873.

³⁵¹ Clermont-Ganneau, AR I: "On the Hill called Viri Galilaei," 413-419.

³⁵² Clermont-Ganneau, *PEFQSt* (1874) 147: "Letters from M. Clermont-Ganneau. March 5, 1874." A description of Wadi Yasul and Wadi Beit Sahur is found in AR I, 420-437. He reports hundreds of tombs and several ossuaries, which are described on pp. 437-448.

³⁵³ AR II, 488, lists four specimen from there.

³⁵⁴ See Clermont Ganneau, *PEFQSt* (1874), 108-109: "Letters from Clermont-Ganneau, from Febr. 8th, 1874;" see also AR I, 448-450.

he found that some villagers had already cleared several metres of the passage into the tomb that the porcupine had previously called home. With difficulty Clermont-Ganneau carefully crawled on all fours into the narrow passage and made his way into a chamber full of earth into which the porcupine had burrowed. Eventually five ossuaries and many fragments were recovered.

Greed, incompetence, and fraud

Unfortunately, the process of understanding and unraveling the ossuary phenomenon has been complicated by difficulties in gaining access to the finds for study purposes, as well as even more serious problems of greed, deceit and even outright fraud. These problems were particularly acute throughout the early years of ossuary discovery - i.e. in the nineteenth century. While throughout much of the nineteenth century, under Ottoman rule, antiquities remained the property of the Turkish government, occasionally the authorities would allow the ossuaries, like other artefacts, to be shipped to foreign countries. However, knowing that foreign agents were always eager, indeed insatiable, to learn about and to acquire ossuaries for research purposes or for purchase, local Arabs disclosed the whereabouts of “*sanadik* or *sandük*” (as they were locally called) for the goodwill of the Europeans, and especially for the prospect of handsome remuneration. This, of course, frequently led to the problematic practice of tomb robberies. Indeed, the practice of tomb robberies, which had even existed in antiquity, became such a plaguing issue that later archeologists (such as Sukenik) would eventually consider themselves very lucky to come across an unopened tomb which still housed its ossuaries *in situ* and where the archeological context had not been ruined.

A further difficulty for the early discoverers and researchers of ossuaries, was the issue of concealment. For instance, in 1880, Schick estimated the number of ossuaries to amount to 300.³⁵⁵ However, the actual number of published ossuaries was only a fraction of this. No later than 1881 this discrepancy was recognized and addressed in the first survey

³⁵⁵ Cited by Schultze, “Sarkophage und Grabinschriften aus Jerusalem,” 10.

of ossuary discoveries. The survey's author, Schultze, speculated as to the gap in the record and reasoned that a possible lack of interest in plain specimens in favour of inscribed ones was to blame. This might well have been the case. Not even all decorated pieces were published as time went by, "because one is already too familiar with them."³⁵⁶ However, another reason- and a more disturbing one- was likely the intentional concealment of findings.³⁵⁷ Schultze sadly stated that most artifacts had disappeared into private hands without leaving a trace. This was unfortunately part of the ossuaries' fate. We do not know the number of ossuaries that are in private hands, nor in private institutions. Luckily for research, though, on occasion, the owner published the ossuary or granted a scholar permission to do so. Thus, these ossuaries were not always lost for the record. On the other hand, some once-recorded artifacts in public institutions are no longer there.

Yet another manifestation of the problems which has beset ossuary research-that of fraud- occurred in 1881. Clermont-Ganneau found a small ossuary in the Greek Monastery of the Cross, housed among their antiquities. This one, however, had fallen victim to a falsification and had been 'Moabitisied'³⁵⁸ Found in Málha, the chest itself was authentic - it looked like any other sample - but it had been embellished with a false inscription. Thanks to his expertise in languages, though, Clermont-Ganneau was able to expose this fraud to the owners' bafflement. This incident not only evokes the present -day allegations of fraud which are being raised in relation to the James ossuary, but points out some of the problems which complicate ossuary research.

Between 1880 and 1899 - for almost two decades - hardly any new ossuaries were being discovered or, at least, were not announced. Only one notice, in 1891, appeared in the

³⁵⁶ See Bonaventura Lugscheider, "Über ein neuentdecktes jüdisches Grab mit hebräischen Inschriften," *MDPV* 6 (1900) 37.

³⁵⁷ Also proposed by Kloner, *Necropolis of Jerusalem*, 250-51.

³⁵⁸ In the late 70's and the beginning of the 80's a collection of objects appeared on the market, allegedly originating from Moab on account of inscriptions similar to those on the stele of Mesa the Moabite - but it was all a fraud.

Fund's *Quarterly Statements*³⁵⁹ where G.R. Lees reported the opening of some tombs north of the Damascus Gate and the recovery of some plain as well as decorated and inscribed ossuaries. During this time, however, the first surveys of the Fund were being completed, and the publication of the findings was being prepared.

Then, in 1899³⁶⁰ Bonaventura Lugscheider,³⁶¹ a member of the Deutsche Palästina-Verein was returning from Anathot to Jerusalem and observed that workmen, busy digging calcareous tufa, had just discovered the entrance to a multi-chambered burial cave. Therein, Lugscheider counted 30 ossuaries which he was determined to study. After having obtained official permission from the authorities to study the artifacts, he returned on the following day, examined the artifacts and notified the German organization. Immediately after their discovery, the majority of these ossuaries were removed by Ismail Bey, head of the Public Instruction Department, and relocated to the Government school near Herod's Gate.

5.2 Ossuary Discoveries in the Early Twentieth Century

The Twentieth Century witnessed continuing finds of great interest. Moreover, another highly significant development occurred in the early years of the twentieth century- the founding in 1914 of the Jewish Palestine Exploration Fund (JPEF), later to be renamed the Israel Exploration Society. Whereas the nineteenth century had seen ossuary and other archeological finds dominated by non-Jews, the founding of the 'Jewish Palestine Exploration Fund' was paralleled by another trend, namely the blossoming interest in and involvement of Jewish scholars in Palestinian archeology. In terms of actual ossuary finds

³⁵⁹ G.R. Lees, "(Notes and News)," *PEQSt* (1891) 89.

³⁶⁰ The Palestine Exploration Fund printed C.A. Hornstein's report dated from the 30th October, "Newly-Discovered Tomb on Mount Scopus," *PEFQSt* (1900) 75-76. In France, the find was communicated first to La Société des Antiquaires on Dec 13th 1899, and then imparted by H. Vincent, the eminent scholar of the École Biblique in Jerusalem, in their *Revue Biblique*: Vincent, "Hypogée judéo-grec découvert au Scopus. (Chronique)," *RB* 9 (1900) 106 -112.

³⁶¹ Lugscheider, "Über ein neuentdecktes jüdisches Grab," 33-37.

in the early years of the nineteenth century, however, I shall limit the present discussion to the historical highlights, mentioning only those ossuaries which are most renowned for reasons of their beauty, their controversial nature or their inscriptions of names of historical personalities.

In 1902, a significant tomb had been opened at the north end of the Mt. of Olives (Mt.Scopus) in the field adjoining the house of a certain Mr. Gray Hill. This has become known as the “Tomb of Nicanor of Alexandria”³⁶² after a Greek inscription on one of the seven ossuaries found, which revealed that the bones within belonged to (the sons of) Nicanor of Alexandria. Credit went to the daughter of the consul, Gladys Dickson, who studied and published her observations on the finds. Among the ossuaries one of small dimensions (1 foot 3 inches x 8 1/2 in. x 10 1/2 in.) was recovered. Dickson suggested that it was “probably for a child’s bones.”³⁶³ This designation differed significantly from others previously given. The identification of those very small ossuaries, which eventually appeared in quite large numbers, is of significance to the arguments I shall subsequently present. A cross mark was explained correctly by Miss Dickson as being a direction mark: “it corresponds to a similar mark on the lid of the ossuary, showing the proper way to orient it.”³⁶⁴

In this manner, ossuaries continued to be found as a result of the building activities in newly established Christian institutions.³⁶⁵ For example, a burial cave in the Schneller Compound (Syrian Orphanage)³⁶⁶ in the north-west part of the city was discovered in 1905,

³⁶² Gladys Dickson, “The Tomb of Nicanor of Alexandria,” *PEFQSt* (1903) 326-331. She noted the painted red lines on both sides, one end, and the lid.

³⁶³ Dickson, “The Tomb of Nicanor of Alexandria,” 330.

³⁶⁴ Dickson, “The Tomb of Nicanor of Alexandria,” 331.

³⁶⁵ Such as the White Fathers of St. Ann’s Seminary, the Sisters of Sion, the Franciscans (Dominus Flevit), the Benedicts: Dormition Abbay, the Dominicans of St. Etienne; Notre Dame.

³⁶⁶ The first director of the institution, Ludwig Schneller, published: “Neuentdecktes Grab mit Handschriften aus der Zeit Christi,” *Der Bote aus Zion* 21/2 (1906) 28-31. See also M. Lidzbarski, *Ephemeris*

adjacent to the 1880 find. The institution's quarterly, *Der Bote aus Zion*, reported eight ornamented ossuaries bearing bilingual Greek and Hebrew inscriptions. This attests to the Jewish owners' residence outside Judea, possibly Beth-She'an. The ossuaries were among those that had probably been stolen and sold to Christian institutions such as the Syrian Orphanage and the Russian Compound, whose interest in the material culture of the Holy Land was well-known. Members or workers of these institutions often located ossuaries on their premises when building houses, or when undertaking their own small excavations designed to unearth evidence from the early Christian epoch.

Additionally, some religious institutions eagerly started their own private antiquity collections of Palestinian artifacts. Small museums exhibit ossuaries that had been found on their property or which had been bought.³⁶⁷ The German Protestant Institute of Archaeology in Jerusalem, for instance, opened officially in 1903,³⁶⁷ and the German Benedictines at the Dormition Abbey in 1906.³⁶⁸ Sometimes pieces were exchanged between the various institutions.

In 1912, six inscribed ossuaries which generated much interest on the part of paleographers and epigraphers, were found in a burial cave in the Qatamon neighborhood of

2 (1906) 191-199; Jean Baptiste Frey (ed.) *Corpus Inscriptionum Judaicarum* (2 vols.; Rome: Pontificio istituto di archeologia cristiana, 1936-1952 [reprint of vol. 1, with a prolegomenon by B. Lifshitz, New York, 1975] II: Asie, Afrique (Rome, 1952) 314.

³⁶⁷ Its first director, Gustav D. Dalman, not only purchased but also studied the bone-boxes, especially their inscriptions, and communicated the analysis to the Deutsche Palästina Verein. The organization published them in their *Zeitschrift*: G.H. Dalman, "Inschriften aus Palästina," *ZDPV* 37 (1914) 135-136, 144-145. One of the eleven original ossuaries, originating from Gaza, was made from clay ('Thonsarg ohne Inschrift u. Ornament'), but it is missing today. In addition, Dalman published new interesting finds, such as ossuary found in the spring 1903 on Mt. of Olives, see "Epigraphisches und Pseudegraphisches," *MDPV* 9 (1903) 30. Recently, Volkmar Fritz and Roland Deines published eighteen ossuaries, which are today in the institute's possession in "Catalogue of the Jewish Ossuaries in the German Protestant Institute of Archaeology," *IEJ* 49/3-4 (1999) 222-241.

³⁶⁸ See for example, M. Giesler, "Das archäologische Museum der Dormitio," [Deutsche Benediktiner-Abtei 'Maria' Heimgang in Jerusalem] *Das Heilige Land* 79 (1935) 15.

Jerusalem, housed in the Sions Museum.³⁶⁹ In the spring of 1912, Hubert Grimme reported the finds in the *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung*³⁷⁰ and revealed that the inscriptions on these particular ossuaries indicated that the burials belonged to the priestly Qallan family.

At the end of October 1923 an undisturbed tomb south of Silwan in the Kidron Valley was opened. It yielded about twenty ossuaries, a dozen of which bore inscriptions with the names and genealogies of those buried. Archaeological news covering the year 1923 in the *American Journal of Archaeology* announced the discovery.³⁷¹ W.F. Albright expressed strong interest in the inscriptions as their increasing number provided scholars with “invaluable material for the nomenclature and eventually for the history of the New Testament period.”³⁷² Names such as Yehosef son of Shimon and Abuna Simon the elder³⁷³ are examples of the inscriptions which fascinated him.

The year 1926 may truly be considered a watershed year in the history, not only of ossuary research, but of archeology in the Holy Land altogether. The newly-founded Hebrew University of Jerusalem opened its Department of Antiquities (to be renamed The Institute of Archeology after 1967) in that year. Additionally, its archeologists (in cooperation with the JPEF and the government’s Department of Antiquities) began to concentrate on the remains of the Second Temple Period. Therefore, a systematic search for Jewish tombs near the University, in the Kidron Valley, as well as in the vicinity of the village of Silwan was carried out. Sukenik, destined to become one of the great archeological scholars of the

³⁶⁹ P.H. Hänsler, “Die Ossuarien des Sionsmuseums,” *Das Heilige Land* 57 (1913) 85-95, 129-144.

³⁷⁰ Hubert Grimme, “Inchriften auf Ossuarien aus Jerusalem,” *Orientalische Literatur-Zeitung* 15 (1912) 529-534. Grimme could establish the relationship of four generations as well as a priestly connection; also Frey, *Corpus* II: 303.

³⁷¹ W.F. Albright, “Recent Discoveries (Archaeological News, Discoveries and Bibliography),” *AJA* 28 (1924) 87-88.

³⁷² Albright, “Recent Discoveries,” 87.

³⁷³ L.A. Mayer, “A Tomb in the Kidron Valley containing Ossuaries with Hebrew Graffiti Names,” *Palestine Museum, Jerusalem-Bulletin*. (British School of Archaeology, Jerusalem) 1 (1924) 56-60.

Hebrew University, discovered a cave in 1926 in the German Colony³⁷⁴ which revealed twelve ossuaries. Most of these revealed particularly exciting inscriptions, such as "Dositheus our father, do not disturb."³⁷⁵ In the same year, Sukenik found one with the inscription Jesus, Son of Joseph which reveals the usage of the name Yeshu.³⁷⁶

An interesting tomb near Giv'at Ram,³⁷⁷ found in 1929, revealed a bronze mirror glass dated to the second century CE, and one pottery ossuary together with a stone one. Equally fascinating were the twenty-three ossuaries uncovered in 1932 in the tomb of the priestly Boethos family on Mount Scopus. The ossuary of Simon, son of Boethos, may in fact be that of the High Priest appointed by Herod.³⁷⁸

Additional ossuaries which generated much interest include those found at the end of 1934 in a tomb close to Beit Sahur el-'Atiq.³⁷⁹ In this very simple tomb, five ossuaries were found, three of which were inscribed (i.e. Onias son of Alexa). Most peculiar graffiti and scratches, twice on the rear side "ostophagos" referred to the ossuary itself. Other ossuaries found in 1941 include one of Alexandros from Cyrene, who - it is suggested - belongs to the family of Simon, the man who carried Jesus' cross.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁴ Eleazar L. Sukenik, "A Jewish Hypogeum near Jerusalem," *JPOS* 8 (1928) 113-121; "Additional Notes on 'A Jewish Hypogeum near Jerusalem.' (Notes and Comment)," *JPOS* 9 (1929) 45-49.

³⁷⁵ Sukenik, "Nochmals 'Die Ossuarien in Palästina'," *MGWJ* 75 (1931) 462-463.

³⁷⁶ See Maisler, "Sole Reminders," 778.

³⁷⁷ R. Ruchmann, "Tombs on Giv'at Ram (Botanical Gardens)," *ESI* 6 (1987-1988) 60-61.

³⁷⁸ Eleazar L. Sukenik, "A Jewish Tomb-Cave on the Slope of Mount Scopus," *JJPES* 3 (1934) 62-73 [Hebrew].

³⁷⁹ See Sukenik, "Jewish Tomb in the Kedron Valley," mentioned above; also referred to by G.E. Kirk, "Archaeological Activities in Palestine and Transjordan since 1939," *PEQ* (1946) 96-97.

³⁸⁰ Eleazar L. Sukenik, "A Jewish Tomb Cave in the Vicinity of Isawiyeh," *Kedem* 1 (1942) 29-31 [Hebrew] and Avigad, "Depository of inscribed Ossuaries," 1-12; esp. J.P. Kane, "Ossuary inscriptions from Jerusalem," *JSS* 23 (1978) 268-282.

The second half of the century witnessed a continuation in the trend of ossuary discovery in the rest of the country, just as in the previous century. The first ossuary recorded after 1948 was a decorated sample discovered in 1949 by Maisler (Mazar) during soundings in En Gedi.³⁸¹ More ossuaries came to light in the burial tombs at En Gedi by Hadas. In the 1950's a series of large-scale planned excavations at the necropolis in Ramat Rachel (1959-62) and at Bet She'arim yielded ossuaries. Rahmani was instrumental in advancing the field of study by virtue of his excavations and especially his research, during those decades. Obviously, great excitement was generated when the Maccabee Tombs in Mode'in yielded ossuaries that supposedly could be connected to the Maccabees themselves.

To the north-west of the Old City, the Sanhedria Tomb complex, later known as the "Tombs of the Judges", was thoroughly cleared and investigated in the late 40's and in the beginning of the 50's by Rothschild and Avigad. In almost all of the twenty tombs, which had been robbed in antiquity, the excavators found very fragmentary ossuaries. As well, the Qorban ossuary, discovered in 1956, refers to the deceased who apparently willed support for the Temple offerings.³⁸²

The unification of Jerusalem in the wake of the 1967 Six-Day War marked an important watershed with even more exciting finds to come. After the Hebrew University on Mount Scopus became accessible to Jews again, Avigad discovered a very elaborate tomb on its grounds. Its facade and interior were faced with fine ashlar masonry with drafted margins. Fourteen inscribed ossuaries referred to the patriarch of the family as a Nazarite. This "Tomb of a Nazarite Family", was dismantled and rebuilt at a different location. One of the most important ossuaries came to light supposedly north of Herod's Gate. It refers to the historical figure of a high priest, Theophilus, whose granddaughter was buried in an ossuary.³⁸³ Also in the north (towards the East) where the new neighborhood at Giv'at ha-

³⁸¹ Benjamin Mazar, "A Sounding at En-gedi," *BJPES* 15 (1949) 28 [H].

³⁸² Josef Tadeusz Milik, "Trois Tombeaux juifs récemment découverts au Sud-Est de Jérusalem." *LA* 7 (1956-57) 232-239; *RB* 65 (1958) 409.

³⁸³ Barag and Flusser, "Ossuary of Yehohanah," mentioned above."

Mivtar³⁸⁴ has sprung up, significant tombs have been exposed.³⁸⁵ For example, the Tomb of Simon the Builder of the Temple (1968) contained an ossuary belonging to a master builder or mason, who assisted in the construction of the Temple. Another fascinating find is that of the Yehohanan Ossuary (1968) which contained the remains of a victim of crucifixion. A nail was discovered still piercing his heel bones, while his shin bones were found broken, presumably in order to hasten the process of dying.³⁸⁶

The 'House of David' Ossuary, discovered in 1971 among sixteen ossuaries, is famous for corroborating the existence of those who claimed descent from King David.³⁸⁷

While digging the foundations of the Hebrew University's School of Education on Mount Scopus, burial caves with large numbers of ossuaries were found. Specimens came to light, for example, when bulldozers crashed through the ceiling.³⁸⁸

Furthermore, since The Mount of Olives and the Kidron Valley have the largest concentration of Second Temple period tombs in Jerusalem, rich depositories of ossuaries have been located there. Thirty ossuaries were found, for example, in a single chamber in the Tomb on Jebel Khalet et-Turi, south of Silwan. Throughout the tomb complex, many familiar names appear, such as Yakhin the priest and Cyrene the Proselyte (Cyrene's ossuary was discovered in early 1950's at the site known as Dominus Flevit on the Mount of Olives). The burial ground from the Late Second Temple period extends beyond the foot of the western slope of the Mount of Olives. It is an extension of the necropolis of Jerusalem's

³⁸⁴ Tzaferis, "Giv'at Hamivtar," 18-32. See Naveh, "Ossuary Inscriptions from Givat ha-Mivtar," mentioned above.

³⁸⁵ See the report on burial caves in these areas by Fanny Vitto, "Burial Caves from the Second Temple Period in Jerusalem (Mount Scopus, Giv'at Hamivtar, Neveh Ya'aqov)," *'Atiqot* [Jerusalem 1991] 40 (2000) 65-121.

³⁸⁶ Haas, "Givat ha-Mivtar," mentioned above.

³⁸⁷ See David Flusser, "'The House of David' on an Ossuary," *Israel Museum Journal* 5 (1986) 37-40, for the discovery and the significance of the inscription.

³⁸⁸ Vitto, "Burial Caves from the Second Temple Period in Jerusalem," 65-66.

aristocracy from the First Temple period (on the western slope of Silwan). The map introducing Part Two shows the extent of the necropolis of Jerusalem. The famous monumental tombs - Bene Hezir's Tomb, Zechariah's Tomb, Absalom's Tomb, and Jehoshaphat's Tomb - have left no record of ossuaries, though the tombs themselves will appear later in my argument.

Some of the wealthiest Jerusalemite families were buried in the elaborate necropolis between the Hinnom Valley and the lower Kidron Valley. In the summer of 1989, while the road leading to the village of Silwan was widened, the Aceldama Tombs were exposed at the foot of the western slope of the Kidron Valley near the Aceldama Monastery. Salvage excavations, carried out in the wake of this discovery, yielded an exceptional number of ossuaries and inscriptions. Analysis of these ossuaries indicates that the buried were affluent Jews from the city of Apamea in Northern Syria.

During the last decade, one of the most significant tombs was found in the Peace Forest in Northern Talpith, a neighbourhood south of Jerusalem. It contained ossuaries inscribed with the name of the High Priest, Caiaphas, known to us already from the New Testament. The Caiaphas Ossuary is thought by some historians to be that of the High Priest, Joseph, son of Caiaphas, mentioned by Josephus and by the New Testament.

Also, south of Jerusalem, at Beit Safafa, a plain ossuary was discovered which is of interest to scholars, not because of the absence of decoration or inscription, but rather because of the unique burial setting. It is, to my knowledge, the only specimen that has been found in a shaft grave - not in a tomb.

Finally, it should be noted that much of our information about secondary burial customs comes not only from Jerusalem tombs and ossuaries, but also from the necropolis at Jericho. Due to the sudden appearance of ossuaries in the antiquity market, suggestive of tomb robberies in the region of Jericho, a survey was carried out on behalf of the Archaeological Staff Officer for Judea and Samaria. This resulted in the discovery of a huge necropolis covering about 10 km along the foothills to the west of Jericho. Some tombs were excavated yielding ossuaries that were significant in many ways. For example, the historical

personage, Theodotos, a freedman of Queen Agrippina, could now be safely dated. Also, the family of Goliath could be traced genealogically for three generations!

It is obvious that since the first discoveries of the ossuaries in the 1860's and the initial interest in their existence generated by Conrad Schick's letter of 1866, the Judean ossuary has proven to be simultaneously a fascinating and puzzling artifact, to both scholars and layman alike.

The late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries continued not only to see more and more ossuaries coming to light, especially during periods of robust building activity in Jerusalem and its environs, but also witnessed intense scholarly debate about the very origins and functions of the ossuary and its significance in the religious, social, economic and cultural milieu of the Second Temple Period.

It is this scholarly debate which we must now consider in order to catalogue the divergent theories regarding the ossuaries, to understand the particular approaches of each theory's proponents, and more importantly, to identify the questions regarding the ossuary and its role in Second Temple society which still remain to be answered.

Excursus

The Voyage continues from the Tombs to Museums and to Living Rooms

Although tangential to the main scope and thesis of this dissertation, I feel it is important to provide some interesting information concerning the fate of the ossuaries that have come to light over the years, since Schick's and de Saulcy's earliest discoveries. The story of how they have made their way from the tombs to museums, in the most fortunate of cases, and sometimes how they have been lost from scholarship, or suffered an even more ignoble fate, is another fascinating chapter in the voyage of the Judean ossuary. Fortunately, some ossuaries have come to take their rightful place in

museums, where they can continue to interest and intrigue scholars and lay people alike.

Under the Ottoman law of antiquities, ossuaries were considered the property of Turkey. Occasionally, a firman granted official permission to foreign countries to excavate and export artifacts under certain conditions. Otherwise, the antiquities were housed in Jerusalem in a tiny Government museum, destined to be exported. When the British took over, a consignment of ossuaries was about to be shipped from Jerusalem to a museum in Istanbul.³⁸⁹ British law subsequently decreed that the recovered ossuaries were to remain in Palestine and not to be shipped to Britain.

To the early scholars it was known that some Jewish bone chests were prominently displayed, for instance, in the German Consulate, and - to the chagrin of de Saulcy - in the London Literature Society's small museum in the former English Consulate. Jewish bone chests that had either been discovered on the premises of Christian institutions³⁹⁰ or that had been purchased from private hands,³⁹¹ were sometimes displayed in a prominent place in their small museums. But very often, the artifacts were scattered randomly on the premises, in showcases, in halls, or left in court yards. Not

³⁸⁹ Vincent, "Chronique," *RB* 9 (1900) 107.

³⁹⁰ For example, the Syrian Orphanage - see J. Euting, "Epigraphische Miscellen," in *Sitzungsberichte der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin* (Berlin, 1885) 683-684, ossuaries #'s 61, 65, 70, and 71; the Monastery of the Cross - see Euting, "Epigraphische Miscellen," #'s 62 and 64; the English Sanatorium - see Euting, "Epigraphische Miscellen," #65; the Sisters of Notre-Dame - see Germer-Durand, *Un Musée palestinien, notice sur le musée archéologique de Notre-Dame de France à Jérusalem* (Paris: Maison de la Bonne Presse, 1906-1907) 16-19; the German Benedictine Convent - see H.H. Spoer, "Some Hebrew and Phoenician Inscriptions, I: New Ossuaries from Jerusalem," *JAOS* 28 (1907) 355-359; the Convent of St. Anne - *RB* (1904) 263.

³⁹¹ For instance, Gustav Dalman acquired ossuaries for the German Protestant Institute of Archaeology, which originated from Jerusalem, Gaza, er-Ram, and from Mukhmas (Fritz and Deines, *Catalogue*, 222).

all of these institutions are in existence anymore, and numerous ossuaries from these collections have vanished without a trace.³⁹²

Notwithstanding the export rules, as mentioned above, de Saulcy's finds from the Tomb of the Kings was carried off to the Musée Parent in Paris. From Schick's published find of twenty specimens, eight of the more interesting pieces were shipped on April 24, 1867 to the same destination;³⁹³ the remaining twelve pieces ended up in various other hands. Known to us is that one piece embellished the garden of the German Consulate in Jerusalem,³⁹⁴ one was presented as a gift to the Palestine Exploration Fund in London,³⁹⁵ and one decorated piece would enrich the French scholar Clermont-Ganneau's private antiquity collection in Jerusalem.³⁹⁶ This latter collection comprised also a group of ossuaries originating from the substantial find in Wadi Yasul.³⁹⁷ Other ossuaries originating from this site changed hands: three were given as presents to the chief librarian, Euting, of Strassburg from a certain Dr. Einssler,³⁹⁸ the engineer Schick,³⁹⁹ and Mr. Schönecken,⁴⁰⁰ all residents in Jerusalem. The accidental find by Captain

³⁹² Lost, for instance, is the clay ossuary originating from Gaza mentioned in the note above.

³⁹³ The ossuary collection was published by de Saulcy in the *Bulletin archéologique du Musée Parent*, October 1867, under the title "Caisse funéraires ou ossuaires judaïques."

³⁹⁴ Clermont-Ganneau, "Nouveaux ossuaires juifs," 406.

³⁹⁵ Clermont-Ganneau, "Nouveaux ossuaires juifs," 402.

³⁹⁶ Clermont-Ganneau, "Nouveaux ossuaires juifs," 406.

³⁹⁷ Clermont-Ganneau, "Ossuaire juif de Joseph, fils de Jean," *RA* 36 (2e série; 1878) 306, he speaks of his own collection obtained from his excavation in Wadi Yasul in 1874.

³⁹⁸ Euting, "Epigraphische Miscellen, 682, #58.

³⁹⁹ Euting, "Epigraphische Miscellen, 682, #59.

⁴⁰⁰ Euting, "Epigraphische Miscellen, 682, #60.

Walker and Mr. Hay went to the Palestine Exploration Fund in London.⁴⁰¹ Three or four pieces from the Mount of Olives went to the Museum of the English Literature Society. An inscribed ossuary from Wadi Yasul was stolen and sold to an antique collector in Jaffa, a certain von Ustinow⁴⁰² It ended up in the Louvre in Paris.⁴⁰³ all living in Jerusalem. The large ossuary from Lydda, published by Clermont-Ganneau, went to the Louvre in Paris. Other ossuaries were also sent to the Louvre,⁴⁰⁴ to the British Museum⁴⁰⁵ and to the Kensington Museum in London. In the course of time, a number of European (i.e. Geneva⁴⁰⁶) or North American museums (i.e. the Cincinnati Art Museum in Ohio⁴⁰⁷) either purchased, or were given ossuaries as gifts or

⁴⁰¹ The gift was presented to the Fund on January 19, 1870, see Wilson and Warren, *Recovery of Jerusalem*, 237. Two more chests, one from the English sanatorium, the other from Bethany, are featured by Chester, "Notes on Miscellaneous Objects," 387.

⁴⁰² He is mentioned by various scholars, see for example, Euting, "Epigraphische Miscellen, 682, #50.

⁴⁰³ RA Nov. 1878.; see also Schultze, "Sarkophage" 11, number 5).

⁴⁰⁴ See Héron de Villefosse, *Notice des Monuments provenant de la Palestine et conservés au Musée du Louvre* (Salle Judaïque) (Paris: Charles de Morgues Freres, 2^e 1879 [orig.: 1876]). This work was reviewed by Clermont-Ganneau, *RC* 8 (1879) 76-77, who paid attention to inventory #41, an ossuary (gift by de Saulcy, = #43, in Dussaud's work below) and to #49, a fragment (gift by Albert Dupont, 1869= #51, in Dussaud's work below), remarking that ossuaries of a Jewish kind also exist in Chypre. In 1912, Dussaud, *Les Monuments palestiniens*, 33-50, 53, 74, lists seven pieces or parts thereof. In addition to de Villefosse, featured ossuaries are #16 and #17 (gifts by Mr. Patrimonio, French consul at Jerusalem, 1879); #18 (gift by Mr. Lacau, chancellor in the French consulate at Smyrna., 1880); #15 (de Saulcy); #93 (gift by Mr. Chevarrier, French consul at Jaffa, 1881).

⁴⁰⁵ O. M Dalton, *British Museum. A Guide to the Early Christian and Byzantine Antiquities in the Department of British and Medieval Antiquities* (England: Oxford University Press, 1921 [2nd ed.; orig. 1903]).

⁴⁰⁶ For Geneva, see Yvette Mottier, *Un ossuaire de Jérusalem et le rite de l'ossilegium* (Geneva, Musée d'art et d'histoire, 1992).

⁴⁰⁷ A piece given by the archaeologist Nelson Glueck to the Cincinnati Art Museum in Ohio in 1995, see Steven Fine, "Another View of Jerusalem's Necropolis during the First Century: A Decorated Ossuary from

loans. A visitor to Toronto, here in Canada, can find three ossuaries exhibited in the ROM throughout the year, “brought home” by the former curator, Currelly, “and now declared as ‘Ours’... ‘not in the sense of possession, but in the sense of shared experience.’” (P.X).⁴⁰⁸

Ossuaries that were recovered legally on State property since the British mandate were initially housed in the small museum of the Department of Antiquities, and later exhibited in the Bezalel museum,⁴⁰⁹ and after the latter’s closure, were distributed to the Palestine Antiquities Museum (now known as the Rockefeller Museum) as well as to the Israel Museum.⁴¹⁰ After the Six Day War, a large consignment was located in the courtyard of the Rockefeller Museum and was acquired by the Israel Antiquities Authority. Eventually, the lack of space for the growing number of artifacts in exhibition facilities forced the material culture of the Second Temple Period into warehouses - in particular, the larger collections of the IAA⁴¹¹ and of the Hebrew University.⁴¹² Storage in warehouses, however, restricts access to the

the Nelson and Helen Glueck Collection of the Cincinnati Art Museum,” *JJS* 54/2 (2003) 233-241.

⁴⁰⁸ Charles Trick Currelly, *I brought the Ages Home* (Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum [ROM], 1956).

⁴⁰⁹ After this closed down, its ossuaries came into the possession of the IAA or were taken to the new Israel Museum.

⁴¹⁰ The Israel Museum has a number of pieces in its collection, among them #s 455 and 482 in RCat.

⁴¹¹ Collection of the Israel Antiquities Authorities (IAA), formerly the Department for Antiquities in Palestine, then Israel Department of Antiquities and Museum (IDAM)

⁴¹² End of 1999, I was privileged to view the inventory cards of the Hebrew University’s collection of some 80 ossuaries at the time. 40 of those pieces had been published by Ruth Jacoby, *Jerusalem Ossuaries: Jerusalem Index of Jewish Art* (Jerusalem, 1987). It includes also 18 pieces in the collections of the Franciscan Biblical School (‘Dominus Flevit’ necropolis) out of a total of 129 ossuaries.

actual artifacts for the public. Their publication in a catalogue, therefore, is to be applauded.⁴¹³

A substantial number of the first artifacts to be discovered, however, ended up in the hands of private individuals⁴¹⁴ and serious collectors. Explorers and archaeologists themselves kept or bought choice pieces for their own antiquity collections. Occasionally, private owners permitted the publication of their specimens. In this way, although without the proper archaeological record, not all information was lost.⁴¹⁵ Nevertheless, the majority of these ossuaries disappeared without leaving any trace. This unfortunate state of affairs was recognized already about a decade into ossuary discovery, when the number of bone chests was estimated to be 300; the actual number of ossuaries published, however, was far less. The discrepancy was explained by claiming that plain pieces were sometimes not deemed worthy of publication. Only the inscribed artifacts were published. Many ossuaries had simply disappeared, within the country or exported.⁴¹⁶ Others were simply put to unusual use: Thus, they turn up as ash urns, building stones,⁴¹⁷ water troughs, flower planters, and practical storage containers. Some chests were indeed published unexpectedly, falling victim to falsification when they were adorned with fabricated inscriptions (Greek

⁴¹³ Particularly Rahmani's *Catalogue*, or the one of Fritz and Deines, referred to above.

⁴¹⁴ Oded Golan, for example, the owner of the disputed 'James' ossuary, has reputedly one of Israel's largest private antiquities collections and admitted to owning 30 or 40 ossuaries.

⁴¹⁵ Tal Ilan, "An Inscribed Ossuary from a Private Collection," *IEJ* 51/1 (2001) 92-95.

⁴¹⁶ Schütz, "Die Ossuarien in Palästina," 287-88.

⁴¹⁷ For the illustration of this ossuary, see also fig. 3 in Benjamin Maisler (Mazar), "Jüdische Familiengräber bei Jerusalem," 347.

or Moabite, or Christian) in order to increase their value.⁴¹⁸ The most famous of these in modern times is the so-called ‘James’ ossuary that bears the astonishing inscription of a “Yakov son of Yosef, brother of Jesus” and the authenticity of which is hotly debated.

Finally, there are those ossuaries that did not survive the discovery process for very long. Often they were destroyed through careless handling, or they were recycled by decomposition in a limestone kiln to produce building materials.⁴¹⁹ In conclusion, the ossuaries suffered a fate no different from that of other artifacts: They were removed from their intended setting and subsequently, lost their *raison d’être*.⁴²⁰

What has happened to the human remains for which the ossuaries were originally created? For the most part, the containers were emptied, and the bones were scattered or discarded by the early discoverers. This lack of respect towards human remains as well as the mundane or even scholarly motivations for disturbing places of eternal rest, justified the negative and sometimes violent reaction of the religious sector in the State of Israel and soon led to profound criticism in the scholarly world. It is now considered questionable and even unethical to retrieve funerary chests for no other reason than data acquisition or to enrich antiquity collections in museums, or

⁴¹⁸ See Clermont-Ganneau, *Les fraudes archéologiques en Palestine* (Paris: Leroux, 1885) 95-96. He mentioned a new case of falsification in case of Dalman’s corpus, dealt with in “Sur diverses inscriptions de Palestine publiées par M. Dalman,” *RAO* 6 (1905) 172.

⁴¹⁹ For the destruction of tombs by quarrymen see AR I, 299:” ...quarrymen who have been working the necropolis as a mine of hewn stone.”

⁴²⁰ Of interest here is Gideon Avni’s study, “Christian Secondary Use of Jewish Burial Caves in Jerusalem in the Light of New Excavations at the Aceldama Tombs,” in *Early Christianity in Context. Monuments and Documents*. (SBF, 38), ed. F. Manns and E. Alliata. (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1993), 266 and 270 fig.4. It shows the reuse of an ossuary for cremated remains in Later Roman/Byzantine times.

worse, for monetary gains on the black market. Nowadays, the excavation of necropolises in Israel is forbidden. Should it happen that ossuaries come to light accidentally or via a salvage excavation, the human remains are properly re-buried (a third time), perhaps following an anthropological examination.

Ossuaries travel the world

The interested individual has the opportunity of viewing ossuaries both in Israel and abroad. A number of renowned museums and institutions possess collections of Middle Eastern Archaeology, Art, or Ancient Jewish Art and Archaeology that feature Jewish ossuaries.

In addition, special exhibitions that include ossuaries occasionally tour Israel, Europe, or North American museums and organizations. Two beautiful specimens from the Israel Museum appeared in the exhibition *Treasures of the Holy Land* in New York, Los Angeles, and Houston during 1986-1987. In 1988, forty-two pieces were featured in *Jewish Ornamented Ossuaries of the Late Second Temple Period* (The Reuben and Edith Hecht Museum, Haifa).⁴²¹ The so-called ‘Caiaphas’ ossuary toured Italy, the USA and Canada. During the *Jerusalem 3000* Anniversary (September -November 1996), the traveling exhibition *From the Diaspora to Jerusalem* made its Canadian debut at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, where I could view five ossuaries from the famous Akeldama tombs. In 1998, the Museum of Art in Vienna, opened its door to visitors for a “Land der Bibel” exhibition⁴²² with a selection of ossuaries, among them the one of Shimon the

⁴²¹ R.Hachlili, *Jewish Ornamented Ossuaries of the Late Second Temple Period* (The Reuben and Edith Hecht Museum Exhibition Catalogue No.4). Haifa, 1988, containing 42 pieces.

⁴²² See Wilfried Seipel, *Land der Bibel. Schätze aus dem Israel Museum Jerusalem* (Katalog zur Ausstellung des Kunsthistorischen Museums Wien, 22. September 1997 bis 18. Jänner 1998) #’s 149-153. Thanks to Dr. Reinhard Pummer, who brought this exhibition to my attention.

Temple builder, a non-inscribed, beautifully carved exemplar, the one belonging to Yehohanan, the crucified man, and the famous Caiaphas ossuary.⁴²³ The last three specimen were also displayed at the exhibition “Ancient Treasures and the Dead Sea Scrolls” in Montreal and at the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Hull, Canada, the latter between Dec. 5, 2003 and April 12, 2004. Recently, thousands of people took the opportunity to view one of the most sensational (and disputed) ossuaries - the so-called ‘James’ ossuary which arrived from Israel on a private initiative and which was on display at the Royal Ontario Museum from November to December 2002.

The best opportunities to study a variety of artifacts, even unexpectedly, is naturally in Israel. Visiting some of the extant Christian institutions in Jerusalem mentioned above, one may still see ossuaries found originally on their property, sometimes supplemented with additional purchases, in their own small museums, showcases, or elsewhere on the premises. The artifacts are not always identified, though, and the casual visitor probably wonders about the function of these small stone chests. Not seldom, the bone chests have found secondary uses. During my last visit to Jerusalem (2000), I located several ossuaries in the Monastery of the Cross, arrayed along the walls in one of the rooms, each storing church candles. Most impressive for visitors are the ossuaries that can be seen in their natural burial setting, such as those on the premises of Dominus Flevit.

The tourist might also stroll through the Moslem Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem and thereby locate the ossuary used as a building material in a house wall - upside down! And, there is certainly a good chance of

⁴²³ The Caiaphas ossuary had been sent to the Vatican for the millennium celebration.

locating these artifacts by browsing through an antique shop.⁴²⁴ And, to one's surprise one might follow up on an invitation to dinner and encounter an ossuary in the living room.

⁴²⁴ In the fall 1999, I saw two plain artifacts in an antique store in the Via Dolorosa in the Old city, priced at 700 US dollars. Export of this kind of material culture, in any case, is presently forbidden by Israeli law.

Chapter 6

After the Discovery: The Rhetoric of the Ossuaries

6.1 *The Rhetoric of the Ossuary in Modern Times (19th century to today)*

Since ossuaries first started coming to light in the 1860's, they have impacted on the lives of many individuals from various countries, nationalities, confessions, genders, and economic backgrounds. People involved themselves with the artifacts for various reasons. To each individual, Jewish ossuaries *communicated* different messages, which I see summarized in the accompanying table, and which ultimately decided the fate and the place of the artifacts in modern times. For example, some saw in the piece of workmanship only its limestone content and reacted to a chunk of chalk susceptible to heat and thus capable of conversion into lime useful for building. As a consequence, numerous ossuaries were slated for oblivion. Others perceived the ossuary as a quarried building block and incorporated it as an ashlar into a wall, exposed to the elements, its art work slowly decaying. Yet others appreciated its practical storage and filling capacity around the house, and ossuaries thus found a new purpose in secondary usage. The fact that ossuaries are antiques appealed to collectors who saw its worth in their private or public collections, either simply as a piece of art to be enjoyed, or as educational value in representing an ancient civilization. Museum pieces have probably “enjoyed” the best fate of all, as they are admired in conditions optimal for preservation. For scholars, the ossuary signifies exciting material culture used as source material in particular fields or areas of interest relating to the artifact or its purpose. However, Jews appreciate and cherish the ossuary as a legacy of their own past. The ossuary has provided Jews with an important reminder of their rich and undeniable heritage in Israel, of their deep, unquestionable, and assailable “roots” in the Holy Land. Thus, regardless of the source of the interest - be it that of a worker or an intellectual, a person of integrity or a thief, a private person or an official, a local or a foreigner, a Christian or a Jew - access to the newly discovered artifact has triggered many benefits. It has brought gratification financially, intellectually, emotionally, ideologically, personally, or publicly. The

preoccupation of individuals with the ossuary led to oral or written knowledge pertaining to certain aspects of the ossuary. However, we cannot deny that the significant amount of controversy that surrounds the artifact has transformed the Jewish ossuary into a “bone of contention”⁴²⁵ ever since its exciting rediscovery.

Message of the Ossuary	Capacity of the Ossuary	Fate
<i>Chalk</i>	Raw material	Destroyed - no longer existent
<i>Ashlar</i>	Form and shape and material	Remained in secondary use in private possession Building stone in wall
<i>Container</i>	Space for filling and storing: Household chest for candles, Planter, water trough	Remained in this capacity in secondary use in private hands
<i>Collectible</i> <i>Antique</i>	Collector's item for education, for national pride	Remained in this capacity in private or public institutions
	Collector's item for monetary gain or investment, for personal pride	Remained in this capacity in private possession
<i>Material Culture</i>	Artifact for research on culture and society that produced this object, for comparative data of own research	Remained in this capacity in museums

The function of the stone box in antiquity was for secondary burial, which is no longer practiced in modern times (except for special cases laid down in the Halakhah.). Just as

⁴²⁵ For example, the older hot debate on the ossuaries' decoration for their symbolic or non-symbolic meaning, or the ongoing acrimonious dispute on the James' ossuary in contributions published in BAR; see Hershel Shanks elaborating, "The Storm over the Bone Box," 29/5 (2003) 26-39, 83.

modern observers have their own varied views regarding this one piece of *realia*, so too did Second Temple Period Jews. For their part, they adopted a small limestone chest with a specific purpose in mind and used it in gratifying ways to respond to various interests that this dissertation will explore in Parts IV and V.

6.2 *Modern scholarship on the Jewish ossuary*

With the discovery of the ossuary, significant source material came to light to advance the knowledge of scholars in specific fields or, by comparison, to provide new insights in related areas of interest. The ossuary naturally drew the attention of the archaeologists, scholars in Biblical Studies, in Judaic Studies, Social and Art History, paleography, and more recently, in social and physical anthropology.

A decade into their discovery, the ossuaries were considered to be significant sources, such that their omission in reference works - dictionaries⁴²⁶ or text books⁴²⁷ - was severely criticized in book reviews. To demonstrate the significance of the ossuary, I enumerate some specific areas on which scholarship focused; these pertain to the chest as an artifact as well as to its function. The exhaustive bibliography is, in part, intended to show the ensuing scholarship.

The bone container in scholarship

Scholars in Biblical and Judaic Studies related to the ossuary as a funerary container that provided historical evidence of a Jewish burial practice long forgotten in the collective

⁴²⁶ See Charles Clermont-Ganneau: "Note. *Dictionnaire des Antiquités Chrétiennes* [by Martigny, Paris, 1877]," *RC* 8 (1879) 90-91, where he criticizes the fact that no reference was made to the physical similarities of the Christian caskets to the Jewish caskets as the former's prototype.

⁴²⁷ See Charles Clermont-Ganneau, "Review: Benzinger and Nowak's *Lehrbuch der hebräischen Archäologie*," *RC* 44 (1897), where he criticizes the fact that these funerary caskets, characteristic of ancient Judaism, were not represented by an illustration, nor even mentioned with a single word.

memory of the Jewish people; furthermore, it was one that was elusive in religious or historical literature. That ossuaries reveal a custom of Second Temple Judaism - the matrix of nascent Christianity - made the artifacts immediately attractive and intriguing for New Testament studies and Christian Theology.⁴²⁸ One must assume that ossuary burial certainly illustrates how early Christians were buried.⁴²⁹ Furthermore, Jewish bone chests shed some light on the origin of Christian reliquaries.⁴³⁰

Ossuary inscriptions in scholarship

Ossuary inscriptions constitute a substantial part of the whole corpus of Jewish inscriptions. Evidence of inscriptions is generally received with excitement for various reasons. Epigraphs entered collections of Hebrew and Semitic inscriptions.⁴³¹ The first publications were due to Chwolson, Levy, Clermont-Ganneau, Arbel, and Savignac and Vincent from the

⁴²⁸ See, for example, Craig Evans, *Jesus and the Ossuaries* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2003).

⁴²⁹ See Byron R. McCane, *Jews, Christians, and Burial in Roman Palestine (Israel)* (Thesis (Ph.D.), Duke University, 1992, and the monograph, *Roll Back the Stone: Death and Burial in the World of Jesus* (Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 2003).

⁴³⁰ Suggested also by Clermont-Ganneau in his review of the *Dictionnaire des Antiquités Chrétiennes* [by Martigny, Paris] in RC 8 (1879) 90.

⁴³¹ The main collections of ossuary inscriptions are by Chwolson, *Corpus Inscriptionum Hebraicarum* (1882); Klein, *Jüdisch-palästinensischer Corpus Inscriptionum* (1920); Frey, *Corpus Inscriptionum Judaicarum* II (1952); Bagatti and Milik, *Dominus Flevit*, 70-109. For individual inscriptions, see Clermont-Ganneau, *RA* 3 (1883) 257-76; *ARI* (1899) 381-454; Macalister, *PEFQS* (1904) 336-43; (1908) 341-42; L.-H. Vincent, *RB* 16 (1907) 410-14; Lidzbarski, *PEFQS* (1909) 73; Grimme, *OLZ* 15 (1912) 529-34; Hänsler, *Das heilige Land* 57 (1913) 130-34; Dalman *ZDMG* 37 (1914) 135-45; Savignac, *RB* 34 (1925) 253-66; Sukenik, *JPOS* 8 (1928) 113-21; *Jüdische Gräber*; 22-31; *Kedem* I (1942) 61-63; 2 (1945) 23-31; *AJA* 51 (1947) 351-65; Vincent, *RB* 43 (1934) 564-67; Krauss, *REJ* 97 (1934) 1-34; Rahmani, *Atiqot* 3 (1961) 104, 107; Avigad, *IEJ* 12 (1962) 1; *IEJ* 17 (1967) 101-11; *IEJ* 21 (1971) 185-200; Nave, *IEJ* 20 (1970) 33-37; 23 *IEJ* (1973) 82-91; Yadin *IEJ* 22 (1972) 235-36; Rosenthal, 23 *IEJ* 23 (1973) 72-81; Kloner, Tsafir, and Nave, *Jerusalem Revealed, Archaeology in the Holy City 1968-1974 [Tombs]* (1975) 69-74; Puech, *RB* 90 (1983) 481-553.

École Biblique. This was followed by Frey's corpus of epigraphy. Scholars, finding unfamiliar language and script, encountered a challenging task; each newly discovered text generated a series of heated discussions among the experts. In the course of time, scholars gained new expertise. Today, knowledge of the script has advanced to such a point that it itself serves as a litmus test to date other material culture comparatively. The dating of the artifacts to between the late first century BCE and the first two-thirds of the first century CE provides a point of reference for dating documents. The date of composition of the famous Covenant Scroll was determined in just this way.⁴³²

The form, language, and content of inscriptions were thoroughly investigated by Pieter W. van der Horst⁴³³ and Jan Willem Henten,⁴³⁴ Rachel Hachlili⁴³⁵ and Tal Ilan, in particular, concentrated on the origin and form of usage.⁴³⁶ As another example, the content of inscriptions was also researched, focusing on personal names: for instance, new names,

⁴³² Solomon A. Birnbaum, "The Date of the Covenant Scroll," *PEQ* (1949) 140-41 and n. 2 for the sources.

⁴³³ Van der Horst, *Ancient Jewish Epitaphs*; "Jewish Funerary Inscriptions," 46-57, 54-57.

⁴³⁴ Jan Willem van Henten, and Pieter Willem van der Horst, *Studies in Early Jewish Epigraphy* (Leiden-New York: Brill), 1994.

⁴³⁵ Hachlili's excavation reports include her discussion on the inscriptions. Together with Patricia Smith, she established a genealogy of the data she discovered: "The Genealogy of the Goliath Family." *BASOR* 235 (1979) 67-70. Her published paper is a particular treatise on names read at the Noster Colloquium in Amsterdam, June 9-11, 1998: "Hebrew Names, Personal Names, Family Names and Nicknames of Jews in the Second Temple Period, in *Families and Family Relations. As represented in early Judaism and early Christianities: Texts and Fictions*. [Studies in Theology and Religion 2], ed. by Jan Willem van Henten and Athalya Brenner; Leiden: Deo Publishing, 2000) 83-115.

⁴³⁶ Tal Ilan, *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity* (TSAJ 91) (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002). Her previous publications dealing with inscriptions are "Notes on the Distribution of Women's Names," and "Ossuary and Sarcophagus Inscriptions," referred to above; further "New Ossuary Inscriptions from Jerusalem," *SCI* 11 (1991-92) 149-59; *Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Palestine: An Inquiry into Image and Status*. Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum 44. Tübingen: Mohr, 1995.

or what their attributes can tell us about Judean society at the time.⁴³⁷ Previously known names were confirmed as “popular.” However, a repertoire of many new names enriched the existing onomasticon already compiled by other sources. The personalities behind many of the names were studied by Claude Cohen-Matlofsky⁴³⁸ in her prosopographic study of Jewish society in the Second Temple period. Inscriptions with respect to a gendered Jewish society have also been investigated by Yifat Peleg.⁴³⁹

The first epitaphs revealing names such as Yoseph and Mariah, Shimon, Martha, or Yeshu and Yehoshua ben Yoseph, brought excitement to Christian circles. Each discovery naturally kindled the hope of finding evidence for the historicity of personages that feature in Biblical or post-biblical Jewish or Christian literature. To date, possible evidence for several figures has been proposed (e.g. Nicanor and Caiaphas). When an ossuary was recently published bearing an inscription, Ya’akov bar Yehoseph, akhui de Yehoshua (“James, son of Yehoseph, brother of Yehoshua”⁴⁴⁰), the possibility of its being the ossuary of James, the first bishop of Jerusalem, encouraged much scholarly debate. Archaeology of the New Testament now usually deals regularly with ossuaries. Thus, modern publications that use archaeology to illustrate the beginnings of the Early Church generally no longer omit mention of the bone box.⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁷ Albright, “Recent Discoveries,” 87, recognizes the significance and speaks of “invaluable material for the nomenclature and eventually for the history of the New Testament period.”

⁴³⁸ Claude Cohen-Matlofsky, *Les laïcs en Palestine d’Auguste à Hadrien: Études prosopographiques* (Paris: H. Champion, 2001).

⁴³⁹ Yifat Peleg, “Gender, Ossuaries and Meaning,” in *Material Culture, Society and Ideology. New Directions in the Archaeology of the Land of Israel. Conference Proceedings, June 3, 1999*, ed. by Abraham Faust and Aren Maeir (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University, 1999) 119-128 (Hebrew); English Abstract Xiii-Xiv; “Gender and Ossuaries: Ideology and Meaning,” *BASOR* 325 (2002) 65-73.

⁴⁴⁰ For its treatment by André Lemaire, see “Burial Box of James the Brother of Jesus,” *BAR* 28/6 (2002) 24-33, 70.

⁴⁴¹ Jack Finegan, *The Archaeology of the New Testament. The Life of Jesus and the Beginning of the Early Church* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1969) 216-219.

Inscriptions were also investigated for possible information concerning beliefs in the afterlife, specifically, in matters of resurrection. Joseph S. Park advanced a comprehensive analysis, over time and space, based on the corpus of all Jewish inscriptions available, including those on ossuaries.⁴⁴²

Ossuary decoration in scholarship

After initial evaluation of the ossuary by Clermont-Ganneau as popular art, it was only with the beginning of the 20th century that decorations became the subject matter for visual arts. Adolf Reifenberg, taking stock of small Palestinian objects d'art, discussed and illustrated some specimens.⁴⁴³ Systematic treatment and assessment of the ornamentations, in comparison to Hellenistic and Roman art, occurred only decades later. Erwin Goodenough produced the first extensive study of ossuaries and their decorations in a voluminous work, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period* (1953-58).⁴⁴⁴ This was followed by Avi-Yona's⁴⁴⁵ monograph, *Oriental Art in Roman Palestine*, and by Pau Figueras' work, *Decorated Jewish Ossuaries*.⁴⁴⁶ The latter presents, in great detail, various motifs and elements of ornamentation, and deals with the question of possible symbolism.

⁴⁴² Joseph S. Park, *Conceptions of afterlife in Jewish Inscriptions: with special reference to Pauline Literatur*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000. His study confirmed what scholars previously stated that there is no inscriptions that referred to, or alluded to physical resurrection in Rabbinic sense. Ideas of a post-mortem existence in form of astral immortality is indicated in one occurrence.

⁴⁴³ Adolf Reifenberg, *Palästinensische Kleinkunst* (Berlin: Richard Carl Schmidt, 1927).

⁴⁴⁴ The following volumes specifically refer to Jewish ossuaries: I: *The Archaeological Evidence from Palestine* (1953) 59-139; III: *Illustrations* (1953) 105-231; IV: *The Problem of Method. Symbols from Jewish Cult* (1954b) 63-70, 110-112, 120; X: *Summary and Conclusions* (1965) 22-39, 64-77, 106.

⁴⁴⁵ Michael Avi-Yona, *Oriental Art in Roman Palestine* (Studi Semitici 5; Roma: Università di Roma-Centro di Studi Semitici, 1961).

⁴⁴⁶ The work DJO grew out of his dissertation *Jewish and Christian Beliefs on Life after Death in the Light of the Ossuary Decoration*. (PhD Diss. Hebrew Univ. Jerusalem, 1974).

Symbolic meaning in ossuary decoration became a 'bone of contention' in scholarship for decades following Erwin Goodenough's work and his interpretation of ossuary decoration as symbolic. He refutes the realistic (i.e. non-symbolic) interpretation of the ornamental motifs as previously published by the Israeli archaeologists Avi-Yonah and Sukenik. Members of the Franciscan School in Jerusalem, Testa and Bagatti, continued the dispute by defending the symbolic interpretation and by postulating ossuary burial, in each case, to be a Christian way of burial.⁴⁴⁷ Their thesis was subsequently attacked by De Vaux of the École Biblique,⁴⁴⁸ and by Avi-Yonah,⁴⁴⁹ though it was otherwise ignored in general. For the most part, Goodenough's pronouncements⁴⁵⁰ have been dismissed in the scholarly world as speculative.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁴⁷ See Emilio Testa, *Il simbolismo dei giudeo-cristiani*, (PSBF 14; Jerusalem, 1962) 466; Bagatti and Milik, *Dominus Flevit*, 179.

⁴⁴⁸ Roland de Vaux, "Review of Bagatti B. and Milik J.T. *Gli scavi del 'Dominus Flevit', I: La necropoli del periodo romano*," *RB* 66 (1959) 299-301.

⁴⁴⁹ Michael Avi-Yonah, "Review of Bagatti, P.B. and J.T. Milik, *Gli scavi del 'Dominus flevit'. Parte I: La necropoli del periodo romano*," *IEJ* 11 (1961) 91-94.

⁴⁵⁰ Goodenough recognized the frequency of a motif and deduced from this a symbolic use. Jewish art is exclusively Hellenistic and consequently cannot be decorative, because the borrowed pagan symbols are "living symbols" (IV:43). The value of the symbol lies in its 'emotional impact'(X:70) which Goodenough identifies by his own feelings (VII:220), contradicting the claim for universal character of the symbols (IV: 37 - 'lingua franca').

⁴⁵¹ Michael Avi-Yonah, "Review of Goodenough E.R. *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, I-IV," *IEJ* 6 (1956) 194-199; Figueras, *DJO*, 80-81, regrets that Goodenough's work lacks criteria of typology, chronology, systematization of the motifs and the consideration of any materialistic aspects; Levi Y. Rahmani, "Ancient Jerusalem's Funerary Customs and Tombs. Part IV," *BA* 45 (1982) 116, deplores that Goodenough did not provide written evidence of tombs and *ossuaries*, nor literary sources pertaining to symbolic values; see also *RCat*, 25-27.

Repeatedly throughout those years, Rahmani called for a realistic interpretation, denying any symbolic meaning to the ornamentation.⁴⁵² The fact that there are no cases of written reference to symbolism in contemporary literature, remains a powerful argument for the non-symbolic approach.⁴⁵³ Even a realistic symbolic representation, such as the architectural motif symbolizing the Temple façade,⁴⁵⁴ is untenable to Rahmani.⁴⁵⁵ He attempts to prove, and still maintains, that the ossuary decorations are only material imitations of sepulchral art to be found in the vicinity of Jerusalem of that time.⁴⁵⁶ In his opinion, the entire embellishment merely signifies "the eternal home of the deceased, until his bodily resurrection from the bones contained therein."⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵² Last confirmed in RCat, 26.

⁴⁵³ Rahmani, "Ancient, IV," 117; "Review of Kanael B., *Die Kunst der antiken Synagoge*," *IEJ* 12 (1962) 74, acknowledges the possibility of a symbolic value of a motif, for instance the "Sacred Portal", at an earlier point in time, but its meaning might well have been lost by the time ossuaries were used; James Hall, *Illustrated Dictionary of Symbols in Eastern and Western Art* (New York: Icon Editions, 1994) 157, describes the common rosette motif, which originally personified Near-Eastern sun-gods, was a popular decorative motif in Mesopotamian art. Later its purpose was probably apotropaic; therefore, at the time of ossuary usage it seems farfetched to see an Ishtar star in the common rosette.

⁴⁵⁴ Michael Avi-Yonah, "Oriental Elements in the Art of Palestine in the Roman and Byzantine Periods, I," *QDAP* 10 (1944) 147.

⁴⁵⁵ Rahmani, "Ancient. IV," 117, acknowledges as exceptions the depiction of *menoroth* on two ossuaries as symbolic and explains this evidence in the context of ownership of the ossuary by a priestly family; see Asher Grossberg, "Behold the Temple. Is it Depicted on a Priestly Ossuary?" *BAR* 22/3 (1996) 46-51, 66.

⁴⁵⁶ Levi Y. Rahmani, "Jerusalem's Tomb Monuments on Jewish Ossuaries," *IEJ* 18 (1968) 220-225. RCat provides a list of parallels between tomb architecture and the architectural motifs on ossuaries. But these architectural motifs are found in other sumptuous buildings of this epoch. Hence Figueras, *DJO*, 79, comments: "Why should artisans of ossuaries imitate only those *imitations of buildings* - the few rich tombs in Jerusalem - and not the buildings themselves?"

⁴⁵⁷ Rahmani, "Review of Kanael," 74.

In his valuable monograph, Figueras proceeded in 1983 to reconcile the position of the symbolists⁴⁵⁸ and the realists, basically accepting a possible symbolic interpretation of the ornamental motifs.⁴⁵⁹ He conferred a twofold purpose on the ornamental motifs: decorative-aesthetic,⁴⁶⁰ as well as symbolic, with the latter "only at times."^{461 462} Certainly, craftsmanship was determined by the skills of the artisan, guided by decorative-aesthetic considerations, and restricted by a certain price range. However, the artist's intention or the buyer's perception cannot be established and, accordingly, a symbolic interpretation of *ossuary* decoration cannot be so simply dismissed.⁴⁶³ Figueras' approach was appreciated

⁴⁵⁸ The funerary context has mostly been neglected by symbolists who perceived various symbolic possibilities in each and every element of an ornamental motif. The common rosettes have been interpreted as: an Istar star, a symbol of the sun...the divine light, a wheel symbolizing reincarnation, stars symbolizing angels who were guarding the dead until the day of resurrection, or the eyes (soul) of the deceased. Mystical significance has been read even into the number of petals; the guiding marks of the artisans have been declared as symbols for the cross, see RCat, 25-27; DJO, 80.

⁴⁵⁹ Justification for a symbolic interpretation was found by underlining any decoration in the context. For example, Figueras DJO, 83, a bone container, placed in the "darkness of the tombs."

⁴⁶⁰ Figueras, DJO, 84, sees in the decoration the intention to create "a sense of beauty, harmony and peace, an intention which underlies some of the characteristic features of this art, such as symmetry." He finally sees them as "a wish for peace for the dead and an additional proof of hope for an everlasting life and perhaps for the bodily resurrection."

⁴⁶¹ Figueras, DJO, 83, demonstrates that the depiction of a gate can simply denote a gate; yet, it may be in a symbolic way represented as either the Gate of Hades or the Gate of Heaven.

⁴⁶² Figueras DJO, 73-83. He relates funerary art to the hope of a post-mortem Second Temple Jewish eschatological literature uses allegorical terms such as the "gate to *Sheol*" and the "gate to Heaven." Figueras, DJO, 88-90, provides a listing of allegorical passages: the Gate of *Sheol* (Isa 38:10; Job 38:17; Ps 19:14; 107:18); Gates of *Sheol* (PsSol 16:1-3; 1QH III:16-18); Gates of Death (1QH VI:24); Gates of *Hades* (Apoc Elijah 3:18; 14:3-13). The author points also to the perception of the new abode of a heavenly, lightful place: The Gate of Heaven (1En 9:2, 104:2, Apoc Elijah 3:18; 14:3-13).

⁴⁶³ Rahmani, RCat, 28, acknowledges that the purchaser's choice may have been based on a personal symbolic association, but the possible non-symbolic intention of the artist is ignored; see DJO, 22-23.

as a possible and "sober corrective" to extreme opinions.⁴⁶⁴ In agreement with Figueras, the importance of decoration and its symbolism may be perceived,⁴⁶⁵ for example, in the ossuary of a certain Azalia that is decorated with a bull's head, a symbol of afterlife in the Pagan world.⁴⁶⁶ The ornamentation on the bone-containers was interpreted by others, too, as an indication of a belief in life after death.⁴⁶⁷ The most recent discussions of the meaning of ossuary decoration dealing with the so-called *nephesh* or pyramidal representation on ossuaries, are by Lothar Triebel⁴⁶⁸ and Steven Fine.⁴⁶⁹ Door and *nephesh* designs, as symbols of resurrection, will be addressed below.

The fact that the majority of the bone-boxes are undecorated, necessitates the study of the occurrence of *ossuaries* divorced from any iconographic scheme. This departure has been taken by Meyers, who did not concern himself with the evaluation of the adornment and, instead, emphasizes that "secondary burials themselves have a rather elaborate theology."⁴⁷⁰ Similarly Rahmani refers to the ritual of ossilegium as the important act "which was linked neither to the receptacle nor to its form nor to its decoration."⁴⁷¹

⁴⁶⁴ Eric Meyers, "Review: *Decorated Jewish Ossuaries*, by Pau Figueras," BASOR 260 (1985) 82-83.

⁴⁶⁵ For its origin on secondary burial containers, see below.

⁴⁶⁶ Avni, "Architecture", 34.

⁴⁶⁷ Figueras, DJO, 83, takes it for granted that "if there is symbolism in *ossuary* decoration this symbolism must be related to the beliefs in afterlife." W. Wirgin, "The Menorah as Symbol of After-Life," *IEJ* 14 (1964) 102-104, claimed that those who were buried in decorated *ossuaries* believed in immortality of the soul rather than in resurrection as he associates the menorah with the Temple and the Sadducees, who oppose resurrection beliefs. Goodenough I: 133; X: 70-73: "... as symbols of hope of another life for those whose bones were in the boxes - symbols of hope, and perhaps direct aids to its fulfillment."

⁴⁶⁸ Lothar Triebel *Jenseitshoffnung in Wort und Stein. Nefesch und Pyramidales Grabmal als Phänomene antiken jüdischen Bestattungswesens im Kontext der Nachbarkulturen* (Leiden:Brill, 2004).

⁴⁶⁹ See Fine's article, "Another View."

⁴⁷⁰ JORR, 44.

⁴⁷¹ RCat, 28.

The content: The Bones

A modest number of recovered ossuaries contained skeletal remains on which physical anthropologist, Nathan Haas, has carried out a detailed metric analysis, non-metric morphology and pathology.⁴⁷² Ossuary burials in Jerusalem,⁴⁷³ or Jericho⁴⁷⁴ that seemed interesting in some respects were investigated, for example, by J. Zias and by Patricia Smith in order to establish the gender, age, cause of death, or family relationships of the buried person. The evidence of crucifixion in one particular burial naturally generated great excitement and numerous publications.⁴⁷⁵

A steady flow of publications has appeared over the years. Israeli, European, and North American scholars contributed ample articles, entries in reference works, several dissertations and monographs.⁴⁷⁶ Additionally, a comprehensive catalogue of ossuaries in the possession of the Israeli Antiquities Authority was published.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷² Haas, "Giv'at ha-Mivtar," 38-59. Nathan Haas and H. Nathan, "Anthropological Survey of the Human Skeleton Remains from Qumran," *RQ* 6 (1968) 323-52.

⁴⁷³ Patricia Smith, "The Human Skeletal Remains from the Abba Cave," *IEJ* 27 (1977) 121-124; Smith and Zias, "Skeletal Remains," 109-115; J. Zias, "Anthropological Evidence of Interpersonal Violence in the First-Century A.D. Jerusalem," *Current Anthropology* 24 (1983) 233-234; "Human Skeletal Remains from the 'Caiaphas' Tomb," *'Atiqot* 21 (1992) 78-80; "Human Skeletal Remains from the Mount Scopus Tomb," *'Atiqot* 21 (1992) 97-103; "Anthropological Analysis of Human Skeletal Remains," in *The Akeldama Tombs: Three Burial Caves in the Kidron Valley, Jerusalem* (IAA Reports 1; Jerusalem: IAA, 1996) 117-21; J. Zias, and E. Sekeles, "The Crucified Man from Giv'at ha-Mivtar: A Reappraisal," *IEJ* 35 (1985) 22-27.

⁴⁷⁴ B. Arensburg and P. Smith. "Appendix: The Jewish Population of Jericho 100BC-70AD," *PEQ* 115 (1983) 133-139.

⁴⁷⁵ For example, Vas(s)ilios Tzaferis, "Crucifixion - the Archaeological Evidence," *BAR* 11/1 (1985) 44-53.

⁴⁷⁶ See the bibliography, which is an exhaustive listing of publications dealing with ossuaries.

⁴⁷⁷ *A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries in the Collection of the State of Israel*, authored by the former chief curator of the IAA, L.Y. Rahmani.

We see that, over time, interest in ossuaries has reached an ever growing circle of people - experts and lay persons alike. It is my view that, as we continue to uncover profound meanings and information from this Kulturträger, we must acknowledge gratitude for its contribution to fine tuning our knowledge of the Late Second Temple period. Furthermore, although great strides have been made in understanding inscriptions, decorations and osteo-pathology, the quest for meaning of the ossuary still continues. The next chapter presents and examines the sometimes conflicting studies which deal with the *origin* of the phenomenon, a subject to which this thesis hopes to contribute.

Chapter 7

Previous Research into the Origin of Ossuary Burial

In the course of history, the practice of ossuary burial had fallen into oblivion even in the collective memory of the Jewish people, and the few Rabbinic literary references to this practice - without the *realia* - were rather obscure. It was common knowledge that Jews in the Holy Land and in the Diaspora buried their dead in the ground with or without a coffin.⁴⁷⁸ Primary burial was the regular Jewish practice as far as one could remember and as far as one knew. The discovery of large sarcophagi in Jewish tombs did not pose a problem with either scholars or lay persons. The stone coffins complied with the 'norm' - the dead were laid to eternal rest immediately after death occurred without subsequent handling of the remains.

Thus, the discovery of ossuaries was very problematic. It would take decades to fathom the custom of secondary obsequies in Jewish burial practice. It was not so much the discovery of a heretofore unknown material culture *per se* but rather the associated ritual of bone collecting performed by Jews which was baffling. It does not come as a surprise to find that, in their shock, some of the earliest scholars had doubted the very authenticity of the artifact claiming that since Jewish Law forbade touching a tomb or disturbing the dust of the dead, secondary burial was incompatible with the concept of maintaining the eternal peace of the deceased. Furthermore, any action that would necessitate the contracting of corpse-impurity by the deceased's relative a second time would have been a paradox in the face of the purity concerns of the time. In the opinion of those scholars, ossilegium was incompatible with the Jewish world view, a perception that seemed to be confirmed by Jewish funerary customs of modern times. Other scholars, though, in the absence of

⁴⁷⁸ Christians traced their own burial practice of inhumation back to the Jewish matrix of burial customs (either earth burial or coffin burial in tombs) that were identifiable as a primary burial.

identifiably *Jewish* archaeological data⁴⁸⁰, were eager and happy to find references to ossilegium in Rabbinic text material, thereby rendering ossuaries “kosher”.

Once the archaeological evidence testified incontrovertibly that the ossuary was indeed Jewish material culture, it had to be acknowledged that ancient Jews had actually performed the ritual of bone collecting not simply as an exception to the rule but as a popular widespread custom in Jewish society. Nevertheless, the ossuary discourse evokes a certain sense that the discovery of bone chests in a Jewish context surpassed expected scholarly curiosity about a new artifact. It appears that scholars felt almost compelled to come up with an exceptionally good explanation as to why Jews deviated in the late Second Temple period from the ‘norm’ and re-buried their dead in ossuaries. After all, as far as I am aware, there seems to be no similar compulsion by scholars to explain the novelties associated with the Hellenistic coffin or with Jewish sarcophagi from the Roman period.⁴⁸¹ Perhaps that is because those receptacles at least complied with the preconceived notion of ‘normal’ permanent disposal of corpses by Jews.

Therefore, in this chapter I shall present the various hypotheses advanced by scholars intrigued by questions such as why Jews did collect the bones of the dead in small bone chests in that particular era as well as why the ossuaries appeared and disappeared when they did. The reader will see that scholars of various disciplines, each with his/her own agenda, began to tackle the origin and meaning of the ossuary phenomenon from different angles. They brought the expertise from their own field of research to the discourse. Over time, the problem of ossuary burial was therefore addressed using new methods and theories of interpretation where etic and emic approaches balanced.

⁴⁸⁰ Although already uncovered at that time, the well-know First Temple period tomb under St. Etienne, was still being interpreted by Vincent as a Byzantine tomb. While that was indeed true, the Byzantine monks merely re-used the ancient tomb.

⁴⁸¹ Pagan embellishments on Roman-period sarcophagi, however, did of course generate bafflement.

After surveying previous scholarship, I shall analyze the associated theories and determine to what extent they succeed and, more significantly, how they point to the lacuna which must be filled.

7.1 Earliest Hypotheses Concerning the Purpose of Ossuary Burial

7.1.1 The Ossuary - a means of transport

The first hypothesis, advanced by Schick in 1866, and noted in the Prologue of this work, treats the ossuaries as a means of transport and return of the skeletal remains of Diaspora Jews to Jerusalem. Jews who died abroad longed to be buried in their homeland. Because he was knowledgeable about the Bible, and well informed about social affairs in Jerusalem, Schick drew an analogy between the collection and relocation of the Biblical King Saul's remains and that of the contemporary reburial of a Protestant professor in Jerusalem, concluding: "Thus is proven that at all times similar customs have taken place." In keeping with this explanation, the burial caves in Jerusalem were merely depositories for the stone chests. Thirty years later, in 1889, Schick still adhered to his original hypothesis, supporting it this time with citations from the Mishna.⁴⁸¹

7.1.2 The Ossuary - a means to save space

By 1867 de Saulcy had retracted his initial error of identifying the ossuaries as treasure boxes, and he published his hypothesis that Jewish bone boxes were a means of economizing space. He familiarized the reader with the layout of Jewish rock-cut caves and their burial niches (kukhim), which housed one corpse at a time, according to Jewish Law. Pointing to the limited number of burial niches, insufficient for a large family or over a long enough period of time, the French savant reasoned that a particular niche had to be reused several times. Common sense dictated that from time to time the bones had to be gathered

⁴⁸¹ Conrad Schick, "Culter-Historische Studien über das Heilige Land," in *Jerusalem* 3 (1889) 1- 35, edited by Abraham Moses Lunz.

respectfully and put into an ossuary, which then took its place in the family chamber, thus clearing the niche in order to make room for the next burials⁴⁸³.⁴⁸⁴ This was accomplished by gathering the desiccated bones- once the flesh had decayed- into the receptacles under discussion. To show that the idea of the practice of bone-collecting was not farfetched, de Saulcy pointed to contemporary Christian practices of exhumation as well as to Mishnaic and Talmudic passages⁴⁸⁵ proving that Jews too once collected bones.

7.1.3 *The Ossuary provides an honourable reburial*

In 1874, the English PEF published *Our Work in Palestine* wherein the editors speculated: “It is possible that the individuals thus interred were martyrs ignominiously buried at first and afterwards exhumed and honoured with more careful interment.”⁴⁸⁶ The reason for ossuary burial, in their view, is thus the rectification of a disgraceful initial interment to an honourable reburial. The editors referred to contemporary customs in certain Italian convents where, after an initial interment, skulls and bones were dug up and “fantastically” arranged in churches or crypts.

⁴⁸³ De Saulcy, “Caisses funéraires,” 26: “Le bon sens indique que dès lors les ossements devaient en être recueillis avec respect & déposés dans un ossuaires qui prenait place dans le sépulcre de famille en laissant libre le couch don’t on avait besoin.”

⁴⁸⁴ Clermont-Ganneau, “Nouveaux ossuaires juifs,” 399, added that the ossuaries were placed, like cinerary urns of pagans, either on the floor in the tomb, or in the burial niches or also in special niches cut into the walls.

⁴⁸⁵ These passages in the Mishna (Moed Katan, I,3) and in the Jerusalem Talmud (jMoed Katan, 1,5) are the known sources for ossilegium, see below.

⁴⁸⁶ Pp. 156, 157 n.*, *Recovery of Jerusalem*, 493.

7.2 Early Discussion in the Literature

As expected, these first three hypotheses sparked a lively scholarly discussion. The English explorer, Conder,⁴⁸⁶ subscribed to the ‘transport’ hypothesis, while Clermont-Ganneau disagreed⁴⁸⁷ and instead promptly applauded de Saulcy’s ‘logical’ explanation, which he promoted assiduously throughout his career.⁴⁸⁸ Clermont-Ganneau strengthened de Saulcy’s explanation further with Talmudic passages (pertaining to ossilegium in the case of Jews condemned to death), thereby evoking the speculations of the PEF.⁴⁸⁹ Nonetheless, elsewhere he stated explicitly that he had not found any indication in the archaeological record that supported the assumption that those buried in ossuaries had been martyrs.⁴⁹⁰

Finally, Neroutsos-Bey, excavator of some ossuaries in Alexandria, gave his support to the space saver hypothesis.⁴⁹¹

Both Schick’s and de Saulcy’s hypotheses had been approvingly received by the scholarly world. Each theory had its adherents, while some scholars accepted both hypotheses simultaneously. Within a decade, though, ossuary burial was no longer

⁴⁸⁶ Warren and Conder, *SWPJ*, 404: “They are not large enough to contain a whole body, but the Jews used them for the bones of their ancestors, which they collected and brought (often from Spain and other distant countries) for sepulture at Jerusalem. This practice is connected with well-known superstitions, and with the belief that the Last Judgement would take place in the Kedron valley.”

⁴⁸⁷ Clermont-Ganneau, “Nouveaux ossuaires juifs,” 398 n.2

⁴⁸⁸ AR, 373 “As death took place, room was made for the new arrivals by removing the old bones from the receptacles, “ovens,” troughs or benches, and putting them into those small coffin-shaped ossuaries of soft stone.”

⁴⁸⁹ Charles Clermont-Ganneau, “Nouveaux ossuaires juifs avec inscriptions grecques et hébraïques.” *RA* 25 (2e série; 1873) n.2 from p. 398 and p. 399 with n.3.

⁴⁹⁰ This comparison is unwarranted for as it only demonstrates the incorrectness of comparing contemporary customs with those that are distant in time, place, and by different ethnic people.

⁴⁹¹ Néroutsos-Bey, Tassos Dēmētrios. *Notice sur les fouilles récentes exécutées à Alexandrie*, Alexandria, 1875, 49.

associated with the reburial of martyrs. The transport-hypothesis continued a little longer, particularly in conjunction with the space-saver hypothesis that also took local practice into account. This was the state of ossuary discourse in the year 1881.

Just over a decade into the history of ossuary discoveries - the artifacts supposedly now amounting to about 300⁴⁹³ - two German scholars, Victor Schultze,⁴⁹⁴ and Heinrich Grätz⁴⁹⁵ felt the need for a comprehensive treatment of the ossuary phenomenon in Palestine, and began to comment on the purposes of the artifacts, as proposed to date.

At first glance - thus Schultze introduces this issue - the 'sarcophagi's purpose appear shrouded in mystery.⁴⁹⁶ Asserting that these 'peculiar' funerary monuments served only in exceptional cases, (Offenbar also haben wir in den ganz anders bemessenen und getalteten Urnen Monumente zu sehen, die nur in Ausnahmefällen dienten." (p.12) the author discusses the hypothesis by Schick, de Saulcy, and the PEF. While discarding the notion of ossuaries as *quasi* reliquaries (3) as not sustainable on any account, Schultze wholeheartedly advocates de Saulcy's hypothesis to be well proven. Interestingly, he adds that the small-sized niches in the caves served the same purpose as the receptacles, only, the former contained the human remains of the poor, whereas the stone receptacles belonged to the affluent people.⁴⁹⁷ Ossuary burial is thus reserved more or less for the wealthy. Notwithstanding his approval in this regard, Schultze did not want to rule out completely the transport-hypothesis - the known reasons being the longing of Jews to be buried in Jerusalem, inscriptions in the Greek language, and the presumably Alexandrian

⁴⁹³ This information is provided by Schultze, "Sarkophage," 10.

⁴⁹⁴ Schultze gave a short survey of the ossuaries, their discovery, providence, appearance, the extant inscriptions, and discussed the dato known hypothesis.

⁴⁹⁵ Grätz, Heinrich, "Die jüdischen Steinsarkophage in Palästina," *MGWJ* 30 (1881) 529-539.

⁴⁹⁶ Schultze, "Sarkophage," 12: "Der Zweck dieser Kalksteincassetten ... erscheint auf den ersten Blick dunkel".

⁴⁹⁷ Schultze, "Sarkophage" 13: "Die Sarkophage werden von Wohlhabendern, die Nischen von Armen benutzt worden sein."

ornamentation.⁴⁹⁷ Schultze conceded that more finds were necessary to secure this hypothesis.

For Grätz,⁴⁹⁸ the Jewish historian engaged in “Wissenschaft des Judentums”, a thorough investigation into the ‘definitely Jewish’ artifact meant consulting Talmudic sources and Talmudic archaeology. In his opinion, only these bring the required degree of certainty, whereas archaeological data alone leads to conjecture. From the tractate Semahot (where a certain rabbi fulfils his father’s will to collect his bones into an ossuary) Grätz deduced that bone collecting was a local custom and “nearly commonly practiced”⁴⁹⁹ For Grätz, then, ossuary use was the rule and not the exception.

Like Schultze, Grätz accepted the possibility that ossuaries had served as a means of transport. Arguing this case, he repeated known arguments as well as the fact that few artifacts had been discovered in one place and occasionally in chamber tombs that did not feature burial niches and which were therefore depositories. According to Grätz, the smaller versions of ossuaries, were used to contain and to transport rot, that is, putrefied flesh and bones (Leichenstaub). He referred to Rabbinical sources that described rot⁵⁰⁰ as being produced by a fast-acting limestone agent applied at the time of burial. Obviously, rot needed less space and could be accommodated in the mini ossuaries, and besides did not smell during the transport. Therefore, Grätz hypothesized that the regular’ size ossuaries were used locally, whereas the mini-version served for transport purposes. (The latter would eventually be identified as children’s ossuaries⁵⁰¹). But, in all, the author assessed ossuary usage for transport purposes as less prominent, and rather more exceptional, than the local

⁴⁹⁷ Schultze, “Sarkophage,” 10.

⁴⁹⁸ Grätz, “Die jüdischen Steinsarkophage,” 529-539.

⁴⁹⁹ Grätz, “Die jüdischen Steinsarkophage,” 532, 534.

⁵⁰⁰ Ohalot II, 1; mMoed katan 80d and parallels; Nidda 17b, Tosafot 3. These passages mention that the corpse was laid into limestone to hasten the decay (which otherwise would have lasted for quite some time.)

⁵⁰¹ The first identification of the smaller chest versions as children’s ossuaries was by Gladys Dickson, “The Tomb of Nicanor of Alexandria,” *PEFQS* (1903) 330.

usage of bone chests. He noted that this custom (die “Sitte oder Unsitte”) of returning corpses in larger number from abroad occurred only after 70 CE.⁵⁰²

Eventually, though, the transport hypotheses fell by the wayside, as did the notion of martyrs’ reburial. The space saving hypothesis remained the most commonly accepted and it was perpetuated throughout the next century until today with occasional amendments and qualifications.

Around the turn of the century, the École Biblique of the Dominicans concerned itself with ossuaries in addition to other artifacts of the Holy Land. On the occasion of a new ossuary find, the scholar Vincent addressed the question of the bone chests’ burial setting- an issue that seemed to him still not firmly resolved: “Mais ce que la nouvelle trouvaille ne contribue pas à établir définitivement, c’est la manière dont on se servait des ossuaires et quelle était leur situation dans le tombeau (109). En passant he cited one of Clermont-Ganneau’s publications explaining bone collecting into ossuaries in order to facilitate new burial space.

After WWI, the Department of Antiquities and the University in Berlin - in the wake of many new archaeological discoveries - engaged intensively in ossuary research. On January 6, 1931, the prominent archaeologist Sukenik lectured in Berlin about Jewish tombs in Jerusalem dating to the early Christian era.⁵⁰³ Sukenik ascribed in principle to the view that ossilegium in bone chests was necessary for space saving measures.⁵⁰⁴ Having excavated many ossuaries, Sukenik was aware that ossuaries had been stored in niches, while corpses were on benches. From that he deduced that people, at some point in time, collected bones

⁵⁰² For a whole discussion on the issue of reburial in Eretz Israel see Gafni’s treatise and more recently, Rajak, who convincingly demonstrate that in Second Temple times the transport of Diaspora Jews was not commonly done; they asserted that the habit of reburial did not happen until the third century CE.

⁵⁰³ Eleazar L. Sukenik, “Lecture at the Archäologische Gesellschaft zu Berlin, Sitzung 6.1.1931,” *Archäologischer Anzeiger* (1931) 309-316.

⁵⁰⁴ Sukenik, *Jüdische Gräber*, 6: “Als es notwenig wurde Raum für andere Mitglieder [der Familie] zu schaffen, sammelte man die Knochen in Kisten, um Platz zu gewinnen.”

regardless of whether there was a need for space for further burials or not.⁵⁰⁵ He reasoned that people collected the bones into an ossuary in order to avoid their dispersion.⁵⁰⁶ He was the first and one of the very few scholars who additionally addressed the disappearance of the ossuary burial by stating that after the destruction of the Temple reburial seemed to later generations to be incompatible with Torah Law.⁵⁰⁷

In that same year another article about ossuaries in Palestine appeared, written by D. Schütz.⁵⁰⁸ He started by addressing the question of ossilegium's disturbance of the eternal peace, and then he argued quite contrarily that ossuaries comply well with this prohibition inasmuch as they actually keep human remains inside the tomb, piously preserved and protected from desecration. Introducing a socio-economic aspect into the ossuary discourse, Schütz conjectured that the patrons were probably wealthy enough people who could afford tombs.⁵⁰⁹

The obvious solution for the problem of space - namely, simply adding additional niches or chambers - was expounded, in 1937, by Pesach Bar Adon in the Bulletin of the Jewish Palestine Exploration Society (JPES).⁵¹⁰ As an illustration of such possibilities, Bar Adon pointed out the significant number of seventy niches in the Sanhedria tombs.

⁵⁰⁵ Sukenik, *Jüdische Gräber*, 8: "Später sammelte man die Knochen, egal ob man Raum brauchte für weitere Bestattungen."

⁵⁰⁶ Sukenik, *Jüdische Gräber*, 7: "... nicht nur aus Platzmangel sondern auch Zerstreuen zu vermeiden."

⁵⁰⁷ Sukenik, *Jüdische Gräber*, 7: "Diese Sitte wird nach der Zerstörung des Tempels wohl allmählich aufgegeben worden sein; späteren Jüdischen Generationen schien sie ganz unverständlich und nicht mit dem Gesetz im Einklang stehend."

⁵⁰⁸ D. Schütz, "Die Ossuarien in Palästina," *MGWJ* 75 (1931) 286-292; also, "Ossuarien in Palästina," *Actes du Ve Congrès international d'histoire des religions à Lund* (1930) 307-309.

⁵⁰⁹ Schütz, "Ossuarien in Palästina," 289: "Wahrscheinlich hat die Sitte, die Gebeine derart zu sammeln, nur in begüterten Families bestanden. Denn sie wird auf Grabkammern beschränkt gewesen sein, deren Besitz sich nicht jederman erlauben kann."

⁵¹⁰ Pessah Bar-Adon, "On the Custom of Secondary Burials," *BJPES* 5 (1937) 102-103(Hebrew).

However, his argument continued by noting that enlargement of caves involved an exorbitant cost in workmanship that not every descendant might have been able to afford; therefore, with rising costs Jews started to collect the bones of their forebears from their primary resting places. Furthermore, workers often encountered rock which was too hard to chisel and which hindered the enlargement of the premises in the first place. Thus, for financial-technical reasons - rock carving was hard and expensive - existing burial places had to be reused; this of course was facilitated by ossuary burial.

In a short immediate response, S. Yeivin,⁵¹² objected to this hypothesis, citing proof from Egypt, where the ground is soft and where, nevertheless, people practiced secondary burial. He was more inclined to consider religious and social causes as the explanation for ossuary burial and suggested a more thorough investigation in this regard.⁵¹³

For the English - speaking world, the eminent archaeologist of the JPES, Benjamin Maisler (later Mazar), wrote a lengthy article in the *Illustrated London News* (Oct. 29, 1938): "The Sole Reminders of Jerusalem's 'Golden Age'. Tombs in the Ancient Jewish Cemetery dating back to the time of Christ and the first century A.D., when the Holy City was at the height of its splendor as capital of Palestine."⁵¹⁴ Maisler, like his colleague Sukenik, argued that ossuary usage "may be accounted for by the lack of sufficient space in the family caves and by the necessity of making room for fresh burials as well as by the constant apprehension lest the bones should become scattered."⁵¹⁵

⁵¹² S. Yeivin, "Note to Article of P. Bar Adon," *BJPES* 5 (1937) 103 (Hebrew).

⁵¹³ Yeivin, "Note," 103.

⁵¹⁴ Benjamin Maisler, "The Sole Reminder of Jerusalem's 'Golden Age'," *Illustrated London News* 5193 (1938) 778-779.

⁵¹⁵ Maisler, "Sole Reminder," 778.

7.2.1 *The Ossuary as a means of preserving bones in purity for resurrection*

It is interesting to note that in the latter half of the 20th century, two significant but diametrically opposed trends of thought regarding the origins and function of the ossuary began to take shape.

Eric Meyers set out⁵¹⁵ to explain the ossuary phenomenon in its ancient Near Eastern setting. He surveyed related and similar burial customs in the Near East and concluded that the movement from ossilegium into ossuaries actually reflected the continuity of various forms of secondary burial in the tomb setting in Judea. The thrust of his argument is that the idea of the ossuary was already embedded in the consciousness of the Judean.

Furthermore, Meyers' study argues that the ossuary was a phenomenon continuous in space (ranging from Persia to the Aegean to Etruria) and time (from the Chalcolithic era to the Second Temple period) and that the Judean ossuary, even if used for individual burial, was therefore by no means unique in the region. However, Meyers did acknowledge that even if all the various civilizations of the Near East made use of physical receptacles similar to the ossuary, many of these did so with notions and beliefs in some sort of resurrection.

According to Meyers, then, the ossuary was not a novelty in the first century CE. The "origin of the individual ossuary tends to suggest that outside influences may be at work in determining the type of receptacle that was utilized by Jews in the Roman period."⁵¹⁶ Meyers sees a striking parallel between Persian astodans and Jewish ossuaries in form and decoration.⁵¹⁷

However, in the same way that Meyers' study argues in favour of seeing the ossuary as part of a larger spatial and chronological trend, the tendency to explain the emergence of ossuaries as a specific development responding to particular religious beliefs and perceptions of the afterlife in Palestinian Judaism began to gain ground as well among scholars. In fact,

⁵¹⁵ JORR, 3.

⁵¹⁶ JORR, 94.

⁵¹⁷ JORR, 94.

the main proponent of this view, L.Y. Rahmani, developed and refined his ideas over several decades, at times in vehement dis-agreement with Meyers' study which emphasizes the physical and decorative similarities between the Judean ossuaries and those of other neighbouring cultures.

Regardless of approach, the fact remains that the issues of Redemption in general and the resurrection of the dead have been of major concern in scholarship on the various nuanced expressions of Judaism in the Late Second Temple period.⁵¹⁸ Both Jewish and Christian scholars have postulated notions of post-mortem existence with regard to ancient Jewish art⁵¹⁹ and the material culture in general, and the remains of Jewish burial of this time in particular.

Around 1958 a new hypothesis surfaced, linking ossuary burial to bodily resurrection. Its well known advocate, L. Y. Rahmani,⁵²⁰ has maintained this rather intricate interpretation ever since. In 1958, he stated: "It may well be assumed that there existed a strong connection between the concept of individual resurrection and the custom of collecting the bones from each former burial into a separate ossuary, often with the name of the deceased inscribed

⁵¹⁸ Many scholars are in agreement with Nickelsburg, "that a belief in a blessed future life was a fundamental postulate of the faith of the apocalypticist and an integral part of other, non- apocalyptic strains of early post-biblical Jewish theology." (George W.E. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism*. [HTS 26; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972] 10). See also Grabbe's characterization of Late Second Temple period Judaism as religion of personal salvation in Judaism, II: 533.

⁵¹⁹ This interpretation of ancient art has been challenged, for example, by Steven Fine. See "A Note on Ossuary Burial and the Resurrection of the Dead in First-Century Jerusalem. Fundamental elements of Israelite theological motivations and individuation within the Greco-Roman World," *JJS* 51/1 (2000) 69 and n.4.

⁵²⁰ During the summer of 1996 and winter 1999 I was able to discuss this issue with L.Y. Rahmani.

upon it.”⁵²² The logic suggests that individual physical resurrection requires that the bones not be intermingled with those of other individuals.

Subsequently, in 1961, he advanced his theory by elaborating on atonement as a prerequisite for resurrection: “The custom seems to be aimed at assuring the sinlessness of the deceased by expiation. The decomposition of the flesh, considered most painful, supposedly atones for past sins. Then, once the bones are bare they are collected and preserved in an ossuary for the resurrection, conceived at that time to involve the entire skeleton.”⁵²³

In its final refined phase, Rahmani relates his theory to the Pharisees, a particular group in Jewish society, which was prominently associated with the theological belief in the resurrection of the dead.⁵²⁴ Rahmani insisted that bone-gathering and the preservation of the skeletal remains within an especially designed *ossuary*, “novel at the time, was founded in the belief in individual, physical resurrection, which was then taking deep root in Pharisaic circles, being based, as has been noted, on concepts of the early Hasidim.”⁵²⁵

Rahmani’s rationale is that ossuaries were an innovation on the part of the Pharisees, because it was that segment of Jewish society which advocated the belief in bodily resurrection. Furthermore, the Pharisees were the group that was influential enough to modify previous customs precisely at the time when the ossuaries appeared. That this hypothesis then served as a proof for the popularity of the resurrection belief is a circular

⁵²² L.Y. Rahmani, “A Jewish Tomb on Shahin Hill, Jerusalem,” *IEJ* 8 (1958) 105. This view is further expressed in “Rock-Cut Tombs,” 116-117; “Jason’s Tomb”, 95; “Ancient Jerusalem’s Funerary Customs, IV, 110; Rahmani, “Ossuaries”, 193; *RCat*, 53-54.

⁵²³ Rahmani, *Ancient Funerary Customs*, IV, 110; 1982, 110; 1961, 117.

⁵²⁴ Josephus comments on the stance that Sadducees and Pharisees profess vis-à-vis their position regarding life after death in *War* 2.163b, *Ant* 13.5.9; 18.1.2. This is paralleled in the Gospels *Mt* 22:23-33; *Mk* 12:18-27; and *Acts* 4:1-2; 5:17 24:21. *Acts* 23:8-9 identifies resurrection as a determining factor that differentiated Pharisees from others.

⁵²⁵ Rahmani, “Ossuaries,” 193.

argument. This twist was proposed by Hengel: "Seit jener Zeit bis 70 n.Chr. (bzw. in kleinerem Masse bis ins 2. Jh.n.Chr.), wurden die Gebeine Toter in Gebeinkästen gesammelt, damit sie die Auferstehung der Toten erwarten; ein Hinweis darauf, wie sehr diese für die Pharisäer typische Erwartung volkstümlich geworden war."⁵²⁵

In summary, then, Rahmani concluded that the purpose of the ossuary was to best preserve the bones of an individual in their sinless state, a state which is considered necessary for personal and physical resurrection, presupposing the Pharisaic notion that expiation of sins is achieved by the painful process of flesh decay.

Rachel Hachlili, an Israeli archeologist, has taken this approach one step further, adding a nationalistic aspect. Noting that the appearance of ossuaries in Jericho coincided with the loss of political independence at the onset of direct Roman rule in 6 CE, she argues that, apparently, Jews suddenly considered themselves to have been sinners. Hachlili, however, draws the fine distinction between the two aspects of Rahmani's hypothesis: facilitation of resurrection by the preservation of the bones on the one hand, and facilitation of resurrection by demonstrating expiation of sins on the other. She rejects the first aspect, noting that it would have been less likely to lose bones had they remained in the primary receptacle as in Jericho. However, she seems to agree with the second part of Rahmani's theory since, in her view, the sudden consciousness of and longing for purity as the essential component for resurrection and, implicitly, for the coming of the Messiah who would restore political independence, became so acute for Jews at this time. It is this, then, which spurred the introduction of the ossuary, in Hachlili's view.

Many modern interpreters of the ossuary phenomenon accept the correlation of Jewish ossuaries with Pharisaic beliefs. It is presently *the* interpretation given in numerous publications and exhibitions concerning the ossuary - possibly, because there has not been a better comprehensive alternative. For example, Deines admits that "... Rahmani..., der

⁵²⁵ Martin Hengel, *Judaica et Hellenistica. Unter Mitarbeit von Roland Deines* (WUNT, 90; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1996) 430; see also 470.

diese Sitte mit der pharisäischen Hoffnung auf die Auferstehung der Toten in Verbindung bringt, eine These, die zwar nicht unwidersprochen blieb, aber bisher durch keine bessere Gesamtinterpretation abgelöst wurde. Auch das hier vorgelegte Material ist eine Stütze der Sicht Rahmanis.⁵²⁷

Yet, it is worth noting two implications which grow out of Rahmani's hypothesis and which will have to be tested further if indeed his theory is to be considered credible. The first is the corollary that no Sadducee remains can be expected to be discovered in ossuaries; the second is that the number of ossuaries is actually an indication of the number of Pharisees living in pre-70CE Jerusalem. Some interesting challenges to both points have arisen recently and will be addressed later.

7.2.2 Resurrection of the space-saving hypothesis

In the 1990's, the space saving hypothesis was brought up again, this time by the Israeli scholar Nissan Rubin.⁵²⁸ Following Bar Adon's argument that technical-financial reasons led to the use of ossuary burial, Rubin⁵²⁹ elaborated further upon secondary burial practices arising from the need to minimize burial space in order not to encroach more than necessary upon expensive land or fertile farmland.⁵³⁰ Existing space had been used efficiently by collecting the bones either in recesses or into a pit. The collecting of bones into ossuaries was another possibility for saving space; the small chests occupy less space than a larger coffin, and they may be mounted one above the other.⁵³¹

⁵²⁷ Roland Deines, *Jüdische Steingefäße und pharisäische Frömmigkeit* (WUNT, II/52) (Tübingen: Siebeck Mohr, 1993) 5.

⁵²⁸ N. Rubin, "Secondary Burials in the Mishnaic and Talmudic Periods: A Proposed Model of the Relationship of Social Structure to Burial Practice," in *Graves and Burial Practices in Israel in the Ancient Period*, ed. I. Singer) 262-268 (Hebrew).

⁵²⁹ Rubin, "Secondary Burials," 263-264, rejects Rahmani.

⁵³⁰ Rubin, "Secondary Burials," 265.

⁵³¹ Rubin, "Secondary Burials," 258.

Rubin adds to the argument that ossuary burial began with the increasing standard of living in prospering pre-70 CE Jerusalem. In keeping with this concept, once the financial situation deteriorated after the Destruction of Jerusalem, the ossuaries disappeared.⁵³² It is of interest to note that Rubin rejects theological reasons as the basis for ossuary burial, and he briefly states that the new idea of gathering bones in the ossuary is merely another space saving measure, and is possibly a Roman influence.

Once again, though, it was Rachel Hachlili who challenged Rubin's return to the space-saving argument. Based on her work as one of the excavators of Jericho's necropolis, Hachlili asserted: "In fact, more individuals were found buried in the coffin tombs than in the ossuary tombs."⁵³³ If there was no apparent need to save space, then why bother with secondary burial at all in Jericho?

The most recent published view that ossuary burial was based on considerations of space has been advanced by Josef Park.⁵³⁴ "It cannot be denied that the burial of bare bones did allow for significantly more burials inside a given tomb, nor that those who practiced ossilegium were aware of this fact. However, there is no reason to argue that this was the only basis of the practice; it is quite possible that both theological and practical concerns played a part."⁵³⁵

A link to religious beliefs has, however, been completely rejected by a number of scholars in the 1990's in favour of an interpretation that is related to the inner societal process of individualization.⁵³⁶ The two major proponents of this approach are the scholars, Steven

⁵³² Rubin, "Secondary Burials," 263.

⁵³³ See Hachlili, "Jewish Funerary Customs," 95, where she points to positions of the ossuaries elsewhere in the tomb, leaving empty loculi.

⁵³⁴ Also personal communiqué, in November 2002. Joseph S. Park, *Conceptions of afterlife in Jewish Inscriptions: with special reference to Pauline Literatur*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000, 170-172.

⁵³⁵ Park, *Conceptions of afterlife*, 178 and n.87.

⁵³⁶ For example, Meyers, JORR, 80, agreed, but nevertheless supports the link pertaining to atonement and ossilegium.

Fine⁵³⁶ and Eyal Regev,⁵³⁷ who refuted the previous interpretations, in particular that of Rahmani. Rahmani's hypothesis has also been criticized in my MA thesis as early as 1996 (see below).

7.2.3 The ossuary functions as a means of personalized and individual burial

Steven Fine recently (2000) elaborated a socio-economic explanation. In his view, the emergence of ossuary burial was the result of a confluence of two components: an ideological shift in perception which began to emphasize individuation in Second Temple Palestine as well as tangible economic preconditions. The latter consisted of the influx of wealth with King Herod's extensive building activities and secondly, the availability of expert masons upon whom the manufacture of the ossuaries depended. To some extent, Fine is here following the lead of Nissan Rubin who also remarked and emphasized the improved economic conditions of the period. Moreover, Fine views the reason for the ossuary's appearance as a manifestation of "developing notions of the individual's place in society." Fine thus identifies a parallel here between this evolution of thought in Judean society with the emerging sense of the individual which was becoming more prevalent in the contemporary Graeco-Roman world. Furthermore, Fine strongly criticizes the theological arguments involving resurrection as lacking positive evidence, calling them unsupported conjecture. One of his objections points to the idea of the use of ossuaries exclusively by Pharisees as unconvincing.

⁵³⁶ Fine, "A Note," 69-76; Fine, "Why Bone Boxes? Splendour of Herodian Jerusalem Reflected in Burial Practices." *BAR* 27/4 (2001) 38-44; 57. Fine scrutinized this theory by asking whether the nineteenth-century scholarly persuasive paradigm (the resurrection/redemption trope) was repeated by modern interpreters simply without re-evaluation. He explored the archaeological data and the literary sources that had been adduced in supporting this claim and rightly concluded that there was no support for this claim.

⁵³⁷ Regev, Eyal, "The individualistic Meaning of Jewish Ossuaries: A Socio-Anthropological Perspective of Burial Practice," *PEQ* 133 (January-June 2001) 39-49; Regev, "Individualist Meaning" discussed chronological, functional, and socio-religious difficulties.

Eyal Regev, also refutes the theological arguments made by Rahmani and Meyers. His main criticisms of their theories are based on chronological, functional, and socio-religious difficulties.⁵⁴⁰ From a socio-anthropological perspective, Regev develops the individuation concept further. He sees ossuary burial as “an expression of a social and cultural tendency towards individual burial practice.” Regev argues for an individualistic meaning of Jewish ossuaries and concludes that the ossuary is “the means of constructing identity.” According to him, inscriptions of name, biographical details, and ornamentation prove that ossuaries gave the dead person’s family the opportunity to identify the deceased, to locate him or her in the family and in society, and to express a personal message - all components of individualization in Judean society. Regev reinforces his arguments by citing his previous studies that in this same time period there was a revolution in *halakhah* and in ritual. Whereas previously it had been the communal priestly cult which held sway, suddenly a non-priestly personal attitude to ritual-namely prayer and Rabbinical teaching of the law-came to the fore. All three innovations - *halakhah*, ritual and burial practice - point to a sudden emergence of a personal religious experience. Regev suggests that this all occurred at a time of, and was possibly the byproduct of the growing ascendancy of a newly wealthy society, within which it became important to identify the individual’s role. The origin of ossuary burial is therefore correlated to the change in people’s social perception of sense of self.

⁵⁴⁰ Regev’s position is : a) Belief in resurrection pre-dated ossuaries by at least a hundred years, and post-dated ossuaries by many hundreds of years; b) Inefficient bone collection demonstrates that skeletal integrity was not important, while the average of 1.7 persons per ossuary flies in the face of a belief in an individual resurrection. The two critical requirements for bodily resurrection - namely, that they be of a complete skeleton and that the bones be that of one individual - were missing; c) Burials in ossuaries of the Caiaphas family, the Theophlos family and the Boethos family (all probably Sadducees) throws into question the clear association of ossuaries with Pharisaic resurrectionism.

7.2.4 *The ossuary burial as a foreign social convention*

All of these aforementioned hypotheses pertaining to the ossuary phenomenon - whether based on either practical needs for the preservation of space, social values, religious concepts and beliefs or the process of individualization- all have as a common denominator the view that ossuary burial was generated from within Jewish society, independent of foreign influence. Yet, a very different approach is taken by the historian Lee Levine. He approaches the question from 'without', claiming foreign influence as a major factor in the appearance of the ossuary.

Levine⁵³⁹ assessed the nature and extent of Hellenistic influences on five different aspects of life in Jerusalem at the end of the Second Temple period. He lists entertainment institutions, then funerary remains, languages, political institutions, as well as the Temple itself. In discussing Hellenistic and Roman influence on funerary remains, he of course enters into the ossuary debate, seeing the origin of the ossuary as a Roman practice modified to conform to Jewish tradition. "Viewing this Roman practice as the inspiration for the Jews' use of ossuaries can best explain the dating of this widespread Jerusalem custom." He further argues that this phenomenon should be seen as an indication of "the profound impact Rome was having on the city." Rather than explaining the ossuary phenomenon based on religious beliefs, Levine contends that the introduction of the ossuary "may be construed less as a statement of particular religious beliefs than as a social convention that the relatively affluent Jerusalem society borrowed from Roman practice."

Though it is obvious that a vast array of scholars have postulated a wide range of explanations for the ossuary phenomenon in Second Temple Palestine, this thesis will attempt to build upon the theories of Lee Levine and show that the Judean ossuary was, in

⁵³⁹ Lee I Levine, "From the Beginning of Roman Rule to the End of the Second Temple Period," in *The History of Eretz Israel 4: The Roman Period from the Conquest to the Ben Kozba War* (63 B.C.E. - 135 C.E), ed. M. Stern (Jerusalem: Keter, 1984) 66-67 (Hebrew); *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity. Conflict or Confluence?* Seattle & London: University of Washington Press, 1998.

fact, a “cultural choice” taken from the larger context of the Hellenistic and Roman worlds. However, like most other artifacts and vogues adopted by various groups and individuals to express or to emphasize their particular world view, it would itself be modified.

Chapter 8

Critical Analysis of Previous Scholarship into the Origin of Ossuary Burial

8.1 *The various Reasons for Ossuary Burial*

As we have seen in the previous chapter “Research into the Origin of Ossuary Burial,” various scholars have postulated diverse hypotheses to explain the emergence of the Judean ossuary, to account for its function or purpose, and to propose reasons for its disappearance. I have also pointed out that the scholarly debate has often been shaped by lively-if not intense- disagreement. In this section, therefore, I will explore the validity of the diverse hypotheses postulated by the previous scholars. It is important to bear in mind that the ideas set forth in each hypothesis are not necessarily mutually exclusive but rather merely parallel options. Each theory makes sense in some aspect of a complex phenomenon, while no one theory can claim by itself to provide an entirely comprehensive explanation of the nature and purpose of Jewish ossuary burial.

Therefore, in order to facilitate the present task, the previously cited hypotheses (H1-H10) are drawn together in the table that follows, with a view to establishing the subsequent information: to identify the particular fact or condition that laid the groundwork for the emergence of the ossuary phenomenon according to a particular hypothesis; to enumerate the proposed purposes of ossuary burial and to establish the particular interests or goals which were achieved by the use of the ossuary.

We shall then proceed to attempt to evaluate the validity of each proposed cause or condition. In other words, were the circumstances, situations, or interests of the people really such as claimed by the theorist, and could these have triggered the novelty of the ossuary at this moment in time? Additionally, would these circumstances or conditions have necessarily originated the material culture in question, or provided the occasion for utilizing ossuary burial while alternate solutions were possible, even readily in place?

	<i>Fact or Cause</i>	<i>Purpose of the Ossuary</i>	<i>Goal</i>
1	Longing of the Diaspora Jew for burial in Jerusalem /Holy Land Religion	<i>Means to transport</i> Relocating collected skeletal remains	Permanent burial in Jerusalem/Holy Land for effective atonement and hastened resurrection
2	Burial niches filled to capacity, need of vacant niches Economy	<i>Means to free niches</i> Accommodating the collected remains	Reuse of burial niches for new burials
3	Limitation of space in tomb, need space Economy	<i>Means to save space</i> Providing an economic way of burial compared to coffin burial	Accommodation of more burials
4	Danger of bone scatter as a result of reburial Integrity of human remains	<i>Means to protect</i> Keeping remains together	Completeness of human remains
5	Condition of purity for bodily and individual resurrection Religion	<i>Means to protect</i> Keeping the burial exclusive	Awaiting resurrection in purity
6	Ignoble initial burial Value of Honour	<i>Means to honour</i> Providing a respectable place of burial	Respectable burial (for martyrs)
7	Increase of wealth Economy	<i>Means of luxury</i> Providing the luxury of a personal place of burial	Demonstration of self worth

8	a) Developing notions of the individual's place within the family unit, Ideology b) Building activity and availability of expert masons Economy	<i>Means of Individuation</i> Accommodating individual burial	Individuated and personal way of burial
9	Individualism, Individualization of Judean society Ideology	<i>Means to express social and cultural tendency toward individual burial practice</i>	Constructing identity
10	Impact of Hellenistic or Roman practice	(no purpose provided)	Emulating foreign conventions

8.2 Association of ossuaries with the transport of human remains

Although Schick originally believed that ossuary burial was motivated by the desire to transfer the remains 'back home,' (implied: Land of Israel, Jerusalem)⁵⁴⁰ a subsequent amendment by the journal editor⁵⁴¹ and further analysis⁵⁴² thrust the reasoning firmly onto

⁵⁴⁰ See Schick, *Leipziger Illustrierte*, and subsequently stating 'elsewhere' but not in these particular tombs, see Schick, "Cultur-Historische Studien," 23-24: "... die Gebeine ..., die irgendwo anders gesammelt und hier in den Kistchen beigesetzt sind, und mit den Hohlen in denen sie sich befinden, in keiner anderen Beziehung stehen, als dass sie hier niedergestellt sind."

⁵⁴¹ Schick, "Cultur-Historische Studien," 24 *: "The habit: to collect the bones of those who died in foreign lands and to bury them in their family tombs is mentioned also in the Mishnah . (Moed Katan 1,5)." The cited passage, however, does not say this at all.

⁵⁴² In this sense Schultze, "Sarkophage," 13, asserts: "Ein Begräbniss in Jerusalem ist stets die Sehnsucht der Diaspora-Israeliten gewesen," but left it at that.

ideology as conveyed by rabbinic texts. The latter teach that the value of being buried in the Holy Land lies in effective atonement and in hastened resurrection. J. Jotham-Rothschild, one of the excavators of the Sanhedria tombs, expounded upon this most emphatically.⁵⁴³ In either case, the ossuary was supposedly a container safe and small enough to carry the remains back to the Holy Land.

In assessing the plausibility of this hypothesis, I must first take issue with the reference to rabbinic teaching in relation both to innovation and to chronology. As well, I must question whether the use of the ossuary as a means of transport in itself was probable. While our knowledge today confirms the ossuaries to have been local products, I find it nonetheless worthwhile to consider such a scenario - some scholars indeed argue this in some instances - for its implications to my thesis.

1. The subject matter of re-interment of Diaspora Jews in Palestine in Late Antiquity has been recently taken up in modern scholarship and treated in detail by Gafni.⁵⁴⁴ He demonstrated convincingly that rabbinic statements in the early Amoraic period (the beginning of the third century) indeed evince the special value attached to being buried on Palestinian soil,⁵⁴⁵ which no doubt encouraged the occasional transfer of corpses to Bet She'arim in Late Antiquity. Indeed, eventual, rabbinic rhetoric motivated some Diaspora

⁵⁴³ J. Jotham-Rothschild, "The Tombs of Sanhedria," *PEQ* 84 (1952) 25: "But resurrection would take place in Jerusalem, the only city whose soil was considered holy, as is still believed by the pious of all three world religions; and for this reason the bodies of those who used to dwell in foreign lands were carried by camel, mule or donkey to Jerusalem, to be laid to rest in the family tomb. Jews living in distant countries were first buried at their place of residence until decomposition was complete. The bones were thereafter collected, shrouded and anointed, and sent to Jerusalem in ossuaries or coffins."

⁵⁴⁴ Gafni, "Reinterment," 96-105; see also Tessa Rajak, "The Rabbinic Dead and the Diaspora Dead at Beth Shearim," in *The Jewish Dialogue with Greece and Rome. Studies in cultural and Social Interaction* (Leiden: Brill, 2001) 479-499.

⁵⁴⁵ Gafni, "Reinterment," 102.

Jews to make arrangements for their final burial in Jerusalem; this still remains a wish of some individuals today.⁵⁴⁶

Therefore, based on Gafni's "healthy scepticism of any pre-Amoraic manifestation,"⁵⁴⁷ I must consider the hypothesis that ossuary burial originated as a response to the longing of the Diaspora Jews to be buried in the Holy Land as an anachronism. Significantly, even Graetz suggests a date for this habit (diese "Sitte oder Unsitte") to the last quarter of the third century,⁵⁴⁸ and gives as *terminus post quem* the Destruction of the Temple.⁵⁴⁹ However, he did not realize the chronological difficulty in his interpretation since he lacked the scientific ability to date material culture, which he could only vaguely ascribe to ancient Judaism.

We may conclude, therefore, that a first-century Jew from abroad, if he or she desired to be permanently buried in Jerusalem, must have been motivated by something other than the prospect of being among the first to be resurrected in Messianic times.

Indeed, while there are stories and legends relating to transfer of remains from abroad to the Land of Israel/Jerusalem, these narratives reveal exceptional circumstances of exile⁵⁵⁰ or temporary absence, where those who died abroad wanted, understandably, to have their

⁵⁴⁶ In December, 2003, I was witnessing this custom when a corpse was sent off from Ottawa for interment in Jerusalem.

⁵⁴⁷ Rajak's comment in "Rabbinic Dead," 487, where she agrees with Gafni's conclusion and asserts weak evidence of this practice even for some time later.

⁵⁴⁸ Grätz, "Steinsarkophage," 537.

⁵⁴⁹ Grätz, "Steinsarkophage," 538, argues that the purity concerns associated with the Temple cult would have been jeopardized by the pollution of the land caused by corpses.

⁵⁵⁰ The Biblical narrative tells of the Patriarchs Joseph and Jakob whose embalmed remains are taken back from Egypt to the Land of Israel to be buried in their ancestral burial cave. Josephus, *War* 1. 184; *Ant.* 14. 124., reported that Aristobolus II was poisoned while being exiled from Judea (49 BCE) and his corpse, preserved in honey, was returned to the royal burial tombs of the Hasmoneans; an epitaph in the so-called 'Abba' tomb in Jerusalem reads of a Jerusalemite exile to Babylonia who returned and brought back the remains of Mattathiah son of Judah to be buried in this tomb, see Vas(s)ilios Tzaferis, "Givat ha-Mivtar," 18.

remains returned back home, to their own inheritance. The case of Queen Helena of Adiabene⁵⁵¹ in the Herodian period, belongs in my view, to this category of Jews.⁵⁵² For the most part, though, Jews who had lived and died in the Diaspora were just as commonly buried there, both in Europe as well as in Asia Minor, until at least the third century CE.⁵⁵³ Since during the time period crucial for my investigation, Diaspora Jews were rarely buried outside of their home community, one must consider if realistically there could be scores of Diaspora Jews buried in a few particular tombs in Jerusalem in the absence of some other compelling reason?⁵⁵⁴

Finally, if we are to accept the theory that the ossuary was a means of transport used simply to relocate skeletal remains from the Diaspora to Jerusalem, the issue of initial burial (during which time the flesh would be wasted away) must be considered. Yet, this issue of initial burial in itself is filled with speculation. For instance, why would someone whose interest lay in being buried in the Holy Land not be shipped in a wooden coffin immediately upon death? Must we assume that the voyage, for some reason, was not possible at the time of death and thus resulted in a temporary burial? Grätz, in fact, makes the assumption that initial burial was a deliberate practice, to allow for a small bone container to serve as a means of transport. Thinking, on the one hand, that the imperative of economy necessitated small containers for transport, yet accepting on the other hand that many ossuaries were local products, Grätz eventually argued that it was the mini-ossuaries, designed to contain “Leichenstaub,” which were the means of transport. This argument, we now know, is inaccurate since these mini-ossuaries were simply children’s ossuaries. Furthermore, modern

⁵⁵¹ Queen Helena from Adiabene, a convert to Judaism, had lived for some time in Jerusalem and commissioned a splendid tomb for her and her sons. After her demise abroad, her remains were brought in a sarcophagus to Jerusalem and deposited in her tomb (i.e. ‘Tomb of the Kings’).

⁵⁵² Gafni, “Reinterment,” 97, and n. 8, points to different categories of Diaspora Jews.

⁵⁵³ See David Noy, “Where were the Jews of the Diaspora buried?” in *Jews in a Graeco-Roman World*, ed. M. Goodman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998) 78.

⁵⁵⁴ Yet, some modern scholars argue that inscribed ossuaries indicating places of origin houses the remains of Diaspora or non-local Jews, whose remains had been transported to Jerusalem.

methods of text analysis do not accept as “proof” a rabbinic statement - lime was sprinkled on the dead body in order to accelerate decay - to explain a phenomenon of a different society removed in time. If economy was indeed the driving force associated with the transport hypothesis, why would wooden boxes not have sufficed for a journey of finite duration more readily than heavy stone boxes?

Finally, in closing, I must note that the advocates of the transport theory essentially based their argument, in part, on the assumption that the ossuary was a foreign artifact imported into Judea. They interpreted the Greek inscriptions and the style of decoration as proof of this. Today we know, of course, that these decorations and stylistic details were typical in Late Second Temple times. As for the motivation or cause of the ossuary being the desire of Diaspora Jews to be re-buried in Jerusalem, I can conclude that this idea too is untenable, especially to explain the emergence of the ossuary phenomenon. At best, this idea would be applicable in the very last days of ossuary use, when a new ideology was developing.

One further curious comment must be noted before I leave this transport hypothesis. The transport theory - which maintained that the ossuary was a foreign object brought to Jerusalem in its capacity to transport remains - may yet serve as a channel in my argument for foreign influence, which will be developed in Part IV of this thesis. Thus, it would indeed be ironic to realize that the very first (transport) hypothesis, which sought to explain the emergence of the ossuary phenomenon and which has long fallen out of fashion with scholars, is actually correct, although for the wrong reason.

8.3 Association of ossilegium / ossuaries with belief in resurrection

Rahmani, the scholar most associated with this theory, as well as others, has postulated that re-burying the bones of the deceased during ossilegium was performed as a consequence of the emergence of the Pharisaic-supported belief in an impending moment when the deceased would be resurrected bodily and that, to guarantee this, the bones of the deceased must not be intermingled with those of other individuals. Bones that are bare of decomposed flesh

supposedly indicate that the deceased had finally achieved atonement by the painful process of decay and was thus primed for resurrection, the restoration of the physical body from the entire skeleton.⁵⁵⁵ Thus, if a sinless state is seen as a prerequisite to resurrection,⁵⁵⁶ it is quite logical to associate the concept of physical resurrection with the practice of bone collecting, i.e. ossilegium. Rahmani, therefore, asserts that this ritual “was intended to reassure the survivors that their relatives 'rested from judgement', (were) cleansed from sin and (were) entitled to resurrection.”⁵⁵⁷ The resurrection theory is therefore predicated on the following assumptions: a) that stripping of the flesh (to which sin is liable to adhere) is indeed a precondition for atonement; b) that an exclusive burial was necessary c) that ossilegium into ossuaries was uniquely of Pharisaic origin.

However, upon closer examination, we can see that the facts do not support Rahmani's theory, nor its nuanced, expanded version -with the political-nationalistic components- advanced by Rachel Hachlili.

First, as Steven Fine has asserted, there are no literary sources to support Hachlili's viewpoint. Although the Talmud does refer to the pain of decomposition in conjunction with atonement,⁵⁵⁸ there is no association of ossilegium with politics or nationalism. If Jews did in fact consider themselves to be sinners starting with the loss of political power to the Romans in 6 CE, as Hachlili suggests, such that flesh-stripping would be a requirement for atonement and expiation of sins and hence for resurrection in a state of purity, why then was ossuary burial already on the upswing one generation earlier? Furthermore, some ossuaries that have been excavated are lavishly decorated-certainly a fact that does not support the idea that Jews of this period were anxious to demonstrate piety. Additionally, before 70 CE, the Temple service was intact and sacrifices for sins were brought. Specifically, on the Day of

⁵⁵⁵ Hachlili's enlargement of Rahmani's theory

⁵⁵⁶ Rahmani, “Funerary customs, I, 175, referring to Josephus, *Ant* 18:14, who pronounces that only by leading a virtuous life will the soul have the power to revive; *Wars* 2.8.14.; also 2 Macc 12: 42-45.

⁵⁵⁷ RCat, 28.

⁵⁵⁸ mSan 6.5-6; JMQ 1.5; bSan 47b; Ber 18b; Shab 13b.

Atonement, the people were atoned. It is precisely because this mechanism was no longer intact after 70 CE, that rabbis began to propose alternative methods to atone. A socio-rhetorical analysis of the particular passage in the Babylonian Talmud, bSan 47b, finds that this particular link between decay and atonement only developed during a progressive rabbinical debate over several generations, ending presumably in the 5th CE. Therefore, this hypothesis cannot be taken as the reason for ossilegium during the Herodian period.

Additionally, the logic of rabbinic beliefs expressed in ancient oral tradition actually forces us to abandon the connection between resurrection and ossilegium. After all, the small spinal bone, named the “luz”, alone was required for resurrection of the dead.⁵⁵⁹ There would thus be no need to put all the bones into a receptacle. A tiny box would have sufficed. In fact, why bother with a box or chest at all? According to the Rahmani - Hachlili theory, decay of the flesh alone was apparently sufficient to guarantee resurrection. The millennium-old Jewish practice of ossilegium onto piles in a charnel room, during the First Temple period, apparently had sufficed during earlier episodes of the loss of political independence when Jews must also have felt they were sinners. Jews were, after all, conscious of resurrection since the time of their exile in Babylon and Persia, and still believe in resurrection to this date.

Secondly, the issue of the efficiency - or rather the inefficiency - of bone collecting must be considered in my assessment of Rahmani's theory. If a Judean were going to go to the trouble to collect bones in order to guarantee the physical resurrection of the deceased, then one would expect him to do the job efficiently. Yet, one finds cases where the collection of bones was very inefficient, even sloppy.⁵⁶⁰ I agree with Magen⁵⁶¹ that a few

⁵⁵⁹ Midrash Leviticus Rabbah 18.

⁵⁶⁰ Amos Kloner, *The Necropolis of Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period*, PhD Thesis, Hebrew University of Jerusalem (1980). Kloner points out that some bones were missing in some ossuaries. His description of bones shoved into the inner reaches of loculi by a later ossuary is jarring.

⁵⁶¹ Yitzhak Magen, *The Stone Vessel Industry in the Second Temple Period. Excavations at Hizma and the Jerusalem Temple Mount* (Jerusalem: IES, 2002) 136, 137.

examples of the apparent disregard for maintaining one complete skeleton are sufficient to cast serious doubt upon the entire resurrection hypothesis.

Thirdly, and in keeping with the issue of the inefficiency or haphazard manner of bone collecting, is the fact that many ossuaries have been found to contain the bones of more than one person.⁵⁶² Therefore, the question of the prevention of intermingling is a red herring. One can assume that a pious Pharisaic Jew of that period, who firmly believed in the concept of resurrection, would believe that God could distinguish between those who were deserving of resurrection and those who were not, whether or not the bones were intermingled. After all, what was to happen to all those who had died in earlier generations and whose bones had been piled up in charnel chambers? If the prevention of intermingling of bones was really a factor in determining resurrection, then how could one guarantee, for example, that a mother and child whose bones were placed in the same ossuary,(as has indeed been found) could possibly experience separate fates, in principle, if only one of them was deserving of resurrection? Furthermore, would the Pharisees even have considered the receptacle or ossuary an important issue, when, in fact, the righteousness of the deceased was the significant determining factor. Would an individual who had suffered drowning, accidental death, burning or even dismemberment during death on a battlefield be disqualified from resurrection simply because of the impossibility of collecting the bones in a separate ossuary? Surely it is difficult to believe that even the Pharisee would consider the absence of a complete set of skeletal remains in a separate ossuary as a factor preventing the resurrection of the pious.

A fourth and equally significant consideration is the fact that resurrection is mentioned rather sparingly in Second Temple period literature; this in itself suggests that it was hardly the obsession that Rahmani claims precipitated the invention of the ossuary.

⁵⁶² A. Kloner, "Burial Caves and Ossuaries from the Second Temple Period on Mount Scopus," in *Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple, Mishnah and Talmud Period. Festschrift S. Safrai*, ed. I. Gafni, A. Oppenheimer, and M. Stern (Jerusalem, 1993) 75-106 [Hebrew].

A fifth difficulty with Rahmani's theory lies with the chronology of ossuary use. The employment of ossuaries began rather abruptly and ended dramatically. Although one can understand the almost complete demise of ossuary use after the near total destruction of Judean society in 70 CE, is one to deduce that the belief in bodily resurrection suddenly arose around 20 BCE? Yet, we know that the popular belief in bodily resurrection was at least 100 years older than the emergence of ossuaries, dating back to the Maccabees. The prophet Ezekiel had already enunciated the principles during the Babylonian exile several hundred years earlier. All that was needed was an opportunity for a proud display of the faith. Such an opportunity arose, as Fine rightly points out, with the importation by Herod of a class of expert stone masons. However, even here there is a difficulty since, if this scenario were true, then one would not really expect ossuaries to be an expression of that faith. After all, Ezekiel's original prophetic vision was one of *scattered* bones, rather than of collected bones.⁵⁶³ A more logical scenario would be that there was willingness to imitate current fashions, and that this could be finally expressed in more than just funerary art, once the class of stone masons emerged.

Finally, Rahmani's theory rests on the premise that the people buried in the ossuaries were either Pharisees or Pharisaic sympathizers, who were the main group of Judeans to believe in an impending, society-wide bodily resurrection. However, there have been ossuaries found with inscriptions identifying the occupants as members of prominent Sadducean families, including even high priests.⁵⁶⁴ Since the Sadducees denied the concept of bodily resurrection, the claim that ossuary use was a manifestation of a belief in bodily resurrection becomes highly untenable. One might argue that, by the time these personalities were buried, the use of ossuaries was so popular and widespread that the original association with resurrection might have been forgotten. Yet here again the idea that a representative of the group strongly opposing the Pharisees would conveniently forget the supposed

⁵⁶³ Ezekiel 37: 1-2

⁵⁶⁴ The families of the High Priests, Boethos, Theophilus and Caiaphas, were probably Sadducees, not Pharisees, and yet were re-buried in ossuaries.

association with resurrection and adopt a symbol of his rivals at a time when symbolism was significant to Jewish society⁵⁶⁵ is difficult to accept.

Considering all these factors, then, I must conclude that everything points to a negative correlation between ossuaries and belief in resurrection. The main reason for Rahmani's position lies with the continual linkage in rabbinical references of ossilegium with atonement. While Meyers, too, accepts Rahmani's point to a degree, he, at least, doesn't posit the belief in physical resurrection as the only cause for secondary burial. A second apparent observation, raised in order to support the resurrection theory was the rare discovery of skulls in which coins were found in the mouths of the deceased; these were to be used as payment for the trip to the afterlife beyond the River Styx. However, such a rare display of a religious principle corrupted from the Greco-Roman practice surely does not justify a generalization. In any case, this practice does not necessarily establish a connection to bodily resurrection. More importantly, though, this practice would surely have been anathema to pious Pharisees.

What is curious as well is that even though it might have added credence to his argument of the link between ossuaries and belief in bodily resurrection, Rahmani, like De Vaux of the École Biblique, Avi-Yonah and Sukenik, has repeatedly called for a realistic interpretation of the decorations appearing on many ossuaries. He rejected any possible symbolic meaning of the rosetta designs (possibly signifying the cycle of life) and of stylistic trees (possibly signifying the tree of life) and even of stylistic house shapes, doors and architectural decor (possibly signifying the "eternal home"). Instead, the symbolism argument was taken up⁵⁶⁶ by Goodenough⁵⁶⁷ and by Testa and Bagatti, members of the

⁵⁶⁵ The same can be said to those who support the belief that ossuary usage was a Christian phenomenon, especially to those who accept the James ossuary as authentic. In addition, there is an important difference between Christian usage and Jewish usage. The early Christians would have believed in a one-time-only resurrection of Jesus, rather than a society-wide resurrection.

⁵⁶⁶ See Figueras' overview in his introduction to DJO on this issue.

⁵⁶⁷ Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period* (1953-58).

Franciscan School in Jerusalem. The latter two carried the argument to the extreme and postulated a Christian origin for all ossuaries, thereby disenfranchising the Jews who had first used them, long before the birth of Jesus. Other scholars, such as Pau Figueras, see the end of the use of the ossuary as linked to the emerging Christian relic cult of martyrs;⁵⁶⁸ moreover, this scholar attempted to reconcile the position of the symbolists and the realists. This, though, is a very difficult subject area, as the entire Greco-Roman world was using the rose or rosetta image, which itself could have been imported along with the ossuary.

One other argument, used by Fine and by Sanders to refute Rahmani's linkage of ossuary use with the Pharisaic belief in resurrection, is the fact that secondary burial in ossuaries was a signature element of Second Temple period Judaism; indeed, it was employed by all classes and groups of Judeans. Among the ossuary finds were those which belonged to indentured and freed slaves and even to some crucified Jews.

Yet, while it is true that the ossuary was not completely a Pharisaic device, Fine's argument is not totally satisfactory either. Otherwise, there would have been many more ossuaries than the 2000 odd items discovered so far. Indeed, one can make a solid argument that the number of ossuaries discovered to date is actually quite consistent with estimates of the number of Pharisees in pre-70 CE Judea and that the few noncompliant cases would occur because every rule has its exceptions. Notwithstanding this, the 3400 people cumulatively re-buried in ossuaries by 70 CE could easily refer to some other elite group such as the wealthy or the ruling class and their employees, or even to Sadducean imitators of Greco-Roman funerary objects - and not necessarily to the Pharisees. Therefore, to attempt to link the ossuaries to any one particular group is problematic, at best. Rather, this thesis will argue that because the ossuary phenomenon transcended social, religious, and economic barriers, some other common denominator or determining factor must have driven the emergence and the eventual demise of this artefact. Furthermore, this thesis will attempt to prove that the driving force behind this artefact was, in fact, a desire to imitate the

⁵⁶⁸ Figueras, *Decorated Jewish Ossuaries*, 12.

prevalent fashion of the well-to-do in other imperial cities at a time when a generally excellent economy supported this industry.

Lastly, pertaining to the socio-economic issue that Fine raised, the availability of more money in Herod's time coupled with the influx of a class of expert masons, facilitated the emergence of an ossuary industry. Judean society, however, had previously gone through prosperous times, as Iron Age II and Hellenistic tombs in Jerusalem bear witness.⁵⁶⁹ Thus, the know-how and the means were available prior to the Herodian period, but none of that skill manifested itself in a funerary monument.⁵⁷⁰ The concept of a secondary burial container was made real only when this kind of receptacle was fashioned elsewhere. Then, and only then, did the availability of expert masons and artisans come in handy to execute the demand of Jerusalem's well-to-do.

8.4 *The space-saving hypothesis*

Continuing in the vein of De Saulcy's hypothesis, Pesach Bar-Adon and subsequently Nissan Rubin argued that ossuaries emerged in response to various economic pressures. According to Bar-Adon, it supposedly became more and more expensive to enlarge family tombs in order to accommodate the remains of an increasing number of generations with a limited number of loculi per tomb. Re-using the few loculi and placing the remains in boxes alleviated the problem. Rubin adds that increased wealth during Herod's reign encouraged Judeans to abandon the millenium-old custom of charnel burial for individual boxes. Magen,⁵⁷¹ too, subscribes to the idea that practical aspects of ossilegium into ossuaries were based on the needs of the time, although he still claims that ossuaries were inspired by

⁵⁶⁹ This is superbly illustrated by Gabriel Barkay and Amos Kloner, "Jerusalem Tombs from the Days of the First Temple," *BAR* 12/2 (1986) 22-39, and by Andrea M. Berlin, "Power and its Afterlife. Tombs in Hellenistic Palestine," *NEA* 65/2 (2002) 138-148.

⁵⁷⁰ Very recently, Craig Evans, *Jesus and the Ossuaries*, 29, sees in Herod's massive building program and rejected blocks of limestone the answer to the appearance of the ossuaries.

⁵⁷¹ Magen, *Stone Vessel Industry*, 137.

religious beliefs. I find that although Bar-Adon and Rubin each have a point, there are still difficulties with their hypotheses. First of all, charnel burial had already been abandoned for loculi burial long before Herod. Second and perhaps more importantly, there is a contradiction in thinking that while it would be too expensive to carve out a new hole in a limestone wall, it would be economically viable to pay for the precise chiseling of a rectangular box, inside and outside, including rather ornate designs, along with lids and feet! Therefore, even if this had been economically feasible, it is difficult to see a reason for the wholesale, country-wide adoption of the more expensive ossuary phenomenon when the pre-existing procedures would have sufficed.

Problems also exist with the fundamental premise of the space-saving hypothesis. This theory simply is not supported by the facts. For instance, corpses have been found in front of the loculus, on the benches or even on the floor. Sukenik, who himself subscribed to this hypothesis, noticed the apparent contradiction of an empty niche with an ossuary below. He thus had to speculate that after some time people had developed the habit of collecting bones into an ossuary whether or not there was the need for an empty niche. Furthermore, we also have evidence that the collected remains were frequently replaced within the loculus which thus served simultaneously as the initial receptacle and as the permanent housing for the same individual. In an extreme case, one tomb in Jericho reveals that a particular loculus was widened on both of its long sides to such an extent that the original rectangular hole was gone and had been replaced by a nearly round cavity filled with several secondary burials. In this way the loculus was transformed into a communal ossuary which housed the bones of many individuals. Even more curious was the discovery that multiple ossuaries were often stored in the niches, which thus functioned as a depository of several ossuaries. In the light of this evidence, it becomes difficult for the space-saving hypothesis to explain the purpose of the ossuary as facilitator of new burials, if the ossuaries themselves occupied primary burial space.

We may then conclude that removing remains from a niche may have been a reason or cause to employ an ossuary but it could not be the factor which explains the emergence of this phenomenon. By using the ossuary, people merely had acquired an additional

alternative place to rebury the collected remains; this of course could have coincidentally resulted in an empty niche- that is, the freeing up of more burial space. Yet, in itself, this theory does not explain the impetus or motive to create this alternative.

8.5 The Protection Hypothesis

One of the presumed advantages of placing bones in lidded boxes was that they would be preserved safely and securely. Sukenik argued that the remains would then be protected from scatter when removed from the niche. However, it seems to us, as it did to Hachlili, that there would actually be less risk to lose bones after decay had they remained undisturbed in a primary receptacle, as was the case in the Jericho necropolis. If it were absolutely necessary to place the bones in a protective container, then why not in a coffin, a sealed niche or even in a shaft grave? Consequently, this protection hypothesis remains highly speculative.

8.6 The Honourable Reburial Hypothesis

As previously mentioned, certain scholars such as the editors of the English Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF) had speculated that ossuaries were reserved for those who, for some reason, had had to be buried ignobly, away from the family tomb, and could only be reburied with the family, after the decay of the flesh had ensued. In particular, it was thought that the deceased were martyrs - a clear association of the ossuary with a reliquary. However, this designation is arbitrary at best because the text from the Mishna which supposedly supports this hypothesis, is referring to executed criminals, who were denied proper burial rites; only after the flesh had decayed were the bones collected and reburied in the family tomb. Although this hypothesis would actually be supported by the related Rabbinic view that decay of flesh hastened atonement, it does not really explain the emergence of ossuary burial in the Herodian period, because it is too restrictive in scope. It is difficult-if not improbable-to imagine that huge tomb complexes were occupied by whole families of martyrs or criminals.

8.7 Association of ossuaries with developing notions of individuation

The proponents of the socio-anthropological perspective, Steven Fine and Eyal Regev⁵⁷² argue that the sudden appearance of Jewish ossuaries reflected the new-found awareness of the individual at the time of Herod. Regev expands on Fine's theory of individuation⁵⁷³, claiming that a new sense of self developed in Jewish society within the overall trend towards individualization in the Greco-Roman world. Although this is a very attractive hypothesis, it too is simply not substantiated by the facts. For instance, it has been demonstrated that there was an average of 1.7 (re-)burials within each ossuary, and that occasionally the bone collection was terribly inefficient,⁵⁷⁴ even haphazard! This in itself does not suggest concern with safeguarding individual identity.

Additionally, Fine argues that the ossuary phenomenon reflected the development of a change in attitude, but so did the Hellenistic coffin prior to the bone chest. A more serious objection is that if the concept of the individual were really that important, why is it that less than 50% of all ossuaries actually identified their occupants by name, and very few mentioned the status or profession of the deceased. One might be tempted to argue that this

⁵⁷² Eyal Regev, "The Individualistic Meaning of Jewish ossuaries: A Socio-Anthropological Perspective of Burial Practice," *PEQ* (January-June 2001) 39-49.

⁵⁷³ Regev uses the term "individualism." Regev's is an error common in historical scholarship. The scholarly understanding of the word can be found in works such as by Christopher Pelling (ed), *Characterization and Individuality in Greek Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), V; Louis Dumont, *Essays on Individualism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 25; and Luther H. Martin, "The Anti-Individualistic Ideology of Hellenistic Culture," *Numen* 41/2 (1994) 118 and n. 5. 7, 8. Thus Pelling's "slippery figure", the individual, seems to have slipped by Regev. Without defining his terms Regev therefore uses confusing terminology which, in the context of the origin of ossuaries is irritating. I do not believe that Regev was focusing on a selfish *me-first* approach to life, as opposed to obligations to society or even to family, which Thomas J. Schoeneman, "Individualism," *Encyclopedia of Human Behavior*, vol. 2, p. 631, equates to self-contained individualism or enlightened self-interest. Instead I prefer to use the word "individuation" or "individuality" or "individualization" in the sense of an increased tendency towards personal self-worth, rather than "individualism." Similarly, I prefer "individual" rather than "individualistic".

⁵⁷⁴ Kloner, *Necropolis of Jerusalem*.

merely reflected the level of literacy, and that illiteracy is anyway irrelevant to the expression of individuation. However, on the other hand, logic suggests that anyone who was wealthy enough to commission the manufacture of an ossuary ought to have been able to hire a scribe, if individuation were really that important. Nor does the concept of individuation necessarily mean that a stone chest had to be manufactured to establish a person's identity. Could not the name and other relevant information about the deceased be inscribed above a burial niche? Actually, the trend to individual burial would have been more easily guaranteed by primary burial into a coffin, or else by secondary placement into a loculus without any ossuary. These procedures (coffin burial and shaft graves) were, in fact, already in place for at least a hundred years prior to the use of the ossuary. Thus, given that there were already solutions in place ready to respond to this growing interest in expressing individuation, I must question whether individuation was really the cause for introducing the chest. The multiple burials in ossuaries, up to seven individuals (including infants) seems to indicate that the trend to individuation did not give rise to the ossuary, but rather to the coffin. Though the ossuary was designed for individual burial, so too was the coffin, and so too were the sealed niches, the shaft grave, and the Augustan sarcophagus. The trend to individuation, therefore, logically manifested itself in the change from built-in cavities to small cavities.

Regev too has argued for the link between the growing trend toward individuation and ossuary burial by referring to the revolution in *halakhah* and in ritual which became apparent around the time of Herod, during which prayer and Rabbinical teaching of the law started to come to the fore. However, all that this proves is that there was a sudden emergence of a personal religious experience during life. I remain unconvinced that this necessarily manifested itself in the form of the use of stone ossuaries which would suddenly disappear again around 70 CE at a time when, significantly, Rabbinic Judaism was imposing itself even more strongly than it had prior to 70 CE.

8.8 Foreign Influence

An examination of the principal theories which purport to explain the origin and function of the Judean ossuary reveals serious shortcomings in all of them, with the exception of those of Lee Levine and Gideon Foerster, who both argue that foreign influence was a prime factor in the emergence of the ossuary.⁵⁷⁵ We have seen that all the proposed functions or capacities of the ossuary, except perhaps that as a transport medium, were already just as easily being fulfilled by the prior system of burial (ossilegium into niches in a tomb) and these methods were still in existence, even after ossuaries disappeared. The small sealed cavities within tombs already provided a tangible space, housing one (or a few) bone assemblage(s), just like the ossuary; furthermore, these could express individuation of burial just as easily as the ossuary. As well, the economically sized chamber could guarantee the desired protection for the bones, and would permit the inscription of the name and status of the deceased person(s) on the sealing slab or on the adjacent wall; it could even accommodate some decoration. Therefore, in its most basic function as a small container that safely housed the bones of one or a few privileged individuals, the ossuary was redundant and provided no additional intrinsic value. Thus, if the function of the ossuary was already being fulfilled by pre-existing options, one must ask why the Judeans used it? What - if any- were the differences between the ossuary and the other options? And finally, we must determine if the adoption of the ossuary had more to do with style- that is, with employing a new form or style of housing which really had little effect on issues of safeguarding and securing the bones, economy of burial space, theological belief or so forth.

⁵⁷⁵ Lee I. Levine, "From the Beginning of Roman Rule to the End of the Second Temple Period," in *The History of Eretz Israel 4: The Roman Period from the Conquest to the Ben Kozba War* (63 B.C.E. - 135 C.E.), ed. M. Stern (Jerusalem: Keter, 1984, 66-67 [Hebrew]); *Jerusalem Cathedra: Studies in the History, Archaeology, Geography, and Ethnography of the Land of Israel*, vol. 1. (Jerusalem: Yad Izaak Ben-Zvi Institute; Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 1981); *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity. Conflict or Confluence?* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998). Gideon Foerster, "Ossilegium and Ossuaries: the Origins and Significance of a Jewish Burial Practice in the last Decades of the 1st century BC and the 1st century AD," 53, in *Abstracts of the XVth International Congress of Classical Archaeology* (Amsterdam, July 12-17, 1998).

It is also important, at this point, to note that though all these theories have central weaknesses, they also all have some interesting merits. In fact, each element within Judean society - be it the Pharisee, the wealthy man, the individual interested in saving tomb space, the person longing for his homeland, the Hellenist hoping to express individuation, or the individual seeking to regain honour- could very well have projected his or her wished and interests into the artifact, providing that it was already an available object.⁵⁷⁶ Given this, the above groups would actually all be imitators rather than innovators. And so, the question usually posed, namely which group invented the ossuary, is actually the wrong one. The ossuary had already been invented!

This thesis, then, will attempt to determine the *source of the novelty* as well as to account for its appearance at that particular time in Judean society. If indeed the ossuary did not emerge “from within” Judean society, then one must search for its origin “from without.” It would then be logical to assume that once the ossuary had “invaded” Judean society, its adoption and widespread use merely involved a question of mechanism. In this sense, then, the thesis will support the theories of Foerster and Levine, who argued that an elite segment of society, influenced respectively by Rhodian ash chests¹ and by Roman ash urns, was actually responsible for the introduction of the ossuary into Judea.

However, the present research will also show that though Foerster and Levine² were generally correct in their assessments that an elite segment of Judean society was influenced to adopt the ossuary from other cultures’ artefacts (the Rhodian ash chests and Roman ash urns) these two scholars did not correctly identify the actual geographical source of the influence, nor did they address the question of the disappearance of the ossuary. Thus, despite their important contributions to the scholarly debate, this thesis will construct a comprehensive interpretation of the transient phenomenon.

⁵⁷⁶ See, for example, Peleg argues in her work, “Gender and Ossuaries: Ideology and Meaning, for this particular meaning that people had attached to ossuary burial.

Furthermore, the present thesis will demonstrate that it was the fashion-conscious segment of Judean society which introduced the ossuary, and that the influence likely came from Asia Minor. This explanation of the emergence of the ossuary as stemming from the attraction to a fashionable style accommodates a wide - if not the widest - set of different scenarios and recognizes a certain truth in each of them. It is then possible to acknowledge that diverse elements in Judean society were “imitators” making use of an artefact which would eventually, through a process of adoption and adaptation, become a cultural hallmark!

1. The Rhodian origin is interesting, considering the similarity of Rhodian to Jewish ossuaries. However, the distribution of Rhodian osteothekai is strictly limited;⁵⁷⁷ only very few specimens have been found in the neighbouring Rhodian islands and in the Peraea.⁵⁷⁸ Obviously, the plainly executed stone caskets had never been an export article, unlike the large Rhodian amphoras which reached the coastal areas of Palestine. The question of a correlation between Rhodian caskets and other similar ash-chests in Asia Minor has been addressed by Fraser and answered in the negative: “There is no reason to suppose a link between the various regions in this respect, for the employment of this shape of casket for ashes clearly derives from the use of the sarcophagus for inhumation; it evidently developed subsequently on its own, in places where, as at Rhodes, the sarcophagus was not in general use in the post-Classical period.”⁵⁷⁹ Likewise Fraser refuted the possibility of a link to the ash-caskets of Imperial Rome, as the latter “differ[s] fundamentally in shape, for it is far more cubical and rarely gable-lidded, to say nothing of the invariable ornate decoration.”⁵⁸⁰

⁵⁷⁷ P.M. Fraser, *Rhodian Funerary Monuments* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1977) 13.

⁵⁷⁸ Fraser, *Rhodian Funerary Monuments*, 13 and n.48, explains this that perhaps there the practice of cremation was not as frequent as inhumation.

⁵⁷⁹ Fraser, *Rhodian Funerary Monuments*, 13.

⁵⁸⁰ Fraser, *Rhodian Funerary Monuments*, 13.

2. Lee Levine and Gideon Foerster were not the only scholars to hypothesize about the foreign origin of the individual burial container. Eric Meyers, in an extensive survey of secondary burial practices and individual receptacles in the ancient Near East, concluded that the Judean ossuary constituted no novelty in the region.⁵⁸¹ Ultimately Meyers actually urges us to accept the Persian “astodan” or bone container, similar in size and shape to the Jewish ossuary, as the likeliest candidate for the antecedent of the Herodian material culture. However, several significant difficulties exist with this assumption: For example, Meyers cites the similar Rabbinic term, despite its having been used in the Talmud only many years after the introduction of the ossuary. A more glaring problem is the lack of presenting any viable mechanism for the transmission of the idea of the receptacle, leaving it up to the reader to imagine what dynamic could have fostered the influence. Although it is true that Jewish experience with the Persians dates back to at least the time of the Babylonian exile, and that the majority of Jews who were living in Persian-dominated lands could have brought the concept of the ossuary back with them when Jews were given permission to resettle Judea around 500 BCE, it is curious indeed that no ossuaries have been discovered in Judea that date to this period of time. Again, though one might be tempted to argue that Jewish society was too impoverished at this point in its history to afford stone containers, and instead, opted for wooden ones, which were easy to make, but left no evidence. Thus, if Persian stone astodans were in fact the model or precursor for the Judean ossuaries, it would be logical to expect to see them, or evidence of them, in stone.

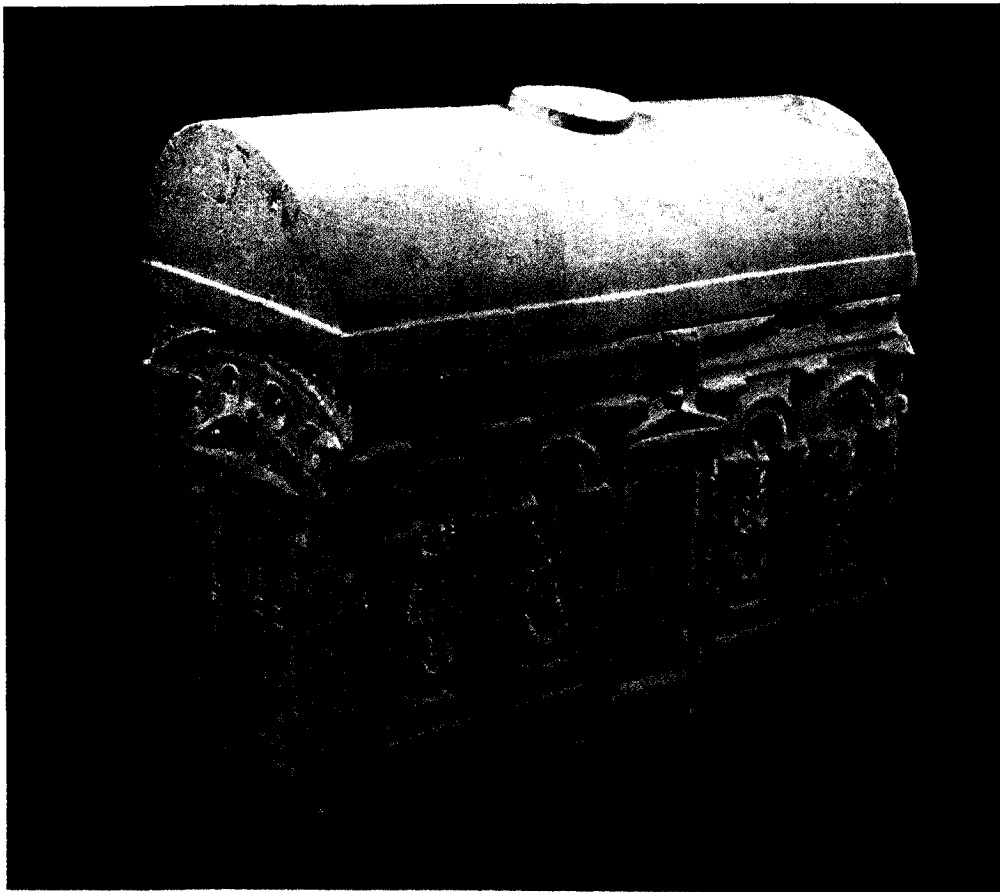
Another, and perhaps more perplexing difficulty with Meyers’ theory, is that of chronology. If the Jews who had resettled in Judea around 500 BCE had indeed brought with them the idea of the Persian *astodan*, and yet left no

⁵⁸¹ Eric Meyers, “Secondary Burials in Palestine,” *BA* 33 (1970), 2-29.

demonstrable physical evidence of continuous, or even occasional use of the artefact, is one to accept the possibility that the influence lay dormant for so many years, until approximately 20 BCE, when Persian culture and political influence had long ceased to dominate Judea and when, in fact, Judea had become a Hellenic province?

Part Three:

Pagan Ash Urn and Jewish Ossuary - a Parallel?



Jerusalem



Asia Minor

Comparison of a Judaeen ossuary and a Greco-Roman ash-chest manufactured in Asia Minor. Note the stylized doorways in both cases at the ends of the containers. The ash chest was photographed by the author in Antalya, Turkey.



Ash chests photographed by the author in the garden of the archaeological museum in Antalya, Turkey. The provenance of the chests is unknown.

Introduction

At this point of the thesis, I argue that the source of the Jewish ossuary phenomenon is to be traced to the production of a particular type of ash urn prominent in the cremation practices of the Empire. Indicators of this influence consisting of striking similarities -as a whole - denote the parallel.

Cremation was a mode of burial which occasionally competed with inhumation in the ancient Greek world.⁵⁸² The Hellenistic age saw numerous societies switching from burying to burning the dead. This phenomenon caught on in the city of Rome to the effect that, eventually, cremation was viewed the *Romanus mos*. During the early Roman empire, cremation was clearly the burial choice among the well-to-do and the official classes in Rome and in her provinces.⁵⁸³

In the Aegean world and in the East, burning continued to be the fashion, at least, in urban centres, while other parts of the population kept to the inhumation practice. Some provinces never introduced cremation into their indigenous practices. For example, the upper classes in Egypt continued to embalm and mummify their dead. The province of Judea, too, adhered to her regional, longstanding tradition of burying the dead in caves (and, alternatively, in shaft graves). Just as the usage of small funerary chests was increasingly

⁵⁸² See Donna C. Kurtz and John Boardman. *Greek Burial Customs. Aspects of Greek and Roman Life* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press) 1971.

⁵⁸³ Jocelyn M. C Toynbee, in her comprehensive work, *Death and Burial in the Roman World. Aspects of Greek and Roman Life*. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971) 43-64, has brought together an account on burial customs of Rome and the provinces, which derived mainly from references in classical authors, epigraphs, and and depictions on funerary furniture. See further R. Reece (ed.), *Burial in the Roman World* (London: Council for British Archaeology, 1977). Of particular interest with regard to burial customs in the Roman provinces is Michael Heinzelmann, Jacopo Ortalli, Peter Fasold, and Marion Witteyer, *Römischer Bestattungsbrauch und Beigabesitten in Rom, Norditalien und den Nordwestprovinzen von der späten Republic bis in die Kaiserzeit*. Internationales Colloquium, Rom 1.-3. April 1998 (Wiesbaden, Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 2001).

becoming popular in the empire, Jerusalem's society was introducing the innovative practice of ossuary burial. Was there, after all, a connection to alien funerary practices?

Part Three argues for correspondence between the Pagan ash urn and the Jewish ossuary, despite their different associated modes of disposal of the dead. The parallel phenomenon emerges in four areas, a) burial context - setting, place, and function of receptacles in secondary obsequies; b) material culture in terms of production and workmanship; c) terminology, and lastly, d) history of cremation and inhumation practice in the Empire. Four chapters will explore the common language of the Jewish ossuary and Pagan ash urns.

It will be shown that within the larger world of the Roman Empire, Jews buried the dead in the same fashion as their Pagan counterparts. They made, used, and even termed secondary burial containers in similar ways as other societies did. All of these details betoken a parallel phenomenon that came about by cultural choice rather than by chance.

The development within various countries of the empire of these particular secondary burial containers will be considered as the impetus to the production and use of ossuaries in Jerusalem. This presents a challenge, considering the innate Jewish abhorrence to the rite of burning the dead.

Before embarking on my task, I have to be aware that similar burial-related actions might have different meanings in different societies. Multiple meanings attached to ritual behaviour of funerary objects are understood by those encultured in a given society, and these are baffling to outsiders. Thus, it may well be that Jews reacted negatively to the cremation rite and objected the manner of disposal. But notwithstanding such perception, Jews may well have been receptive to collection into a personal container as an expression of care and honourable treatment of the last vestiges of individuals.

Chapter 9

The Parallel: Secondary Burial Container

9.1 *Introducing the similar context of ash urn and ossuary*

The *raison d'être* of the ash urn and the ossuary lies in the context of the social institution of burial. Amid lamentations and expressions of grief, a funeral procession⁵⁸⁴ accompanies the dead body to the extramural⁵⁸⁵ disposal area and to the appropriate facility, i.e. the pyre or the tomb. Herein, the corpse was placed along with provisions and personal possessions; thus the deceased person was buried. In either mode of disposal, the corpse was subjected to certain activities that would “stabilize the deceased in an indestructible medium”⁵⁸⁶ - ashes and bones.

Sometimes, the burial was not a one-time-only affair, but the remains would be collected and disposed of in a secondary burial, occasioning the provision of a prepared individual burial container. The staged burial will be the focus of my analysis, and urn and the ossuary are viewed in the framework of the classical scheme of secondary obsequies. Within these rites both containers play an equivalent role and perform similar functions. Paying attention to the nature of the remains in both methods of interment not only shows

⁵⁸⁴ Toynbee, *Death*, 46-48; Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.27, speaks of procession and lamentation as the rule. For funerary procession in Jewish practice see Samuel Krauss, *Talmudische Archäologie*, II (1911) 62-69. His work brings together rabbinic references and points to their continuity with biblical accounts and innovations, which are sometimes deduced as an ancient Canaanite practice, and significantly, mostly compared to Roman practice and given the equivalent Roman designation.

⁵⁸⁵ The formal separation of places of the living and the dead is discerned by the Late Bronze Age, see Gonen, *Burial Patterns*, 20-21. This practice was certainly linked in most societies with concepts on spiritual pollution with the dead body. In antiquity it is laid down as a Roman law, the Twelve Tables, quoted by Cicero (*de leg.* 2.23.58) and as pointed out by Toynbee, *Death*, 48, observed until the late Empire. This law was also fixed in the Mishna BB 2:9.

⁵⁸⁶ Formulated by Thomas, “Funeral Rites,” 39.

the relevance of comparing the receptacles but also suggests a common language for these containers. This will provide us with the clue as to what caught the attention and interest of the Judeans regarding Pagan ash urns.

I shall proceed by describing, in general, elements in the cremation rite whereby secondary cremations will be the focal point. In comparing this with Jewish secondary burial I shall stress not only the similarities but also assess whether the expected differences shed light on my hypothesis of a true parallel between the ash urn and the ossuary that served as the source of influence. By describing the cremation rite over time and space in only general terms and by omitting the specific associated meanings in each society, I merely show the 'skeleton' of the ritual. However, I justify this by arguing that it was the bare operational function which was of interest to Jews because that is what ultimately did not conflict with Jewish values and beliefs.

Besides appearing within the actual burial context, both containers appear within the context of specific social strata. Their accessibility is rather limited for the poor and unaffiliated, which in the first place had no means to acquire a costly manufactured receptacle, nor claims to tomb occupancy other than patronage. The availability of the luxurious ash urn and ossuary for burial was thus conditioned on the wealth and status of the deceased. The unprivileged in all societies were simply interred in a primary mass-burial ground without any need for a receptacle.

9.2 Cremation

Burning the dead took place on a pyre, a prepared mound of wood, which could be a single stack or a lighthouse construction. Thereupon, the corpse was positioned and burnt, usually with the bier on which it lay. The process lasted several hours or a day until the flames had died down and only smoldering embers remained. Naturally, this time span does not compare to the few hours needed by the modern incinerator to reduce the corpse efficiently to ashes. Nevertheless, for ancient societies, burning the dead was a quick method of

destroying putrid matter and at the same time was able to produce the last stable remains of the human being - the ashes.

9.2.1 *The nature of the cremated remains*

Complete burning⁵⁸⁷ first turns the organic substance of the human body into a small amount of ash,⁵⁸⁸ and with greater blaze intensity, reduces the inorganic bones themselves to white ash.⁵⁸⁹ The final powdered ash is mostly from the bones with trace amounts originating from the flesh. Archeological evidence from Greek cremation graves regularly showed “a thin layer of white ash - the ashes of the dead”⁵⁹⁰ - upon a blackened layer of carbonized wood. To sustain a sufficiently strong fire and achieve a complete cremation was a problem in antiquity. The composition of cremated remains is thus contingent on the intensity and on the efficiency of the burning process, which relied on the quality of the pyre and its ventilation system.⁵⁹¹ Thus, at times, combustion had the effect that the shape of the corpse could not be determined. In contrast, a less efficient blaze left substantial parts of charred bones, with fragments ranging from tiny to large.

⁵⁸⁷ Burning of organic material (a fuel) in the presence of oxygen in the air produces carbon dioxide (CO₂), water vapour (H₂O), as well as trace amounts of nitrogen oxides and ash (mostly mineral oxides, carbonates, and phosphates), heat and light. Inhumation would reduce the organic material to exactly the same end products albeit at a much slower rate and without light.

⁵⁸⁸ Bones are mostly composed of calcium carbonate, which when heated even in the absence of air, turns into calcium oxide (lime powder) and carbon dioxide (a gas): $\text{CaCO}_3 \rightarrow \text{CaO} + \text{CO}_2$. The greater the heat the faster the pyrolysis of the bones.

⁵⁸⁹ The ashes of concern stem from the bone material.

⁵⁹⁰ See Kurtz and Boardman, *Greek Burial Customs*, 74.

⁵⁹¹ See Kurtz and Boardman, *Greek Burial Customs*, 73, on the ventilation system in the Archaic period.

From archaeological evidence in Ephesus⁵⁹² it has been inferred that the fire was kindled apparently just below the middle of the body. The lesser intensity of the combustion did not lead to the reduction of the extremities to ashes, and “the fingers and toes fell to the base of the pyre in the course of cremation.”⁵⁹³ Substantial sized bone fragments illustrated by Walker’s photo,⁵⁹⁴ were raked out from the pyre debris and were then broken before being placed into the repository.⁵⁹⁵

From this evidence I may conjecture that in antiquity the survivors counted on finding not only a white, powdery residue in the debris but also partially burnt bones and some measure of, possibly, quite substantial bone fragments.⁵⁹⁶

9.2.2 *The burial place of the ashes*

The burial place of the ashes depended on the type of cremation - primary or secondary. In primary cremation the burning of the corpse took place directly in the grave, the spot where the ashes were to be permanently kept, which was normally a rectangular pit.⁵⁹⁷ At the end of the burning process, the ashes remained lying upon debris on the floor without being handled, and the pit was sealed with rubble and sherds. The pit functioned as the receptacle for the ashes, and was marked as the burial place of one particular individual.

9.2.3 *Secondary cremation, prelude to the ash urn*

⁵⁹² See Walker, *Memorials*, 55-57, on the evidence of cremation rites from Ephesus.

⁵⁹³ Walker, *Memorials*, 55.

⁵⁹⁴ Walker, *Memorials*, 56, photo no. 45.

⁵⁹⁵ Walker, *Memorials*, 57.

⁵⁹⁶ Hereby is of interest that some societies prepared cremation graves with ventilation channels and used good combustion material such as papyrus, while others in subsequent periods did not.

⁵⁹⁷ See Kurtz and Boardman, *Greek Burial Customs*, 74. Such facility was known in Rome as *bustum*, see Toynbee, *Death*, 49.

In secondary cremation, the more familiar of the two types of cremation, the pyre was erected at a distance from the intended burial place of the ashes.⁵⁹⁸ In this setting, the cremated remains were collected and traditionally placed into some sort of manufactured container - *the ash urn*. It is found, in the Greek as well as the Roman world that the original collection was into a napkin rather than into an urn. In the course of time, the actual urn was no longer the immediate receiver of the ashes at the pyre location, but rather developed into a piece of tomb furniture. Some were even very ostentatious. The urn, generally, housed one cremated individual, but every so often, two or three people - probably the remains of a family unit.

9.2.4 *The final location of the ash urn*

In the Greek and Roman world the allotted burial facility for the urn could be a pit in the ground,⁵⁹⁹ or a rock-cut tomb or building (the private or semi-private hypogaeum or the public catacombs, or the above-ground mausoleum in Late Republican and early imperial tombs). Inside the tombs, most often the urns were visibly displayed in semi-circular or rectangular niches (the *loculi* or *thekai*)⁶⁰⁰ or were set into the low bench running along the walls.⁶⁰¹ The large Roman ash altar of course, was left free-standing.⁶⁰² In Hellenistic tombs in Alexandria, however, “each *loculus* is normally closed by a plaster slab (*Pl. 88*) with a door painted on it, and the name of the dead above.”⁶⁰³

⁵⁹⁸ See Kurtz and Boardman, *Greek Burial Customs*, 33. Such facility was known in Rome as *ustrina*, see Toynbee, *Death*, 49.

⁵⁹⁹ Kurtz and Boardman, *Greek Burial Customs*, 163; see p. 37, for the standard cremation grave in Greece. For Rome, see Toynbee, *Death*, 50.

⁶⁰⁰ Kurtz and Boardman, *Greek Burial Customs*, 275; Toynbee, *Death*, 133 and photo 28.

⁶⁰¹ See Toynbee, *Death*, 50.

⁶⁰² Toynbee, *Death*, 50.

⁶⁰³ See Kurtz and Boardman, *Greek Burial Customs*, 303.

9.3 (Dis)similarities in the burial rite of cremation and cave deposit

Let us view the ash urn and the ossuary in the scheme of secondary obsequies⁶⁰⁴ by comparing key elements of a staged burial in the accompanying table. Stage I, the separation rite, relates to the disposal of the corpse. Stage II, the re-aggregation rite, concerns the disposal and final burial of the remains.

9.3.1 Stage I: disposal of the corpse

Mode of Disposal	Cremation	Cave burial
Disposal Facility	Pyre installation in designated cremation area	Rock-cut family tomb
Activity subjected	Reduction of organic and inorganic matter in the process of combustion	Decomposition of organic matter as a result of bacterial or fungal action
Human Remains	Ashes and calcined bones	Denuded bones
Time Span	Day(s)	Months to years
State of Remains	Layer of cremated remains	articulate skeleton
Provisional burial place	Occupied space in the pyre debris	Occupied space on bench, burial niche, or cave floor

The first stage, as expected, conveys clearly the dissimilarity of cremation practice to cave burial (inhumation) on all counts. The open destruction of the human body in a provisional facility contrasts markedly with an activity already slowly taking place in the permanent burial facility, a process hidden within shrouds or binding sheets. The anthropologist, Thomas, observed different attitudes to decay as expressed by people's approaches to controlling decay in funeral rites. Applied here, we find that Jews accepted the flesh's

⁶⁰⁴ For this parallelism, see Thomas, "Funeral Rites," 42.

becomes putrid and slowly wasting away. In cremating people the attitude was one of prevention or prohibition of the natural fate of humankind. Naturally, each approach has its particular meaning according to the people's world view, and that may be subject to change. Looking ahead in time, societies in the Later Roman period changing to inhumation apparently changed their attitude to decay.

The time it takes to reduce the corpse into a layer of ash and charred bones or a skeleton becomes significant in a staged burial for those that intend to handle the stabilized media for the purpose of closure. It denotes a liminal period of *waiting* until this becomes possible. Until secondary burial can take place, the deceased is still in the "process of dying" - as formulated by Kraemer⁶⁰⁵ - and a final state cannot be bestowed upon the remains. The final fate of the deceased as justified in the imagination is still pending, the survivors not yet reintegrated into society. The factor of time thus makes a big difference.

In Roman Palestine secondary burial could take place many months or years after the initial burial. Only then could the son be absolved of his duty to bury his forbears permanently in an ossuary; only then could the state of mourning be lifted, and the survivors be reintegrated into society and could closure be accomplished for the loss of the loved one. All of this was achieved incomparably earlier in cremating societies - for example, nine days in Rome. In such societies, the rite of integration began already once the embers on the pyre were quenched with water or wine.⁶⁰⁶

9.3.2 *Stage II: disposal of the remains*

While the two rites were very different during the first stage - the disposal of the corpse, the two rites were in step with each other during the second stage - the disposal of the remains. I shall point out the similar kinds of funerary objects, procedures, actions, and treatments of

⁶⁰⁵ David Kraemer, *The Meaning of Death in Rabbinic Judaism* (London: Routledge, 2000) 50-51.

⁶⁰⁶ Toynbee, *Death*, 50.

the remains, present in a highly ritualized ceremony accompanying the permanent burial of Judeans and of cremating societies.

Mode of Disposal	Cremation	Cave burial
Procedure	Removal of calcined bones	Removal of bare bones
	Collection of calcined bones	Collection of bare bones
	Placement in enclosure	Placement in enclosure
Treatment of Remains	Wine, oil, balsam,	Wine, oil, myrrh, herbs
Initial Receptacle	Cloth	Cloth
Permanent Receptacle	Manufactured as urn	Manufactured ossuary
Permanent Location	Niche, recess, ledge; pit in the ground	Burial niche, arcosolia, bench; one occurrence in grave

9.4 Commonality in both secondary burial rites

9.4.1 Handling the same kind of remains

As shown above, cremation yielded mostly calcined bones, whereas cave burial produced intact de-fleshed bones. Nevertheless, in both cases it was some form of bones that remained - either charred or de-fleshed and desiccated. When cremated remains were gathered, it was the tangible residue, the calcined bones,⁶⁰⁷ that was removed from the burnt debris of the pyre and that was the focus of the solicitude at the time of secondary burial. It is telling that these remains were stored in receptacles which people named *osteothekai*, literally, *bone*-chests.

Therefore, there is actually no need to over-emphasize the supposed dichotomy of “ashes” versus “bones.” Not surprisingly, modern scholars published the Ephesian ash chests

⁶⁰⁷ The mixture of fragmented and/or charred bones of various sizes, plus lime ash, is often simply denoted “calcined bones.”

under the designation ‘ossuaries,’ a term that in Israeli archaeology is reserved for the Herodian and the early Chalcolithic bone boxes. It is my contention that ancient Jewish societies perceived the language ‘bone’ in a Pagan ash urn in just the same manner.

9.4.2 Proceeding in the same manner

First, there is the same procedure in both rites of *removal* of the calcined or the desiccated bones from a provisional location to the final burial place. Second, there is the same procedure of collecting the primary burial to a secondary burial. Of course there may be extenuating circumstances (even pre-dating ossuary usage) where bones would have to be moved elsewhere, such as in the case of the bones of Uzzah and the bones of criminals which could not be buried among their brethren. Any relocation of bones would, by necessity, resemble ashurn re-burial, so that one might therefore be tempted to argue that there is no true parallel between Judean ossilegium and ash-urn reburial. However, those exceptional cases were not associated with any ritual; it was merely a practical necessity for special cases which could not otherwise be handled. For such cases the container had an entirely different meaning - simple transport. Our case, on the other hand, is indeed unique because it is concerned with ritually-driven relocations, as was ashurn re-burial.

9.4.3 Objects for the same purposes

Cloth was most often used for the initial gathering of the cinerary remains. A napkin was practical and affordable for receiving and enclosing the ashes, as well as for transportation to the permanent burial location. Thus, the intended container became a piece of ‘funerary furniture’ rather than the direct receiver. However, since cloth degraded, it was not suitable for keeping human remains safe, lest they scatter. Therefore, cinerary remains that were contained in a cloth bundle were generally enclosed by a container of a durable material for protection. Evidence is found, for example, in Archaic Greek burials.

Cloth found practical usage also in the secondary burial of bones. Cloth, spread as a mat or a wrapper, conferred however a less protective status on skeletal remains than a durable material would. With the option of a durable container, the collected bones were still enclosed in cloth (see above). The preference for a more protective means shows up in the parallel collecting of human remains into a durable receptacle in Roman Palestine also. Evidence for collected bones in a durable container is as old as the Chalcolithic times. From these observations, we conjecture that the collecting of remains is generally always found in conjunction with a durable, manufactured container.

9.4.4 *Burial containers with the same functions*

By using ash urn and ossuary, societies made similar use of a container's capacities to provide a protective and individual space within which one could house the collected remains, and furthermore, to inscribe and decorate this space. That this was done in similar ways as well I shall show in the following chapter.

9.4.5 *The same treatment of remains*

The collected remains obtain the same kind of honourable treatment regardless of the rite. Application of wine, oil, or spices reflects rites that are associated with care and honour for the loved ones. The use of spices in the preparation of a dead body for burial is a longstanding habit already mentioned for King Asa (2Chr 16:14). In the Late Second Temple times, it was a custom to sprinkle herbs,⁶⁰⁸ such as myrrh and aloe on the wrapped body,⁶⁰⁹ and this was then repeated for the collected remains. Thus, secondary burial of ashes and bones carry out the same treatment as part of a universal tradition. The rabbinic debate

⁶⁰⁸ Also Mk 16:1; Lk 3:56; 24:1; Jn 19:40, illustrate this custom.

⁶⁰⁹ Bunches of withered flowers were found in *ossuaries* among bones, see Haas, "Giv'at ha-Mivtar," 38-40. Zlotnick, *Mourning*, 161 n.9, proposes that spices and embalmment may have been an act of deference to the deceased.

concerning applications of wine and oil in addition to herbs appears to reflect habits found in their cultural milieu of a mixed society. The debate generated an opinion to employ only herbs for various reasons. Wine and oil may not have been applied in some circles, but at least herbs as a honourable treatment of collected bones is found in the treatment of ashes.

9.4.6. The same final resting place

Just as the cinerary urn was visibly positioned on a bench or in a niche within the tomb, so too was the ossuary often placed on a the shelf in an arcosolia, which was specifically hewn for display purposes within a tomb. Alternatively, both secondary burial containers could be enclosed in a recess or burial niche which was subsequently sealed with a slab of stone.

9.4.7 Being in a state of mourning

At the time of secondary burial, people were in a state of mourning followed by purification. Mourning lasted nine days in Rome, starting from the moment that the ashes had been collected. In Roman Palestine, ossilegium occasioned mourning and purification rites were patterned after the primary funeral (according to the Biblical prescription for a corpse and with customs that likewise reflect the cultural milieu of the time). Mourning was observed once more, for one day. Friends came to console the survivors and to participate in the funeral meal. The parallel is not mitigated just because Jews mourned in a different way. Any kind of mourning suffices to show a parallel.

Clearly, once the ossuary was adopted, then Jewish society in Roman Palestine re-buried the dead in the same manner as cremating societies empire- wide did.

9.5 Discussion:

The language of gathering into an individual container as the source of influence

The parallel practice of collecting ashes into the ash urn has prompted some scholars in the past to explain the innovative practice of Jewish ossuary burial in terms of foreign influence.

For example, Foerster perceived the parallel in ritual and associated container, asserting, “the Jewish ossilegium in fact reflects the pagan rite of gathering and burying the remains in urns after the cremation of the deceased.”⁶¹⁰ He understands the implementation of the foreign procedure as conditional upon the Jewish need to “resort to a different and longer method of reaching a total state of decomposition of the flesh.”

Another proponent of a link to ash-gathering (but in a Roman context), Levine, points out three necessary stipulations for the Roman ash urn to be emulated: “depositing bones and not ashes, waiting twelve months for the flesh to decompose, and accompanying this act with burial customs appropriated from the primary Jewish funerary setting.”⁶¹¹ Levine is, of course, correct in emphasizing the much longer waiting period. However, there is no real evidence to support the specific number, twelve months. Levine’s use of the term “Roman ash urn” begs for more clarification, if he means more than simply referring in general to a secondary burial container employed for ashes at the time of the Roman empire. Foerster and Levine, both maintain influence on the practice of ossilegium that the novelty of the ossuary phenomenon came about by emulating a foreign custom.

The association with collecting bones into a container led Rahmani allegedly to concede in the 1960's that “It is very possible that Roman habits of collecting remains in ash-urns triggered this [ossuary burial] off.”⁶¹² Notwithstanding this apparent admission, Rahmani has opposed the idea of foreign influence on ossilegium as well as on the artifact, preferring the theory that the ritual as well as the material culture was a home-grown phenomenon. He seems to mean that, at most, the impetus of using an individual container could have come from outside Judea, but not a specific kind of artifact. His argument rests

⁶¹⁰ Foerster, “Ossilegium,” 53: “Jewish *ossilegium* in fact reflects the pagan rite of gathering and burying the remains in urns after the cremation of the deceased.

⁶¹¹ Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 67.

⁶¹² Cited by Meyers, JORR, 32-33, and noted in n.82: Personal communique/ dated June 18, 1968. The association with the practice of cremation had the Roman ash urns put aside in the question of ossuary origin .

on rabbinic sources describing ליקוט עצמות, the orthodox rite of collecting bones, and emphasizes the fact that there would have been no need to copy a ritual which already existed in Judea. He appears to object specifically to any Roman connection, stating that: “Even if these Jews had known about the funerary customs and art of Rome, they would have strongly disapproved of them and certainly would not have deliberately copied them.”⁶¹³ Rahmani is surely referring to the reviled custom of cremation.

We object to Rahmani’s position for two reasons:

- a) The Rabbinical sources laid down the tradition of ossilegium known at the time that they were recorded. It is unknown how far back in time these stretched. Consequently, they might have been referring merely to the ritual of the days when ossuaries already existed rather than to any pre-existing ritual. Rahmani cannot prove that these oral traditions reflect burial techniques of the 1st century BCE. The only dating mentioned in Semahot is the phrase “prior to the destruction of Jerusalem.” But the only names of Rabbinical personalities mentioned are those who lived after 70 CE.
- b) It cannot be proven from archaeological evidence that the orthodox ritual pre-dated the ossuary (used for space reasons and protection of the burial.) If the rite of ossilegium had already existed, then archaeologists would have found many single piles of bones as evidence.⁶¹⁴

Both rites (cremation and ossilegium) showed up on the scene simultaneously; and I claim, as backed by the numerous parallels between Greco-Roman and Judean practices, that Jews consciously adopted a fashionable practice which was spreading throughout the empire, albeit somewhat delayed, all the while preserving their aversion to cremation and iconic decoration.

⁶¹³ RCat, Appendix B: Were Jewish *ossilegium* and ossuaries influenced from abroad? 58.

⁶¹⁴ Prior to ossilegium, *kokh*-burial or coffin-burial was customary, as a sign of primary burial intention. The evidence for secondary burial was few individual bone deposits in niches or else, as group deposits in the standing pit or in a *kokh* itself, see Part I.

In tracing the origin of the individual receptacle, Eric Meyers also briefly considers post-cremation burial as a parallel to ossuary burial.⁶¹⁵ But he ultimately dismisses the idea of an ash urn as a source, even were a cinerary urn, (the Etruscan specimen, for example) to bear some resemblance to the ossuary.⁶¹⁶ This is in direct opposition to my viewpoint. Meyers sees relevance for possible parallels strengthened if those procedures were to make use of a bone repository.⁶¹⁷ One particular phenomenon, the Persian astodan,⁶¹⁸ fulfills his requirements and is “strikingly similar” to the ossuary in regard to its use for bone-collecting, as well as to its form and decoration (rosettes, geometrical patterns, and motifs.⁶¹⁹ In Meyers’ conclusion, he suggests strong influence from the East⁶²⁰ and dismisses ash-gathering into a cinerary urn as a relevant parallel.⁶²¹ In the following excursus I address the relevance of Meyers’ parallel and the plausibility of influence on Judea.⁶²²

⁶¹⁵ Meyers, JORR, 31-36.

⁶¹⁶ Meyers, JORR, 34: “... the fact that Etruscan urns are cinerary mitigates the case for Jewish borrowing..”

⁶¹⁷ Meyers, JORR 34. However, modern Parsees nevertheless do fathom a relevant parallel between cremation and exposure, even though cremation contradicts their own concept of defilement by fire.

⁶¹⁸ Meyers, JORR, 27-31; 94.

⁶¹⁹ See Meyers, JORR, 94; p. 29 and ns.62,63, and 65, for the material culture and references to the artifact.

⁶²⁰ Meyers in his final analysis, JORR, 94, understands influence on Jewish ossilegium as “reinforcing something that... was by then well known in Palestine,” but was decisive behind the “convention of the chest type ossuary adopted by the first century B.C.”

⁶²¹ Meyers, JORR, 36, asserts that despite the striking parallel of ash-gathering , “...it would be hazardous indeed to suggest any sort of influence here.”

⁶²² Also Rahmani recently felt compelled to respond to the notion of influence from the East, see RCat, 56-57. He concludes his assessment of the available data with regard to similarity of the decorations on Persian astodans and the Jewish material culture, by asserting that “general Oriental traits are to be expected” in the Jewish ossuaries, but not because of influence from the astodans (p.57). Rather they come from the already established Eastern elements in Jerusalem’s tomb architecture. I do not subscribe to the notion that the ossuary

Excursus.

The Burial Rite of Exposure and the Associated 'Astodan' - A Relevant Parallel?

The manner of disposal, discussed here, involves the exposure of the dead to the elements, to beasts and birds of prey, and the subsequent deposition of the defleshed bones into a place of burial. It was known to the Greeks as a Persian custom,⁶²³ with the earliest attestation given by Herodotus. Sub-aerial disposal of the corpse near "corpse-eating birds" was eventually laid down as a funerary rite in Zoroastrian sacred scriptures, particularly the *Vendidad* (6:45-51;8:10).⁶²⁴ The parallel with ossuary burial would be strengthened had the burial place for the bones signified a prepared, manufactured container. And influence on Jewish funerary customs would have to be seriously considered if there were to be evidence of a visible corpus of Persian bone containers *prior* to the advent of the Judean containers along, with cultural contact. Of concern to me is Meyer's assumption of these pre-conditions, which he admittedly based on indirect evidence.

decoration necessarily derives from tomb architecture. But I agree with the notion that such eastern elements were part of artistic expressions already present, and which should not come as a surprise in a common cultural milieu. My position on this issue, namely that artistic style on its own is not necessarily an indicator of influence from any direction, particularly on the use of an ossuary, is further elaborated in the next chapter.

⁶²³ Scholarship refers to Herodotus, (*History* 1.140), Strabo (*Geography* 11.11.3; for Central Asia: 15.3.20), see Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Persia and the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1990) 453 and n. 344 ; see Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism II: Under the Achaemenians* (Leiden: Brill, 1982) 182, for Herodotus, and 210, for Plutarch.

⁶²⁴ See Yamauchi, *Persia*, for the overview of 'Zoroastrian Sacred Texts,' 403-410, particularly on *Vendidad* [Vd.] p.407. The *Vendidad* is one of the components of the main body of the Zoroastrian scriptures known as Avesta. Its compilation of older material may have begun under the Parthian Vologeses III (148-191 CE) and completed under the Sassanian Chosroes I (531-579 CE).

The scriptural authority of the rite of exposure is contained in the *Vendidad*.⁶²⁵ Actually, as Boyce points out, different ways of disposing of the dead are transmitted in Vd. 7.47-51. She ascribes this variety to the nature of the text as a compilation of diverse material from various epochs. Thus, prior to this composition, by the end of the second century CE, the rite of exposure “was far from being generally adopted,”⁶²⁶ and sub-aerial disposal of the corpse, earth burial, and entombment, occurred side by side. Since the indigenous practice of primary inhumation was preserved until exposure to vultures became the orthodox rite in Zoroastrianism (much later than the time period of concern to us), then inhumation was certainly practiced by a substantial fraction of the population.

The rationale underlying exposure is the prohibition of defilement of the earth, fire, and water.⁶²⁷ If Zoroastrian teachings were appealing, except for the rite of exposure, then the rite of inhumation could be adapted to comply with the purity concerns by encasing the body with wax before burying it in the ground or by entombment whereby the stone or brick would guarantee the separation of the polluting corpse from the good creations. (This seems to reflect the burial practice of the Achaemenid rulers).⁶²⁸

Examination of the rite of exposure, which is transmitted in the *Vendidad* (6.49-51),⁶²⁹ shows the following: Sub-aerial disposal of the dead may signify primary burial or secondary burial, both being sanctioned. In the former mode, the skeletal remains are laid out on the ground and “exposed to the light seen by the sun” - the significant merit in the Zoroastrian rite.⁶³⁰ The grave of the individual

⁶²⁵ See Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism I: The Early Period* (Leiden : Brill, 1996, 3rd impr.; orig. 1975), on the excursus: “The Zoroastrian Funeral Rites,” 325-330.

⁶²⁶ Boyce, *History I*, 326-7.

⁶²⁷ Yamauchi, *Persia*, and reference to Vd.. 3.36 - 41,6.3; Y.65.8.

⁶²⁸ Boyce, *History II*, 54-57.

⁶²⁹ Boyce, *History I*, 326, states that “when it was composed the characteristic Zoroastrian rite was far from being general adopted.”

⁶³⁰ Stated by Boyce, *History I*, 325.

was simply the area occupied by the skeletal remains - possibly a natural, flat rocky outcrop to which the term *dakhma*⁶³¹ may refer. Allowance for this kind of burial is made in case the bones are not taken care of. As a consequence, there is no preparation of a place of burial that leaves the prominent record in archaeology which I seek. Such a place is afforded in the latter mode (secondary burial) where the habit of gathering up the remains occasioned the preparation of the place and space for burial, a parallel to the cremation practice.⁶³²

The burial place or “grave” of the exposed individual according to the Vendidad (6.49-51)

Although not objecting on religious grounds to the abandonment of the bones, the text nonetheless requires of those who are able, to gather up the bones and make provisions for a place of burial for the bones with the following specifications:

“An “*uzdana*” shall be made, out of reach of dogs and foxes and wolves, not to be rained on from above by rain-water. If they shall be able, these Mazda-worshipers, (let it be) among stones or chalk or clay.”

Boyce understands *uzdana* as “a technical term for an ossuary,” in the sense of a ‘place for bones.’⁶³³ Certainly, *uzdana* (glossed as *astodan*— literally “bone-container”⁶³⁴) refers to some kind of “space for bones” that receives as well as keeps the human remains safe. The text states that this *uzdana* is to be cut into a specific

⁶³¹ Vd. 8.2

⁶³² The time span between the initial and the permanent burial is specified to be one year (Vd 5.14) During this time, the beneficent sun’s rays burn away the pollution of the corpse, the corrupting flesh is completely removed, and the rain washes down the uncleanness.

⁶³³ Boyce, *History II*, 211.

⁶³⁴ Boyce, *History I*, 327.

material, one type of which was postulated to mean clay in Persian.⁶³⁵ The specification may be, in my view, interpreted in the context of durability rather than purity, as the bones are no longer polluting. Moreover, the receptacle is to be “out of reach” where there is chalk, stone, or clay. This seems to refer to a natural environment, i.e. to a grave in living rock in a mountainous region. Boyce infers, (“to judge from later practice”), that an *uzdana* prepared in this way applies to “a cist cut in mountain or hillside.”⁶³⁶ The requirement for such a hewn burial space, or grave, in the face of cliffs or cut into the mountain might reflect the reality of such a burial facility, already sanctioned by regional traditions before exposure had appeared as a practice.

Indeed, evidence for such disposal facilities exists.⁶³⁷ The well known rock-cut tomb built by Artim of Limyra (Lycia)⁶³⁸ around 400 BCE features two burial chambers, each containing a small rectangular cavity hewn into the floor. An Aramaic inscription over one of the doors reads: “This astodana Artim son of Arzify made,” identifying *astodan* unambiguously as a bone repository.⁶³⁹ Furthermore, the inscription bears on the type of bone receptacle, as understood by the people. The original meaning of *uzdana* is, therefore, a small but fixed burial installation.

Since exposure without bone-gathering was also not objectionable,⁶⁴⁰ Boyce is certainly correct in pointing out that the need for a tangible space or receptacle

⁶³⁵ Boyce, *History I*, XVI. It seems to me from the context that if one is cutting into a hard substance, it is more likely that the more compressed version of clay, namely shale or slate is what is meant.

⁶³⁶ Boyce, *History I*, 327.

⁶³⁷ Yamauchi, *Persia*, 453, refers to Median tombs as well as to the Lycian tomb, which is discussed by Boyce, *History II*, 211.

⁶³⁸ See Boyce, *History II*, 211, for the discussion on the tomb.

⁶³⁹ Boyce, *History II*, 210, cites the Aramaic portion: “stwdnh znh ‘rtym br ‘rzpy ‘bd” along with the translation: “This astodana Artim son of Arzify made.”

⁶⁴⁰ Boyce, *History I*, 327. Foreign observers noted abandoned bones as late as the Sassanian period.

“to preserve individual bones was therefore helpful rather than necessary.”⁶⁴¹ I agree also that a bone repository was gratifying in that it “satisfied natural piety, and established a place where individual rites for the dead could be performed.”⁶⁴² I add that it would have to apply to single and multiple bone deposits alike.

Notwithstanding the above, Boyce holds that the Vendidad’s wording is sufficiently ambiguous that the *uzdana* might just as easily refer to an individual container as much as a hollow cut into the living rock. Starting at what point in time did people understand an *uzdana* to be a single container?

Isolated casket-like clay artifacts have actually been found in Northern Iran. The dating is controversial, though, and some scholars believe that they date to the third or second century BCE; others date them to the first century CE.⁶⁴³ In any case, this must mean that with this innovation, Persians could read that the grave could not only be cut into the durable material, but could also be manufactured out of that material - of course for those with the means. Boyce holds that if the disposal facility were to be a grave dug in the ground, bones were first put in these clay or stone containers,⁶⁴⁴ although theoretically, bones needed not be considered as polluting. Thus, in later usage the texts may very well reflect the custom of burying into a container, with the term *astodan* equated to the Greek term *ostaton*, a place for bones.⁶⁴⁵

⁶⁴¹ Boyce, *History I*, 327.

⁶⁴² Boyce, *History I*, 327.

⁶⁴³ See RCat, 56, and references therein regarding the dating.

⁶⁴⁴ Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrians. Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979) 90, 91.

⁶⁴⁵ Note that the first word of Artym of Lymira’s (fifth century BCE) Aramaic inscription, ‘stwdnh’ is read by scholars as astodana. It seems to me, in the absence of vowels in the Aramaic script, that the first word in this phrase could just as easily read ostadon, rather than astodan. (My transposition of the *waw* is no different than Meyers’ transposition, which converts the Talmudic אִיסְטָרוֹן, into his Persian *astodan* (JORR, 62).) If so, this could mean that the word, *uzdana*, might have been borrowed from the Greeks as early as the fifth century BCE.

Although the dating of the above-mentioned caskets is controversial one nevertheless begins to see caskets appearing undoubtedly in the second century CE. In the same region, plain casket-like *astodans*, mostly fashioned out of clay and some out of stone, have been discovered⁶⁴⁶ and dated to 179 CE (Carbon-date).⁶⁴⁷ Other finds in South Russia or Central Asia are even much later.⁶⁴⁸ Ghirshman, for example, notes that in the Sassanian period, baked brick ossuaries were found in Turkestan in the sixth century CE⁶⁴⁹ while only two stone ones were ever found in Iran proper.⁶⁵⁰

The evidence in Greek sources referring to the magi, or soldiers, and to (male) Persians, and mentioned above, may signify in fact a limited practice of particular groups in the population, who kept a longstanding regional tradition originating in the steppes of Russia, and who combined it with ideology, also supposedly originating from Central Asia.⁶⁵¹ Consequently, is one allowed to assume that the practice of exposure, indeed the custom of post-exposure burial of the bones, was prominent in the population at large?⁶⁵² There is no physical evidence prior to the second century.

Rahmani, who has surveyed the archaeological data from Persia, correctly points to the question of controversial dating and the remoteness of

⁶⁴⁶ For the archeological data on astodans discussed by Meyers, see JORR, 29.

⁶⁴⁷ RCat, 56 and note 13 for reference.

⁶⁴⁸ RCat, 57.

⁶⁴⁹ R. Ghirshman, *Iran. From the Earliest Times to the Islamic Conquest* (Baltimore. MD: Penguin Books, repr. 1965, orig. 1954) 332.

⁶⁵⁰ Ghirshman, *Iran*, 332 and fig. 99; p. 333 and fig. 100, refers to two ossuaries found in Bishapur.

⁶⁵¹ Boyce, *History I*, 190-191, 274-275; *History II*, 210-211.

⁶⁵² Yamauchi, *Persia*, 453, has noted that exposure of the dead was not followed by the Achaemenid or Parthian rulers themselves. For example, the bodies of Cyrus and Darius were placed intact in tombs. In pagan Iran, inhumation was the indigenous practice. According to Ghirshman, *Iran*, 156 and 275, bodies were embalmed in a tomb, until exposure became a religious requirement presumably only with Zoroaster.

the finds from Persia proper. Meyers himself admits that “no certain pre-Christian *astodans*” were found.⁶⁵³ Rahmani's conclusion, that “any direct [Iranian] theological or practical influence upon the Jerusalem custom may be excluded” is, in the absence of evidence, convincing.⁶⁵⁴

It is indeed tempting to extrapolate the origin of Jewish ossilegium and the ossuary to Persian practice. Scholars⁶⁵⁵ already favor the opinion that the initial stimulus for the Jewish belief in resurrection and other theological concepts originated with the traditions of Iran to which the major Jewish presence in post-586 BCE Persia and Mesopotamia was exposed. Furthermore, Judea was a province of the Persian empire, and the close inter-societal relations between Judea and the Jews of the Persian Diaspora guaranteed that Persian concepts could easily make their way to Judea. The use by Persians of casket-type *astodans* would therefore fit into this scenario, and it would be no more objectionable to Jews than Greco-Roman cremation was.

I am now in a position to answer the question of relevance.

a) Is the Persian rite of exposure a relevant parallel? Although the concept might be sound, the Persian *astodans* date to much too late a time period, and so the relevance of this parallel, favoured by Meyers, is on shaky ground.⁶⁵⁶

b) Is the Greco-Roman rite of cremation less relevant a parallel? A short comparison of the two rites convinces us that, in fact, it is more relevant. In both

⁶⁵³ Meyers, JORR, 28, concludes: “We have no certain pre-Christian *astodans* and have attempted to raise only the possibility that there were such *astodans*. To my mind the indirect evidence is quite convincing.”

⁶⁵⁴ RCat, 57. But Meyers, JORR, 28-30, cites Parthian evidence for secondary burials from Seleucia on the Tigris (Level III, 140 BCE -CE 43), often in slipper coffins or tubs. In this context he seems inclined to follow some scholars who accept the assumption that *astodans* had been used already from the early Parthian period onwards.

⁶⁵⁵ See Yamauchi, Persia, 458-466, for a concise overview of scholarship on the issue of influence of Zoroastrianism on Judaism, particularly the notion of resurrection.

⁶⁵⁶ Rahmani, RCat 57, has excluded practical influence for the same reason.

rites, the flesh is destroyed quickly, pure bones are collected from the first location and then buried in a second location, possibly into an individual container. If cremation were an objectionable method of disposal for the Jews, then so would exposure have been an irrelevant parallel.⁶⁵⁷ Moreover, at the crucial time period, around 30 BCE, Palestinian Jews were not primarily exposed to the Eastern political, social and cultural milieu. On the other hand, there is plenty of evidence that Jerusalemites were, since the Hellenistic period, immersed in a “collecting” milieu that reflected the Greek way of life. Furthermore, the cinerary urn had already appeared in Western culture at the crucial time. Therefore, not only is post-cremation secondary burial not less relevant a parallel, but rather it is an even more relevant a parallel.

In my view, in order for any practical influence to be exerted there has to be a prominent source of influence present at the right time primed to be copied. From the data available to me at the present time these conditions are not fulfilled by the *astodans*. It is interesting to note that, in view of the prominent Hellenistic impact on the Persian empire,⁶⁵⁸ actually the ash urn (already in existence for a long time) influenced the Iranians to make and use an individual container as much as it influenced Jews to make and use ossuaries. Since containers were not really needed, as deduced by Boyce from the Vendidad, I conjecture that it was a fashion that developed. It is my contention that Persian *astodans* had come about in the same way as the Judean ossuary, by Hellenistic influence on the respective cultures.⁶⁵⁹

⁶⁵⁷ Jer 7.33 conveys clearly by referring to the protection of Rizpah against the devouring of corpses by animals (2 Sam 21.10) that unburial is wrong and sinful. We know that the Babylonian Jewish community adhered to inhumation, an anathema in Persian practice. In the face of certain problems, a story of one magus digging up the buried dead of Israel (BB 58) is credible. A reference to this problem seems to me the effort of the rabbis to seek a biblical source for the duty to bury, i.e. disposal of the corpse in the ground, (San 46b-47), in response to the inquiry of Sassanian King Shapur concerning this obligation in the Torah.

⁶⁵⁸ Meyers, JORR, 29 n. 67, acknowledges cultural contact with the Greek world. Greek mercenaries appeared in Southern Russia and Northern Iran in 358 BCE.

⁶⁵⁹ Ironically, the oldest astodan found in Persia proper (from Bushire), came from a tomb which is described by Ernst E. Herzfeld, *Archaeological History of Iran*, the Schweich Lectures of the British Academy

It appears to us, though, according to the available data, that the Judean phenomenon appeared earlier than the Persian one.

9.6 *Summary of the parallel phenomenon of secondary burial containers*

I am now in the position to identify the parallel phenomenon: I note that *likut azamot* in rabbinic literature was a *funerary rite* that was as highly ritualized an affair as was the pagan burial rite of cremation.⁶⁶⁰ These secondary obsequies included the careful treatment of the remains and, significantly, their placement in an individual enduring container. At the time of collecting either ashes or bones, mourning rites were observed. The common denominator to the ash urn and the ossuary is their multi-faceted nature as individual secondary burial containers. For either mode of disposal, the function was to house the collected remains, namely the bones of the dead, in calcined or in denuded form, but the language nonetheless denotes bones. Both the ash urn and the ossuary were manufactured for the same purpose: to provide a protective housing for the remains. Both the ash urn and the ossuary were designated to house the collected remains of a single individual. Lastly, both containers served the interests of the living survivors to attend to the remains in a ceremonial or ritual fashion. Additional related facets or capacities such as inscriptions with the names of the deceased will be explored in the next chapter.

I have noted above that there were special circumstances leading to containers for the non-ritual transport or storage of bones belonging to temporary social outcasts. I reject those because they are atypical of the vast majority of ossuaries. I remain convinced that ossuaries are ritual-connected containers of collected bones whose origin was the Greco-Roman ash urn.

1934 (London: Oxford University Press, 1935) as “basically Hellenistic in structure and Greek in detail.”

⁶⁶⁰ Like secondary obsequies in Rome, secondary obsequies in Judea heeded special attention to the collected remains of a single individual in analogy with the attention given to his corpse at his first funeral.

There were indeed other “bone-collecting” societies for which one could have claimed foreign influence, notably the Persian one, that could have possibly triggered the Judean practice of collecting bones into containers; but I ultimately reject these because of the late Persian containers. The evidence which I have presented so far for parallelism between the ash urn and the ossuary is intriguing and is suggestive of influence by Roman imperial fashion. I have satisfied a necessary condition - similarity of the re-burial process - but it is not a sufficient condition. The following additional sets of evidence of parallelism, taken together, will ultimately solidify my argument.

Chapter 10

Parallel - Material Culture

10.1 *Ash urn and ossuary*

The classical ash urn is associated with a vase of varying size and shape, with a footed base or pedestal. In fact, though, people employed a nearly endless variety of receptacles for the ashes of the deceased: from simple appropriated household vessels to designed containers in variegated forms and materials. Representative of the Greek world⁶⁶¹ are jugs, amphoras, clay pots, metal or stone containers, and vases. In the West, the Etruscans employed round forms or rectangular house-shaped urns and, from the fourth century BCE, alabaster and terra cotta ash chests resembling mini-sarcophagi.⁶⁶² Roman ash receptacles were very versatile, ranging from simple earthenware pots, glass vessels and lead canisters to the more valuable ash-urns made of terra cotta, stone or marble, shaped in the form of houses or baskets.⁶⁶³ They used polygonal, round, or rectangular boxes or caskets both in simple or adorned versions. One finds vases and urns made out of alabaster, gold, silver, or bronze. The most elaborate cases featured a large marble altar-shaped ash-chest. The expenditure in resources needed to make some Roman ash receptacles is quite remarkable, and it has been asserted that they were “‘show’ articles of sepulchral furniture, ... meant to be admired for their shape or colour or elaborate carving.”⁶⁶⁴ They served to gratify the dead.

Similarity of material culture is only one necessary component of my argument for dependency. It is already difficult to prove dependency based on physical similarities. In the face of the vast array of funerary receptacles that were produced over time and space to house

⁶⁶¹ Kurtz and Boardman, *Greek Burial Customs*, 33, 37, 53, 163, 172, 178, 183, 195, 307, 322.

⁶⁶² Toynbee, *Death*, 50, 253-268.

⁶⁶³ Toynbee, 50; 253-268; see the chapter “Urnen” in Guntram Koch and Hellmut Sichtermann, *Römische Sarkophage* (München: Beck, 1982) 41-43.

⁶⁶⁴ Toynbee, *Death*, 253.

the cremated dead, how is it possible to even argue for a parallel to the Judean artifacts? In which material way are they comparable? And furthermore, in which way are possible parallels indicative of dependency?

To demonstrate similarity in the material culture itself, I chose *a priori* comparative data based on physical appearance as rectangular stone receptacles, which were approximately contemporaneous with the production of the Herodian ossuary.

I commence by presenting a representative corpus of stone receptacles from Rome, Rhodes, and a number of regions in Asia Minor. These samples invite a comparison to the Jewish ossuaries because, for one thing, they constitute a well-documented group of artifacts, and moreover, there are documented inter-societal relations that would explain a parallel phenomenon. Following a description in general terms of these ash containers and their regional characteristics (our intention is not to establish a particular source of origination), I compare their physical appearance to the Herodian artifact and assess the nature of their similarity.

10.2 *The corpus of secondary burial containers in the Empire*

I commence with the earliest corpus of stone receptacles in our group, the cinerary caskets from Rhodes as representative of mostly Hellenistic material culture. They had been previously associated with the Jerusalem ossuaries by Gideon Foerster who described them as “the closest parallels to the Jerusalem ossuaries, which seem to have been influenced by them.”⁶⁶⁵

⁶⁶⁵ Foerster, “Ossilegium,” 53. He confirmed this view in a personal communique in Jerusalem, end of 1999.

10.2.1 *The Rhodian ostothe kai*

Many hundreds of limestone cinerary caskets or *ostothe kai* from Rhodes were subjected to stylistic and historical analysis by P.M. Fraser.⁶⁶⁶ It was the typical receptacle for the cremated remains of Rhodians.

The locally produced, white limestone receptacles are of rectangular form with lids of triangular section. They stand on short, nearly square feet (Fig.10.1). Their dimensions average 35-50 cm in length, 30-35 cm in width, and 20-25 cm in height (including the lid).⁶⁶⁷ Rather thick walls end in a rim on which the lid sits. The surfaces are worked somewhat but not highly finished. The caskets are entirely plain, without any element of decoration. A substantial number are inscribed, either on the lid or, most frequently, on the short side; but never on the face panel.⁶⁶⁸ Overall, the physical appearance of the Rhodian *ostothe kai* is rather uniform and unpretentious.

The Rhodian corpus consists mainly of Late Hellenistic material culture, with a few pieces dating back to as early as the third century BCE, and a negligible number to the early imperial period.⁶⁶⁹ Its geographical distribution is strictly limited and only a very few specimens have been found in the neighbouring Rhodian islands and in the Peraea.⁶⁷⁰ Interestingly, they nevertheless enter into the debate of possible influences on the Judean artefacts, as I shall discuss below.

The next corpus of ash receptacles sampled is from Rome, the heart of the empire, and the cultural model for the provincial elite.

⁶⁶⁶ The presented data here are conveniently taken from Fraser, *Rhodian Funerary Monuments*, 12-13, who provided a stylistic and historical analysis.

⁶⁶⁷ A large example is 51.5 cm x 54 cm x 41 cm.

⁶⁶⁸ Fraser, *Rhodian Funerary Monuments*, 12-13, figs. 25-30.

⁶⁶⁹ Fraser, *Rhodian Funerary Monuments*, 12.

⁶⁷⁰ Fraser, *Rhodian Funerary Monuments*, 13 and n.48.

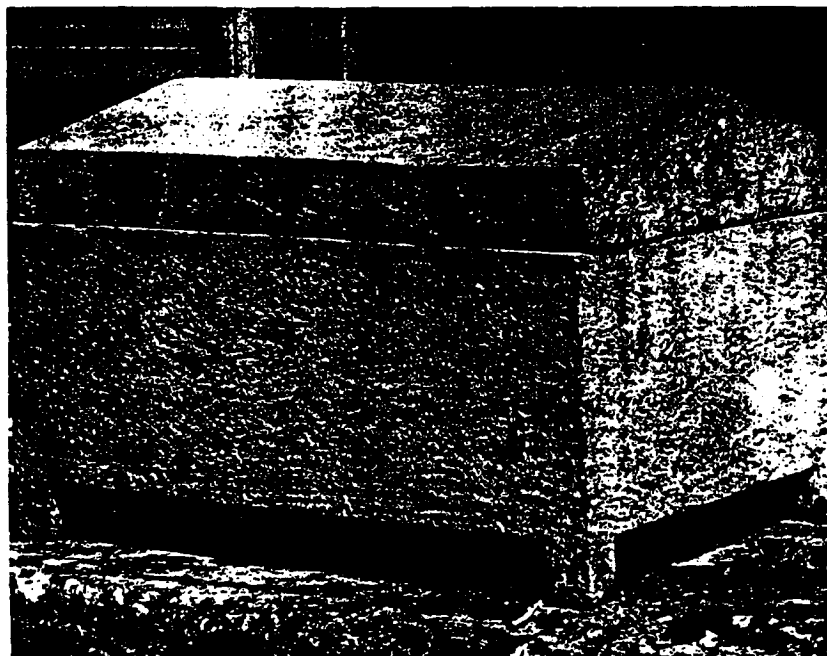


Fig. 10.1 Cinerary casket from Rhodes

10.2.2 Roman cineraria or ash chest

From among Roman ash urns, the one that looks most like the Judean ossuary - the rectangular marble urn, or cinerarium - is an obvious example of interest.⁶⁷¹ It was a novelty at the time and limited to the city of Rome and her vicinity. In the rest of Italy, the Hellenistic limestone chest remained in usage.⁶⁷² This particular urn surfaced during the early years of the Empire, enjoyed its heyday between 70 CE to 130 CE, and then dwindled in number as the number of sarcophagi increased. Significantly, the material culture is thus contemporaneous with the Judean artifact.

The most common form of the marble urn is box- or casket-shaped⁶⁷³ with gabled lids and an average height of 0.4 to 0.6 m.⁶⁷⁴ It was decorated or plain. Early specimens featured the little feet and gabled roof reminiscent of the Republic stone chest.⁶⁷⁵ After the middle of the first century CE, though, the feet disappeared, the low pitched gabled roof terminated in 'bolsters', and the box widened at the bottom and at the top. Decorations were carved initially on all four sides. Later they appeared only on three sides, and eventually only on the front panel. The prominent ornament was the carved heavy fruit garland slung between bucrania. Later on, the garland was supported by ram and Ammon heads or candelabra. An alternative ornamentation made use of a floral style consisting of tendrils, ivy, and branches. Around the middle of the first century CE, the repertoire of motifs expanded to include architectural features and the representation of doors, portraits of the dead, and small scenes with human figures. Fig. 9.1 shows such features not only for an ash chest in Asia Minor and

⁶⁷¹ Our survey is based on Koch-Sichtermann, *Römische Sarkophage* 43-58, who provide a detailed description of form, chronology and development of decoration; also conveniently summarized by Guntram. Koch, *Sarkophage der römischen Kaiserzeit* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1993) 64-65. See Toynbee, *Death*, 255-265, for the treatment of *cineraria* and the description of some specimens.

⁶⁷² See Koch-Sichtermann, *Römische Sarkophage*, 43.

⁶⁷³ Koch, *Sarkophage*, 64, fig. 35 and n.297 for reference.

⁶⁷⁴ Toynbee, *Death*, 256.

⁶⁷⁵ Koch-Sichtermann, *Römische Sarkophage*, 44.

also for a Judean ossuary. In the last third of the first century there appeared masks, dolphins, swans, eagles, birds, erotes and victories. These remained popular throughout the second century CE. From the time of Hadrian on, decorations portraying mythical themes were adopted for the urn as well as for the newly surfacing sarcophagi (see fig. 35, 36, 37 in KS).

Inscriptions on tabulae, appearing with increased frequency during the mid-first century, teach us that the marble urn was in vogue first with the aristocracy, and then subsequently with slaves and freedmen from important households, and in the second and third centuries with soldiers. The marble urn is found in the *columbaria*, but is also the standard receptacle in the chamber- and house-tombs of the well-to-do.⁶⁷⁶

10.2.3 *The Asia Minor ostothe kai*

I shall now draw attention to the large corpus of ostothe kai in Asia Minor.⁶⁷⁷ Apparently, this corpus surfaced already in the early Hellenistic period in the form of a rock-hewn, fixed installation.⁶⁷⁸ The material culture portrayed here is the set of movable containers

⁶⁷⁶ Koch-Sichtermann, *Römische Sarkophage*, 45.

⁶⁷⁷ For the term ostototheke, see Jadwiga Kubińska, *Les monuments funéraires dans les inscriptions grecques de l'Asie Mineure* (Warsaw: PWN-Editions Scientifiques de Cologne, 1968) 32-35. The corpus of ostothe kai are treated by Nuşin, in her unpublished (Turkish) dissertation, *Kleinasiatische Ostotheiken in Sarkophagform* (Ph.D. Dissertation. Istanbul, Turkey, 1965), a copy of which is in my possession. Guntram Koch's, *Sarkophage der römischen Kaiserzeit*, features on pp. 154-162 a compilation of the larger groups of ostothe kai from various regions that portray common characteristics. They are also referred to in, Koch-Sichtermann, *Römische Sarkophage*, 573.

⁶⁷⁸ One representative of this ostotheke is associated with the Alketas tomb in Termessos and the date of 319 BCE. For its description as well as other samples, see K. Lanckoronski, *Die Städte Pamphyliens und Pisidiens II* (1982) 64, fig.16, and p.69, fig. 21); also Robert Fleischer, "Eine späthellenistische Ostothek aus Pisidien," in *Classica et Provincialia*, ed. Gerda Schwarz and Erwin Pochmarski (Festschrift Erna Diez, Graz-Austria: Akad. Druck-und Verlagsanstalt, 1978) 41 and p.42, plate 13,7. Fleischer refers, (pp. 43-44) additionally to an individual container from Selge possibly predating the fixed receptacles.

resembling boxes or chests, and frequently, small sarcophagi, dating to the Late Hellenistic period and beyond, possibly, to the third century CE.⁶⁷⁹ It concerns larger groups of *ostothekai* originating from Dokimeion, Bithynia, Sardis, Ephesus (Ionia), Caries, Pisidia, Pamphylia, and Isauria -Lycaonia, which portray a unique type of characteristic for this region. (See photographs introducing Part Three.⁶⁸⁰) Though not described here, there are many single, as-of-yet unclassified specimens from the rest of Asia Minor. There is thus evidence of an even wider distribution and more common usage of secondary burial container. In other words, it must have been a quite noticeable phenomenon in Asia Minor.

For some regions in Asia Minor larger contingents of *ostothekai* are found, but not in others. For example, in Aphrodisia one finds numerous sarcophagi and (up to now) no evidence for *ostothekai*.⁶⁸¹ In contrast, in Eastern Pamphylia / West Cilicia, there are very many *ostothekai* extant but few sarcophagi.⁶⁸² And in Bithynia, *ostothekai* match the many sarcophagi in numbers.

Despite this inexplicable incongruity I shall briefly describe the individual groups, beginning with the material culture prior to and contemporaneous with the Judean ossuary since only those qualify as a possible source of influence. The later groups will also be briefly surveyed, since they not only demonstrate how widespread the phenomena was in Asia Minor, but they also show the production for *ostothekai* at a time just before the production of sarcophagi took over. The latest versions of secondary burial containers, ossuaries included, were simply very large containers. The following categorization is Koch's, in distinction to Asgari's.

⁶⁷⁹ Koch, *Sarkophage*, 160-161.

⁶⁸⁰ These photos compare a Jerusalem ossuary with some specimens in the museum of Antalya, Turkey.

⁶⁸¹ Koch, *Sarkophage*, 155.

⁶⁸² See Koch, *Sarkophage*, 155, and the reasons provided.

*Pisidia*⁶⁸³

Besides the above-mentioned fixed ostothekai in Termessos, a further group of specimens may be dated to the Hellenistic period. One local marble ostotheke from Sagalassos,⁶⁸⁴ for example, is dated to the late second century BCE. Characteristic of this group is the mostly high box form⁶⁸⁵ (fig.10.2) perpetuated until the second or third century CE,⁶⁸⁶ rather than the longer casket form. Some pieces have little feet. The prominent decoration is the shield with weapons, eagle, a door, and occasionally figures.

*Sardis*⁶⁸⁷

A group of ostothekai prominent in Sardis is chest-like with little cubic feet and a low gabled lid (see fig. 10.2). Between the feet on the small side of the chest, there is typically an inverse pediment (a triangle pointing downwards). Characteristic of these ostothekai is the imitation of a metal key lock on the long front side (reminiscent of a wooden household chest). The inscriptions suggest a usage starting from late Hellenistic times (first century BCE) to imperial times (approximately 50 CE⁶⁸⁸).

⁶⁸³ Koch, *Sarkophage*, 158-159.

⁶⁸⁴ Fleischer, "Ostothek," 39.

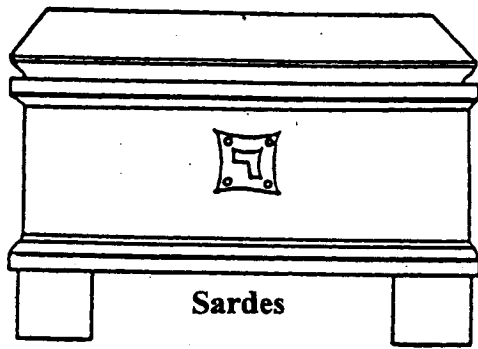
⁶⁸⁵ I found such example in the Museum in Antalya in November 1999. Fleischer, "Ostothek," 43 and fig.9-13, refers to another sample in Aglasun (Sagalassos). The sample from Sagalassos measures ca 0.77-73 m (l); 0.48-43 m (w) and 0.69 m (h).

⁶⁸⁶ Fleischer, "Ostothek," 49. Koch, *Sarkophage*, 159, mentions a second century CE garland specimen.

⁶⁸⁷ See Koch, *Sarkophage*, 156, for the description and fig 85 on p.157. For an example, see also Nuşin Asgari, "Die Halbfabrikate Kleinasiatischer Girlandensarkophage und ihre Herkunft," *AA* 3(1977) 336 and fig. 14.

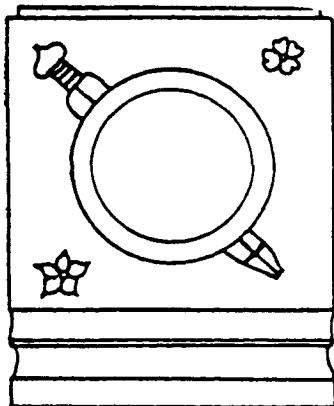
⁶⁸⁸ Asgari, "Halbfabrikate," 337; Koch, *Sarkophage*, 158.

Fig. 10.2
Ostothekai in Asia Minor



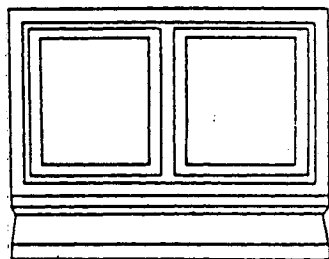
a)

Sardes



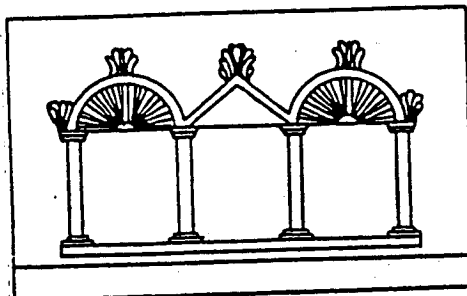
b)

Pisidia



c)

Bithynia



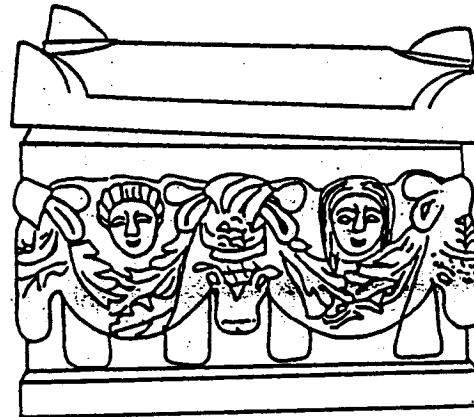
d)

Isauria



e)

Ephesus



f)

Pamphylia



g)

Dokimeion

The ostotheikai of Ephesus were studied in detail by Christine M. Thomas. In Ephesus some of the secondary burials reflect multiple usage, and two of these show evidence of Christian ownership. Almost all ossuaries apparently contained the calcified bones left over after cremation. Only four out 109 catalogued ossuaries (complete or fragmentary), however, were actually found with the remains therein. Three of them contained ash, while one contained actual bones just as in the secondary Jewish burial. [Perhaps this reflects a certain important Jewish presence in Ephesus.]

The use of ossuaries in Ephesus dates from the late Hellenistic period (100 BCE) to 200 CE;⁶⁹⁰ its heyday was 0 to 100 CE. Ephesus was a unique microcosm of the whole Empire. Especially in the Augustan era, when newly emerging Ephesus became the capital of Asia, the new Roman and Italian settlers were the pioneers who circulated innovations in burial practices, echoing whatever the practice was in Rome. Changes in decorative motifs during the middle of the ossuary period was also a manifestation of this situation. The styles and techniques used for Ephesian ossuaries turn out to be the forerunners of those used in sarcophagi. Yet throughout the 300 year period of change, the ossuaries in Ephesus maintained distinct Ephesian elements in use since the beginning of the period. Their popularity was such that they were even exported to Kyzikos, Samos, Angina, and particular versions to Rome.⁶⁹¹

⁶⁸⁹ Koch, *Sarkophage*, 158; Asgari, "Halbfabrikate," 335-338. Recently, these data were recently complemented by Christine Thomas' publication, "The Ephesians ossuaries and the rise of the sarcophagus," *AJA* 100 (1996) 393-393; further Christine M. Thomas and Cengiz İçten, Selçuk, "The Ephesian ossuaries and Roman Influence on the Production of Burial Containers," in *100 Jahre Österreichische Forschungen in Ephesus. Aktien des Symposions Wien, 1995* ([*Archäologische Forschungen*, I] Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1999, *Textband*, 549-553; *Tafelband*, Tafeln 131 and 132). A catalogue is apparently forthcoming.

⁶⁹⁰ A more precise dating is now possible and posits the plain osteothekai at least much earlier than the first century CE.

⁶⁹¹ Koch, *Sarkophage*, 158.

The style common throughout this period can be summarized by the shape: rectangular with dimensions of 23 to 39 cm (height) x 36 to 64 cm (length) x 26 to 46 cm (depth). The thickness of the walls was 3 to 6.5 cm. 62 % of the ossuaries were beautifully inscribed with the names of their owners on the claw-dressed front face. Generally there was no workmanship on the back face, implying that the back was placed against a wall. The ossuaries can all be categorized as one of two types: plain or decorated with haute relief sculptures of garlands. The plain style is the oldest, dating to the Hellenistic period (100 BCE to about 0 CE). The dates can be deduced from the presence of simple Greek names inscribed on the outside. Such ossuaries were used equally by Roman citizens and by Greek-speaking non-citizens. There was a profiled molding on the bottom as well as on the lid. Acroteria are found on the gabled lid along with a pediment sometimes decorated with a rosette. The bottom is supported by small cube feet, along with an inverse pediment between the feet. One sample, found in Tyre, has traces of red and yellow paint. There is a similarity to the *ostothekai* found in Sardis. Midway through the *ostothekai* period, around the turn of the era, there was a dramatic shift to the garland type of decoration. Although Ephesians maintained the low profile molding, the cube feet, the inverse pediments and the gabled lids of the plain Hellenistic type, suddenly garlands of autumnal leaves (finished and semi-finished) began to appear on the containers. The Augustan garland, the Latin inscriptions, and the 74% usage by Roman citizens points to direct Roman influence furnished by the influx of new settlers from Rome and Italy at a time when Ephesus became the capital of Asia. One can distinguish between the two subsets of this category of ossuary - the finished and the semi-finished. The former displays, on the front and back, two garlands supported by two rams' heads in the corners and by one bull head in the centre. On each end there was only one short garland. Occasionally one also sees a Gorgon head. Erotes are exceptionally rare. The latter (unfinished version) displays raised bosses ready for the carving of garlands and animal heads. Evidence of mass production leads me to conclude that the unfinished type were simply templates. There seems to have been a tendency for about half of the purchasers to order the unfinished type from the craftsmen. Thomas also notes that, as the *ostothekai* were beginning to be displaced by sarcophagi throughout the Empire, the motif

used on the ostotheke was used as the model for the later, main period of sarcophagi production, except that, for example, three garlands were sculpted on the longer sarcophagi. After 150 CE, names on ostothekai are mainly simple Greek, apparently because the Roman citizens and the non-citizens started to use sarcophagi.

Other larger groups of ostothekai are 'latecomers' showing up around the mid-second century CE. They were in use for some decades, most to the beginning of the third century. Some groups belong to the garland type and carry carved images of the heavy garland slung between bulls' or rams' heads or Cupids' shoulders. Busts of males and females are placed at times above the garland's arches.

A substantial number of garland types, typically also featuring a door on a side panel, derive from *East Pamphylia*⁶⁹²/*West Cilicia* (e.g. Side); others come from *Caries*⁶⁹³ and *Dokimeion*⁶⁹⁴ (fig. 10.2), the large production centre of sarcophagi. In *Bithynia*,⁶⁹⁵ a second group, the traditional regional chest type, is extant (fig. 10.2).

A distinct type of ostothekai comes from *Isauria-Lycaonia*⁶⁹⁶ (fig. 10.2). It features the architectural design of the grave stele, occasionally decorated with figures. A lid, for example, may feature a resting lion.

Asgari's categorization of 349 ostothekai of Asia Minor, found in Turkish and European museums, into eleven groups is based on distinct forms and artistry. Each group could be subdivided. She identified the undecorated box type from Lydia, the footless box type from Phrygia displaying pillared corners and a lock-plate motif on the roof, the Lydian

⁶⁹² Koch, *Sarkophage*, 159.

⁶⁹³ Koch, *Sarkophage*, 158. The artifacts are dated late, i.e. to the second century CE. Asgari, "Halbfabrikate," 345 n.38.

⁶⁹⁴ Dokimeion was the main production centre also for sarcophagi. The ostothekai date to 140-170 CE, see Koch, *Sarkophage*, 155.

⁶⁹⁵ Koch, *Sarkophage*, 155, dates the samples to the second half of the second century CE.

⁶⁹⁶ Koch, *Sarkophage*, 160-161. The artifacts may be as late as the third century CE.

type with rams' heads at the corners and bukrania supporting garlands,⁶⁹⁷ the Phrygian-Pamphylian type with decorated acroteria and with *nikai* at the corners supporting oak garlands and erotes and tiled roof-shaped covers, the Bithynian type with three decorated sides only but with *nikai* at the corners (some with frames and pillars), the Pamphylian-Cilician type with a door at the end and with unique acanthus-leaf garlands supported by bukrania and with human heads above the garlands, the Inner Anatolian broad urn type of the Roman imperial era with ridge-roofed covers and with very coarse garlands supported by rams' heads, the Prokonnesian type of undecorated chests with high ridge-roofed covers and big corner acroteria, similar to the regional sarcophagi, and three other groups of miscellaneous urns, chests and cinerary chest-altar combinations. Based on her categorization and the interrelation between chests and sarcophagi, Asgari was able to identify centres of production: Ephesus (Lydia), Prokonessos (Bosporus), Dokimeion (Phrygia), Synnada (Phrygia) and possibly Nicea (Bithynia).

One comes away with a strong impression of a very rich culture of chest-shaped cinerary urns spread out over all of Asia Minor, and stretching from the late-Hellenistic period (prior to the Judean ossuary) all the way to the third century CE.

10.3 *Similarity of the material culture*

Judean ossuaries and their foreign cinerary counterparts are similar in several respects: a) the material out of which they were made - namely stone; b) their form - namely rectangular chest; c) their appearance - namely decoration and painting; and d) their inscriptions - namely commemorations and/or protective curses. Taken individually, these similarities may not convince the reader that the Judean ossuary was influenced by the foreign cinerary urn. However, it would be coincidental in the extreme for all four aspects to be so nearly identical without our having to wonder about influence.

⁶⁹⁷ This is the Ephesian type described by Thomas and İçten, and is the one which showed the increasing sophistication and fanciness of the garlands as time progressed.

Stone

The foreign *ostothekai* and *cineraria* were constructed out of limestone or marble, as were the Judean ossuaries. Limestone is common to all of these regions. The ready availability allowed for the production of a great variety of objects, including funerary receptacles. Jerusalem abounded in limestone quarries, which at the time were being extensively mined for the massive renovations of the Temple under Herod. It seems only sensible that the same material would be used in the production of ossuaries. Archaeology has also confirmed the use of limestone in the manufacture of elegant stone tables and household vessels.⁶⁹⁸ Thus we have evidence of a skilled workforce that was accomplished in quarrying the stone as well as in producing fine *objets d'art*. Consequently, it may be reasoned that there would be no need for Judea to depend on its neighbours for inspiration in the utilization of limestone in the creation of the burial chests. Why then, was stone used only during a narrow time period in Judea?

Stone was not the only material available or suitable to use for funerary receptacles. Clay as well as wood was a sensible option that had indeed been utilized at other times for the same purpose. During the second and third centuries CE, Jews manufactured a substantial number of clay ossuaries, particularly in the Galilee, albeit without much energy expenditure for decorating the often simple and crudely worked specimens. We also recall the unique Chalcolithic dome-shaped bone boxes where clay had been molded into material culture of distinction.

Wood too has been universally used for funerary containers. Remarkable examples of Hellenistic wood coffins have been discovered in the Dead Sea region with inlaid work and carved designs. There is reasonable evidence that wooden ossuaries were also made, certainly in the decades following 70 CE. Rabbinic literature refers to ossuaries made of "arazin" (i.e. cedar). Some scholars even view the wooden ossuaries as a prototype of the stone version from the Herodian period. If so, then why have none of those survived? The

⁶⁹⁸ See Magen, Yitzhak. "Jerusalem as the Centre for Stone-Ware Production in Herodian Times." *Qadmoniot* 17 (1984) 124-127.

climate of Jericho, where stone ossuaries have been found, would be conducive to the preservation of the supposedly earlier wooden ossuaries. Yet, none have been found. Furthermore, it would beg the question of why a sudden change to stone occurred.

The reason which is often cited for the employment of, or preference for stone is its insusceptibility to impurity, an issue which was of utmost concern in the Late Second Temple period. However, this reason is not convincing, since at no time were there any objections to wood or clay as burial containers in spite of the fact that both materials do not protect one from impurity. Consequently, the use of stone as a burial material was sudden and for no apparent reason.

Wooden coffins from the Hellenistic world, clay coffins and lead sarcophagi in the later Roman empire coincide with Palestinian specimens of this respective material, and one does find corresponding clay and lead ossuaries, though wood in Jerusalem would not have been preserved. Does this not suggest knowledge of and receptivity to fashions abroad?

It seems that the *realia* portray stone burial material as a fashion of the time. Its use was not dictated by purity concerns nor by its availability and suitability at the time, but rather as a consequence of emulating the fashion of a prominent production of small stone funerary chests abroad. Apparently, as fashions in choices of material changed, I find these choices coinciding with those in Palestine.

Chest-shape

Box-, casket-, chest-shaped, or even round funerary containers were all hollowed from a single block of stone. For the protection of the contents, an individual, carved lid was also provided. Occasionally, little feet were additional features of some groups of receptacles.⁶⁹⁹ The ossuary also portrays this kind of workmanship. Aside from the obvious diverse artistry involved, one may ask if these basic characteristics of a stone chest-type container suffice to

⁶⁹⁹ This characteristics may appear throughout the production time of the container, or in some places, the earlier pieces featured feet, the later none. Such taxonomy has not been considered for the ossuary.

suggest dependency? Or did the Judean ossuary develop this aspect independently? This question has already been the subject of debate in the literature.

As mentioned above, Foerster sees in the Rhodian *ostothekai* the source of influence for the Jerusalem ossuaries. Objecting to foreign influence on Jewish ossilegium and on the Jewish ossuary in particular, Rahmani argued that any physical similarity has a simple explanation inasmuch as all funerary containers, including the ossuary, had the same origin, namely the common household chest.⁷⁰⁰ Rahmani's position was derived from earlier scholarship that had discussed similar craftsmanship in woodwork and stone. For example, Clermont-Ganneau viewed the ossuary simply as a local wooden coffer executed in stone, including the feet and rosette motif. Carl Watzinger added that in antiquity, both the household chest and the coffin were modeled on small caskets that stored the woman's utensils in the house.⁷⁰¹

Indeed, the imitation of the metal lock and keyhole observed on the wooden chests in the corpus of Sardis specimens; or the evidence of inner compartments in one particular ossuary is indeed indicative of such an origin. One can thus agree on a prototype of the funerary chests or casket that does explain why there are these similarities. One can even agree that each group of funerary containers, the ossuary no exception, had independently

⁷⁰⁰ RCat, Appendix B: Were Jewish Ossilegium and Ossuaries influenced from Abroad?, 58; there, Rahmani insists that the Jewish ossuary had been independently developed material culture, patterned on common wooden household chests and copied from contemporaneous tombs which reflect the taste of Hellenistic culture.

⁷⁰¹ See Carl Watzinger, *Griechische Holzarkophage aus der Zeit Alexander des Grossen* (*Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichung der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft* 6; Leipzig: J.H. Hinrichs, 1905) 63: "Truhe und Sarg sind im Altertum in identischer Form gebildet worden. Beide sind nur eine Vergrößerung der Kasten die zur Aufnahme des Toilettengerates und der Arbeitsgegenstände der Frau dienten." Already Clermont-Ganneau had noticed similarities of the ossuaries with wooden coffers the latter featuring feet and even rosettes and wrote, *RA* (June 1873) 401: "... les ossuaires étaient primitivement de véritables coffrets en bois, dont les monuments que nous connaissons ne sont pour ainsi dire que l'exacte traduction en pierre." He also associated the Hebrew word *arzin*, derived from cedar, with a wooden chest; see the chapter dealing with "terminology."

developed its style based on local household chests. One could thus argue against foreign influence in terms of the diffusion of art or workmanship from one group of containers to another regional group (such as Roman influence of garlands on Ephesian urns). However, influence as we understand it, was the idea of making a burial container for secondary burial as represented by *ostothekai*. This is a different concept than the diffusion of art on the same kind of existing material culture. The importation of the idea itself for a funerary container was a pre-requisite for subsequent imitation of household chests:

The case of the Judean ossuary was different than the Rhodian ash chest, where the similarity to household chests was transmitted from existing sarcophagi. This did not happen in Jerusalem. Here, the ossuary shape might have been directly copied from the household chest. If so, then why did the Jerusalemites get the idea only at this point in time and not earlier? Alternatively, one might assume that the novel idea of producing a stone chest for secondary burial along with the shape, was imitated lock, stock and barrel from some versions of foreign containers at the discretion of the mason (who might have been a foreigner himself) or else at the behest of the customer himself. In the last analysis, one therefore does not need to agree with Rahmani's objection to foreign influence.

Regardless of the mechanism we may ask why then, exactly during the Herodian period, at the time when there was an ongoing production of limestone *ostothekai* in other Near Eastern provinces, would Jerusalemites copy the idea of using a wooden household chest as a model for the reburial of collected human remains? Evidently, there was a demand of customers that coincided with the demand of Pagan customers. This brings us back to the original argument that a simultaneous development is less likely when there is contact with a society where this phenomenon already exists.

Herod's building activities created a large number of quarry workers and craftsmen, who were trained locals or who had come from abroad. It is tempting to say that these circumstances generated the advent of the ossuary phenomenon. It involved the same kind of skills, that is, to cut a building block from limestone and then to simply hollow it out. Moreover, a flourishing chalk vessel industry evolved precisely at that time. Can one accept

this as the cause of the ossuary phenomenon? I believe the answer to be no. One already sees exquisite craftsmanship in stone displayed in the earlier monumental Hellenistic tombs. Thus, opportunities and the know-how to create small and large stone receptacles had already existed long before. But it did not happen.

Obviously, there had been no demand on the part of Judean customers or, alternatively, no “selling” of the idea to a potential customer by masons that would have led to making small burial containers. This fashion coincides with the industry of *ostothekai* and their templates in other provinces in the Empire. There the industry had taken off on a larger scale that was noticeable and that invited imitation in other provinces. It was only then that an enterprise of stone containers began in Judea as well. Was this a coincidence?

There is no doubt that the availability of many masons and artists served as a catalyst for manufacturing stone containers. In particular one can accept the notion that the phenomenon flourished due to the initiative of the craftsmen on the lookout for an additional source of income during temporary layoffs. However, this would only satisfy a base of customers who were willing to take advantage of the good masons in town. Why did masons not produce small burial containers earlier? The original question must still be answered: on which grounds would a customer tell the craftsman to cut out a chest-shaped burial container and finish it in a certain fashion, if not for the knowledge of similar things elsewhere? Or why would a mason engage in ‘selling’ a piece of workmanship if he did not already know about it. Is it not possible that it was prevalent in the mason’s place of origin? An inventive Judean mason is certainly possible, but it is less probable than a mason influenced by a foreign convention.

Inscriptions

Ramsay MacMullen introduced his presentation on epigraphic habits in the Roman empire⁷⁰² with the following phrase: “Knowing how to communicate in writing is one thing; doing so

⁷⁰² Ramsay MacMullen, “The Epigraphic Habit in the Roman Empire,” *AJPh* 103 (1983) 233.

is another.” Writing became noticeable in the Augustan age, peaked approximately between 175 and 225 CE⁷⁰³ and then dwindled away. One may find a similar rise and fall of the inscription habit in Jewish society intriguing for many reasons.⁷⁰⁴ The decision whether or not to inscribe and what to inscribe in a funerary context may further strengthen my argument for a connection of ossuaries to burial containers in the wider Greco-Roman world. Few epitaphs are known from First Temple times. With the advent of the ossuary in the early Roman period, Jerusalem’s society began to ‘write in stone’ as a form of literacy.⁷⁰⁵ There is a considerable number of epitaphs spread out over about 100 years of production in Jerusalem until the destruction of production centres around 70 CE.

The phenomenon of inscribed ossuaries seems to parallel the writing habit beginning in the rest of the Roman empire as seen on tombstones and other funerary monuments. It spreads in the late second - early third century CE in Galilean society and in the necropolis of Bet She’arim and in more varied and expanded inscriptions on tomb walls and sarcophagi. Since epigraphy started only slowly with the Augustan age, including Judea, then one can suggest that the non-inscribed pieces do not necessarily mean that the deceased was not considered to be commemorated by the survivors. Like in the rest of the Empire, the non-inscribed funerary monument marks a burial, and an inscription turns this marker into a memorial of the deceased that perpetuates his memory in history.

Ancient Jewish epitaphs have been subjected to extensive research. It has been asserted that the forms, formulae, and genres (including those on ossuaries) differed little

⁷⁰³ MacMullen, “Epigraphic Habit,” 238, draws attention to the ‘Mrozek ‘curve and the chronological clustering of Latin inscriptions.

⁷⁰⁴ With realization of a slowly developing habit conjectured here under Augustus, I may have an explanation why in prominent tombs no ossuary was inscribed. It was not that the buried were not worth to be commemorated by a inscription but the time of burial may have been at the beginning of the epigraphic habit, while in contrast, at a later point, simple people would be identified also.

⁷⁰⁵ From the substantial body of 895/7 (p.11) artifacts published in the catalogue of the IAA about 25 % are inscribed. This calculated proportion is certainly less if one takes in account that many plain pieces were not published and further, that many plain specimens had been discarded in the 19th century as less important.

from counterparts in the Greco-Roman world.⁷⁰⁶ I shall argue that this common repertoire of inscriptions demonstrates a knowledge of foreign funerary customs which gave occasion to evaluate possible options for ways to bury the dead, one of which (namely the inscribed ossuary) was eventually adopted for its attraction. Some of the ossuary inscriptions point to parallel themes that were inscribed on tomb markers in the Greco-Roman world and in Judea. They have no decorative value, but they were placed there to give messages to the bystander.

The simplest and most frequent identifying epitaph on the ossuary is of the type 'here lies', followed by the name of the deceased in the nominative. Greek parallels as early as the seventh century BCE, and Latin parallels as early as the third century BCE⁷⁰⁷ are known. This simple formula sufficed to identify the deceased in a "locative statement"⁷⁰⁸ to the effect that a particular person by that name had been buried at that location. 'This is the tomb of' + the name in the genitive again identifies the burial place of a particular person. A third type⁷⁰⁹ of identifying inscription is one which mentions the name of the deceased in the dative followed by the name of a dedicator, usually a close relative.⁷¹⁰

Inscriptions on ossuaries consist most often of the name of the person lying therein. Occasionally biographical attributes (i.e. personal status) are also added. Of special interest

⁷⁰⁶ Van der Horst, *Ancient Jewish Epitaphs*, 40. Van der Horst asserted that the various forms in Jewish funerary epigraphy "are not original creations but derive from pagan examples." Also, Baruch Lifshitz, "Notes d'épigraphie palestinienne," *RB* 73 (1966) 248-257, refers to several pagan parallels.

⁷⁰⁷ See Richmond A Lattimore, *Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs* ([Illinois Studies in Language and Literature, 28/1-2] Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1942) 14-15 and nn.4,5, for references.

⁷⁰⁸ Park, *Conceptions of afterlife*, 34.

⁷⁰⁹ If this was done by parents, it is the 'descending type'; if by children, the ascending type, see Ian Morris, *Death-ritual and social structure in classical antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 162, and reference therein..

⁷¹⁰ See Van der Horst, *Ancient Jewish Epigraphs*, 44-45, for these dedication and memory formulae.

are those inscriptions that express ideas about or attitudes to natural death (found on Pagan monuments) as well as themes designed to safeguard the tomb⁷¹¹.

In the Greek version a warning pertaining to the exclusiveness⁷¹² of the place of burial is expressed as "Do not open this resting-place".⁷¹³ The same message is also inscribed on an ossuary in Hebrew as: "do not open."⁷¹⁴ Warnings against the violation of the place of burial are meant to deter violation of the burial place whether by vandalism, theft, or unauthorized occupancy. Another such warning is inscribed in Greek: "whoever moves it, breaks his vow." ⁷¹⁵

Stronger weapons in this defense mechanism are expressed by pronouncing certain fines and maledictions.⁷¹⁶ The latter is seen in Rhodes as early as the seventh century BCE, but curse-formulae are a genre basically limited to the Roman period in Asia Minor, e.g. Phrygia, Lycia and Caria.⁷¹⁷ They are of special interest as they occur very often in Jewish communities just as in those of their Pagan neighbours, with the proviso that Pagan ideology was replaced with passages from Deuteronomy. In Jerusalem this genre appears a few times on ossuaries as well.

Lattimore correctly points out that the mental states which led to the wish to safeguard burial places can be of various sorts.⁷¹⁸ Curses against offenders that violate the unity of the tomb accordingly threaten the strangers with the untimely death of his children,

⁷¹¹ See Lattimore, *Themes*, 108; Van der Horst, *Ancient Jewish Epigraphs*, 54-60; Park, *Conceptions of afterlife*, 37-39.

⁷¹² Lattimore, *Themes*, 108.

⁷¹³ See Lattimore, *Themes*, 106 no. 137 and reference.

⁷¹⁴ RCat, #70.

⁷¹⁵ RCat, #142.

⁷¹⁶ Lattimore, *Themes*, 109. To Lattimore this seems to suggest a special attitude to death.

⁷¹⁷ Lattimore, *Themes*, 108-9.

⁷¹⁸ Lattimore, *Themes*, 106.

a desolate house, or a widowed wife, etc. One also encounters the threat of personal calamities such as blindness: ("I am the urn of Tataea: whoever steals me shall go blind."⁷¹⁹ Inmyview this is paralleled in the ossuary inscription which was translated by the editor as "whoever moves these [bones] away, may blindness strike him."⁷²⁰

Hardly echoing a wish for resurrection, two Jerusalem inscriptions give expression to very sobering musings, one of which states: "No one can go up [from the grave],⁷²¹ and the other beseeches the visitor to enjoy himself in this life by eating and drinking.⁷²² These reflections are paralleled in the Greek world of inscriptions.

Another interesting example is a theme publicizing a personal failure not to have been able to bring off-spring into the world. The inscription, "Ossuary of Shalom daughter of Sha'ul who failed to give birth,⁷²³ is indeed corroborated by anthropological tests that identified the remains as that of a young woman with her unborn child. It would certainly be rather embarrassing for a modern woman to publicize any natural cause of death especially dying at childbirth.⁷²⁴

Decorations

Some common ornaments and motifs do appear in Judean and Pagan societies, but the correspondence is rarer than in the case of inscriptions. *Tabula ansata* appearing on the

⁷¹⁹ For examples, see Lattimore, *Themes*, 112-113.

⁷²⁰ RCat, #559.

⁷²¹ Cross, "A Note," 245-246. See also the interpretation given by Nave, "An Aramaic Consolatory Burial Inscription," 55-59.

⁷²² Lifshitz, "Notes d'épigraphie palestinienne," 248-257, refers to several pagan parallels.

⁷²³ The above mentioned inscription from Giv'at ha-Mivtar, 43," ends: "*Shalom bat*." This has been read as "Peace, daughter!" However, inmyview it is the repetition of her name, Shalom, rather than the word shalom, "peace."

⁷²⁴ Lattimore *Themes*, 142-143.

ossuary is a particular example, to which one ascribes a Roman origin. A nice example that appears very seldom on ossuaries but which is characteristic of the region of Pamphylia is the motif of the door on the side panel.

Diffusion of artistic elements and style can be attributed to influence in a limited sense only. Scholars enter the discussion by asking if one particular element is indigenous, in our case “Oriental”, or whether it comes from the West, i.e. Rome or Greece in distinction from the East, meaning Nabatea or Mesopotamia. However, unless the motifs are unique, it is extremely difficult to prove influence by comparing artistic features which ultimately stem from the human imagination and are universal in nature. In decorations one finds similar themes⁷²⁵ (for example the motif of the door). And it might be rightfully argued that similarities happened by chance and because of universal interests in different societies. However, I argue that similar interests executed in the *same kind of container* points to the knowledge of the existence of and imitation of such foreign containers.

Paint combinations are perhaps better indicators of foreign influence. Certain features in combination appear on the ossuaries exactly as they do abroad. Like the ostotheke, ossuaries were painted yellow, red and occasionally orange, presumably, for apopothropic purposes. Whether or not this combination has symbolic value or not is irrelevant, the fact that it was applied is of significance. Furthermore, I find that the location of paint on the ossuaries parallels that on ash containers. One had the choice of painting all sides, three sides, or only the front. However, in fact, the back was never painted. Why? Apparently, foreign containers were placed into loculi (arcosolia) which obviated the need to decorate the back facing the tomb wall. Ossuaries too were sometimes placed in loculi, and in that case the back of the ossuary needed no decoration.

⁷²⁵ Rahmani suggested copying from tombs. This was in fact also done in the Hellenistic world (see Diadochen tomb in Termessos). The individual receptacle was modeled often after the tomb they were placed within, sometimes exactly copying the facades. Thus the small receptacle as the personal tomb of an individual copied the collective family tomb.

Figueras has dealt in detail with ornamentation on ossuaries. The trademark decoration of the ossuary was the rosetta. Though an "Allerweltsmotif," its particular setting, mostly in pairs with all kinds of variations in style, characterizes the typical Herodian ossuary. It is my contention that they constituted the only aspect of the Judean material culture which was distinct from other foreign containers.

But not all ossuaries exclusively show this same motif. There was no mass production, and although one can make out particular workshops with definitely the same kind of ossuary, they indicate in my view the hand of many different masons as well as of customers of foreign origin who commissioned a motif familiar to them from the ash chest. This may be important. Some fringe groups of containers have the specific motifs of foreign cinerary chests. One ossuary, for example, features a door and other architectural designs on the side panel which are nearly identical to those on foreign receptacles, reminiscent of the masonry on foreign national buildings and tombs. Also, other ossuaries show wreaths and garlands - typical foreign motifs. It was known, that these kinds of motifs -- ivy, etc. supported by animal heads -- were examples of funerary art used on alien receptacles. And this must have been copied, since this was not otherwise a national architectural feature in Judea.

Some ossuaries are indeed executed exactly like the foreign examples, and postulating a direct link is fair when comparing exceptional motifs of decoration. Yet, workmanship and artistry are not always good indicators of foreign influence, as there are great varieties in forms and styles. On the other hand, the occasional lack of decoration on the back panel, or the frequent application of yellow and red on the artifacts strongly supports my hypothesis. Most significant is the occurrence of inscriptions on ossuaries. While Judea might simply have been following the epigraphic habit in the empire in general, it is the combination of chest plus inscriptions which is the noteworthy parallel. In particular the subject matter is too similar to be a coincidence: curses for grave violation, themes on one's fate, and descriptions of personal attributes, for example, X daughter of Y "who failed to give birth," are known themes in Greco-Roman epigraphy.

10.4 *Similarity of the manufacturing process*

The ash chests of Asia Minor and Judea frequently show the same mode of execution. Admittedly, Jerusalem did not develop this industry to the same extent as did Asia Minor. The execution, in spite of a limited range of motifs, almost suggests many Judean masons and artisans involved rather than a central factory, although one does have evidence that in some cases particular versions of an ossuary had indeed been reproduced several times.⁷²⁶ For the most part distinguishable, individual pieces make up the Judean corpus. This did not stop Judeans, though, from exporting two or three Herodian ossuaries from the Jewish metropolis to the important diaspora. I would therefore like to suggest that one sees the same industry in Jerusalem, though on a smaller scale, as that found in other regions of the empire, namely to merely provide the plain container and to indicate the rough form of the design, mainly the rosettes. In this way the dead in Judea were sometimes buried even before the artifact was ever finished.

10.5 *Summary*

As in Judea, small, portable lidded limestone chests appeared in the Hellenistic and Roman world in a funerary context. There are examples from Rhodes, Asia Minor and Rome herself. Since antiquity, funerary caskets were modeled on the common wooden household chest. Although the similarity in form between the Jewish ossuary and the pagan cinerary casket need not necessarily mean dependency of one on the other, nevertheless there are certain features that are not traceable at all to wooden household chests, but rather which do relate to pagan receptacles. It is true that workmanship and artistry are necessary but not sufficient indicators of influence. Furthermore, the Herodian receptacle did develop its own style, specifically the recurring motif of rosettas which are clearly distinguishable from non-Judean artifacts. Yet, some ossuaries are executed exactly like the foreign examples, with exceptional motifs of decoration. This, plus the occasional lack of decoration on the back

⁷²⁶ See Hachlili, "A Jericho Ossuary," 238-247.

panel, or the frequent application of yellow and red on the artifacts as well as the occurrence of Greco-Roman types of inscriptions on ossuaries - all point to influence from without.

Chapter 11

The Parallel: Evidence of Terminology

People interact with material items in their daily lives by designing, using and sharing them, thinking, talking, and writing about them. During such relationships, the object needs a name that makes sense and refers unambiguously to the object. Fortunately the names for the ossuary are trans-mitted on the chests themselves as well as in literary sources. Therefore, even if a particular term was not employed at all times during ossuary usage, the people's own testimony provides evidence for how they referred to the bone chest and for how the audience accepted this nomenclature.

Similar or identical terminology is often a valuable clue to substantiate foreign influence. Therefore, in this section I shall explore possible parallel terminology of the ash receptacles and the ossuary. Finally I shall consider how far parallel terms in a Greek-speaking society can be taken to support the argument that the Judean ossuary originated from abroad.

11.1 σορός

The first term of interest is the Greek term σορός inscribed on a Jewish ossuary from Jericho. In a Jewish context, therefore, it must be identified with a secondary burial container for bare bones. The standard Greek lexicon defines σορός in general as “a vessel for holding human remains.”⁷²⁷ This could refer to a receptacle both for a corpse or for collected remains (calcined bones). The Greek term apparently had a dual meaning as a coffin/sarcophagus⁷²⁸

⁷²⁷ For this designation, see Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 1621, who further list cinerary urn, coffin, coffin of stone. See also Luke 7:14, where σορός is translated as bier.

⁷²⁸ The Septuagint equates this term with the Hebrew word *aron* in Genesis 50:26 (in the sense of a coffin). Also, in Asia Minor the term σορός designates a sarcophagus, as is evident from inscriptions on funerary monuments. See Kubińska, *Monuments funéraires*, 32-35. Kubińska, states that this term is

or as a cinerary urn, depending on the context. Thus, for the Judean population as well as for the Greek speaking societies abroad, σορός was a conventional term that was understood in the same way, and significantly, when it concerned its function in secondary obsequies as a housing for collected remains.

Yet another similarity seems to me to be indicated by in the curious habit of identifying the artifact by name and by inscribing the term directly on the Jewish burial container, a habit which is also prominently displayed in inscriptions on receptacles in Asia Minor.⁷²⁹ (This habit provides unambiguous evidence for how people talked about the material culture and its meaning). To employ the same term and to inscribe it upon a funerary monument demonstrates a similarity that may well have been derived by knowledge and adoption of foreign customs.

11.2 θήκη and ὀστοθήκη

The term, ὀστοθήκη (*ostotheke*),⁷³⁰ is a compound word constructed from ὀστο: bones and θήκη:⁷³¹ case, chest; thus it means literally bone- chest. This clearly parallels the term σοματο-θήκη (*somato-theke*), that is, a case for the corpse (*soma*: body). Frequently one finds also the shortened term θήκη (*theke*) alone, and both versions refer to a sarcophagus.⁷³²

widespread in all of Asia Minor, but is particularly frequent in Hierapolis (Phrygia) and Aphrodisias (Caria), followed by Smyrna, Ephesus, and Magnesia (Ionia).

⁷²⁹ See Kubińska's study, *Monuments funéraires*.

⁷³⁰ Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 1263, list under ὀστοθήκη receptacles for bones, even sarcophagus. The diminutive form, ὀστοθήκιον, or in Ephesus, ὀστοθηκάριον, is also known from Hellenistic Greek sources dating to the third and second century BCE.

⁷³¹ Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 797.

⁷³² For the term σοματοθήκη and its distribution, see Kubińska, *Monuments funéraires*, 35-38. The term is particularly frequent at Termessos, but occurs also in Cilicia, Lycia, and Pamphylia; for the term θήκη, see Kubińska, *Monuments funéraires*, 38-40. It is found mainly at Termessos and Cilicia, and occasionally, elsewhere in Asia Minor.

In Asia Minor the inscriptions testify to ὀστοθήκη⁷³³ meaning a cinerary urn. To date, this term has not been unambiguously identified on any Herodian ossuary. Yet interestingly, the Hebrew graffiti, מַחֲפֵי (*machpe*) discovered on an ossuary lid, has been interpreted and has been translated as θήκη (*theke*), based in part on the prevalence of that Greek word in Jerusalem inscriptions.⁷³⁴ The term *theke*, i.e. case, would then be the shortened form of *osto-theke* which would have been translated into a Semitic language. If so, as speculated by some scholars,⁷³⁵ there would be yet another parallel term evidenced on funerary monuments in Asia Minor. Now, Kubińska lists the parallel shortened term θήκη only for sarcophagi, not for cinerary urns. However, I like to conjecture that Judeans used this short term and inscribed it, as it was the habit, on a Jewish *ostotheke*.

Finally, I would like to add one more term, namely τόπος (*topos*),⁷³⁶ which actually designates the terrain around a funerary monument.⁷³⁷ Just like the term is part of inscriptions placed upon funerary monuments in Asia Minor, so too does it appear on a Judean ossuary.⁷³⁸ The Greek inscription reads: Mathias and Simon, brothers; sons of Ya'ir. κυρε τυς τουπου,⁷³⁹ the latter part of which is translated: the masters of the tomb. It matches the accompanying Hebrew inscription, מרי קבר. Clearly, τόπος is the equivalent to קבר. While Rahmani identifies קבר as the ossuary itself (essentially the tomb of the brothers), I interpret the term in its sense of τόπος, namely the place belonging to the

⁷³³ Kubińska, *Monuments funéraires*, 64-66. The term is common especially in Bithynia, Galatia, Ionia, and Lydia.

⁷³⁴ Renan, "Nouvelles et mélanges," 539-540.

⁷³⁵ Renan, "Nouvelles et mélanges," 539-540; Schütz, "Ossuarien," 288.

⁷³⁶ Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 1761.

⁷³⁷ See Kubińska, *Monuments funéraires*, 129.

⁷³⁸ RCat, #560.

⁷³⁹ Rahmani claims τουπου as a mis-spelling of τόπου.

ossuary, that is the tomb premises over which the brothers lord beyond death. In other words, the terminology is the same in Judea and Asia Minor.

In summary, usage of the term σορός and possibly (ὅστο)θήκη, in conjunction with the Judean *ossuary*, to the extent of inscribing these words or their variants on the ossuary itself, at least shows that Judeans knew of a parallel Greek terminology for a parallel phenomenon, and helps support my argument for the foreign origin of the ossuary.

Chapter 12

The Parallel Phenomenon of Secondary Burial Container

12.1 *The Parallel: Appearance and Disappearance*

Cremation was occasionally the mode of burial in the ancient Greek and Roman worlds. Between 100 BCE and about 250 CE, European and Eastern populations changed their methods of disposal of the dead.⁷⁴⁰ The patterns have been studied by a large number of authors over many years. In brief, it appears that during this time period there were two seas of change. The first was a wave of cremation originating from the North or from the continent; the second was a wave of inhumation seemingly originating from Rome. Each wave supplanted its predecessor in a process spread out over a broad range of time lasting about 150 years or more. The spread leads inevitably to confusion and sometimes bewildering contradictions. It does not help that, for the most part, researchers have not

⁷⁴⁰ Speculation: In comparing cremation and inhumation, the very different treatment of the corpses has been previously pointed out in scholarship. The former was labeled “harsh” while the latter was labeled “gentler”. This was then taken as the reason for the shift from cremation to inhumation. It seems to me that this is a label given by outsiders, because even for insiders, i.e. proponents of the so-called ‘gentle’ method, in rabbinic circles, decay meant suffering and was described as painful to the dead “like a needle to the flesh.” Inhumation, therefore, signified no gentler fate to the dead bodies. Adherence to one method or the other is grounded in different attitudes to decay, an approach that may be one of principle in a given society and its culture, or else one of adaptation to a different or changing world view in subcultures of a given society. This would explain the coexistence of cremation and inhumation or shifting patterns in societies. Indeed, the collected remains have various meanings attached and represent different notions of a post-mortem fate of the deceased. For one group of survivors, they present the residue of an imperfect human condition necessitating liberation via purifying flames, for the other group, they symbolize purity and a sinless state achieved by means of decay. Note Thomas, “Funeral Rites,” 42. Therefore, the respective receptacle may relate the message that the deceased was finally immortal and possibly divine, or, alternatively, that the deceased had been granted atonement with the ensuing prospect of a blissful afterlife. Nevertheless, for my argument of a parallel phenomenon, the function of the receptacles as a funerary object is identical: to simply house and protect the collected ‘hyper-significant remains.’ (For this notion, see Thomas, “Funeral Rites,” 43.)

published comparative statistics. It was tempting for them to assign the changes to a particular personality at a particular time and place or to a particular fascination with, say an Eastern religion. Morris has pointed out that such a procedure is too simplistic and can lead to false conclusions, as for example in the case of the philo-Hellenist pro-inhumation Emperor Hadrian who was succeeded by other emperors who nevertheless still preferred cremation. It is, in any case more revealing for the present purposes to see the trends of whole societies over long periods of time if I am to explain the changes which occurred in Judean society.

In order to draw general conclusions I focus my attention on three regions of the classical world: (a) Rome itself (as represented by the cemetery uncovered in Ostia), (b) Ephesus (as a regional representative of the Eastern Empire), and (c) Judea.

Figure 12.1 shows the distribution in time of secondary burial compared to primary burial as discovered in the cemetery of Ostia.

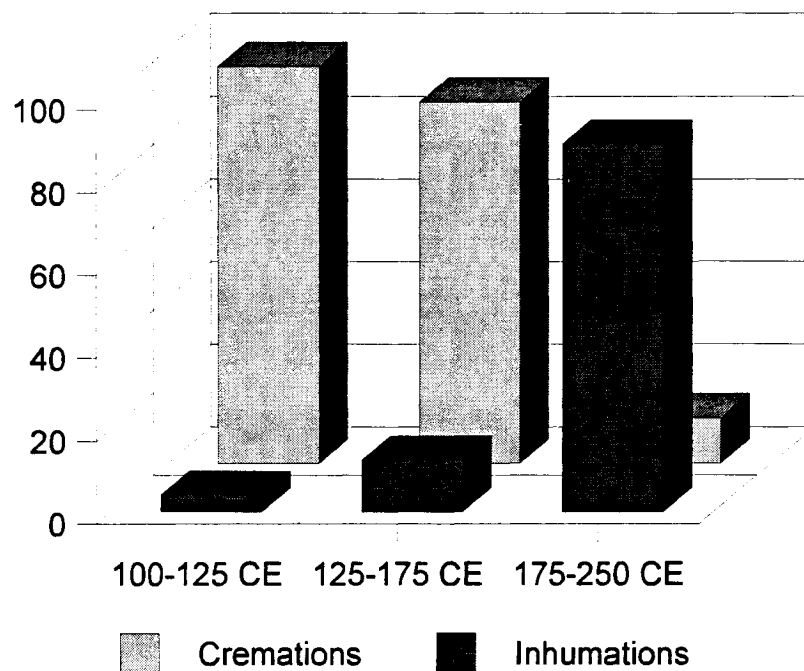


Fig. 12.1. Percentages of cremations and inhumations found in the cemetery of Ostia, Italy, during various periods of time. Note that both burial modes were in equal abundance around 200 CE. This figure is adapted from Morris, *Death-Ritual*, 57.

One sees that starting from 100 CE Roman inhumation steadily increased in popularity at the expense of secondary burial (in this case, cremation), such that by 200 CE they were both equally popular.

In Ephesus, almost all of the discovered ossuaries contained the calcified bones left over after cremation. Only four out of 109 catalogued ossuaries, however, were actually found with the remains therein. Three of them contained ash, while one contained actual bones just as in the secondary Jewish burial. Thomas' and İçten's exhaustive study reveals that secondary burial of ashes into rectangular chests dates from the late Hellenistic period (100 BCE) to 200 CE reaching its heyday around 0 CE. It was essentially supplanted by sarcophagi already by about 100 CE.

Ephesus, it should be noted, had been a unique microcosm of the whole Empire. Especially in the Augustan era when newly emerging Ephesus became the capital of Asia, Roman and Italian pioneers were settling the land, circulating innovations in burial practices, and echoing whatever the practice was in Rome. Changes in decorative motifs during the middle of the ossuary period were also a manifestation of this situation. Yet throughout the 300 year period of change, the ossuaries in Ephesus maintained distinct Ephesian elements in use since the beginning of the period.

As mentioned in the previous section, Ephesian ossuaries can all be categorized as one of two types: plain or decorated with haute relief sculptures of garlands. The plain style is the oldest, dating to the Hellenistic period (100 BCE to about 0 CE). Midway through the ossuary period, around 0 CE, there was a dramatic shift to the garland type of decoration. One can distinguish between the two subsets of this category of ossuary - the finished and the semi-finished. Evidence of mass production leads me to conclude that the unfinished type, characterized by bosses, were simply templates for subsequent workmanship. Fig. 12.2 summarizes the data on both types of ossuaries characterized by Thomas.

The peak in usage occurs around 0 CE. The subsequent decrease in the number of ossuaries is associated with the gradual replacement by sarcophagi. The motif used on the Ephesian ossuary was used as the model for the later, main period of sarcophagi production.

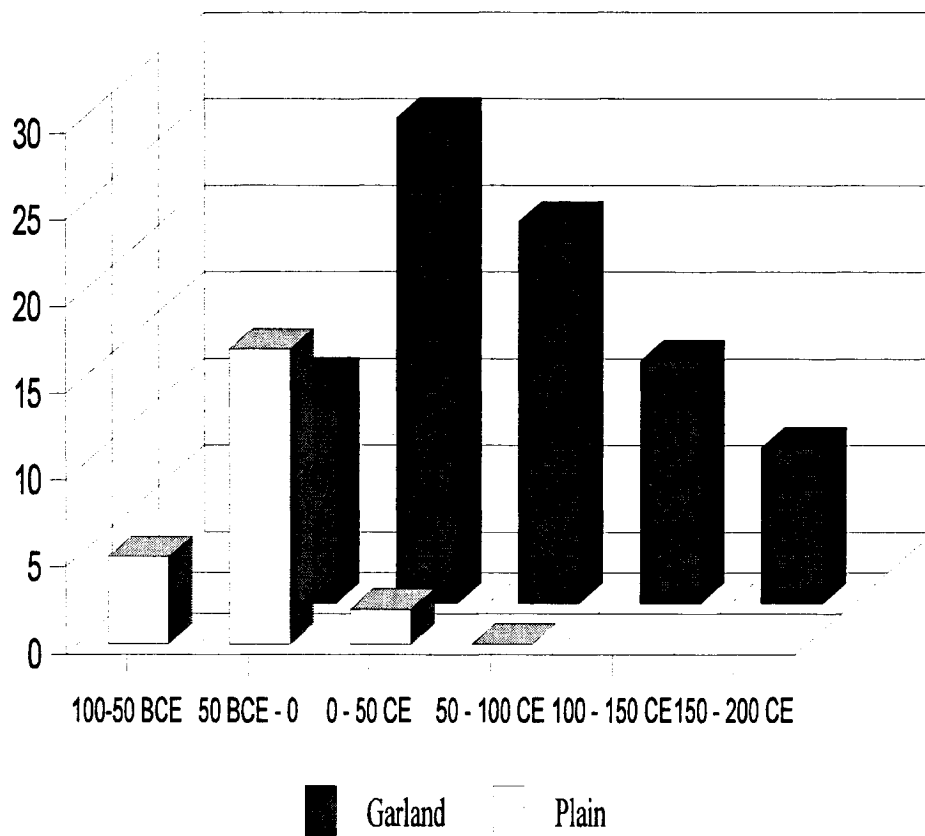


Fig. 12.2. The relative abundance of the two types of ossuaries found in Ephesus at different points in time. Note that the usage of ossuaries of all kinds peaks at around 0 CE. Adapted from Thomas and İçten, "Ossuaries," 553.

The case of Judea is complicated by the difficulty of assigning dates to most of the stone boxes and by the destruction of Judean society by Rome in 70 CE. Nevertheless, with the help of McCane's study⁷⁴¹ and the analysis described below, I can conclude that in Judea, secondary burial into ossuaries began around 30 BCE, reached its heyday around 60 CE, and gradually disappeared by about 150 CE. Unlike Ostia, where sarcophagi replaced secondary burial, in Judea sarcophagi came into use much later. Instead, some other method of primary

⁷⁴¹ Byron R McCane, *Jews, Christians, and Burial*.

burial, such as deposition into earth or coffins, took over from ossuary burial, as an intermediary stage of development.

Rahmani's catalogue is extremely useful for descriptive purposes and for some discussion of geographical distribution and of dating. Unfortunately, there is no statistical analysis of the time distribution. The data in McCane's dissertation can, however, be used as a basis for my own analysis. Of the 191 tombs surveyed covering the period 100 BCE to 350 CE, 92 % of them showed a consistent pattern of secondary burial. Although McCane did not count ossuaries he did count tombs occupied by ossuaries and categorized them according to ranges of dates and number of chambers. Assuming 3 chambers per "multi-chambered" tomb and an average of 5 ossuaries per chamber I constructed a preliminary histogram of ossuary frequency. I then supplemented the data with those pertaining to tombs occupied during several centuries, with the ossuaries therein partitioned according to my preliminary distribution. The resulting distribution is shown in Fig. 12.3.

In this figure I also show the distribution of coffins. However, I do not show the 600 burials associated with no container (although I do note that their distribution parallels that of ossuaries.) One clearly sees a peak in ossuary use at about 60 CE. The distribution of coffins and/or sarcophagi is somewhat curious. Although they were used sparsely in the first century BCE and continue to be used from 200 CE on, there is a gap of 100 years when no coffins appear at all. At the same time there is an anomalously low burial count in containers of *any* kind. Presumably this was the result of the general impoverishment of Judeans due to the military and political upheavals between 70 CE and 135 CE during which Jews were apparently simply interred in the earth. Therefore one has to be critical in interpreting Fig. 12.3.

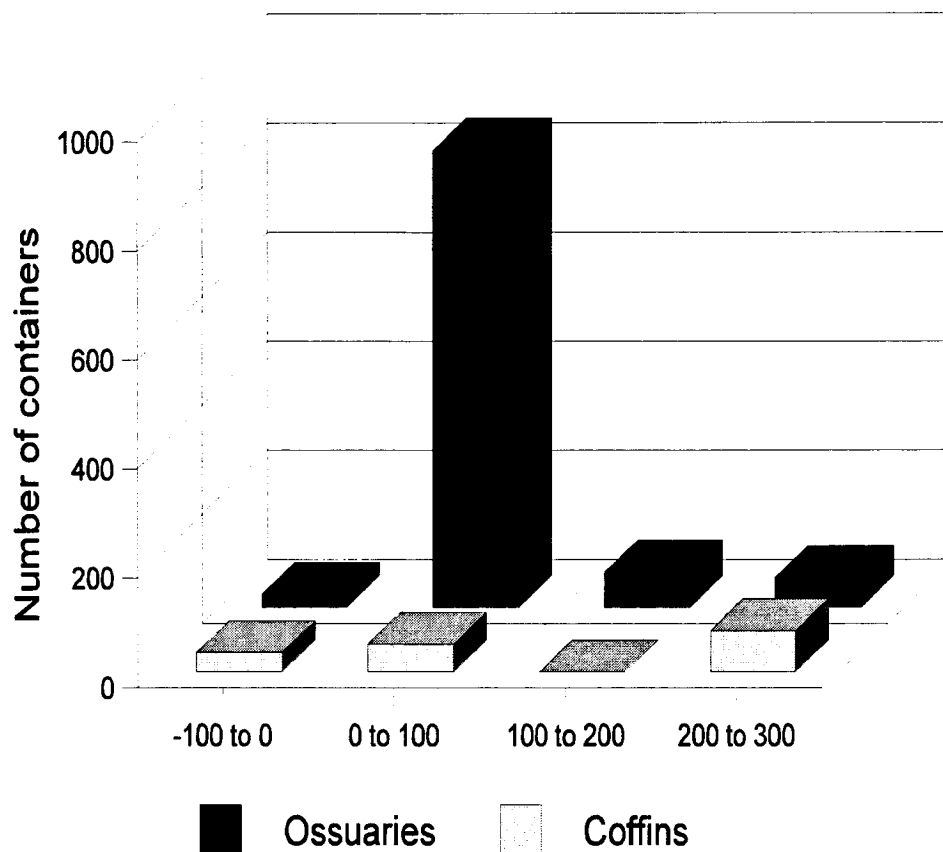


Figure 12.3. The distribution of burials of Judeans in containers at different points in time during the Roman period. Note the dip in numbers during the second century CE.

Perhaps the simplest conclusion would be that while ossuary burial was on the decline, coffin burial in caves was on the rise, and the two phenomena would have been equally popular around 200 CE in the absence of the national disasters.

To determine which culture influenced the others can only be done by looking at the whole picture, as summarized in the following two figures - one for the rise of the secondary burial phenomenon, and one for the rise of primary burials into large receptacles. These figures are adapted from the previous three figures wherein I have drawn smooth curves through the tops of the bars in the histograms, expressed as percentages of total numbers of burials.

In Fig. 12.4 one sees that the Judean wave of ossuary burial mimics that of the Ephesian wave in form, but is delayed by about 75 years. One also sees that the disappearance of the Ostian-Roman wave of secondary burials is shifted to even later times. Hence several significant points about the patterns of influence must be noted at this time:

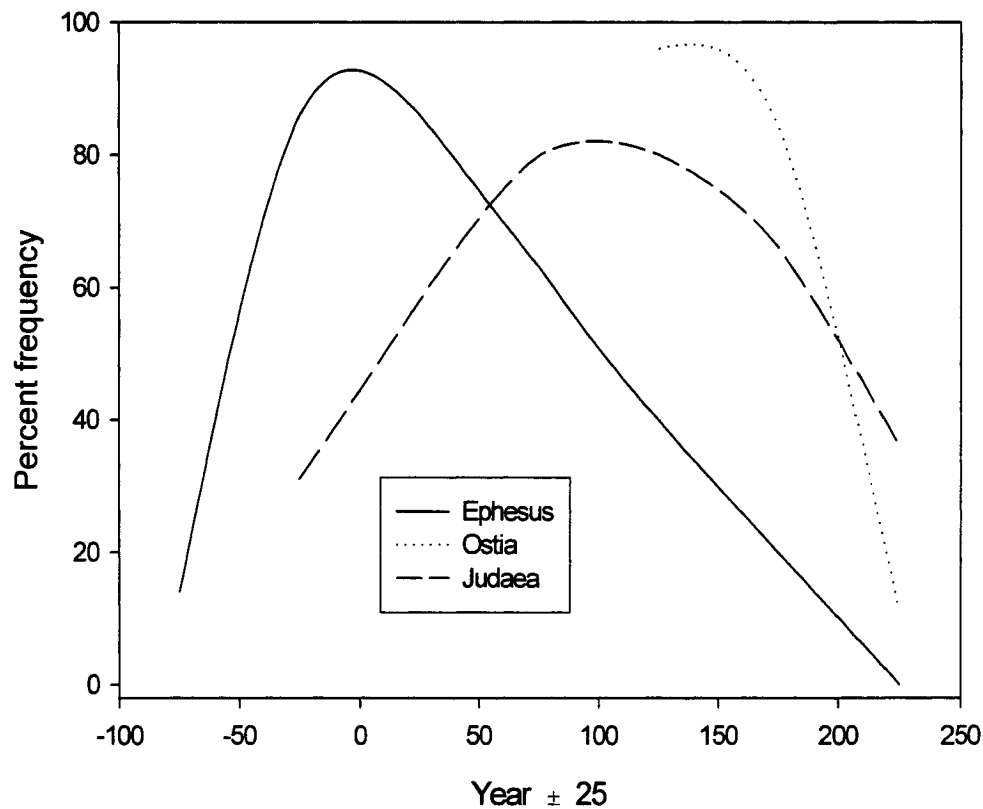


Figure 12.4. The percentage of secondary burials in three different societies during the Roman period.

First, although we are unaware of the original reason, we do know that Romans had adopted cremation from the Etruscans who had already adopted the practice from the Greek or European world. At that point in time, however, it was not secondary burial into chests, but rather into urns. Second, although for lack of data, one cannot establish from my figure

with certainty whether ash chests appeared first in Asia Minor or in Rome,⁷⁴² one can conclude that the Judean practice of burial in chests must have been learned from either of the other two, with reason strongly suggesting the former. The typical small chests of interest to me appeared only in Asia Minor (not in Rome). Furthermore, since Asia Minor was populated by a large number of Jews (in contact with Judeans) socially and geographically close to Judea, it is more likely that Judea was influenced directly by Asia Minor rather than by Rome. Finally, though cremation (with its associated storage of ashes in urns) had already been in vogue in Rome for many years, and was well established by 78 BCE; it would take the Judeans at least two more generations to adopt the ossuaries.

An even clearer and stronger indication of dependency can be made when discussing the disappearance of cremation or ossuaries from the Empire. Fig. 12.4 makes it clear that it happened first in Asia Minor, followed by Judea and finally in Rome itself. Secondary burial was replaced by inhumation. The latter's complementary time dependence is shown in Fig. 12.5.

Although ossuaries disappeared in Judea before cremation did in Rome, the replacement with sarcophagi happened first in Rome because Judeans opted for interment in earth at that time, for lack of material resources. In any case, it was in Asia Minor (or the Greek world in general) where the practice of primary inhumation began during this epoch.

⁷⁴² The question of the origin of ash chests or *ostothekai* in general is highly interestingly. It could be answered in principle by analyzing histograms such as those demonstrated in this chapter, all over the ancient Greek and Roman world. The frequency curve which would peak the earliest in time would presumably be the geographical source of the very first ash chest. For lack of published data, I have presented a sample set, which is unfortunately limited geographically. This would be a massive undertaking far beyond the scope of this work. In this thesis it sufficed to demonstrate a possible precursor to the Judean ossuary.

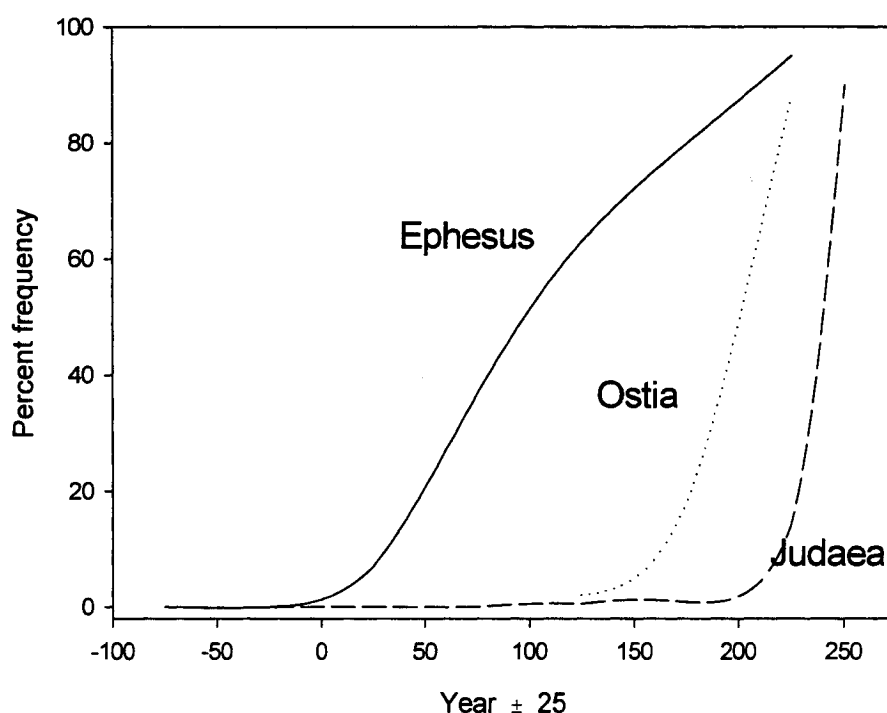


Figure 12.5. The appearance of sarcophagi as a function of time. Percentages are with reference to the frequency of secondary burials (cremation or ossuaries). In the case of Judea both coffins and sarcophagi are counted. The early Hellenistic coffins of Judea are not shown for clarity.

As one would expect, Judea (being closer to Asia Minor with its many Jewish coreligionists) adopted the concept before the Romans did. This is in perfect agreement with everything that we know about the relative abundance of ossuaries and sarcophagi in the Empire, according to the older data of Nock and of Koch, the observations of Morris, as well as my own observations based on the work of McCane. This thesis, then, agrees with and substantiates the contention of Morris that burial practice was a matter of fashion.⁷⁴³ The “classical revival” of Greek influences fomented the diffusion of inhumation back towards Rome starting around 130 CE until about 300 CE when the re-transformation was complete.

⁷⁴³ Morris, *Death-ritual*, 33.

Furthermore, the later changes coincided with the so-called “third century crisis” (after about 230 CE) when there was cultural homogenization of the Roman world along with barbarian invasions, and political and economic regionalization, in contrast to the earlier period when cultural diversity existed alongside political and economic homogenization. The transformation was gradual, and there was considerable overlap with prior practice, as typified by our three case studies. The switch to inhumation in the western Roman world started with the top circles in Rome and Italy, followed by the “mighty” and then by the rest of the population. Fashion-conscious people jockeying for position within the imperial culture adopted this new phenomenon. The origin was eventually forgotten by people. By the time inhumation spread outwards from Rome towards the provinces all the way back to Asia Minor, it was already considered a Roman custom used by all social strata, though in actuality it had originated in the Hellenistic world.

12.2 *Conclusion*

I have considered a multi-pronged approach in order to show that the appearance and disappearance of the usage of Judean ossuaries was likely influenced by the parallel use and subsequent disuse of secondary burial containers in the Greco-Roman world in general. The evidence is clear that the Greco-Roman practice of secondary burial of ashes into stone cinerary urns was very similar in many respects to the Jewish practice of ossilegium. Not only is the function, material, durability, the manufacturing process, the size, shape and form, the energy expenditure, as well as some aspects of decoration such as painting and inscription virtually identical, but even the terminology and some aspects of the associated rituals were too similar for it all to be a coincidence. It appears that it was not simply the ossuary which was the phenomenon, but also the entire ossilegium process which is in question. Had the Judean ossuary developed independently from the ash-chest then it would have appeared at more or less the same time as the ash-chest or even earlier. However, the shift of about two generations between the use and disuse of boxes to store secondary remains in the Greco-Roman world from their usage in Judea confirms that the flow of

influence, if any, was from the Greco-Roman world to Judea. Judea was not an inventor but rather an adopter society; and I must come to the conclusion that there was an Empire-wide desire to emulate the Imperial style which drove the process. It remains for me to show that the opportunity and close contacts existed as a precondition for the diffusion of this social fashion.

Part Four
From Abroad To Jerusalem



Principal cities and regions of the Eastern Hellenistic Mediterranean world. Those cities of Asia Minor, known by scholars to have been settled by Jews, are indicated by a circle; those cities of Asia Minor, in which ostothekei were known to have been used, are indicated by a box. This figure was adapted from two maps originating on the Interactive Mediterranean Web site (<http://iam.classics.unc.edu>). It is being used under the terms of IAM's fair use policy. Copyright 1998, Interactive Ancient Mediterranean. Additional cities have been added by the present author.

Introduction

Neither Judea nor the Jewish people existed in a vacuum. This section of the thesis will demonstrate that there was ongoing cultural contact and receptivity to new ideas in all areas of Jewish life,⁷⁴⁴ and that furthermore, the novel practice of ossuary burial is yet another example thereof. Perhaps this in itself is astonishing, given that people are generally very conservative when it comes to burial customs. Indeed, the historian Victor Rutgers finds that funerary customs were, in some societies, the most resistant to the pressure of acculturation; yet he insists that burial practices do change, and he shows this with regards to Rome's Jewish community.⁷⁴⁵ The opinion of the Hellenist writer Hecateus of Abdera (300 BCE) was quite revealing when he claimed that the Israelites had changed their burial customs as a result of foreign influence.⁷⁴⁶

⁷⁴⁴ For this topic, I consulted Martin Hengel's work, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period*. (2 vols. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974); Elias J. Bickerman, *The Jews in the Greek Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), and Lee Levine's work, *Judaism and Hellenism*; Rajak, *Jewish Dialogue with Greece and Rome*, both works cited previously. For the relation between Rome and her province Judea, I consulted also James D. Anderson, "The Impact of Rome on the Periphery: The Case of Palestine - Roman Period (63 BCE - 324 CE)," in *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land*, ed. Thomas Levy (New York: Fact on File, 1995) 447-465. For a historical survey of talmudic openness to foreign cultures, see the contributions in Jacob J. Schacter (ed.) *Judaism's Encounter with Other Cultures. Rejection or Integration?* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1997).

⁷⁴⁵ See Leonard Victor Rutgers, *The Jews in Late Ancient Rome: Evidence of Cultural Interaction in the Roman Diaspora*. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), 50-51, for general observations on change and continuity. He takes the archaeological data of Jewish Rome (burial sites) and presents evidence of cultural interaction between Jews and Non-Jews in Late Antiquity (pp.50-99). The work of Denali Marie S. Poliakoff, *The Acculturation of Jews in the Roman Empire: Evidence from Burial Places* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Boston University, 1989) is also quite telling.

⁷⁴⁶ "As to marriage and the burial of the dead, he [Moses] saw to it that their [Israelites] customs should differ widely from those of other men. But later, when they became subject to foreign rule, as a result of their mingling with men of other nations (both under Persian rule and under that of the Macedonians who overthrew the Persians), many of their traditional practices were disturbed. Such is the account of Hecataeus of Abdera in regard to the Jews." See Menahem Stern (ed.), *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (ed. with

Although we do not know exactly the nature of the changes to which Hecateus was referring, Part Four of this thesis will strengthen the theory that foreign influence was at work in the adoption of the Herodian ossuary as well,⁷⁴⁷ by discussing the mechanism and actualization on a macroscopic level in terms of a process of *diffusion* "by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system."⁷⁴⁸ The innovation is manifest in the Hellenistic ash chest which, in a process of decision making by individual Jews in Jerusalem, was adopted because of its comparative advantages to existing options.

In setting this stage, the elements in the dissemination process will be examined with regard to a source invented in another culture which was geographically remote from Jerusalem. The opening Chapter 13 deals with contact, the precondition for influence, and with evidence for inter-societal relations, particularly a communication channel between Diaspora Jews and Jerusalem's Jews; Chapter 14 provides examples of receptivity in the adopter society, focusing on lifestyle and burial places, indicating to us that a foreign item, important in both aspects, is consistent with this pattern.

Chapter 15 applies the model of the *innovation-decision process*, as laid out by Everett M. Roberts, to our case; accordingly, I shall trace the adoption of the new idea from abroad to Jerusalem in five conceptualized stages: "*knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation and confirmation*."⁷⁴⁹ The attraction of an ash urn to the potential Jewish adopter is of special interest to us. We shall find that, along the way, the innovator "re-invented" the ash urn to fit his needs and to render it acceptable to the Jewish ethos of Late Second Temple times. This step-by-step development may, in fact, define the origin of the Jewish ossuary. Once the new idea was commissioned in one of the quarries in Jerusalem,

introductions, translations and commentary. Volume I: *From Herodotus to Plutarch* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974) no.11 with commentary ad. loc., p.29.

⁷⁴⁷ Also Rutgers, *Jews*, 62, sees the later change analogously.

⁷⁴⁸ Rogers, *Diffusion*, 5.

⁷⁴⁹ These stages are elaborated by Rogers, *Diffusion*, 161-203.

it meant that unique Jewish material culture was being produced and was being used in a ritual of bone collecting as opposed to ash collecting. This ultimately poses the question of the nature and significance of foreign influence.

The last chapter in this part of the thesis, appropriately, deals with the disappearance of the ossuary from Jewish society and takes into account that the bone chest was a transient phenomenon. In the framework of diffusion, and as a corollary to the appearance of the ‘*osteophagi*’ in the early Roman Empire, a new idea was being communicated to Roman Palestine that brought the life of a *Kulturträger* in Jerusalem’s last decades of splendor to an end. Ossuary burial even fell into oblivion in the memory of subsequent Jewish societies. How was it that such a popular, widespread tradition disappeared relatively suddenly? This question seems to me no less puzzling and fascinating than the issue of the origin of Jewish bone chests which in itself is already such a bone of contention in scholarship.

Chapter 13:

Exchanging New Ideas

13.1 *Contact with the Ossuary Concept from Asia Minor*

In the previous part of this thesis I have shown the striking similarity and parallels between the Greco-Roman cinerary urn and the Judean ossuary, both in terms of their physical nature as well as in their function during the re-burial of the deceased. These similarities suggest more than mere coincidence. Instead, it suggests an exchange of ideas, carried by Jews or Non-Jews. In the following I shall present a possible network of communication between diaspora Jews and Judeans linked in various ways. Having focused on the Greco-Roman world as the source of the Judean ossuary, I now narrow the search to a specific area of the Roman Empire - namely Asia Minor. This is not to exclude other regions (such as Syria). To the best of our current state of knowledge, however, Asia Minor is a good candidate as a region of origin, and it happens we have a significant body of data for it. I shall first establish that there was indeed a sizeable community of Jews living in that region; then I shall demonstrate that there were continuous inter-societal relations leading to the knowledge of new fashions in burial customs.

13.1.1 *Jews in Asia Minor between 280 BCE and 190 CE*

The Jewish communities in Asia Minor are dating back to at least 280 BCE. According to Josephus,⁷⁵⁰ Seleucus Nicator (who died in 281 BCE) had granted Jews citizenship in the cities of Ephesus and the rest of Ionia. Although Tcherikover disputes the claim for citizenship, he does not deny the presence of Jews as early as 280 BCE.⁷⁵¹ Sometime between 212 BCE and 205 BCE Antiochus III instructed Zeuxis, the satrap of the Seleucid

⁷⁵⁰ Josephus, *Ant.* 12:119 and 2:39.

⁷⁵¹ Victor Tcherikover, *Die Hellenistischen Städtegründungen von Alexander dem Grossen bis auf die Römerzeit*, Philologus, Supplementband XIX, Heft I, Leipzig: Dieterich, 1927.

region encompassing Lydia and Phrygia, to transport and settle 2000 Babylonian / Mesopotamian Jewish families, probably with military experience, within his territory.⁷⁵² This corresponds to about 10,000 individual Jews. Given the apparent ease of travel to Asia Minor along the Tigris / Euphrates highway, whose source was in Asia Minor, there may have already been prior settlements of Babylonian Jews in Asia Minor, exactly as Josephus claimed. However, even without that earlier element, by the first century CE there must have been about one million Jews living in Asia Minor, according to an estimate by P. W. van der Horst.⁷⁵³ This is quite a conservative estimate, since a doubling of population every generation for the eight subsequent generations leading up to the turn of the millenium, would bring us to a value of over two and a half million, even without active proselytism. Therefore, as long as Zeuxis carried out the orders of Antiochus III, one can be sure that there was indeed a substantial Jewish presence, of non-Judean background, living in Asia Minor at the start of the period of history which concerns us (50 BCE to 200 CE). Considerable evidence from ancient Jewish historians supports this. For instance, Josephus cites decrees originating in Asia Minor which gives the strong impression of the importance of those communities⁷⁵⁴; Philo (Flacc. 281-2) reports that there were indeed Jewish settlements in almost every country at that time.

Philo's grand statement can be supported by numerous examples which are cited by Trebilco based on inscriptions, decrees and other historical accounts⁷⁵⁵. For example, in 139-138 BCE the Roman Senate sent a circular, on behalf of the Jews of Asia Minor who were in need of support, to Attalus II, the king of Pergamum, to Ariarthes, the king of Cappadocia, and to the cities of Myndos, Halicarnassus, Cnidus, Phaselis and Side, according to the Book

⁷⁵² Josephus, *Ant.* 12: 148-153.

⁷⁵³ P. W. Van der Horst, "Jews and Christians in Aphrodisias in the Light of their Relations in Other Cities of Asia Minor," *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 43 (1989) 106-121.

⁷⁵⁴ Josephus, *Ant.* 14, 16.

⁷⁵⁵ P. R. Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991).

of Maccabees.⁷⁵⁶ The decree of Pergamum, ascribed to Antiochus VII (138-129 BCE) or Antiochus IX (113-95 BCE), according to Josephus, ratified the Roman Senate's decree and announced to King Hyrcanus Pergamum's vigorous support of the Jews of their city and of Judea.⁷⁵⁷ Hyrcanus' mediation via the proconsul, Gaius Rabirius, also succeeded in acquiring a Roman grant of Jewish privileges for Phrygian Jews. Somewhat later, around 88 BCE, Mithridates seized in Cos a substantial amount of Temple tax money collected by the Jews of Asia Minor and sent to Jerusalem in accordance with their religious obligations.⁷⁵⁸ L. Valerius Flaccus repeated this outrage in 62 BCE, seizing Temple tax money donated by about 68,000 Jews from a mere four cities: Apamea, Laodicea, Adramyttium, and Pergamum.⁷⁵⁹ This fifth generation number is in complete accord with my estimate above. In addition to all this, Josephus reports on a letter sent in 49 BCE from Lucius Antonius, proquaestor to Sardis, confirming by decree the Jewish privileges while describing the existence of an organized semi-autonomous Jewish community (*politeuma*) in Sardis.⁷⁶⁰ At the same time the city of Sardis granted land to the Jews for the construction of a synagogue, later to be replaced by the grand structure in the centre of town. Josephus also describes how L. Lentulus Crus exempted some Jews of Ephesus from military service in 43 BCE.⁷⁶¹ Publius Servilius Galba, too, wrote to Miletus in support of the Jews, decreeing that Jews there be allowed to observe their Sabbath, even at the expense of neglecting their civic duties.⁷⁶² The people of Sardis also granted a request from their own Jewish residents for permission to observe their Sabbath unhindered, as well as one for the provision of Kosher

⁷⁵⁶ 1 Macc 15: 16-23.

⁷⁵⁷ Josephus, *Ant.* 14: 247-255.

⁷⁵⁸ Every Jew over the age of 20 was required by the Torah to collect a half-shekel of silver yearly and to contribute this towards the Temple's upkeep.

⁷⁵⁹ Cicero, *Pro Flacco* 28, 68.

⁷⁶⁰ Josephus, *Ant.* 14:235.

⁷⁶¹ Josephus, *Ant.* 14: 228.

⁷⁶² Josephus, *Ant.* 14: 244-246.

food.⁷⁶³ Julius Caesar permitted the Jews of Parium to assemble (in a synagogue), while the people of Halicarnassus and of Sardis decreed that Jews be allowed to build a place of prayer.⁷⁶⁴ A dispute in 14 BCE between some Ionian cities and their Jewish residents was mediated by Marcus Agrippa and Herod.⁷⁶⁵ In 12 BCE Augustus publicly acknowledged the loyal support of the Jews of the province of Asia.⁷⁶⁶ Clearly, none of these favourable events could have occurred in the absence of a numerous, well- established and influential Jewish population in the cities of Asia Minor , and had there not been excellent relations between Jews and Gentiles. Therefore, proud, wealthy and prominent Jewish communities flourished and were obviously accepted by the townsfolk. In fact, by the time Paul visited Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Ephesus, he could report his encounters with a violent and organized Jewish opposition.⁷⁶⁷ Jews had settled even as far as the Bosphorus, where a community already existed by 51 CE according to a manumission document from Phanagoria.⁷⁶⁸ It is explicitly mentioned that the six men involved should serve the synagogue. At the time of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE, there was a sizeable Jewish community in Miletus as well.⁷⁶⁹

Given that the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE signaled the end of the heyday for ossuary usage in Judea, I could well stop here at 70 CE with the chronological list of evidence for the large numbers of Jews, occasionally influential enough to modify policies. However, for the sake of completeness, I do wish to cover the entire period of time during which ossuaries were used to any extent in Judea, on the basis that a large and influential

⁷⁶³ Josephus, *Ant.* 14: 256-261.

⁷⁶⁴ Josephus, *Ant.* 14:256-258.

⁷⁶⁵ Josephus, *Ant.* 12: 125-6 and 16: 27-61.

⁷⁶⁶ Josephus, *Ant.* 16: 165.

⁷⁶⁷ Acts 21:40 - 22:3.

⁷⁶⁸ M. H. Williams, *The Jews among the Greeks and Romans. A Diaspora Source book* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998) 29.

⁷⁶⁹ Josephus, *Ant.* 14: 244-246.

Jewish population after 70 CE could only have been built on the foundations of an already existing solid community. One might think that, in the absence of a Jewish state after the Judean Wars, the political and social status of Asia Minor Jews might have suddenly become precarious. However, the evidence does not reveal this. A list of donors to civic projects even cites the name of a Jew from Jerusalem, Niketas son of Jason, as well as a fabulously large contribution from the Jews of Smyrna during the reign of Hadrian.⁷⁷⁰ According to “The Martyrdom of Polycarp”, Jews in Smyrna supposedly played a role in Polycarp’s death around 156 CE, while Justin Martyr describes polemics with the Jews of Ephesus as late as 160 CE. Although the Jewish population of Judea might have decreased after 70 CE, that of Asia Minor probably increased; indeed, the source of influence from Asia Minor certainly did not diminish.

Aside from the above documentary evidence testifying to the presence of Jews in Asia Minor, there is also considerable archaeological evidence in the form of inscriptions on tombs and public buildings⁷⁷¹: An inscription from Panticapaeum (Black Sea coast), dated to between 50 CE and 80 CE⁷⁷², mentions the town synagogue in the context of a Jew freeing his slave’s son. An inscription from Kayakent (Northern Galatia) has been identified as Jewish because of its use of the Jewish phrase “The power of the Most High God”. An inscription from Smyrna in the time of Hadrian (117-138 CE) lists some Jewish donors who displayed their loyalty to the city. A second century CE inscription on a small altar in Pergamum has been interpreted as Jewish, based on the typically Jewish phrase “Theos Kurios”, God the Lord forever. Roman period inscriptions from Hierapolis and from Nysa explicitly refer to groups of Jewish residents. An inscribed construction stone describes how the Jews of Sardis (Lydia) honoured Lucius Verus in 166 CE on the occasion of his visit to the town. Remnants of the second magnificent synagogue there have survived. Similarly, the synagogue of Pirene (Ionia) dated to around 200 CE, testifies to the existence of a prior

⁷⁷⁰ Williams, *Jews*, 112, and reference therein.

⁷⁷¹ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities*, 43-51, 58-84, 127-165, and references therein.

⁷⁷² Williams, *Jews*, 29, and reference therein.

well- established community. An inscription from Hypaepa around 175 CE refers to the existence of young Jewish club members (Neoterai). In Hierapolis a clearly Jewish inscription dating to about 190 CE describes a Jew who had considerable influence among the two local craftsman guilds.

Thus, it is exceedingly clear that there were large numbers of Jews integrated (but not assimilated) into the culture of Asia Minor. That culture, during the time period of interest to us, was Greco-Roman. To what extent did these Jews adopt imperial customs? I argue that they were loyal to their religion, but were amenable, as their co-religionists throughout the Empire were, to imperial cultural influence. They were certainly far more exposed to the customs of their Gentile neighbours than the Jews of Judea were. Evidence for this comes particularly from funerary practices in Asia Minor.⁷⁷³ I shall now examine some of the burial customs in order to link Jews to ossuaries.

13.1.2 *Jews of Asia Minor and Ossuaries*

The map introducing Part Four shows the distribution of Jewish communities in Asia Minor, as well as those locations where ostiotheke or ash urns have been discovered. The latter are taken from the work of Asgari⁷⁷⁴ and of Koch (See Part 3 of this thesis). Thus, it is obvious that Jews were exposed to ash urns in many if not all locations where they lived. Moreover, it is interesting to note that those cities where both Jews and ostiotheke could be found lay

⁷⁷³ On the basis of an examination of Jewish tombs, identified by a Jewish symbol such as a menorah, or by the adjective Ioudaios (a Jew), Williams, *Jews*, 125, concluded: "In some Diasporan communities, however, most notably those of Asia Minor, Jews were considerably influenced by what their Gentile neighbours did. They erected tombs similar to theirs, and on those tombs, many of them situated in the common city cemetery, they had epitaphs inscribed in the prevailing local idiom."

⁷⁷⁴ For the sake of clarity, not all locations are indicated on the map. Additional sites where ostiothekai have been found and which were investigated by Asgari are: Odemis, Thyateria, Suleymanli, Teira, Kula, Barnova, Nysa (all in Lydia); Blaundos, Polybotos, Kotiaion, Prymnessos (all in Phrygia); Prusa, Kratia Flaviopolis, Geyve, Osmaneli (all in Bithynia); Alanya, Syedra, Salur, Erdemli (all in Pamphylia-Cilicia); Assos, Dardanos (in Mysia) and Kastamonu (in Paphlagonia).

in a broad arc stretching between Ephesus in the west and Selinus in the south, covering the regions of Lydia, Phrygia, Pisidia and Pamphylia. This in itself suggests a route for the diffusion of the ossuary concept aiming directly at Judea. I focus attention on only three of the locations on this arc, and consider them to be representative of them all.

One of the most interesting Jewish communities of Asia Minor, relevant to our ossuary problem, is that of Acmonia (Phrygia). The Jews of Acmonia had built a synagogue around 50 CE and repaired it around 80 CE with funds provided by Gentile sympathizers of high public status, Julia Severa, Popilios Zotikos, and Loukios son of Loukios.⁷⁷⁵ Inscriptions confirm that Jews were deeply involved in civic life, donations and public office. Although acculturated, they were faithful to scripture, and this reinforced their ethno-religious identity. This can be shown from late archaeological evidence. Decorated doorstones from eight tombs, dated to around 200 CE, display the “children’s children” curse - a quotation from the Septuagint version of Exodus 34: 6-7 - as well as the “sickle of the curse” and its variant, the iron broom” curse - quoted from the Septuagint’s version of Zecharias 5: 1-5. These curses were designed to drive off grave violators, with the assumption that all residents of Acmonia were familiar with scripture. At the same time a Jewish burial society was already in existence, as evidenced by an inscription from after 215 CE.⁷⁷⁶ In return for a bequest, this particular burial society was charged with carrying out the annual “rosalia” ceremony on pain of suffering the Justice of God. The ceremony itself was designed to remember the deceased, and it was marked by decking the tomb with roses. The rosalia, of ancient Roman origin, was already practiced by Jews in Acmonia, according to an inscription from 95 CE, and probably even earlier at a point in time when the Romans first occupied Asia Minor. Since it was an annual ceremony, I presume, the first such ceremony for a particular person would have taken place most likely one year after the deceased’s burial. Intriguingly, one might well wonder if this could have been the origin of Diaspora Jewry’s institution of the annual “Yahrzeit” (not necessarily Palestinian or Babylonian Jewry’s, though). More important for

⁷⁷⁵ Williams, *Jews*, 168, and reference therein.

⁷⁷⁶ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities*, 78-80, and references therein.

my present study, though, is this indication of the clear exposure to, if not outright adoption of, imperial burial customs.

The second interesting Jewish community, to which I wish to draw attention, was that of Ephesus. Recalling from the previous section of my thesis that Asia Minor ash chest production was at its heyday by 150 BCE, and assuming for now that the Asia Minor ash chest (as represented by the case of Ephesus) was the model for the Judean ossuary, then one may also wonder if hypothetical exportation of the ossuary concept to Judea might have been accompanied by decorative remnants of the *rosalia* ceremony as well, in the form of rosettas. Furthermore, Thomas noted the large number of ossuaries present in Ephesus.⁷⁷⁷ Unfortunately, only four single boxes contained any remnants. Three of them contained ash, while one of them contained bones but no ash. Obviously, this is too small a sample size from which to derive any meaningful statistics. Nevertheless, if all four had contained ashes then I would be hard put to argue that Jews adopted any of the Gentile reburial customs. However, that there was one box containing bones suggests that Jews had adopted ossuaries, at least in Ephesus, from their next-door neighbours. That it was exactly one out of four that could have been associated with Jews is hard to establish; yet, it would certainly be in keeping with the large Jewish population in Asia Minor in general. Thus we are only one step away from saying that Jews in Judea too adopted ossuaries from the Greco-Roman world. However, it is not necessary to go that far. It is certainly more plausible to claim that Judean Jews adopted Greco-Roman ash urns via their Jewish brethren in Asia Minor.

The third exceedingly interesting Jewish community in Asia Minor was Apamea (Phrygia). It was here that the Jews had defied a Roman edict forbidding anybody to export money in 62 BCE. This was a community fiercely loyal to Torah law. It was here that a tomb inscription containing the simple but veiled threat that the populace “knows the laws of the Jews” was considered sufficient to protect a grave. And it was here that at least the Jewish substratum of the Sibylline Oracles was authored, probably by a Jew, sometime

⁷⁷⁷ Thomas and İçten, “Ephesians ossuaries,” 549.

between 30 BCE and 70 CE.⁷⁷⁸ The author of the Oracles uses Noah's voice to preach to the Apameans. Just as Noah's generation had been entreated to repent, so too was the Phrygian populace being entreated by a God-fearing community to repent and to lead a holy life. Moreover, the author of the Oracle identifies Noah as the hero of the local deluge lore, and the hill behind Apamea as the landing spot of Noah's ark. The Apameans apparently accepted the Jewish modification of the local traditions, for the Apameans subsequently commemorated Noah in a series of coins (of invariant design) extending over several generations of overlords. The coins depict Noah (identified by name) and his wife in flood and salvation scenes together with dove and raven and an ark (rectangular as per the Torah).⁷⁷⁹ Trebilco argues that this invariant scene probably was copied from a public mural in the city centre. Furthermore, Trebilco was concerned with proving that, in order for the Apameans to accept a uniquely Jewish concept of a chest-shaped ark associated with a flood that did not correspond exactly to local tradition, it must be that Jews had achieved credibility, respect and tremendous influence by 193 CE, and by extension, even earlier.

On the other hand, in Hadrian's time, coins displayed five rectangular chests without reference to Noah. In discussing this variation, Trebilco cites a competing theory introduced by Head.⁷⁸⁰ He refers to Apamea's nickname, Kibotos, meaning "chest", mentioned as early as 19 CE by Strabo. Head explains it as originating from Apamea's unique commercial activities transporting goods from the East, (possibly also including Judea) packed in chests, to other markets. He points out that the Greek word for chest is κιβωτός, while the Greek word for ark is λάρναξ. (In fact, even though the Septuagint does use κιβωτός, Josephus used λάρναξ to mean the Ark of Noah, and he reserved the use of the word κιβωτός to designate the Ark of the Covenant, which was indeed chest-shaped.) Trebilco reconciles the

⁷⁷⁸ See Trebilco, *Jewish Communities*, 95-96, for the discussion on the dating and references to further discussion in n. 54 on p. 226.

⁷⁷⁹ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities*, 86-95.

⁷⁸⁰ B. V. Head, *Historia Numorum: A Manual of Greek Numismatics*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1911) 666.

two theories by claiming that the original meaning of a commercial chest was reinterpreted by Apamean Jews, based on their own consciousness of the Biblical flood, in order to manufacture for the city an ancient significance, and for its name a prestige, which it had previously lacked. The association of Apamea, and Apamea alone, with commercial transfer of chests, seems to us, however, to be somewhat farfetched. Perhaps I can offer an additional explanation of the chests based on an *ostothekai* industry specific to Apamea. Although not yet uncovered in Apamea, which is still buried under the modern town of Duneir, *ostothekai* have been found in nearby Sagalassos as well as generally all around Pysidia, Lydia, and Lycaonia, i.e. the surrounding regions, with the production centre in nearby Synnada.⁷⁸¹ *Ostothekai* were being mass-produced from undecorated templates, at least in Ephesus,⁷⁸² and possibly elsewhere in Asia Minor. They were apparently being exported. Perhaps a commerce-oriented city like Apamea with such a strong Jewish influence and with such a fierce attachment to Jerusalem, was a centre of export of *ostothekai*, or at least of the ossuary concept, to Judea. Perhaps it was this industry that was commemorated on the coins. Indeed, there is possible evidence for this scenario. Some of the wealthiest Jerusalemite families were buried in the so-called Akeldama Tombs at the foot of the western slope of the Kidron Valley near the Akeldama monastery. Ilan described the ossuaries found in Caves 2 and 3.⁷⁸³ Analysis of the exceptionally large number of inscribed ossuaries and their tomb setting indicates that the deceased were affluent Jews from a variety of locations in the Diaspora, including the city of Apamea.⁷⁸⁴ In one particular cave the occupants of the ossuaries were from a single family and were thus collectively named the “Ariston family” from Apamea. Were they all transient visitors, or were they immigrants? One can assume that they must have lived in Jerusalem for a significantly long enough period of time for them all to die and for a surviving family member to bury and then re-bury them. Their immigrant

⁷⁸¹ Koch, *Sarkophage*, 155; Asgari, “Halbfabrikate,” 329-380.

⁷⁸² Thomas and İçten, “Ephesians Ossuaries,” 550.

⁷⁸³ Ilan, “Ossuary and Sarcophagus Inscriptions,” 57-71.

⁷⁸⁴ Tal Ilan, “New Ossuary Inscriptions from Jerusalem,” 149-159.

status probably does not matter much to us since, in any case being so proud of their homeland's name, they would surely be too proud not to opt to be buried according to their own customs. What better proof than this is required to show not only the close contact between Apamean Jews and Judea, but also the importation of the Apamean burial culture into Jerusalem. Is this, then, the missing link between Judea and the ossuary? I can only regret that the ossuaries were not dated precisely enough for my purposes to determine if this happened as early as 30 BCE. Furthermore, I must regret that it turns out that the identification of Apamea itself is not so simple. There were two Apameas - one in Asia Minor, known today as Duneir, and another one in Northern Syria, known today as Qal'at al-Mudiq, and which was also heavily populated by Jews during the time of Josephus.⁷⁸⁵ From which one did Ariston's family come? Ilan, has discussed the possibility that Ariston might be identified with the Ariston of Syrian Apamea who is mentioned in the Mishnah,⁷⁸⁶ both having lived during the existence of the Second Temple. Ilan admits that Ariston was not an uncommon name in Jewish onomastics of the Second Temple period, and so it is not possible to prove definitively that the Ariston in the ossuary was the same as the Ariston of the Mishnah. The latter merely brought his first fruits to Jerusalem annually, and as a foreign farmer probably did not settle in Jerusalem. Consequently, it is not necessary to associate the ossuary's Apamea with the Mishnah's Apamea. The probability remains that the subject of the ossuary was from Asia Minor.⁷⁸⁷

Thus, it is possible to conclude that there were large, well-established and influential Jewish communities in Asia Minor. We have also seen that these communities adopted

⁷⁸⁵ Josephus, *Wars* 7:43.

⁷⁸⁶ Ilan, "New Ossuary Inscriptions," 150-154; see also Ilan, "The Ossuary and Sarcophagus Inscriptions," 66. The Mishna Halla 4:11 states: "Ariston brought his first fruits from Apamea and they accepted them from him, for they said: He that owns [land] in Syria is as one that owns [land] in the outskirts of Jerusalem.

⁷⁸⁷ Based on three place names mentioned - Apamea, Seleuca, and possibly Beirut (Beiroutos), Ilan, "The Ossuary and Sarcophagus Inscriptions," 68, suggests a connection to the Syrian Diaspora. She thinks it possible, however, that Beiroutos may be a patronym rather than a toponym.

Greco-Roman customs, in particular burial customs.⁷⁸⁸ In order to demonstrate the feasibility of cross-cultural fertilization of ideas, it remains formeto prove that there was travel and contact between Judea and Asia Minor. Aside from occasional personal travel, such as the missionary type indulged in by Paul (who proudly declared his origin in Tarsus in Cilicia),⁷⁸⁹ one may assume that commercial and occupational traffic between Judea and Asia Minor would have been routine during the *Pax Romana*. For example, expert masons and artists may have come from abroad to the metropolis for work.⁷⁹⁰

I have already shown that Asia Minor Jews took their Temple tax obligation seriously. We also know of the Diaspora Jews' high regard for priestly ancestry⁷⁹¹ and their obligation to maintain the genealogical purity of the priestly class.⁷⁹² Why not follow through with visits to the archives in order to examine pedigrees kept in the record-office attached to the Temple? Why not come to Jerusalem and study in a house of learning? Why

⁷⁸⁸ Ostothekai, found in Asia Minor, were treated by Nuşin Asgari, *Kleinasiatische Ostotheken*, as well as by Koch. Although none were reported for Acmonia or Apamea, this merely means that none have been excavated there yet. On the other hand, there were a very large number from the surrounding Phrygian towns, in which large numbers of Jews lived, with the centre of secondary burial container production in Synnada, not far from Apamea. For the purposes of my discussion it suffices to show that the local Jews were exposed to and even influenced funerary monuments and that, in at least one prominent locality - Ephesus, they were also exposed to chest-shaped ash urns.

⁷⁸⁹ See also Paul's travels to Asia Minor, i.e. Galatia (Gal 1:15-17).

⁷⁹⁰ Ossuaries vary considerably in design and craftsmanship, and one can certainly agree with Robert Houston Smith, "An Early Roman Sarcophagus of Palestine and its School," *PEQ* 105 (1973) 81:"... there were many workshops or independent craftsmen." It would be worth analyzing the ossuaries according to their style and possibly correlate them to geographic regions. In this way the ossuary featured in fig. 9.1 below might be traceable to Asia Minor.

⁷⁹¹ Williams, *Jews*, 52.

⁷⁹² Josephus, *Contra Apionem* 1.32-1.33.

not their thrice-yearly obligation to travel to Jerusalem?⁷⁹³ Indeed, we do have evidence for the flood of Diaspora Jews to Jerusalem. Philo notes that “countless multitudes from countless cities flock to the Temple at every feast, some by land, some by sea, from east and west and north and south.”⁷⁹⁴ Of the large number of synagogues present in Jerusalem while the Temple still stood,⁷⁹⁵ several were devoted to the Jews of the Diaspora, including the Synagogue of the Freedmen, frequented by Jews from Cilicia.⁷⁹⁶

If even only these faith-based practices were maintained, then personal bi-directional travel would have been common. Further, travel could be for purposes of commerce and trade, seeking employment in such occupations, like in the construction industry, which were recruiting, or immigration to Jerusalem in general.⁷⁹⁷ A transfer of or exposure to Asia Minor burial customs would have been a natural consequence or outgrowth of such contact. Let us not forget that a Judean traveler to Psidia or Pamphylia surely will have the same impression that Lanckoronski⁷⁹⁸ and I personally experienced, namely a countryside dotted with funerary monuments, almost like a vast cemetery. Columbaria, mausoleums, stele, rock-cut tombs, freestanding sarcophagi and urns are always physically present and thus confer a message regarding the variety of burial possibilities to be replicated in Judea.

⁷⁹³ Regardless of Ariston’s original homeland, it is clear from the Mishnaic reference (mHalla 4, 11) that he considered himself obliged to bring agricultural produce to Jerusalem just as a native of the Holy Land would.

⁷⁹⁴ Philo, *The Special Laws* 1.69.

⁷⁹⁵ Schürer, *History*, 2. 76.

⁷⁹⁶ The Jews from Cilicia and Asia thronged out of their “Synagogue of the Freedmen” in Jerusalem to confront Stephen (Acts 6.8-1.10).

⁷⁹⁷ In general, influx of diaspora Jews in Jerusalem is well-documented by M. Stern, “The reign of Herod,” in *The Herodian Period*. ([*The World History of the Jewish People*, Ser. 1, Ancient times, Vol. VII]; ed. Michael Avi-Yonah; London: W.H. Allen, 1975) 71-123. See also the ossuary inscriptions in Part One, which mention places of origin, such as Alexandria, Tyre, Cyrenaica, and Capua.

⁷⁹⁸ Lanckoronski, in his introduction to his work, *Die Städte Pamphyliens und Pisidiens*.

Chapter 14

Receptivity in Jewish Society

14.1 *Second Temple Jerusalem: A Jewish and Hellenistic metropolis* ⁷⁹⁹

Ever since Solomon built the first Temple there, Jerusalem has been the focus of the Jewish nation. The city became the centre of the nation's political and religious life. Regulated by the laws of the Torah under the hegemony of the priests, the Temple dominated the city not only topologically but more significantly, spiritually. Thus, by the time of Herod, nearly one thousand years later, Jews regarded Jerusalem as "the Jewish city par excellence."⁸⁰⁰ Jerusalem was both central and sacred to Palestinian as well as Diaspora Jews - a fact which did not go unnoticed by Greek and Roman writers and officials.⁸⁰¹

Notwithstanding its special character, Jerusalem was not immune to outside influences. The best known example is Hellenism. Hengel and Levine, the latest in a long line of scholars⁸⁰² to study this phenomenon, backed by copious evidence, each describe the progressive changes which Jerusalem underwent during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. I feel it appropriate to mention the following.

Hellenism was introduced into the area by the Seleucid rulers in approximately 300 BCE. Possibly already at that time, but no later than 259 BCE,⁸⁰³ there is indisputable evidence for the *interpretatio graeca* of even the city's name - Hierosolyma (iero = Temple

⁷⁹⁹ Hengel, "Jerusalem," 269-306, for the Jewish and Greek dimensions of Jerusalem. See also Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism*, Chapter II, "Second Temple Jerusalem," 38-95.

⁸⁰⁰ Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 33; 37.

⁸⁰¹ Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, 2. 20-44.

⁸⁰² Tcherikover, Chapters 1 to 5 in Abraham Schalit (ed), *The World History of the Jewish People, Vol 6. The Hellenistic Age* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1972).

⁸⁰³ Hengel, "Jerusalem," 272 and n.19.

city).⁸⁰⁴ In 175 BCE, Jerusalem was converted by the High Priest, Jason, into a *polis* filled with such Greek institutions such as the gymnasium and ephebeion.⁸⁰⁵ The process of Hellenization was temporarily interrupted by the revolt led by the Maccabees. Yet their heirs, the Hasmoneans, adopted some Hellenistic customs. They established holidays celebrating military victories, mimicking the Greeks; they had diplomatic relations with Sparta and signed treaties with Rome; and they forged close alliances with the upper strata of Jerusalem's society.⁸⁰⁶ The latter's favourable disposition to Hellenism is demonstrated by names such as Alexander, Diodorus, Apollonius, Eupolemus, Antiochus, Numenius, Jason, Antipater, and Aeneas. Among the Hasmoneans one sees Greek names, in addition to Hebrew ones: John Hyrcanus, Aristobulus, Alexander Annaeus, Salome Alexandra, Hyrcanus and Antigonus.

During the Hasmonaean period (141-63 BCE) evidence of this receptivity to Hellenization is even more plentiful. Some elements of the style and content of the document recording the public appointment of Simon as leader,⁸⁰⁷ are clearly borrowed from the Hellenes. "Herod reigned at a time when the Greek-influenced Hellenism acquired in Rome a new center, which began to extend its influence, including the arts, to the old Greek areas."⁸⁰⁸ Under Herod's rule, acculturation continued, fueled by the aristocracy's appetite.

⁸⁰⁴ Hengel, "Jerusalem," 270-274.

⁸⁰⁵ 2 Macc 4.

⁸⁰⁶ Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 40.

⁸⁰⁷ 1 Macc 14.

⁸⁰⁸ This is aptly formulated in the foreword to Klaus Fittschen and Gideon Foerster (eds.), *Judaea and the Greco-Roman World in the Time of Herod in the Light of Archaeological Evidence* ([Acts of a Symposium, Hebrew University, Goettingen, November 3rd - 4th. 1988 in Jerusalem]. Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996).

The city began to resemble other imperial cities.⁸⁰⁹ Significantly, this was also the time that the ossuary appeared.

14.2 *Evidence of Receptivity in Life*

Noticeable Hellenistic innovations were implanted and perpetuated in Jerusalem during the Roman period in the realms of material culture, in the literary, artistic and architectural genres produced, as well as in social and religious conventions. I must examine these nuances and changes in the following domains.

a) *Material culture*

A visit to the archaeological excavations in the Old city of Jerusalem⁸¹⁰ known as the “Herodian Quarter”, reveals the lifestyle of those living in the Upper city, just before its destruction in 70 CE. Palaces, mansions and ordinary homes portray the cultural milieu of the nobility,⁸¹¹ priests, upper and merchant class. One sees richly ornamented homes with elegant hard limestone furniture,⁸¹² frescoes, stucco work, mosaic floors, bathing facilities, and luxury items. A fresco depicting a frieze motif known only from Rome (end of the

⁸⁰⁹ Especially, Herod’s politic was the reason that the city resembled other cities in the Empire. According to Hengel, “Jerusalem,” 293: [Herod] “hatte das Ziel, das jüdische Ethnos im Mutterland und in der Diaspora in das Römische Reich mit seiner *Pax Augusta* politisch und kulturell zu integrieren, ohne dass dabei die Juden ihre besondere religiöse Identität verlieren sollten, denn eben auf der Besonderheit dieses Volkes gründete auch seine besondere Macht und sein Einfluss, nicht nur als Klientelkönig im Osten, sondern im ganzen Reich.”

⁸¹⁰ Nahman Avigad, *Discovering Jerusalem* (Nashville, Camden, New York: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1980) 81.

⁸¹¹ This is generally assumed to be of the Sadducee faction, see Avigad, *Discovering Jerusalem*, 83.

⁸¹² See Magen, *Stone Vessel Industry*, 101-111, for particularly beautiful specimens of rectangular tables (monopodia) similar to Greco-Roman tables.

Second Style at the end of the first century BCE.⁸¹³) demonstrates the receptivity in lifestyle, particularly that of the wealthy, to foreign conventions. Apparently, Jews of some status during that era built their homes in accordance with the dominant fashion of the Hellenistic Roman period. Wealthy people ate from or used imported dinnerware, decanters, terra sigillata, thin-walled ware, Pompeian red ware and Italian amphorae; they furnished palaces and houses and decorated them with mosaics that easily rivaled those in Pompeii.

b) *Architecture*

Herodian Jerusalem was endowed with Greco-Roman monumental buildings. Besides his own palace and governmental buildings, Herod's public works included grandiose entertainment establishments - a theatre, an amphitheatre, and a hippodrome worthy of the proudest cities of the Roman Empire.⁸¹⁴ Herod even (re-)constructed the Temple according to the Greco-Roman model.⁸¹⁵

The Greco-Roman style of pools incorporated into palaces seems to have also inspired the incorporation of sophisticated aristocratic styles of *mikva'oth*, or ritual baths, into private Jewish homes.⁸¹⁶

c) *The use of the Greek language*

During this critical time period in Palestine, Aramaic, the *lingua franca* of the East, began to share the spotlight with Greek, the *lingua franca* of the Empire. In the course of time, due to the influx of Greek-speaking visitors to Jerusalem, and supported by an infrastructure of

⁸¹³ Avigad, *Discovering Jerusalem*, 103.

⁸¹⁴ Josephus, *Ant.* 15: 267-279.

⁸¹⁵ Benjamin Mazar, "The Archaeological Excavations near the Temple Mount" in *Jerusalem Revealed: Archaeology in the Holy City, 1968-1964*, ed. Y. Yadin (New haven: Yale University Press, 1976) 25-40.

⁸¹⁶ Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 45.

newly introduced Greek education, Greek was read, written, and spoken by not an insignificant proportion of the population. By the first century BCE people who spoke Aramaic would, at the same time and in certain circles, understand, read or speak a measure of Greek. The evidence can be seen in numerous Greek or bilingual inscriptions on monuments, as well as on ossuaries.⁸¹⁷ People eventually felt comfortable with both worlds. Hengel uses the phraseology: “breitere Volks-schichten.”⁸¹⁸ A good example of these trends can readily be seen on coins. Whereas ancient Jewish script was used on Hasmonaean coins before Alexander Janneaus, thereafter one begins to see a bilingual character: the Greek name of ruler and title, followed by the Hebrew name and title. Occasionally, bilingual inscriptions appeared on either side of the coin.⁸¹⁹

d) *Literature*

Jewish Erbauungsliteratur and propaganda literature began to be disseminated in Greek during the late Second Temple period. This included not only extra-canonical texts, but also ethical and eschatological-apocryphal works such as some of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Letter of Aristeas attesting to the translation of the Septuagint, Ben Sira, Jubilees, Judith, Enoch, and the Sybillene oracles.⁸²⁰ Ironically, even the staunchly anti-Hellenic work, 2 Maccabees, was written in the Greek language and style.⁸²¹ Jewish historiography, pioneered by Philo and Josephus, as well as Justus of Tiberias, and imbued with Greco-Roman culture, had its roots in this time period. Although one would expect a class of scholars to be familiar with

⁸¹⁷ Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 76, discusses whether the figure of 37% of ossuary inscriptions in Greek is an underestimate or an overestimate of the percentage of Greek-speakers in Jerusalem of the late Second Temple period.

⁸¹⁸ Hengel, “Jerusalem,” 296.

⁸¹⁹ Ya’akov Meshorer, *Ancient Jewish Coinage*. Vol. 2: *Herod the Great through Bar-Cochba* (New York:Amphore, 1982) 35-159.

⁸²⁰ Hengel, “Jerusalem,” 285.

⁸²¹ Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 45.

Greek, would it be equally valid to assume that the general populace knew Greek to the same extent? Again, the realia of Greek inscriptions found in very public places such as on the *soreg*⁸²² (protective parapet warning Gentiles of the limits of the Holy precinct) and on donation chests in the Temple,⁸²³ confirms a widespread knowledge of Greek on the part of the general population.

e) *Politics*

As noted by many scholars, the municipal government of Jerusalem contained typical Hellenistic elements of the Greek polis, such as archons (rulers), a boule (= city council) along with its bouleuterion (or city hall), a demos (a citizens' group), dekaprotoi (ten leaders) and a synedrion. These institutions have been mentioned by a variety of sources, including Josephus,⁸²⁴ and the Talmud.⁸²⁵ The subject has been rather controversial ever since Tcherikover cast doubt on the reliability of these sources;⁸²⁶ however, the current tendency is to accept the validity of the existence of these institutions, even though the extent of their power or even their exact identity, in such cases as the *sanhedrin*, remains in doubt.⁸²⁷ All of this points to a system of power that was in place in principle, but in practice was ultimately in the hands of the imperial government. In any case, none of the available sources ever point to opposition by the populace which was evidently receptive to the Greco-Roman system of government.

⁸²² Josephus, *Wars* 5, 193-194.

⁸²³ m Sheqalim 3:2.

⁸²⁴ Josephus, *Ant.* 20.11, 20.194; *Wars* 5.532, 6.354, 2.405.

⁸²⁵ jYoma 1.38c; jTa'anit 4.69a.

⁸²⁶ Victor Tcherikover, "Was Jerusalem a Polis?" *IEJ* 14 (1964): 61-78.

⁸²⁷ Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 84-90.

f) Religion

As in the Greco-Roman Empire, where it was not only fashion but also ideology, for all civilized peoples to worship a deity on a mountain, so too were Greek-speaking Jewish immigrants from the Diaspora mesmerized by the newly (re-)constructed Herodian Temple. Ultimately they may have perceived it in much the same manner as Zeus and Bal Shamen were seen in their respective societies, albeit without statues. The Greek-speaking immigrants were also responsible for the introduction of the diaspora-wide concept of a synagogue, previously unknown (and unnecessary) in Judea. We know of the synagogue of the Alexandrians⁸²⁸ as well as others⁸²⁹ - all within Jerusalem.

14.3 Evidence of Receptivity in Death

While daily life slowly adapted to the Greco-Roman culture, so too did funerary customs. As described in Part One of this thesis, three prominent aspects can be discerned:

- a) The Iron Age bench tomb, long used by Judeans, was now replaced by the *loculi*-tomb during the late second century or early first century BCE. Scholars agree on its novel character, differing only in their theories of its origin.⁸³⁰
- b) An individual receptacle - the Hellenistic coffin - suddenly appeared too. This was a drastic innovation, as it meant that only primary burial was taking place within such a *loculi*-tomb.
- c) Monumental tombs and *arcosolia* appeared, reflecting a significant appropriation of Hellenistic building techniques.⁸³¹ Some of the most famous ones are the Hasmonaean

⁸²⁸ tMegillah 2:17.

⁸²⁹ Acts 6:9.

⁸³⁰ Gonen, *Burial Patterns*, 124.

⁸³¹ The architectural features of some monumental tombs are reminiscent of those from Palmyra; but for the most part were copies of Hellenistic masterpieces, including such typical features as columns, Doric capitals, cornices and pyramids. Hans-Peter Kuhnen, *Palästina in griechisch-römischer Zeit*. ([Handbuch der

tombs in Modein, the tomb of Jason⁸³², the Sanhedryia tombs, the Jericho tombs and the Kidron Valley tombs. The arcosolia were designed specifically for display purposes, and in our context were used for the ossuaries. At the same time one sees the appearance of curses and similar formulae mimicking the Greco-Roman style of funerary inscriptions.

Even without this evidence of Hellenization in daily life, the flexibility demonstrated by the newly adopted burial customs alone would be sufficient to allow us to extrapolate the logic and to lead us to suspect that the ossuary too was a foreign convention.

14.4 *Limits to Hellenization in Jerusalem*

It is beyond the scope of this study to delve into the reasons for the receptivity of Judeans to Greco-Roman culture and customs. Whether or not the Jews had aspired early on to aggrandize the image of their Holy city in the eyes of the Greco-Roman world, or whether they simply claimed prior superiority of their Temple city and their Divine Law and had to pay the price for cosmopolitanism,⁸³³ as Hengel⁸³⁴ (with respect to Hellenic culture) or Levine (with respect to Roman culture) emphasized, is not really relevant. What is important, though, is that eventually, once the attitude was entrenched, all that followed was doubtless a matter of fashion. Here, I am merely interested in the nature and the extent of the phenomenon. We have already seen, above, the nature of Jerusalem's Hellenization, discernible in the material culture, in the literary genres produced, and its social and religious

Archäologie, Vorderasien II, 2]; München: C.H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1990, 80, describes these "Prunkgräber ein fremdes Phänomen." Very recently, Lothar Triebel treated the monumental tombs in the light of neighbouring cultures in *Jenseitshoffnung in Wort und Stein. Nefesch und Pyramidales Grabmal als Phänomene antiken jüdischen Bestattungswesens im Kontext der Nachbarkulturen* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

⁸³² Emile Puech, "Inscriptions funéraires palestiniennes: tombeau de Jason et ossuaires." *RB* 90 (1983/4) 481-533.

⁸³³ Bickerman, *Jews in the Greek Age*, 302.

⁸³⁴ Hengel, "Jerusalem, 285, speaks of "politische 'Weltgeltung.'"

conventions; we have yet to examine the degree to which Jews allowed themselves to be receptive.

Receptivity did indeed have its limits. Josephus reports that the populace's negative reaction to Herod's places of entertainment was limited only to the bloody amphitheatre, which had to be placed outside the city walls in order not to offend Jewish religious sensibilities.⁸³⁵ There seemed to be no serious objection, though, to the theater or hippodrome. Public baths, so prevalent in the Greco-Roman world, and adopted in Jerusalem as part of Herod's public works programme, were used primarily for ritual purposes rather than for recreation. Furthermore, these baths avoided the public display of the human body, and were in any case gender-segregated with maximum privacy. The installations had no statuary, nor were the heating systems allowed to function during the Sabbath.⁸³⁶

Limitations came to the fore when it concerned observance of the Sabbath, or else, with regard to dietary laws. The well-to-do Jerusalemites dined on imported Roman dinner ware, but served 'kosher' food.⁸³⁷ Again, religion dictated that there be no figure of God in the Temple, no statues in the streets, markets, baths, public places or even private homes. From the second century BCE to about the mid second century CE, one notes a restrictive attitude towards figural art. At most, some aniconic symbols such as cornucopiae, wheels, stars or floral representations, were accepted.⁸³⁸ In Jerusalem, there were no images of humans or animals in architecture, on coins, in mosaics or frescoes.

Jews were not averse to integrating foreign customs within their daily lives as long as they were within their symbolic cosmos. Rajak uses the word "modifications" to describe

⁸³⁵ Josephus *Ant.* 15. 268, 273-274.

⁸³⁶ This has recently been demonstrated by Yaron Z. Eliav, "The Roman Bath as a Jewish Institution: Another Look at the Encounter between Judaism and the Greco-Roman Culture," *JSJ* 31/4 (2000) 416-454.

⁸³⁷ Chemical analysis has so far confirmed the absence of traces of non-kosher food.

⁸³⁸ See Hengel, "Jerusalem," 297; Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 43-44.

the approach Judeans took while adopting Greco-Roman customs.⁸³⁹ I prefer to use the word “limitations,” instead.

Let us look at burial customs. In some respects they conformed to principles that were uncompromising; in certain other ways they were amenable to flexibility. Thus, the burial could take place in natural caves, in bench tombs, in loculi tombs or in arcosolia tombs. A body could be placed on a rock-cut shelf or into a stone or wooden box, as long as the flesh was allowed to decay, rather than to be cremated or exposed to animals. Furnishing of the tombs with funerary objects was subject to the interpretation of the Second Commandment. This interpretation was variable: A bull’s head on an ossuary, or birds painted on tomb walls were exceptional during Second Temple times. During the Roman-Byzantine period there was room for a more relaxed interpretation; thus, human figures, dolphins, swans, and eagles decorated Bet Shean’s catacombs.

In making the case for receptivity, I do not wish to diminish the argument for a conflict which certainly existed between Hellenism and Judaism during the Second Temple period.⁸⁴⁰ Receptivity is merely a proclivity for selective absorption of some innocuous customs, and does not preclude the people having to make a decision between acceptance or rejection of Hellenism as an ideology. I see merely that Jews during the Second Temple period were receptive to the customs of the Empire, as long as these customs did not confront the authorized limits of Torah law. Within this framework, then, and backed by the numerous

⁸³⁹ Rajak: “The Hasmonaeans and the Uses of Hellenism”, Davies, *A Tribute*, 1990, 261-280. “This could become a contentious matter and be seen as an assault on the Law, but often enough it was acceptable: there was no automatic contradiction between what was Jewish and what was Greek. Such a policy ... brought in its wake an undercurrent of diffused cultural change, of Hellenization in my sense of that term. In this, the Jews developed along lines similar to the peoples around them, in spite of the **modifications** wrought by the complexity of their inherited religious culture.”

⁸⁴⁰ Jonathan Goldstein, ‘Jewish Acceptance and Rejection of Hellenism,’ in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*, eds. E. P. Sanders, A. I. Baumgarten, and Alan Mendelson, vol. 2: *Aspects of Judaism in the Graeco-Roman Period* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981) 64-87.

other examples of receptivity, it is understandable how ossuary usage could have been easily received by the Judeans.

Chapter 15

The Origin of the Jewish Ossuary

15.1. *The Pagan ash urn, a new idea*

In applying the paradigm of a diffusion process to my case,⁸⁴¹ I consider the ash urn as the innovation, which signified “newness”⁸⁴² for Jerusalemites. An ash chest, of course was nothing new; it was invented in high antiquity when people began producing pottery for all kinds of storage purposes, including that of keeping cremated remains safe. But as Everett M. Roberts points out,⁸⁴³

It matters little, so far as human behavior is concerned, whether or not an idea is objectively new as measured by the lapse of time since its first use or discovery. ... if the idea seems new to the individual, it is an innovation.

I may assume, therefore, that at some time towards the end of the first century BCE the Hellenistic ash chest signaled a “new idea” that Judeans became aware of, attracted to, and hence decided to put into use.⁸⁴⁴

Of interest to me now is to consider the “new idea” as a technical innovation.⁸⁴⁵ The ash urn denotes technology designed to best keep human remains safe as a matter of filial duty, piety, pollution, world view, and social obligations. Rogers speaks aptly, then, of “hardware” and “software” components⁸⁴⁶ of the innovation.

⁸⁴¹ See Perry, “Diffusion Theories,” 674-681.

⁸⁴² The attribute of an innovation, Rogers, *Diffusion*, 11.

⁸⁴³ Rogers, *Diffusion*, 11.

⁸⁴⁴ See Rogers, *Diffusion*, 11, identification as “newness” of an innovation.

⁸⁴⁵ Rogers, *Diffusion*, 12-15, explains that research pertains usually to technical innovations whereby the term innovation and technology are synonyms.

⁸⁴⁶ Rogers, *Diffusion*, 12.

The first component, “consisting of the tool that embodies the technology as material or a physical object,”⁸⁴⁷ the hardware, is inherent in *material culture* - in our case the ash urn. Here the physical ‘housing’ of the technology, is manufactured in the form of a small rectangular or box shaped, tangible container made of limestone that is closed off by a lid and which is occasionally decorated and inscribed.

This design embeds the second component, namely the software, described by Rogers as the “information base for the tool,”⁸⁴⁸ that is, what it is, the way(s) it is used, and how it functions in this capacity. As applied to the ash urn, the information base is the programme set out for a secondary burial container for ashes. The instructions are to keep the cremated remains of one individual safe. The design works when the cinerary remains are collected and placed within the space and the latter sealed.

The inventor of this design originated the idea by observing cremation followed by the collection of remains at a predetermined place of burial. The basic technology involved the creation of an individual, durable *container* large enough to *receive and store* the full amount of cremated remains in a final location. The basic design, though, is flexible to some extent; it is neither restricted to ash, nor to exterior style, nor sophistication, nor maximum size.

Our particular design as an individual container, in contrast to a space dug in the ground, encodes additional information - for example, the aspect of mobility, the aspect of tangibility, and the aspect of visibility and impressionability, especially if it is to be inscribed or decorated. It may thus draw attention to the outer appearance of the tool as well as the content within.

In all, the ash urn is a simple design that is easy to understand and to use. It has a certain flexibility in making allowance in the hardware component for adjustment in dimensions (depending whether large fragments of burnt bones are to be accommodated or

⁸⁴⁷ Rogers, *Diffusion*, 12.

⁸⁴⁸ Rogers, *Diffusion*, 12.

not), style, and workmanship without affecting or compromising the basic function of safekeeping.

Significantly, Rogers points to the “social embedding of the hardware aspect of a technology.”⁸⁴⁹ Sociologists emphasize that objects represent not only functional relationships but also social relations. People use the ash chests, for example, not only in relation to the deceased but also for communication with other living people. Robbins describes this eloquently when he speaks about texts (a kind of material culture) not only as “tools” for people to communicate information but also as a “tool” among people.

According to the theory of influence, over a long enough period of time, wherein Jewish culture encountered other cultures, the ash chest technology became known and was communicated to Judeans. I shall now follow the mechanism of the diffusion process and speculate how it worked in the case of ash chests. *A priori* I therefore take the archaeological evidence of ossuaries as the successful implementation of an innovation- decision process in which an individual Jewish innovator became aware of ash urns, attracted to the idea encoded therein, and made the decision to use it in the tomb of his family at the appropriate occasion.⁸⁵⁰ I shall investigate how this decision came about. In the process it will be seen that it was not so simple, and that in order for the idea to be implemented, in pre-70 CE Judean society, the Jewish innovator had to re-invent the innovation precisely because he was a Jew who was bound by non-negotiable cultural constraints that guided his decisions and actions. The Herodian ossuary thus came into being by a fascinating process of re-contextualization and reconfiguration of an invention originating in other societies.

⁸⁴⁹ Rogers, *Diffusion*, 13.

⁸⁵⁰ Rogers, *Diffusion*, 252-280. Compared to the average person an innovator is characterized by greater “formal education, higher socioeconomic status, more exposure to inter-personal channels, more social participation, and more cosmopolite.” His venturesomeness explains his risk-taking. He acts by “launching the new idea in the system by importing the innovation from outside of the system’s boundaries” (p.264) .

15.2 *The making of the Ossuary: An Innovation-Decision process*

At some point, Judeans learned about the existence of cinerary chests in a distant society, either by hearsay or by a chance encounter during a trip abroad. They became aware that Pagans made ‘nice’ stone boxes for the ashes of the dead.⁸⁵¹ However, a Jewish person’s interest need not go any further than a simple awareness of what Romans or Ephesians did with their dead. One reason for this scenario could be that the information was irrelevant⁸⁵² from a position of indifference to other nations’ activities, or from a position that it had no bearing on the situation in Jewish tombs and burial techniques. Though this irrelevance is sometimes argued in scholarship, my position, naturally, is that Jewish individuals did process information that passed by them and did indeed devise meanings for this new knowledge which led to some evaluation or assessment of usefulness.

It has been asserted that people are receptive to message communication in the first place because of their predisposition towards it, whether because of a need for such information or simply because of compatible attitudes. It has further been maintained that

⁸⁵¹ The various groups of *ostothekai* in different regions of Asia Minor had production time lines that differed from each other. I suggest that a diffusion process had been at the works here as well, starting with a given location - presumably on the coastline in Eastern Asia Minor and spreading towards the West. Some imperial provinces adopted cremation and the associated container even later than the Judeans adopted secondary burial into modified ash urns. For the non-Jewish societies, the secondary burial container for ashes meant the adoption of *cremation* and its consequential collecting of the remains from the provisional location into such a container as the best possible option. (Essentially it was a change of burial method). Innovators in societies practicing exposure would receive the new idea to collect remains from the provisional place into such a container as the best possible option (instead of the hewn space in the tombs). Jewish society received the new idea as collecting remains from a primary burial into such a container as the best possible option. In all cases, the message of the ash urn was simply secondary burial. Within the empire the consequence was that many societies had the same style of burial: people collected remains in similar kinds of burial containers even though each was a different manifestation of change.

⁸⁵² This point is made by Rogers, *Diffusion*, 167, who points out that knowledge of an innovation does not necessarily mean adopting it and names one of the reason “because an individual may know about a new idea but not regard it relevant to the individual’s situation, and as potentially useful.”

such needs might be created in the perception of the knower once he learns of the existence of the new idea. It makes sense to assume that the Jewish innovator, hearing of ash urns and absorbing the messages of this design, perceived certain needs that this new idea might address.

Thus, information about ash urns was of interest to the Jewish individual of this period; inevitably, it led to a mental process for assessing, evaluating and making a decision to adopt this idea as a course of action that best served his interest in achieving certain goals. This ultimately brought about the manufacture of the typical Herodian ossuary in local Judean quarries. I follow this process in terms of an innovation-decision process as described by Everett M. Rogers,⁸⁵³

The *innovation-decision process* is the mental process through which an individual (or other decision-making unit) passes from first knowledge of an innovation to forming an attitude toward the innovation, to a decision to adopt or reject, to implementation of the new idea, and to confirmation of this decision. This process consists of a series of actions and choices over time through which an individual (or an organization) evaluates a new idea and decides whether or not to incorporate the innovation into ongoing practice.

15.2.1 *The Knowledge Stage*⁸⁵⁴

The Jewish innovator learned of ash urns and registered the information encoded in a container-type repository for calcined bones. He presumably took note of and became interested in the innovation because of its association with secondary burial and because of his receptivity towards this kind of message. This disposition is formed from needs that are created by observing the capacities of the burial container, but it is influenced by existing attitudes towards burial techniques and their functions consistent with the innovation. The

⁸⁵³ Our intention, though, is not to establish a simulated process of diffusion of the ossuaries, starting in Jerusalem, over their time and space based on the data available, which seems a fascinating project for the future. For example, investigations into the adopter categories or the rate of adoption.

⁸⁵⁴ Rogers, *Diffusion*, 162-167.

innovator is interested in the message of ash urns because he sees it as a solution for or as fulfillment of newly perceived needs and wishes.

Rogers raises the interesting point that “dispositions of individuals influence their behaviour towards the communication message and the effect such messages would have.”⁸⁵⁵

I may speculate that the Jewish innovator was attracted by the information communicated in ash urns because he suddenly recognized⁸⁵⁶ a problem in the area of tomb burial technique that the new idea, if adopted, could address, given that it was consistent with his or her existing attitudes. Specifically, he or she considered a receptacle for collected remains relevant for his burial situation because in the tomb, bones were always being moved from one place to some other place or repository. On a more psychological level, and aside from this practical aspect, there is the quality of newness of the innovation which lodged in his (subconscious) mind and which attracted him enough to lead him to consider the object in the first place.

Once the individual becomes predisposed towards the communicated message, the stage is set to form a favourable (or unfavorable) attitude which is, of course, vital in the next stage- that of persuasion.

15.2.2 *The Persuasion Stage*⁸⁵⁷

In this stage, the innovator has to develop a favourable attitude towards the new idea, incorporated in the ash urn, that will lead to adoption of this object and consequently influence burial behaviour. He must become psychologically involved. He must picture

⁸⁵⁵ Rogers, *Diffusion*, 164: “Individuals expose themselves to ideas that are in accordance with their interests, needs, and existing attitudes.”

⁸⁵⁶ See Rogers, *Diffusion*, 164.

⁸⁵⁷ For Persuasion Stage, see Rogers, *Diffusion*, 167- 171. I take persuasion in the understanding of Rogers (167 *) who defines it to mean an “attitude formation and change on the part of an individual” without the connotation as an intended “induced attitude change in a desired direction on the part of the receiver.”

himself using a container at the appropriate time for his parents or else imagine his own final burial in this way. He must evaluate the advantages and consequences before he can declare that he would like to use or adopt it.

As mentioned above, there are two aspects to the attractiveness of the ash urn - the newness itself and the newness of the idea. The quality of newness affects those who want to be in style, to be in phase with the imperial elite. The newness of the idea incorporates both the needs for compatibility and for advantage, as mentioned above. Therefore, a favourable attitude is formed only if the new idea is compatible⁸⁵⁸ with the innovator's prevailing practices and if it shows some additional advantage.

How were these factors actually perceived? Compatibility is perceived in terms of consistency with what the innovator's family was doing currently, with what it needed, or with what it respected highly and held dearly. In analyzing this outcome, I need to distinguish between the two very different burial techniques in use at that time period. There was (1) the longstanding tradition of secondary burial in varied forms, on the one hand, and (2) primary and permanent coffin - or kokh-burial, on the other hand. Depending on the type of family to which the innovator belonged, he would perceive things differently. Although I suspect that the innovator belonged to the latter category of tomb owners, I must consider both scenarios and assess the issues of compatibility and advantage for both innovator (1) and (2).

Perception of compatibility

The innovation, in general, was used in a tomb setting which was of importance to Jerusalem's society. Tomb burial had a longstanding tradition as a social institution - a collective burial facility for a social unit, that is, for a family (or household) or a group of unrelated individuals who acquired a tomb for this purpose (for example, single immigrants who bound together as former "townsfolk.") Even though the innovation would create clear

⁸⁵⁸ Rogers, *Diffusion*, 168.

boundaries between burials, nonetheless, just like before, all those who were eligible to occupy a particular tomb could still do so even when using this new technology.

For innovator (1) one can see consistency in the ways that the skeletons were handled over the time period that the tomb was being used. There was still the physical touching of the bones for the purpose of collecting and moving them to some other place or location in the tomb. There was still a disturbance of the primary burial. Instead of moving bones into a pit or into a small niche, innovator (1) can see himself placing the bones into a prepared, individual container. The only thing which has changed is the kind of space.

For innovator (2), as a member of a family that had adopted one-time-only burial, the new idea also meant a single change - one of attitude. Coffin and sealed kokh-burial signified the intention of a permanent burial location in the space provided for the deceased person. By switching to a secondary burial container, at the time of the next funeral, the innovator would have to collect bones. Did that in fact signal a step backwards? In order to answer this question, one needs to realize that the coffin itself, along with the loculi-tomb plan, had been adopted as a fashion from a society that, as a norm, practiced earth burial and developed the coffin as a 'grave-box' and, in this mode of disposal, never collected skeletal remains⁸⁵⁹. (But this was merely an implant by a minority into a longstanding burial tradition of secondary burial in tombs). For a Jew, the meaning of a coffin was the permanence of a sealed burial space. Now, with the adoption of the ossuary, he changed his attitude, gave up the coffin and went back to the longstanding habit of handling bones that a tomb situation had fostered. In this way, then, the ossuary would designate up-to-date fashionable newness and not a step backwards.

In this time period, the constraint imposed by the notion of 'disturbing one's eternal sleep,' had not yet been developed, and so the longstanding tradition of cave burial was still being practiced. A secondary burial container would have its place and would indeed be consistent with the burial manner in many tombs in Jerusalem. Since there was no constraint

⁸⁵⁹ At the time, secondary burial was still normal behaviour in Jewish society. It is very possible that not every member in the household was granted a coffin; thus, the regular mode of cave burial applied.

placed on secondary burial, it was not even conceived of as mere exception. Rather, it would be compatible to turn to the usage of a secondary burial container as a permanent place of burial and to collect the bones - all this, within the parameters of acceptable behaviour.

If the coffin (in conjunction with the kokh) had meant an extravagant luxury item in terms of energy expenditure, with the protection requirement fulfilled by the long burial niche, such a need would also be met and maintained by the innovative secondary burial container. The ossuary too could be considered as superfluous and luxurious in the tomb, but at a fraction of the cost in space. The same protection could be afforded to the bones by any convenient burial niche. If the coffin had served the role of an individual, private place of burial, then the new fashion too could just as easily meet this need.

Let us now consider the information about the ash urn's role in cremation and its possible effect. Did this context engender unease or even an unfavorable attitude that would have led to rejection of the innovation? The rational Judean would not likely have been disturbed. While it is true that the design of the technology was developed within the context of cremation, the mode of disposal of the corpse was not really relevant in the end. After all, I defined the basic technology of the ash urn as a place to safeguard the collected remains. It did not matter if the bones were totally burnt or bare. Being flexible in design, the innovation worked independently of the method of disposal of the corpse as long as the outcome of the disposal yielded remains that were intended to be collected. In other words, the practice of collecting remains created the compatibility in behaviour. Flexibility with the dimension of the housing meant that larger parts could be accommodated.

The issue of Jewish sensibility pertains to the disposal of the corpse, not to the disposal of the remains. The attribute of 'burning' associated with the innovation could easily be repressed. Calcined bones simply spoke the language of 'bone,' particularly when the ash urn itself had been introduced as an 'ostotheke.' Furthermore, the Jewish innovator would not actually re-use an ash container, but rather implement the idea of a container per se in a local production. Therefore, the innovative idea 'worked' independently of the actual method of disposal of the flesh.

Another issue that needs to be addressed is the matter of decoration. Motifs of decor had to be re-configured into acceptable designs according to the ethos of Late Second Temple times. I have already mentioned this issue in speaking of the quality and mind set of the adopter society. On the surface, ash urns which were decorated with human and animal images were incompatible with existing traditions of aniconic design in Jerusalem. However, the innovator could see that the basic function of the technology was not at all affected by any working of the housing, since there was complete freedom to decorate or not, according to the taste or sensibility of the adopter.

Perception of Advantage

Innovator (1) knew from experience that bones would be removed either into the collective pit in the centre of the tomb floor, or possibly into a hewn niche somewhere in the tomb, or even onto a pile on the 'bench' or in the kokh. The alternative 'grave' was thus a collective place of burial, an unprotected cloth wrapper, or a sealed hewn niche. Thus, one may certainly assume that the innovation - our ossuary- was perceived as an advantage in the sense of being an individual,⁸⁶⁰ personal 'mini-tomb' or 'grave,' together with all that goes along with a tangible and visible space. The advantages of a secondary burial container were therefore multiple: its visibility, its esthetics, its identity as a private space for one individual, its nature as a place where the bereaved could be consoled and where the innovator could be remembered or commemorated safely and identifiably by later generations, particularly on the anniversary of death. It additionally had the capacity to display the family's wealth and status.

It may be argued that visibility was not such an important issue, considering that no object in Jewish tombs was so exposed to view that it would warrant this attribute, especially if the container were to be sealed in a niche. However, it is my contention that there was,

⁸⁶⁰ Dina Teitelbaum, *The Relationship between Ossuary Burial and the Belief in Resurrection during late Second Temple Period Judaism* (MA Dissertation. Ottawa: Carleton University, 1997) 154. This is also the thrust of Fine's interpretation for the origin of the ossuary, see above.

nevertheless, a certain satisfaction to have supplied this “visibility” at least for the time that ossilegium occurred. Also, the evidence shows that in order to guarantee this visibility, a special effort was undertaken to carve out many niches in the cave, as seen in fig. 3.2 , with the item was prominently displayed in the tomb. This supports my view that visibility was certainly valued by innovator (1).

There were several additional factors which made the ossuary attractive to Judeans. Moreover, these can be recognized from the style which was eventually adopted. Quite often ossuaries were designed to look like miniature houses, with gabled roofs and simulated doorways, exactly as the tombs themselves in which they were deposited. Thus, one can regard ossuaries as mini-tombs within a tomb. The ossuary was sometimes equipped with simulated cushions in order to evoke a level of comfort which the deceased enjoyed in his home while alive. Clearly this was an indication that the ossuary was perceived perhaps as an eternal home for the bones. After death the deceased was memorialized, especially if the ossuary was inscribed with his name and status. Those who believed in resurrection did not need to consider it as an eternal home, but rather only as a temporary one, until the coming of the Messiah when the bones would be revived. In the meantime, the use of ossuaries was an important symbol and statement of family unity and participation, while to outsiders the ossuary and its tomb were a signal of ownership by a particular family. Of course, use of the ossuaries would be attractive and acceptable if - and only if - the root principles of interment (as opposed to cremation) and the use of simple geometric designs (as opposed to sculpture), if any, could be implemented. This was indeed the case.

Clearly, then, we see that there were multiple attractions to the ossuary. Only one, any one, though, sufficed to persuade the innovator. Nonetheless, the choice or range of attractions could guarantee that everyone would see something valuable and beneficial in the ossuary. The variety of attractions is reflected, of course, in the variety of theories propounded by modern scholars for the origin of the ossuary, when in fact there was no single reason. Intriguingly, it was all in the eyes of the beholder - both ancient and modern!

I must still assess how the new design was advantageous for innovator (2) whose kin had already been using an individual receptacle and for whom there was already a measure of visibility in place. The coffin provided visibility as much as the innovation did. As was stated above, for innovator (2) one speculates that it was the novelty itself that offered the advantage. This distinct characteristic was an aspect that had once identified the coffin as well, until this quality began to wane over time for the innovator. Now the secondary burial container provided this innovation characteristic.

In the persuasion stage, the innovator begins to think hypothetically:⁸⁶¹ What are the consequences? There are indeed costs involved but they are not too high. There is a means of burial already prepared for him. There is no longer the uncertainty about his eventual fate. Innovator (2) was better off. He could anticipate a coffin, possibly a kokh also, if his son would be able to enlarge the cave and add another loculus. However, it was different in the First Temple period. Anyone then knew pretty well that all people's remains were collected into a communal repository. It is hard for the innovator to avoid a favourable attitude.

Is it possible to uphold the theory of diffusion if I argue that re-configuration of the Pagan decor and re-contextualization needed to take place such that the original invention looked different than the later aniconic implementation? Diffusion research has, in fact, shown that this happened all the time, especially when innovations were flexible in their design. As Rogers put it:⁸⁶²

An innovation is not necessarily invariant during the process of its diffusion. And adopting an innovation is not necessarily the passive role of just implementing a standard template of the new idea.

The success rate in adoption obviously increases if an innovation can accommodate many more of the potential adopters' requirements. This is true even if it is only a minor change in order to present the innovation as an indigenous design. In the case of modifying

⁸⁶¹ Rogers, *Diffusion*, 168.

⁸⁶² Rogers, *Diffusion*, 264.

a detail, because of cultural constraint, researchers speak of diffusion as a "stimulus diffusion or idea diffusion."⁸⁶³ This is exactly what happened in the case of the ossuary. I can agree here with Rahmani's ~~early statement~~ ^{of ash-collection} that the Pagan cremation practice acted as a "trigger" for the Jewish ossuary. As a consequence I follow this idea right up to its implementation, noting that if something acts as a trigger, it ^{has} ~~influences~~ ^d the adopters in some capacity.

I assess the re-invention as the birth or origin of the Jewish ossuary. With the re-invention of the Pagan ash urn now wearing Jewish garb, it continues as a local phenomenon. The adopters in Jewish society have, in effect, created a slightly different innovation-decision process than the first innovator, to whom I will return later. For now, after we find that there is consistency of the new idea or the potential to erase the inconsistency, we continue to address the issue of a perception of advantage that led to a positive evaluation of the innovation. Table 4.1 summarizes the perceived messages of the ossuary.

⁸⁶³ See Alf L. Kroeber, *Anthropology* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc.: 1948) 368-369, 691, for this concept. He considers stimulus diffusion as the re-invention of an element transmitted across a cultural boundary in order to bring it into harmony with the values of the recipient culture.

15.2.3 The Rhetoric of the Ossuary

Characteristics of the plain artifact	Capacity of the artifact	Meaning of the artifact
Bounded space	Receiving burials Holding burials within Holding burials on their own Holding burials apart Holding burials intact	Economy of space Boundaries Order vs. chaos individual vs. collective distinction vs. anonymity privilege vs. insignificance, unity of parts vs. scatter
Visible Space	Attraction to burial Drawing to workmanship and material	Conspicuous vs. inconspicuous impressive vs. simple Marker vs. anonymity
Tangible Space	Protectiveness of stone	Permanence
Mobile space	Transferring of burials moving of burials	Mobility vs localization
Closed-off space	Prevention from intrusion or extrusion of some danger Having burials concealed Inaccessibility to burials within	Safety vs. harm Privacy vs. public Concealment vs visible
Small space	Limitation of quantity buried Limitation of dimensions	individual vs. communal disarticulated burial vs. articulated post-burial disturbance
Man-made space	Familial duty Manufactured product	Personal attention Luxury
Extra Features	<i>Additional, explicit or amplified language, capacities and meanings</i>	
Epigraphy	Identity of buried individual Expression of ideas, values, beliefs and attitudes of people shaped into product	Communicability Remembrance Propaganda
Art	Expression of ideas, values, beliefs, attitudes, and wishes of people shaped into product	Opportunity for aesthetics Communicability Consolation

More importantly, still, is the advantage that lies in the nature of newness of the innovation. We recall that the coffin (as well as the loculus) in the Greek world was originally a transplant of a 'grave' into the collective facility of a tomb, as a fashion. If this coffin meant new fashion for the family of innovator (2), he surely would exchange a coffin for the secondary burial container which was now in vogue in the Empire; in other words, he would take this chance to demonstrate that he is 'in style.' The advantage in the newness was the connotation of being "civilized", i.e. doing what societies in the Empire do, those which carry the dominant and significant culture of which Judea itself was a subculture. The provision of a coffin in a tomb was, first of all, the fashion in the Hellenistic world, and secondly, an assurance of knowledge of the final place of burial. The Judean could will its execution and even determine how it was to be done. Therefore, for the same reason that his forebears had adopted the Hellenistic coffin, innovator (2) would perceive the advantage of adopting a new innovation and would be attracted to it. One sees this change in Jericho where coffin burial ended and ossuaries appeared. I have to concede, however, that this is applicable only to the kind of people who had both the means and the status to be granted the privilege of a luxury item within a tomb setting. Others in Jericho's tombs, however, continued the practice which did not involve any costs nor claim any special treatment, namely wooden coffins.⁸⁶⁴

Aside from engaging in mental exercises as to how this new idea could be made to work, the innovator had to consider social prestige as part of the persuasion stage. The innovator had to consider how other people would react. Would his innovative idea be accepted, and would it confirm his position or status in the eyes of others? He anticipated that the judgement process would continuously involve challenge and riposte. This raised some uncertainty and anxiety that had to be overcome.

Innovator (1) might think that his peers would consider a burial container pretentious, since one individual would be set above others. He would worry if the rest of the family would reject it for reasons of tradition. Innovator (2)'s family had already set a precedent

⁸⁶⁴ For the coffins at Jericho and a detailed description see Hachlili, *Jericho*, 60-92.

since they had, in previous generations, indulged in a new and accepted mode of burial. He might worry, though, if his forebears would like this innovation. Nonetheless, he would probably ultimately impose his own wishes and later justify his decisions based on the advantages he gave to his parent. This applied also to other people who knew about his new idea, since others after him would like it too, considering the advantages, its acceptable costs, and the abundance and accessibility of raw materials and workmen.

In summary, then, the new idea would be perceived as basically compatible and of comparative advantage, setting the stage for the innovator to make a decision.

15.2.4 *Decision Stage*

I begin with the premise that people act purposively based on subjective preferences (such as attraction to newness) followed by rational decision-making (including evaluation of advantages and anticipated reactions and pay-offs). Thus, after having become aware of the innovation and assessing it during the knowledge and persuasion stages respectively, the innovator now, in the decision stage, makes a rational choice⁸⁶⁵ to adopt it or not, as per Rogers' definition of adoption: "a decision to make full use of an innovation as the best course of action available"⁸⁶⁶ for attaining a goal. If the innovator has already been totally persuaded during the second stage by the perceived advantages of either improving the re-burial process or of obtaining social approval of a fashion statement or both, then the decision process is a foregone conclusion. If, on the other hand, the innovator is left with some doubts, for example concerning an hypothetical ideological stigma attached to an ostotheke, then he must make a value judgement. Acceptance by society would vindicate his choice; on the other hand, rejection would guarantee that the invention would sink into oblivion.

⁸⁶⁵ Durk H. Hak, "Rational Choice Theory," *Encyclopedia of Religion and Society* (William H. Swatos Jr. ed.; Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 1998) 403.

⁸⁶⁶ Rogers, *Diffusion*, 171.

I summarize the decision stage by suggesting that the new idea was indeed perceived both as being advantageous and compatible with the innovator's needs, past experiences, and values. The ossuary represented an elegant solution for storing bones in an alternative space that could compare with and even outdo other options which existed at the time. Its uncomplicated, attractive design led to the appreciation of the new idea manifest in the ash urn. Moreover, the possibility of adjustment to local traditions fostered the decision to go ahead and make use of it. Both innovator (1) and innovator (2) felt that it was worth considering this move.

15.2.5 Implementation Stage

Up to now, I have investigated the role of the innovator on a microscopic level. Once the decision was made to adopt the chest, and a prototype ossuary was manufactured in Jerusalem's quarries, the innovator's role ended. Diffusion then continued with the ^{influential role of the} adopters' ^{in Jerusalem's society} role. The implementation stage began the moment the stone chest was commissioned and masons (possibly with an artistic flair) were engaged in manufacturing the new product based on the innovator's vision.

During the implementation stage, the re-invention was thus carried out by "individuals with preferences, who are embedded within a socio-cultural context that both structures and restricts their actions."⁸⁶⁷ In our case, this meant aniconic decorations on a box made in Judea and devoted entirely to bones, rather than to ash. Only then did the new idea become institutionalized and regularized in Judean society.

The end point of the implementation stage is a matter of arbitrary definition. For example, one could identify it mathematically as the point in time when the rate of usage no longer displayed transient features; or alternatively as one generation after its first introduction. At that point in time the son did what his father did, and ossuaries became a tradition by definition. This process was repeated until another fashion would emerge.

⁸⁶⁷ Hak, "Rational Choice Theory," 403.

15.2.6 *Confirmation stage*

The final stage - that of confirmation - required acceptance in the eyes of relevant others.⁸⁶⁸ At the time of ossilegium, the first user was scrutinized. Confirmation that the innovation was a good idea came not only verbally from family and neighbours, but also from the subsequent commissioning of ossuaries on the part of others. These people, the larger audience, became the early adopters - those who influenced societal opinion. This was followed eventually by institutionalization of the artifact and the development of Rabbinic literature. Confirmation reached its peak when the ruling class also participated. Ossuary inscriptions show us that members of the elite and members of professions or associations did indeed participate. The huge number of ossuaries discovered so far indicates that ossuary burial quickly stopped being an innovation, and moved instead into becoming a tradition, willed from father to son. I must conclude, then, that the product was certainly gratifying to the people at the time.

We know, though, that some tombs of that time period did not contain any ossuary. This indicates that there were a significant number of Judeans who either did not care much about the idea of spending money on the deceased in the family, or who were simply not interested in making a fashion statement.

In summary, I propose that the implementation of the modified ash chest signifies the origin of the Jewish bone chest in Judea. The decision to implement the innovation was made by the first commissioners of stone chests in Jerusalem though not before a significant “re-invention” took place in terms of “reconfiguration” and “re-contextualization.” In fact, the processes that made the ash urn acceptable and fit for use in Judean society are to me the most fascinating part to note. (One might well have guessed that this would be the case, based on the examples of historical Jewish receptivity which I had examined earlier). The ossuary had its roots in the longstanding traditions of cave deposit, and its physical origin was generated within Jewish culture as the result of “re-invention” of a foreign *ostotheke*. Yet, the result or end product had a distinctly “Jewish stamp” on it!

⁸⁶⁸ Durk H. Hak, “Rational Choice Theory, 403.

15.2.7 *Discontinuance*

The ossuary phenomenon has thus far been interpreted as a diffusion process of secondary burial containers originating from abroad, facilitated by a stimulus diffusion in Judea alongside a cosmetic re-invention involving artistic design and the use of local quarries and craftsmen in the context of inhumation. We know, however, that the ossuary phenomenon did not continue; Jews no longer use a secondary burial container. In the framework of innovation diffusion, we understand this effect as a type of a replacement discontinuance, a “decision to reject an idea in order to adopt a better idea that supersedes it. It is time to examine this in greater detail in the closing chapter of the disappearance of the ossuary.

Chapter 16:

The Disappearance of the Ossuary Phenomenon

Ossuaries were quite prominent in Jerusalem up to 70 CE. Indeed, Jerusalem was, as expected, the diffusion centre for Judean society as well as the locale where production had started. Diffusion generally proceeds smoothly over time and space. One could assume that, even taking into account the upheaval caused by the military-political disasters of 70 CE, the phenomenon should nevertheless have continued to spread to other cities and towns over time, and that in these towns the innovators would be followed by a large number of adopters. However, curiously, one does not see this phenomenon in the rest of Roman Palestine in Jewish population areas to the same extent as in pre-70 CE Jerusalem.

One must wonder, then, why the diffusion was stifled? The availability of masons, artisans or raw materials in the second / third century CE certainly was not the problem. Building and quarrying did continue; large sarcophagi and stone coffins were produced. Other material, namely clay, continued to propel the idea of a secondary burial container. 70 CE was thus not the end of the diffusion period, according to the archaeological record. The diffusion process was still continuing into the second and third century CE, albeit on a much smaller scale. Why, then, was the diffusion process no longer so successful; why was it ultimately interrupted?

Discontinuance, as one may term it, was not due to disenchantment with the artifact that people were producing. Apparently, there was no longer any use for the idea of secondary burial containers because people no longer collected bones as an institutionalized custom. This apparent change or break with tradition certainly deserves our attention.

Opinions:

At the outset, one is able to rule out the theory that the termination of ossuary burial was due to imperial legislation. Such possibility had been advanced by Cumont,⁸⁶⁹ who referred to the ordinance *Διάταγμα Καίσαρος* (promulgated by Augustus or his first successors). According to this Roman law, the displacement or exhumation of corpses was proscribed as an infringement on the honour of one's dead parents, who "must not be moved"⁸⁷⁰ from their burial place. Offenders were to suffer capital punishment. Cumont sees in the Jewish practice of removing the skeletal remains to caskets such a disrespectful behaviour towards which the Roman law was directed; he conjectures that this consequently caused the abolishment of ossuaries in the second century CE. We know, however, that ossuary burial did not end at the time the ordinance was issued,⁸⁷¹ and furthermore, that the ossuary signified an honourable place of burial, the latter being the Roman law's concern.

Rahmani⁸⁷² discusses two reasons for the cessation of ossilegium and therefore the use of the bone chest. First, he views the spiritualization of the concept of the resurrection in the third century as the reason that ossilegium - the "most acceptable method of preserving the complete remains of the deceased for resurrection" - was abandoned.⁸⁷³ I do not agree with Rahmani's exposition because the decline of ossuary burial occurred several generations before the spiritualization, propounded by Rahmani, began. Second, Rahmani argues that with the increased mobility, Judeans might not have been able to take care of secondary burials. But this would mean that all families would have been moving. Furthermore, ossilegium was important enough an event that family members would not have been discouraged from carrying out their pious duty towards their parents.

⁸⁶⁹ F. Cumont, "Les ossuaires juifs et le *Διάταγμα Καίσαρος*," *Syria* 14 (1933) 223-24.

⁸⁷⁰ Cumont, "Les ossuaires juifs," 223, and n.1 for reference of the publication of the text.

⁸⁷¹ Cumont did admit to this but his explanation is not convincing. "Les ossuaires juifs," 224.

⁸⁷² RCat, 54-55.

⁸⁷³ Since I have already rejected the notion that ossuary usage depended on a belief in resurrection, then its demise can hardly depend on it either.

Finally, the speculation of a possible cause-and-effect relationship between the Christian use of reliquaries and the discontinuation of the use of ossuaries by Jews, cannot be substantiated and we see, along with McCane,⁸⁷⁴ the problem in the gap between the last ossuary and the evidence of reliquaries which appeared only as late as the fourth and fifth century CE. Figure 12.4 shows in fact that the rate of adoption of ossuaries reached a peak around 70 CE. If one assumes that eventually a new and better idea supplanted the idea of secondary burial container, then one must first identify the new idea and second, assess how and why it was better.

New things appear because they function better in solving a problem. For example, in medicine, one drug is discarded when a better one is found. Looking at the burial situation, economy of space was one bonus advantage brought about by secondary burial. However, it was not the secondary burial container itself which saved space; rather, this was the function of bone collection with or without a tangible receptacle. Instead, I have argued, the secondary burial container in Judea was adopted as an invention from abroad. It appeared because the ash urn signaled novelty and captured attention for its quality aspect of simply being new. Without any knowledge of ash urns or of ash chests, there would not have been an ossuary. Similarly, the ossuary was replaced by something else, the coffin or sarcophagus, which was new and relevant to the populace, as a consequence of yet another new diffusion process. Figure 12.3 shows the time line for the appearance of sarcophagi in Judea. Significantly and not surprisingly, it coincided with the decline and disappearance of ossuary usage.

Like ossuaries, sarcophagi and coffins were not invented to respond to an apparent problem. As in the case of the Hellenistic wooden coffin, a container for the corpse was provided as the place of burial occupying a certain location in the tomb. It is my contention that this manner of burial was now in fashion. At the very least, new hardware was suddenly

⁸⁷⁴ Byron R. McCane, "Bones of Contention? Ossuaries and Reliquaries in Early Judaism and Christianity," *The Second Century* 8/4 (1991) 235-46.

being used. It is probable that this vogue started simply: a set of bones had already been collected and much later, as an afterthought, the container or coffin may have been provided.

What happened in the innovation decision process here? The persuasion lay in the fact that, again, relevant other members in this group were using it. In the second and third centuries CE, in Roman Palestine, tomb burial was used by urban societies that were mixed. These foreign elements represented the cultural model of the Empire in the province of Judea at a time when the imperial household had switched to primary inhumation using sarcophagi or stone coffins most prominently. Again, an 'artificial' need was created. The choice of sarcophagi over ossuaries was apparently made for social approval. What, after all, does the sarcophagus offer that the ossuary does not? The locally produced stone sarcophagi cannot compare in workmanship with the Roman marble creations. They are simpler copies. Thus, they were not used because of their aesthetics. The answer can only be because the coffin became the imperial style. Persuasion shows us only for which purpose a new technology is used. Interest in this technology comes from preference because the relevant others use it. If society uses it, then an individual does as well. Jewish society behaved in a similar manner.

Finally, we must note with interest, perhaps even astonishment, that Jewish sarcophagi of this time period do not portray the rigid iconoclasm of the Late Second Temple period. This fact has startled scholars, and in order to explain this, hypotheses have been advanced that the sarcophagi were in fact, reused foreign material culture. However, nowadays it is easily determined, by chemical analysis, that they were actually local products. Besides, there should have been as much hesitation on the part of Judeans to employ a reused decorated container as to use a locally produced one. Consequently, we must conclude that the inhibitions against using animal and human images were apparently lifted or at least mitigated at this time.⁸⁷⁵ Schwartz has convincingly suggested that ultimately this too can

⁸⁷⁵ See Schürer, *History*, 59 and n. 178, for references to a more flexible attitude towards figural art in the second and third centuries CE.

be explained by invoking the impact of Empire, namely that which had empowered local leadership to employ the “ancestral laws” as constitution.⁸⁷⁶ In pre-70 CE Jerusalem, the power of authority in an exegesis of scripture and in instructing a Jew how to live his life was in the hands of priests, cult personnel, who lived daily with the sacred texts from which they both obtained their legitimacy and from which they had the power to interpret according to their view. The authority was given to leaders who interpreted issues, in this case, specifically, that pictures were forbidden. Significantly, there was no such authority in post-70 CE Jewish society accorded by Rome; instead, Rome imposed direct rule. Individuals living in cities, of Greco-Roman urban culture in particular, had no constraint placed on them because of the lack of religious authority in this time period.⁸⁷⁷ Only slowly, would rabbis eventually acquire and re-acquire the authority to make provisions in this regard. With the fall of the Temple and the great dislocation of Judean society, the rabbis themselves were “inhabiting” a “Roman-Byzantine Orbis” where they had to survive and where they slowly and painstakingly began to gain authority and dictate their interpretation of the Torah. In the meantime, individuals began to rely on their own interpretation and use figurative art, possibly applying a different meaning, if they perceived a tradition which seemed incompatible with what it meant to be a Jew.⁸⁷⁸ If the Jewish opinion makers perceived a certain motif to mean immortality just as it did for the Pagans, then this rhetoric of decor might very well have been viewed as compatible with the Torah’s view and adopted, despite its representation of a pagan deity.

In summary, then, we may conclude that the ossuary both appeared and disappeared in Roman Judea because of a similar reason- namely, the desire to emulate the imperial style. Clearly, though, before 70 CE and the destruction of the Temple, the adoption of the ossuary had to be rendered strictly compatible with Jewish values and beliefs. We find that with the

⁸⁷⁶ Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society*, 2.

⁸⁷⁷ Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society*, 2. For aniconism, see pp. 172 and 174.

⁸⁷⁸ For example, Rabbi Gamaliel was more lenient in its use, except where actual worship of images itself is involved (mAvoda Zara 3:4).

dislocation and chaos engendered by the fall of the Temple and the ensuing Roman domination of every facet of life, the fading away of the ossuary and its replacement with the coffin or sarcophagus presented a greater challenge for the Jews: to avail themselves of innovations and attractions within the prevailing culture while still maintaining their richly distinct Torah heritage.

In addition to identifying the Hellenistic ash urn as the source of influence for the Judean ossuary, this thesis has also argued that in adopting it, the Jews of the Second Temple period were emulating an Imperial style. Not only have I established points of contact between the Jews of the Second Temple period with their counterparts in other parts of the Empire, particularly in Asia Minor, from whom they no doubt became aware of the bone chests, but I have also examined how ideas and innovations are generally disseminated through a five-stage process of diffusion. Furthermore, I have shown that the emulation and ultimate adoption of this particular style of housing for secondary burial, was dependent upon the ability of the Jews of this period to adapt and to modify the ossuary in accordance with basic Torah law. Indeed, although there were many tempting artifacts, customs, fashions and ideas pervasive throughout the Greco-Roman world, any number of which the Judeans might have chosen to adopt, one must wonder what it was about the ossuary that so interested and so attracted the Jews of the time.

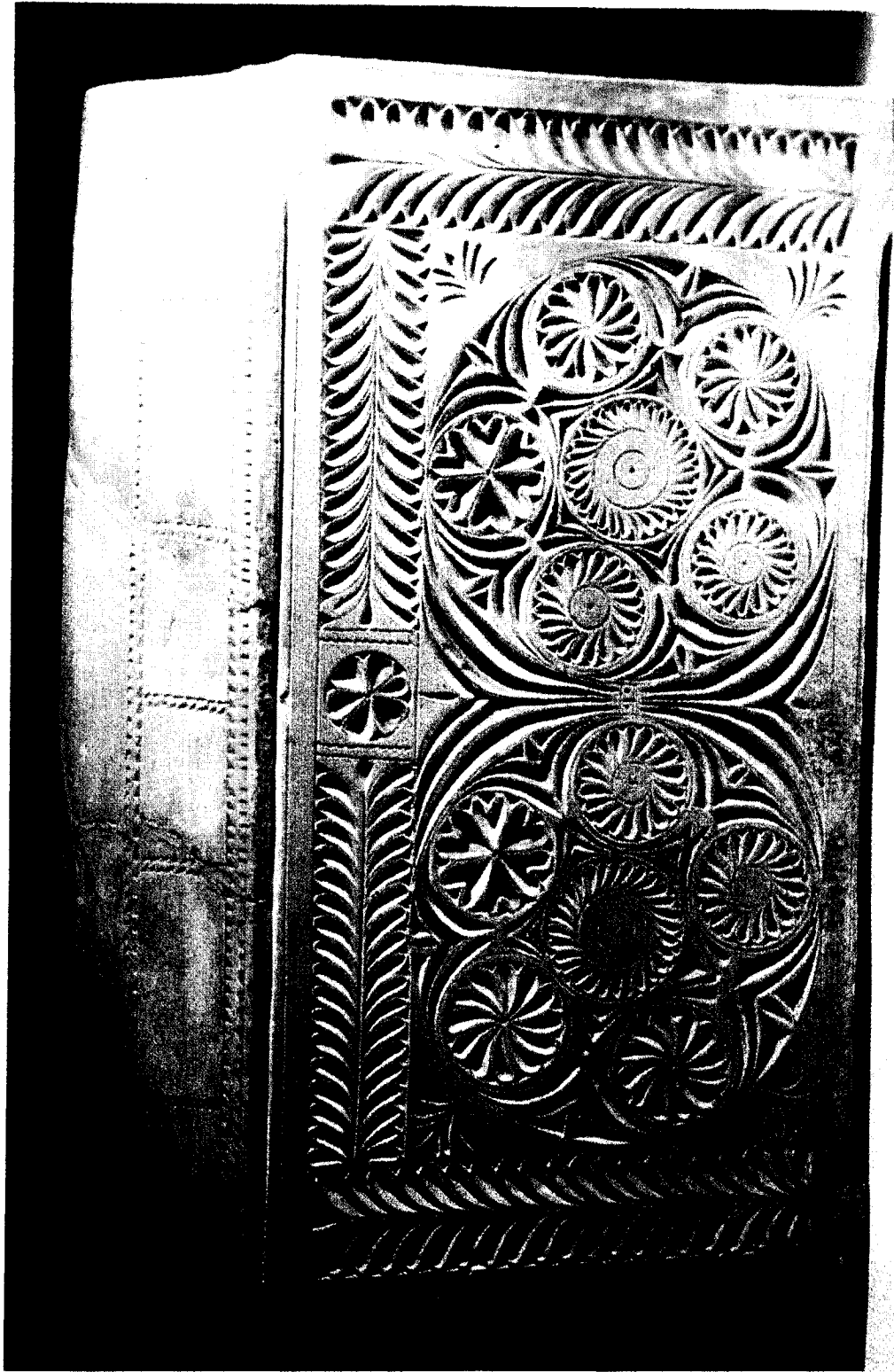
In agreement with Bickerman's suggestive comments⁸⁷⁹ that "discoveries of borrowing and influences have only a modest heuristic value unless we learn why and to what purpose the new motif was woven into the traditional design," I like to devote the last part of this thesis to this concern. It is my contention, which will be developed in the following section, that the notion of honour- that is, the ossuary as a dual manifestation of honour conferred upon the deceased as well as a means of acquisition of honour for the living- resonated deeply with the Judeans and in fact, corresponded well with a basic tenet in Judaism, namely, the discharge of care, responsibility and honour toward the deceased. In Judaism, one has always acquired honour by carrying out one's duty to bury (as opposed

⁸⁷⁹ Bickerman, *The Jews in the Greek Age*, 298-305.

to abandon), and to mourn a loved one (though the outward form and protocol of the mourning may be subject to the particular custom or trapping of the time). In the view of the Jews of the Second Temple period, what better way of ensuring this than by providing a private burial space within a housing to safeguard the remains? I must therefore examine this idea of honour, so deeply rooted in the Jewish spirit and psyche, to understand and to appreciate how the ossuary resonated with and responded to this concept.

Part Five

The Ossuary - an Honourable Burial



Introduction

Rabbi Eleazar bar Zadok said: "Thus spoke father at the time of his death: 'My son, bury me first in a fosse. In the course of time, collect my bones and put them in an ossuary; but do not gather them with thy own hands'. And thus did I attend him: Johanan entered, collected the bones, and spread a sheet over them. I then came in, rent my clothes for them, and sprinkled dried herbs over them. Just as he attended his father, so I attended him. (Sem 12.9)

This passage, commonly considered the *locus classicus* of ossuary burial, communicates to the reader a type of discourse of honour in social relationships. The ossuary represented a proper place of burial to the father whose wish was respected by the son. Thus, the ossuary signifies the concept of honour in the ways of burial.

That funerals had honorific functions for the Mediterranean world in antiquity has been well demonstrated by Antigone Samellas.⁸⁸⁰ Jewish texts clearly reveal the language of honour and shame in manners of burial.⁸⁸¹ Therefore, the people who buried the deceased did it to confer honour upon the parents, as well as to claim honour for themselves, in parallel with the *Sitz im Leben of the people* in the antique world - their general concern for honour and shame.⁸⁸²

⁸⁸⁰ Samellas, *Death in the Eastern Mediterranean*, 229-239: The honorific function of ritual.

⁸⁸¹ For example, San 46b-47a, asks the reason for burial (if there is no authoritative source in the Torah): "Burial - is it because of disgrace [which exposure of the dead might cause to the survivors] or is it because of atonement? Is the eulogy meant for the honour of the living or for the honour of the deceased? ... If they left the deceased [unburied] overnight for his honour [such as] to bring him a coffin and shroud, there is no transgression." Semahot, speaks of the honour of the corpse and honour of the bones. Klein, TA, 58 and n. 430 explains that to be buried without a coffin or merely on a mat was shameful.

⁸⁸² A story that shows how the honour system was in place in the days of Rabbi Akiba, a contemporary of ossuaries, is brought down in *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan* (translated from the Hebrew by Judah Goldin; [Yale Judaica Series, X]; New Haven: Yale University Press; 1955) 42: "His wife used to go about in golden sandals and in a golden tiara. 'Master,' his disciples said to him, 'thou hast put us to shame by what thou hast done for her.'"

The Jewish people lived and participated in a world where guiding behaviour was grounded along the lines that “social groups reward with honor and approval those who embody the behaviors or qualities which the social body deems valuable, and seek to deter deviance from those behaviors or qualities with sanctions of dishonor.”⁸⁸³

While each society, of course, has a code of honour, *what* is honourable - that is, the content, is a matter of consent of its members. The lines of honour or Hebrew *kibbud* are laid out in the Torah, which contains the history of the Jewish people as they perceive and follow a powerful God, who is the ultimate authority and source of honour.⁸⁸⁴ The Scriptures convey that God bestows favour and honour (Ps.84:11) on this nation doing his will, on the “Anointed” (King), on a particular tribe (the Levites), on the priestly class, which led the Temple cult, and on parents. One of the Ten Commandments, referred to in Late Second Temple period texts,⁸⁸⁵ states explicitly that one must “Honour your Father and your mother” (*kibbud av vaem*).

Basically, Jews are considered to derive honour in terms of Torah observance. As Matthews and Benjamin have enumerated, an honourable Jew and his household respect the prescribed boundaries of the holy/unholy (Sabbath observance), the sacred/profane (Temple

⁸⁸³ This description advanced by David A. de Silva, “Let the One Who claims Honor Establish That Claim in the Lord’: Honour Discourse in the Corinthian Correspondence,” *BTH* 28/2 (1998) 61, expresses well my understanding of the *Sitz im Leben* where the ossuary has to claim its position. See in particular Halvor Moxnes, “Honor and Shame” *BTB* 23/4 (1993) 167-176, for a summary of foundational studies of a model for how honour is established, displayed, and maintained. I refer again to Malina, *New Testament World*, mentioned above; and also Jerome H. Neyrey (ed.), *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991).

⁸⁸⁴ Deut 32:3; Pss 19:2; 24:7; 26:8; 29:1, 95:6; 62:8; 72:19; 96:3 104:31; 113:4; 115:1; Jes. 6:3; 42:8

⁸⁸⁵ Sir. 3:13: 11: The glory of one’s father is one’s own glory, and it is a disgrace for children not to respect their mother”; 4Q416 2 iii: “Honour them for your honour’s sake and in the splendor of their face for your life’s sake and for the length of your days”- in Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (London: The Penguin Press, 1997) 407. Josephus, *Against Apion*, 2.28: “The law ordains also that parents should be honoured immediately after God himself.”

compound); furthermore, an honourable Jew observes carefully and scrupulously the rules of purity (building, people, vessels), the dietary laws (kosher food), the wearing of prescribed clothing (prayer shawl and phylacteries) and the performance of rituals (circumcision).⁸⁸⁶ In keeping with this concept, I can explain the function of the ossuary in terms of a further demonstration of honour.

⁸⁸⁶ Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin (eds.), "Social Sciences and Biblical Studies," in "Honor and Shame in the World of the Bible." *Semeia* 68 (1994) 11.

Chapter 17:

“Honour due to the bones of the dead” (Sem 13.1)

17.1 *The honorific function of ossuaries*

a) Honour is conferred upon the deceased by the provision of this kind of space, which acknowledges the need for individual space. Because there was a strong emphasis on the self but in relation to others within the existing society,⁸⁸⁷ providing this individual space was tantamount to giving an individual his dues.

The ossuary honours personal privacy, if applicable, within the social unit. However, one must be careful in defining privacy. On a superficial level, privacy means a single occupant for each ossuary. Proof of this can be seen in the curse inscriptions which are designed to fend off intruders. Furthermore, the Mishna even sets out the dimensions of the private space as four *amos* (cubits). However, on a deeper level, co-occupancy still falls within the parameters of privacy under certain conditions. First of all, permission of the occupant was required for access. Secondly, if one views the ossuary (by virtue of its design) as a mini-household, it becomes apparent that others may share the premises. Obviously the occupants are the immediate family members who are living together. This is implied in the Rabbinic texts which explicitly permit “Whomsoever a person may sleep with, when he is living, he may be buried when he is dead.” (Sem 13.8) Thus, the many examples of multiple burials within the same ossuary⁸⁸⁸ involving family members, which have been found and documented, now become readily understandable; furthermore, no shame whatsoever was

⁸⁸⁷ Bruce Malina “First-Century Personality: Dyadic, not individual” in Neyrey, J.H. (ed.) *The Social World of Luke-Acts* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991) 69-96. See Luther H. Martin, “The Anti-Individualistic Ideology of Hellenistic Culture,” *Numen* 41/2 (1994) 117-140, for his corrective view that in the ancient world individualism in our understanding had not existed.

⁸⁸⁸ Frequently in multiple *ossuary* burials one sees combinations of family relations: husband and wife - 'Shimon and wife'(No.150), father and son: 'Aha and Yaaqov his son'(No. 396); father and sons: 'Maris and Shim'on, sons of Shaul'(No.820); brothers: 'Mathia and Shimon - brothers, sons of Ya'ir' (No.560).

attached to these instances. In this context we read another Rabbinic text which discusses the permissibility of performing ossilegium of two burials at the same time, emphasizing collection at opposite ends of the cloth. The response was that it would be preferable to use two separate ossuaries instead. This is yet another proof of the value attached to private space. Thus, it is not the intermingling *per se* which is the issue, apparently, in defining privacy, but rather *who* is allowed to intermingle. The answer would be decided in part by close kinship, as described above, as well as by the status of the head of the household. The more prestigious, the greater the respect due to each member of the family and the greater the propensity for the wife and each child to acquire her/their own ossuary.⁸⁸⁹ Such families usually had the means to afford this luxury of privacy. One finds, therefore, that in Goliath's tomb, each member of the family had his/her own ossuary.

b) Secondly, and equally important, honour is conferred by memorializing the deceased in a place of distinction. The ossuary functions simultaneously in a retrospective and a prospective way to honour the deceased's memory: it honours the person in terms of how he was in his life, acknowledging his achievements, and his position and role in the family and society. Secondly, the identification of a person (via an inscription) ensures the perpetuation of his memory among his descendants and the Jewish people- all of which can be interpreted in the sense of immortality. The quality of an inscription, therefore, enhances the honorific function of the ossuary because an uninscribed ossuary allows only the second generation to remember the deceased.

In the following I shall examine a number of epitaphs⁸⁹⁰ and illustrate how they exhibit and demonstrate the notion of honour. Epitaphs on *ossuaries* usually consist of the buried individual's name. The name is generally recorded in conjunction with kinship relation, and in one case, testifies to a relationship of *apeleutheros-prostrates* (*libertus-*

⁸⁸⁹ Salome, wife of Joezer, of Goliath (No.800), or 'Martha, daughter of Yehoseph, son of Ya'akov, wife of Yehosef, from Hin' (No.290).

⁸⁹⁰ All *ossuaries* are recorded in *RCat*, if not otherwise stated. In this thesis they are listed with their identification number as recorded in the catalogue.

patronus). One finds also a mention of social status, offices and certain public roles, occupation, accomplishment, references to age at the time of death, and/or place of origin. It is precisely there where honour resides.

17.1.1 *Honour Resides in the Name*

Names of the deceased are familiar to us from contemporary literature and documents. Joseph and Simon were the most favorite, followed by Yehuda, Lazarus, Yohanan, Ananias, Yehoshua (contracted as Yeshu or Yeshu'a) and Mattathias.⁸⁹¹ Extremely popular female names were Salome, Shlomtzion, Mariah, Martha and Yohanna. The onomastic repertoire consists of mostly Semitic names, frequently Greek (e.g. Martha), and occasionally Latin (e.g. Julia) names. The preference for Semitic (biblical, Hebrew, Aramaic) names does not exclude the indiscriminate use of names of different linguistic origins.

Nearly half of all women carried either one of the names Shlomzion and Maria with its variations.⁸⁹² Approximately twenty-eight percent of men had one of only four names.⁸⁹³ Therefore, appellatives "labelled" the many Yehoshuas, Simons and Marthas as a personal identification in the eyes of others. Examples are the 'Mute' (#117), the 'Amputated' (# 62), the 'Small' (# 552), the 'one-eyed' (# 822), the 'Balsam' (# 461), the 'Aloe' (#114) or the 'Grasshopper' (#498). Of interest is one appellation 'Goliath' which became hereditary (# 783, 799, 801).⁸⁹⁴ There are also examples of agnomina which provide information about

⁸⁹¹ *RCat*, 14; compare also Bagatti and Milik, *Dominus Flevit*, 108.

⁸⁹² Tal Ilan, "Notes on the Distribution," 191-192, 198-199.

⁸⁹³ Tal Ilan, *Names of the Jews in Eretz-Israel in the Second Temple and the Mishna Periods. A Statistical Study* (diss.; Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1984, Hebrew) 45.

⁸⁹⁴ Rachel Hachlili and Patricia Smith, "The Genealogy of the Goliath Family," *BASOR* 235 (1979) 67-70.

accomplishments, for example "Simon who built the Sanctuary" (No.200), or "Nicanor from Alexandria who made the [Temple] gates."⁸⁹⁵

The overwhelming majority of names appear in the filiation form '.... son/daughter of...'. But a number of times only the praenomen of the deceased inscribed such as 'Iohana' (# 202) or 'Elazar' (# 20). Other times one finds *duo nomina* such as 'Sorra Aristobola' (# 95), 'Maryam Yohana' (# 31) or 'Eli the son of Simon Yeho'ezer' (#151).

The status of freedman/women can be easily recognized on the basis of epigraphic formulae referring to servile origin. Upon manumission slaves added to their names *libertus* (or *apeleutheros*), or mentioned the patron's name. One ossuary from Jericho belonged to 'Theodotus, freedman (*apeleutheros*) of Queen Agrippina' (# 789).

One can observe formal characteristics of the names in Jewish epitaphs which are borrowed from Roman onomastica. Since Roman name-giving practices reflect social status in the Roman population, it has been suggested that the names borne by Jews indicate an equivalent social status.⁸⁹⁶ It may be suggested that assimilating an imperial practice by the indigenous population was usually done by socially higher ranking families through their connections with the dominant ruling class.

Important information can be derived from the name and patronymic, for example '... *ben...* (personal, male)' for sons, and '... *bat...* (personal, male)' for females. The father's name defined the social categories to which the person belonged, and denoted the ascribed status. In the patrilinear system which operates in Jewish society, descent is traced through the father. Relation to a common male ancestor is therefore by links through men. The instance, 'The sons of El'azar' (# 75) emphasizes the descent of the sons rather than their personal identification by name.

⁸⁹⁵ Charles Clermont-Ganneau, Charles, "The 'Gate of Nicanor' in the Temple of Jerusalem," *PEFQS* (1903), 125-31.

⁸⁹⁶ For a discussion on the onomasticon of the Jewish Community of Rome, and Jewish vis-vis non-Jewish onomastic practices in Late Antiquity, see Leonard Victor Rutgers, *The Jews in Late Ancient Rome. Evidence of Cultural Interaction in the Roman Diaspora* (Leiden: Brill, 1995) 139-175.

Knowing a person's family provides knowledge about the person. ("Like father, like son; Like mother, like daughter"). Hence the importance of genealogies which set out a person's honour lines. They "ground a claim to power, status, rank, office, or inheritance in an earlier ancestor."⁸⁹⁷ Genealogies are needed to provide proof of the "pure seed" of the priesthood as well as for inheritance claims. A number of *ossuaries even* provide names of three generations, for example: 'Yehuda son of Yehohanan son of Yitro' (No.57).

17.1.2 *Parents and Family Relations*

The honourable position inherent in being a father or mother provided the child(ren) with sufficient reason to inscribe the single word for father or mother, 'Abba'(# 344) or 'Ima'(# 21) respectively, as the sole "identification." A direct link between the descendants and the deceased parent is formed by the inscription 'our father'(# 70) or 'our mother' (# 71). A little more information provides the formulations 'mother Shlamzion' (# 71) or 'our father Shimon (the) Elder, Yehosef his son (No.12) or 'Yehud our father' (# 561), which included at least a name for better identification. Sometimes, the deceased (with name) was linked to the descendant by his or her parent relation '... father of...', which again emphasized the mother or father position within a family.

Frequently, in multiple ossuary burials, one sees combinations of family relations: husband and wife - 'Shimon and wife'(# 150), father and son: 'Aha and Yaaqov his son'(# 396); father and sons: 'Maris and Shim'on, sons of Shaul'(# 820); brothers: 'Mathia and Shimon - brothers, sons of Ya'ir' (# 560). Significantly, kinship and prestige revealed in the inscriptions disclose gender conceptions in Jewish culture of the time. Women were defined in terms of their cross-sex relations. Most inscriptions show that a woman remained known under her father's name which procured her social identity, for instance 'Judith, daughter of Nadav'(# 572). Women are mentioned in their roles as a wife: 'Mariame wife of Juda'(# 782), or as a mother: 'Shlamsion mother of Yehoe'zer, of Goliath' (# 801), or even as a

⁸⁹⁷ Robert R. Wilson, "Genealogy, Genealogies," *ABD* 2: 931.

granddaughter: 'Yohanna, granddaughter of Tophlos, cohen' (# 871) or as a combination of those positions. Examples are: 'Salome, wife of Joezer, of Goliath, and Ismael (her) son and Joezer (her) son' (# 800), or 'Martha, daughter of Yehoseph, son of Ya'akov, wife of Yehosef, from Hin' (# 290). Burials with inscriptions lacking the women's names, such as 'Yehuda ben Eleazar and wife', 'Matya's wife and her son' (# 73) or 'Wife of El'azar' (# 74) or '(His) mother of Yudan' (# 370) confirm that women derived public status from their menfolk. One epitaph is unique because it is the only record in which the deceased is linked also to female ancestors: 'Marya, daughter of Neta'el, daughter of Shlamzin' (# 796).

17.1.3 *Honour resides in Status*

The honour of a family was linked to its social class within a stratified society. According to ancestry one can discern a tripartite division in Jewish society.⁸⁹⁸ Its permanent hierarchy grants some members privileged access to wealth, power and prestige. The highest social ranking was accorded to families of legitimate descent - "pure seed". This most honourable class was comprised, in descending order, of Priests, Levites and pure Israelites. Since Israel was a theocracy, priesthood was the primary representative of the nobility. A connection to priestly aristocracy was the "hallmark of an illustrious line" (Josephus, Vita 1) and enhances the prestige for all family members, for example of "Ben Shimon the priest" and "Jonathan - priest." Ultimate honour resides in the office of high priesthood. Descendants will not neglect to mention high priestly connections as shown in the epitaph of "Yehohanna, granddaughter of the High Priest Theophilus." There is also reference to a 'levi.' Although Levites belong to the minor clergy, their connection to the Sanctuary nevertheless grants esteem to this group and thus to those buried in the *ossuary*. I have already mentioned family. In this context, pure ancestry bestowed honour on the household. It may be assumed that those buried in the ossuaries were "pure seed" as they provide their lineage. The fact of

⁸⁹⁸ For an extensive description see Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus. An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament Period* (London: SCM Press, 1969) 271-274.

birth into this class of Priests, Levites and pure Israelites denotes ascribed honour for a person according to the quality of the group.

The second class in Jewish society consists of families of illegitimate descent with only slight blemishes: proselytes, freedmen and illegitimate children of priests ranking lower in social value. Interestingly, epitaphs do mention several proselytes and a freedman.⁸⁹⁹ Along this line is the fascinating find of a crucified old man buried in an *ossuary*.⁹⁰⁰ This find is particularly intriguing since crucifixion denoted public shame. How, then, can this be compatible with the concept of *ossuary* burial as the confirmation of honour?

Let us examine the case of the proselytes first. Several inscriptions identify the deceased as a *ger* (Hebrew for convert), such as 'Salome'⁹⁰¹ and 'Judah'.⁹⁰² Before their conversion, proselytes were gentiles and thus did not partake in the honour bestowed on the Jewish nation. Pure seed by ancestry apparently was not applicable after they joined the Jewish religious community. Reference to conversion might have been information needed to indicate the *ger*'s position in Jewish society.⁹⁰³ It is quite feasible that the social standing of *gerim* in their group could be upgraded by wealth or position⁹⁰⁴ and thus compensate, to a certain degree, for pedigree.

In the case of the crucified old man, honour/shame is perceived, of course, by the group which is evaluating the crucifixion. Crucifixion was a most horrible method of execution that the Roman authorities had at their disposal. The general perception of

⁸⁹⁹ Hachlili, "The Goliath Family," 31-66.

⁹⁰⁰ Haas, "Giv'at ha-Mivtar," *IEJ* 20/1-2 (1970) 38-59.

⁹⁰¹ Bagatti and Milik, *Dominus Flevit*, No 31, also 13, 21, 22.

⁹⁰² Tal Ilan, "The Ossuary and Sarcophagus Inscriptions", in *The Akeldama Tombs (IAA Reports #1;* eds. Gideon Avni and Zvi Greenhut; Jerusalem:IAA, 1996) 66.

⁹⁰³ Proselytes are listed in Damascus Document (CD XIV:5), as part of the Jewish community, albeit in fourth position after priests, Levites, Israelites.

⁹⁰⁴ Frequently converts came from well-to-do circles. See for example the Queen of Adiabene.

crucifixion in the Greco-Roman world was as shame, humiliation and loss of honour, as it is reflected in the Christian Testament (Heb 12:2) and by various classical authors.⁹⁰⁵ The victim was humiliated and stripped of public respect. Did he bring shame upon the family? Was that the reason why the *ossuary* was not inscribed identifying the old man? We do not know the circumstances of the crucifixion. He might have been a prisoner of war or a revolutionary⁹⁰⁶, a criminal in the eyes of the authorities but perhaps a hero in his own circle. Nevertheless, he was buried in an *ossuary*, the 'shameful' sign of the crucifixion, the nail, still in his bones. The sign of shame was thus simultaneously a sign of honour.

The case of the freedman⁹⁰⁷ is equally interesting. Theodotus was a freedman of the Empress Agrippina. He had acquired a special social status derived from his proximity to political power. Protection and assistance, in return, ensured his services to Rome. Agrippina might have been enlisted to secure manumission, citizenship, freedom from taxation or inviolability of person and property for Theodotus. His family shared in this collective honour which is portrayed in the magnificent monumental tomb in Jericho.

The third class in Jewish society consists of families with grave blemishes in their ancestry. It does not come as a surprise to notice the absence of inscriptions which refer to the underprivileged third class in society. Even if the economic status of an extended family would have allowed for a costly tomb, burial in an *ossuary* is inconceivable. To draw attention to the skeletal remains and identify the deceased as a 'bastard', 'eunuch', or 'foundling' on an ossuary would not bestow honour on the kinfolk. In fact, the opposite would result. Any claim for worth would be considered ridiculous by others, and hence result in shame.

⁹⁰⁵ Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion* (London:SCM, 1977) 22-32.

⁹⁰⁶ Jos Ant 17.295, see Hengel 1977: 46-63.

⁹⁰⁷ A.M. Duff, *Freedmen in the early Roman Empire* (2nd.ed. Oxford, UK: The Clarendon Press, 1928). The legal status of an *apeleutheros* is discussed in Daniela Piatelli, "The Jericho Inscription concerning Theodotos, Apeleutheros of the Empress Agrippina", in *Greece and Rome in Eretz Israel* (eds. A. Kasher, U. Rappaport and G. Fuks; [Jerusalem]: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi; IES 1990) 75-83.

17.1.4 Honour Resides in Occupation/Offices

An individual acquires honour by belonging to a group which in turn confers collective honour. However, in voluntary groupings public opinion is paramount.⁹⁰⁸ Occupations which were despised and demeaned in society, such as tanner, tax-collector and ass-driver, carried a stigma and therefore no valued social standing.⁹⁰⁹ Accordingly, it is inconceivable to find an inscription indicating an ass-driver or tanner on an *ossuary*.

However, professions such as teacher, weaver, artisan and scribe were valued, and so it is not surprising that membership in those groups conferred honour. The case of the scribes is particularly interesting. Towards the end of the Second Temple period they became a new upper class in their own right, and formed, together with the ruling class (the hereditary nobility of priests and laity) the Sanhedrin. Then, the scribes were held in higher esteem. We read of Yehosef who derived honour by being the 'son of Hananya the scribe' (# 893) and of a builder 'Simon, the builder of the sanctuary' (# 200). Masons and artisans were in high demand during Herod's building activities throughout Palestine. Their profession must have therefore gained considerable prestige. A physician (# 80), a potter (# 222) and a weaver⁹¹⁰ are also recorded. These professions can be labeled voluntary groupings which have collective honour of which a member can partake. The voluntary group of the Nazirites could claim high honour in Jewish society and Hanania took the opportunity to inscribe this special religious status of his father Jonathan.⁹¹¹

The inscription of "Kynoros, (son) of Diodothos, protopolites = First citizen (# 282) allows us to visualize the honour which Kynoros acquired through this prestigious office. A public position was the one of the Elders which the father of Yehosef indicated in the

⁹⁰⁸ Malina, *New Testament World*, 41.

⁹⁰⁹ Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 303-312.

⁹¹⁰ Bagatti and Milik, *Dominus Flevit*, 94. The profession of a weaver seemed to be more respected in Jewish society than in the Roman world.

⁹¹¹ Nahman Avigad, "The Burial Vault of a Nazirite Family on Mount Scopus," *IEJ* 21 (1971) 185-200.

inscription 'Shimon the Elder, Yehosef his son' (# 12). I have mentioned the esteemed office of the high priesthood which bestowed highest honour on its occupier, even if the deceased's personal conduct was less than honourable.

17.1.5 Honour Resides in Accomplishments

Sometimes agnomina were added to a personal name in order to indicate or to record accomplishments which award esteem and reputation. Personal, individual honour was thus conferred to Mathia and Simon, 'masters of the tomb' or to the artisan 'Aza who made it' or to 'Nicanor from Alexandria who made the Temple gate'. A virtuous man could elevate the family honour and thus the honour of all members in the household.

17.1.6 Honour Resides in Places of Origin

The Greek city culture of the Greco-Roman period kept much of its traditional emphasis on honour. The city is a unit, with the individual as part of the community. Honour was linked to the upkeep of public life and the financing of common goods through benefaction towards the city. This system became a source of competition for power and influence among the city elites.⁹¹²

The village or city as social group possessed a collective honour in which the citizen participated. Collective honour was a major focus for the dyadic first century person, and therefore the deceased's place of origin was frequently mentioned in inscriptions, such as 'Papias and Salomich the Scythopolitans' (# 139), 'Simon of Ptolomais' (# 99) and 'Peletya from Jerusalem' (# 777).

⁹¹² R. Rohrbaugh, "The city in the Second Testament," *BTB* 21/2 (1991) 67-75.

17.1.7 Honour Resides in Age

With the use of *ossuaries*, Jewish onomasticon began to flourish. Clearly discernible is the influence of Roman onomastic practices. Of interest is the avoidance of the Greco-Roman custom of references to age at death in *ossuary* inscriptions in Palestine.⁹¹³ There are only two occurrences in the body of approximately 900 *ossuary* examined, and they are in Greek. Simon died at the age of 41 (# 778) and Thaliarchos at 20 (# 100). It is conceivable that a quantitative conception of human existence may have played a part in Jewish thought,⁹¹⁴ similar to that reflected in the *Wisdom of Solomon*: "For old age is not honored for length of time, or measured by number of years: but understanding is gray hair for anyone, and a blameless life is ripe old age." (4:8-9) Reference to age at time of the death was not a way to demonstrate the honour for the deceased (supposed it was old age), according to the Jewish way of perceiving honour for old age. Honour for the deceased would consequently not be displayed by inscribing his/her age at the times of death on an *ossuary*, and this foreign practice was not assimilated.⁹¹⁵

Equally important, the ossuary guaranteed honour for the living in that it demonstrated their fulfillment of responsibility to ensure a private burial space for their loved ones. Even though some skeptics might wonder why Yehosef bar Hananya, or Yehohanah, Judah, Theodotos, Kynoros, son of Diodothos, or an unidentified crucified male, some generations before Rabbi Zadok's pronouncements were also buried in an ossuary, I here contend that it conveyed to all of them, and a thousand others more, the same notion of honourable burial, and honour due.

⁹¹³ Rutgers, *Jews*, 101-107, maintains that references to age at death was a Roman-Greek practice and became only customary for Jews living in Rome. In exceptional cases elsewhere in the Mediterranean, only the Greek or Latin part referred to age at death, in the Hebrew part phrases of well-wishing were substituted (p.102).

⁹¹⁴ See Rutgers, *Jews*, 106.

⁹¹⁵ Rutgers, *Jews*, 107.

c) Additionally, honour is conferred upon the deceased as well as acquired by the living relative through the display of wealth in the form of the elaborate energy and economic expenditure required to create the artifact. Relative ostentatiousness reflects the degree of honour, though this is only true within a peer group which accepts the same values.

For instance, we know that the Rabbinic writings confer honour upon a family tomb. We may consider the ossuary, then, as an extension of this idea - that is, as a mini-tomb of the individual family member within. The ossuary displays the same qualities or characteristics of a tomb: a tangible, more or less elaborate, marker of a burial, an identifier of this burial, and a memorial for the buried within, to be perpetuated by the descendants and visitors to the tomb. This conclusion can be supported by certain motifs that have been found on ossuaries, imitating the facade of the tomb itself, the pyramidal superstructure, or *nefesh*.⁹¹⁶

17.2 *The change in perception of honour*

Each society, of course, defines its own code and marks of honour according to its particular world view. Thus, Jews judge things differently than other nations; in turn, the various groups in the Late Second Temple period as well as those who had lived in earlier Jewish societies, judged things differently from each other too. Consequently, my claim that ossuary burial entailed the notion of honourable burial must address the question whether this was applicable for *all* Jews throughout first century CE Judea. The community at Qumran, for instance, comes readily to mind, since ossuaries have no relevance in geographical locations like the Dead Sea region where the tradition was individual primary burial in shaft graves. Similarly, were the previous forms of burial in the First Temple period any less honourable in comparison to ossuary burial? Finally, I must address the question why a form of burial, considered honourable, would disappear.

⁹¹⁶ Triebel, *Jenseitshoffnung*, 295, interprets the depicted *nefeshot* on ossuaries (and in tombs) as a sign for hope for a post-mortem existence, and because of the placement in sealed tombs, cannot fathom my suggested meaning.

17.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, I must re-examine the passage in the tractate Semahot that illustrates the court of honour: A son honours his father's wishes to be buried the way the latter had requested on his deathbed. The son did what was expected of him by his father as well as by 'others' who learned about the circumstances of the funeral. Indeed, this was only proper behaviour for a son who had been taught to honour his father and mother. The 'others' acknowledge and evaluate Rabbi Eleazar's behaviour as praiseworthy and dutiful for this very reason. Had the discourse failed to demonstrate the obligation of honoring parents and elders in society, I might venture to guess that Rabbi Eleazar's burial technique, not behaviour, would have been questioned- that is, why he did not bury his father in a coffin.

As we know, ossuary burial eventually gave way to primary inhumation, frequently using a coffin or sarcophagus. The evaluation cited in rabbinic circles "It is honour to bury in coffins, not with mats", confers honour upon a different burial space than was used during the previous century. Therefore, although members in that circle might have been challenging Rabbi Eleazar's action for that reason alone, they were certainly acknowledging, with approbation, his behaviour as appropriate, and the (ossuary) burial provided, as nevertheless honourable.

We know, of course, that the time period required for new ideas to diffuse among people is particularly challenging. New ideas have to compete with existing traditions. In every society, there are those who feel that traditions have to be honoured and maintained, while others feel that times change and a new fashion must be followed. If an individual identifies with the latter group, then that would be persuasive enough to influence his attitude and, as a consequence, he would adopt coffin burial. Otherwise, he would not be considered as belonging, and he would lose respect in the society at that given time. At one point, then, the Mishna states that "the coffin is honourable, but mats shameful." Life is spent acquiring honour; though this behaviour is a constant, the "form or style" of expressing honour is subject to change.

History teaches us that the change to primary burial became the norm at one point in time; moreover, the collecting of bones was relegated to a thing of the past that “we no longer do,”⁹¹⁷ meaning, as a normal practice. In the sixth century *likut azamot* was seemingly condemned by Palestinian Jews.⁹¹⁸ As a result, *likut azamot* fell into oblivion until the nineteenth century when scholarship rediscovered it; the intriguing puzzle then arose as to why the Jews had buried the dead in ossuaries? The answer that I offer is that the ossuary had manifested and had conferred honour upon the high priest, the proselyte, the crucified, and even upon “Shalom who failed to give birth.”

⁹¹⁷ McCane, *Jews, Christians, and Burial*. He claims that this attitude might have possibly been reinforced as a reaction to Christian groups which collected certain bone relics for their own reasons.

⁹¹⁸ Figueras, DJO, 12, mentions two Hebrew hymns from the Cairo Geniza ascribed to Yannai, which condemn those *that in the future will gather bones* (reference p.12 n.75) and *the customers of a gathering of bones* (reference p.12 n.76).

Summary and Conclusion

In many ways, this thesis has become an exciting voyage of discovery in its attempt to shed light upon the *origin* and *function* of the Judean ossuary. While Part One of the thesis established the background for the analysis, by reviewing the burial customs of the Jews of the Second Temple period, Part Two has shown that the Judean ossuary became an object of puzzle and debate to scholars and laymen alike almost immediately upon its initial rediscovery in the 1860's.

Additionally, Part Two of the thesis presents, in a comprehensive fashion, the various scholarly theories which have arisen to account for the ossuary phenomenon. Many scholars, well before this thesis, had proposed theories and explanations as to *why*, in fact, this artifact began to emerge in Judea, becoming rather commonplace there from around 25 BCE; *where* the ossuaries (or the idea of the ossuary) had come from; *what* its use or function was; and ultimately, *why* it disappeared when it did.

In presenting the varied, often highly disputed and conflicting theories, it quickly became apparent that the ossuary was viewed differently by diverse individuals, depending of course, upon their particular scholarly agenda or inclination. Also, the ossuary was perceived differently by Jewish society as a whole, and even by varying groups within Jewish society. Thus, examining the Judean ossuary is by no means a one-dimensional research undertaking; rather it is a complex scholarly challenge involving social, anthropological, psychological, economic, archeological, and theological issues.

In examining the previous research, and then, more importantly, in stepping back to carry on a critical analysis of this research, it became clear that the theories focusing on the home- grown nature of the ossuary (that is, that the ossuary had somehow arisen on its own, in a vacuum, in Judea) were inadequate, if not seriously flawed. Instead, I became more and more convinced that the source or influence for the Judean ossuary was to be found outside of Judea.

Given this point of departure, and building on the theories of Lee Levine and Gideon Foerster, Part Three of the thesis investigates burial practices outside Judea during the

Second Temple period. Multiple significant parallels between the use of the ash chests in the Greco-Roman world and secondary burial in Judea emerge and are set out in this third section of the thesis. The similarities in ritual, material culture, terminology, manufacture and even chronology of their appearance and disappearance are so *striking* that it becomes virtually impossible to avoid the conclusion that the first ossuary was actually an innovation *implanted* into Judea through a process of diffusion.

Part Four of the thesis further seeks to strengthen this contention that the ossuary was an innovative idea brought to Judea - an idea that was not only adopted, but also adapted and modified through a five-stage process of diffusion. It is, of course, necessary to substantiate the claim for foreign influence by showing that contacts did exist between Judea and other societies employing the ash urn. Thanks to previous scholars who had created a body of data, augmented by my own research for this thesis, it became apparent from the statistical distribution of artifacts, as a function of time and location, that the ossuary had appeared at different locations, within the Greco-Roman period, at different points in time. Indeed, in Part Four, I trace the appearance of the ossuary in chronological order- first in Rhodes, then in Ostia, then in Ephesus, Judea and Persia. While it is actually tempting to argue, in the spirit of a true diffusion theory, that this model (Ostia-Ephesus-Judea) indicates the actual route taken by the diffusion of the ossuary idea toward Judea, I must temper this theory by acknowledging that these locales were but a small sampling of the Empire. Hopefully, then, this thesis will prove valuable in pointing out where additional research must be undertaken. In order to obtain a truly comprehensive picture of the diffusion phenomenon, I would suggest that ash chest usage be analyzed in the form of histograms for various locations in Greece, Macedonia, and other locations in Asia Minor and Syria-Phoenicia.

Nonetheless, based on the available evidence, as presented in Part Four of this thesis, I may conclude that Judea was among the last locales to adopt the chest / secondary burial phenomenon during the Late Second Temple period. Furthermore, Judea had obtained the idea of ossuary usage from foreign sources, with Asia Minor being the most likely point of origin. Given these conclusions, I felt that it was necessary to examine how and why the surrogate ash chest, the ossuary, had come to be transformed. In Part Four of this thesis, as

well, I provide proof that the Jews of the Second Temple period already displayed the capability to select or to “pick and choose” certain conventions, trends, ideas and mannerisms pervasive in the Greco-Roman milieu, and “to borrow” them, if and only if these did not conflict with basic Torah Law. Thus, we see that the Judeans made use of ossuaries, with simple geometric designs, solely for the purpose of bone collecting. The Jews of the Second Temple period never practiced cremation or iconography; nevertheless, the use of ossuaries grew rapidly in popularity, within Judea, with special interest groups using the artifact initially for their own reasons. The various groups of Judeans all recognized the potential in the ossuary- the potential to confer honour upon their loved ones in death as well as to evoke honour and approbation for the discharge of responsibility upon the living. These concepts, so deeply rooted in the Jewish mind and spirit, no doubt resonated powerfully and argued forcefully, for the adoption of the ossuary.

As a corollary to this thesis, the ossuary disappeared when the upper class society in Palestinian urban centres took part in the imperial shift from cremation to inhumation. Just as other peoples in the provinces gave up secondary obsequies, so too did the Jews in Palestine eventually opt for primary burial.

Finally, what is, in my view, the most significant insight to emerge from the thesis, is the fact that it reveals, establishes and upholds an important feature or characteristic that distinguished the Jewish community of the Second Temple period namely, their ability to adopt and to adapt foreign ideas, in accordance with their world view grounded in Torah Law. Though for many decades scholars had dismissed the notion that the Jews of the Second Temple period had borrowed the idea of the ossuary from outside Judea, given the artifact’s close resemblance to Pagan ash urns and given the well-known Jewish revulsion toward cremation and iconography, these scholars failed to credit the Judeans with the ability to adopt and to modify ideas, and inventions. This thesis, then, shows that some segments of Jewish society were attracted to this foreign convention. They adopted it consciously, but in so doing, re-invented and re-configured it so that it was neither inconsistent with nor in conflict with fundamental Jewish laws, beliefs and value codes. The story of the Herodian ossuary, then, is really a story of receptivity and adaptation which, on the one hand, accounts

for the appearance of secondary burial containers and, on the other hand, for its disappearance because of this very receptivity to a newer fashion.

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