

A WALK DOWN THE APPIAN WAY

THE SUBURBAN AREA

The roads built by the Romans throughout the ancient world, represented a political event of universal importance. Still nowadays they constitute the basis of the current transport system. Such a wide, well organized and well-working travel system was the support upon which millions of people, trades and ideas have traveled. It responded to those principles of order aimed to the public convenience which distinguished the ancient Roman: in his concept, the roads were *moles necessariae* (essential works) which he proudly counterposed to the *otiosa et stulta ostentatio pyramidarum* (the fruitless and foolish ostentation of pyramids) and to the *inertia sed fama celebrata opera Graecorum* (the Greeks works, famous but useless). In the structure of Roman roads the three fundamental principles of Vitruvius for the architecture can be found: *firmitas, utilitas, venustas* (robustness, usefulness, beauty). The most ancient roads radiate from Rome towards Lazio, Etruria and Sabina. The later roads are those identified by the name of the magistrate who built them: censors, consules and praetors. They scan the challenges of the great expansion of the Roman army and the conquest of the central Italy between the end of IV century and the whole III century b.C., whilst in the II century, the strengthening of the already existing roads and the development of those northwards and southwards of the peninsula, ratified the definitive submission of the whole ancient Italy to the Roman order. The first road which started this impressive undertaking was the **Appian way**, built by the censor Appius Claudius in 312 b.C. which extended through swamps and mountains of the Tyrrhenian side until Capua. Once the Sannitan were defeated, the road was lengthened to Benevento short after the 268 b.C. and then to Venosa, Taranto and with the submission of Messapia and Salento, before 191 b.C., it reached Brindisi, the forefront to the Roman conquests in the East. After the lengthening of the Appian way from Capua to Brindisi, in 132 b.C., another road was built going to Reggio Calabria, the **Popilia way**, started by T. Annius which made build the namesake roads in the Val Padana. This road went through Sala Consilina, Morano Calabro, Cosenza and Vibo Valentia. The basalt paving of the roads which developed from II-I century b.C., is typical of central-Thyrrhenian Italy, where this material is easily achieved. Elsewhere different materials were used depending of their availability, as for example the limestone in the Appennine regions and where the transportation costs would have been excessive, the *terrenae*) or beaten flood wastes and gravel (*viae glareae stratae*). The pavement was the most striking part of the road but also very impressive were all those works aimed to ensure its full stability especially if the terrain was unstable and needed deep

foundations. When a road was built, first of all were the pattern and the width to be defined by marking two parallel grooves as the edges. Along them, were put the blocks containing foundations and paving (*crepidines*); in their interior a moat was dug about 45-60 cm and more until the solid terrain was reached; the grave was then alternately filled with solid or well-beaten material, as big stones (*statumen*), necessary if the terrain was not compact and then layers of debris and corks (*rudus*) within layers of lighter material as sand or pozzolanic ashes in order to make it even; sometimes it was mixed with lime mortar to achieve a good solidification. Above all on a bed of fine material (*nucleus*), the debris or the paving polygons were packed (*summum dorsum*). The signage was often a road completion: the milestones, put at a mile distance with each other (1478 m), signaled the distance to Rome or to some other powerful city along the road and often the name of the magistrate or emperor which built or renewed the road. A custom perhaps adopted from eastern practice, spreaded out throughout the Roman world from II century b.C.: the roads built by C. Gracchus, tribune in 123b.C., had all milestones made by rocky columns.

The Appian way is the best preserved among the big Roman roads and above all it is the first road whose name is due not to its function (the *Salaria* "salt road") or to the place it goes to (*Via Praenestina*, *Via Tiburtina*), but to the one who built it. The reasons for its construction were purely strategic and economical, established by the need to quickly move the army and to control the Terracina sea, to allow for further contacts with the newborn colony of *Suessa Aurunca* and to warrant for the trade with the south, especially with the fertile and rich Campania region. Since IX century, many lands belonging to the church were gradually ceded first for enfiteusis and later to some Roman families as feuds. In that period the counts of Tuscolo used the complex of the tomb of Cecilia Metella to settle a new fortified nucleus and other Roman families. The first segment of Appian way was occupied during XVI-XVII century by powerful families became owners of wide lands: among the various lineages were the Torlonia, Caffarelli, Giustiniani and Boncompagni-Ludovisi; they all kept to exploit the terrains for agricultural and sheep-farming activities. From XIV to XVII century the road became partially disused, its monuments were progressively stripped and the material reused for new buildings. Just during the Renaissance began to develop in Rome the first antiquary interests which soon involved the Appian way, *regina viarum*, and its monumental furniture. Raffaello Sanzio and Antonio da Sangallo complained about the scarce attention and the vandalisms perpetrated and attempted to rielaborate an hypothetical reconstruction. The dispossession of a land stripe corresponding to the ancient Appian way at the beginning of 1800s and the repairing of the ancient consular way made by the Piedmontese archaeologist

Luigi Canina on the will of pope Pius IX, are the first attempts of a long and complex path which led to the constitution of the “Parco Regionale Suburbano dell’Appia Antica”, in 1988. It is a protected area which extends for the first 16Km of the Appian way crossed by the Porta S. Sebastiano, the Mura Aureliane at the crossing with Appia Nuova alle Frattocchie, within the municipality of Roma, Ciampino and Marino. In the Park can be found also the Caffarella valley, the archaeological complex of the tombs of via Latina and the Parco degli Acquedotti next to via Tuscolana. The Appian way before the Mura Aureliane were built, started its first mile from Servianus fence and more precisely from the ancient Capena gateway at the southern edge of Circo Massimo and it was delimited northwards by the Porta San Sebastiano. When, during the imperial age, the city walls were expanded by the built of Aurelian walls, the Appian way came out of the city, going through the porta Appia or S. Sebastiano; in its interior, the municipality settled the Museo delle Mura which allow for a visit of the inner side.

Almost immediately, the first tombs started to be built along the road: at the beginning they were chamber-like, as those of the Scipios, then, at the end of the II century b.C., as the single funerary monuments practice took place, the road became gradually its current appearance: an almost continuous double line made of tombs of every shape and period, whose inscriptions invite the visitor to stop, read and remember. Names of very ancient families are mixed with those belonging to different classes, races, cultures and religions. We can admire wealthy tombs as that of Scipios, the tomb of Cecilia Metella and the columbarium of the Augustus liberti. This tradition was followed by Christians too, which made here their most famous catacombs. From II a.C., many Christians place of worship rose around the cult of apostles in the *cimiterium ad catacumbas* in the III mile by the Basilica of San Sebastiano where for a certain time, during persecutions, the remains of Peter and Paul were placed, once removed from their original place. The cemeteries hence became, since the late antique and at least until the IX a.C., veneration places and pilgrimage destination.

Porta San Sebastiano: the gateway is the best preserved among those facing the Aurelian walls. Its original name was Porta Appia, according to the use. During middle age it was called Porta S. Sebastiano because it carried to the catacombs of that martyr. The current appearance is due to the last interventions made by Belisarius and Narses during the Rome siege in the Gothic war (536 a.C.). The gateway is characterised by a double-arched opening surmounted by bow windows and two semi-cylindrical towers. After a later restoration, the towers were enlarged, increased, and linked, through two parallel walls, to the preexisting Arch of Drusus.

In AD 401-402 Emperor Honorius reshaped the gate with a single *fornix* and a higher attic with two rows of six bow windows each; it was also provided with an uncovered *chemin de ronde* with merlons. The bases of the towers were incorporated within two square-plan platforms, faced with marble. A later modification yielded the gate's present form, in which a floor has been added to the whole structure, towers included. In its interior there is the headquarter of the Museum of Roman walls whose setting, inaugurated in 1990, spreads on the first and second floor of the gateway. In the first part of the ancient section, the history of city fortifications is displayed: from the ancient ones of Royal and Republican age dating back to VI and IV b.C. to those of Aurelian, about which the historical-political events which determined their construction are narrated. Furthermore their construction technique is described, the typology of the gateways, the transformations and the restorations made during IV, V and VI a.C. A panel is dedicated to the war machines which were used on the walls during the sieges, both by the assailants and the besieged. In the last exhibition hall of the first floor, some scale-models representing the walls are shown; the one in the middle represents the ancient Rome map with the circuit of Republican and Aurelian walls, give to visitors the chance to visualize the great expansion of the city from the end of IV b.C to the III a.C. The second model refers to the restorations of the walls which were made only 40 years later, during the empire of Maxentius at the early IV a.C. The last model refers to the appearance of the walls after the drastic structural intervention of Honorius (401-402 a.C.) which, fearing new barbaric invasions, made the whole structure strengthen by erecting of one floor, both the corridors and the towers. In the last hall on the second floor of the western tower, there is a model representing a particular segment of the walls and information about the Appian way, the *regina viarum*. There are also some information about the different building techniques used by Romans and about the gateway history.

The Aurelian Walls

They were defensive walls. Their name is derived from emperor Aurelian (270-275) which ordered their construction after the barbaric populations from northern Europe, came back to threaten the Roman empire by crossing the Alps. The danger was still far from Rome but, if needed, the city would have been defenseless, since the ancient defensive walls from Republican age was disused because of many centuries of safety and because of the great urban expansion. The fortifications project was elaborated by military engineers which put in their interior all the buildings which may have offered strongholds during a siege. Furthermore, being this work very expensive, they tried to use the state properties in order to avoid as much as possible the expropriation costs. Normally the military works were made by the army, but in this case, they used urban manpower since the army was occupied on the

boundaries and in the East. The Aurelian walls, were believed to be since antiquity a really great work; they extended for 19Km, were made by bricks, 6,5mt height and 3.50mt thick; On the top, a watch corridor sheltered by a castellated parapet. Every 100 feet (ca. 30mt) , the curtains were interrupted by massive squared towers higher than the rest, equipped with a covered room from where the war machines could be driven, by means of two big arched windows on the façade and on both sides. Above the room there was a terrace reachable by a stairs. From the court, a bricks' frame overlooked which highlighted the corridor. Since there were many roads exiting the city, many other gateways were opened along the fortifications circuit. Such a gateways, whose names were often derived from the way passing through, were of three architectural kinds: the first, for the big arterial roads, was twins-arched covered by bricks and flanked by hemicircular towers (Flaminia, Appia, Ostiense, Portuense); the second for less traveled roads, had the same features but with only one fornix (for ex. Porta Latina); the third, concerning secondary gateways, was made by a simple arch between two squared towers (ex. Porta Metronia). In order to enter less important patterns, many little gates were present, most of which were soon bricked over for safety reasons. The gateways were closed from inner by two wooden shuttens and on the external side by a portcullis which slid into the fornix and lead by ropes from the above hall. At the beginning of IV a.C., during Maxentius age, the Aurelian walls underwent first restoration measures, even if limited to the curtains and started at the same time the building of an external moat. The most impressive intervention, dated back to early V century, under Honorius, after the Visigoths, led by Alaricus, reached Milan. Such an intervention , aimed to strenght the defenses, was celebrated by inscription on the Tiburtina, Prenestina and Portuense gateways. The walls height was doubled transforming the earlier corridor into a vaulted gallery with embrasures for archers and an above castelled corridor. Also in the towers a second covered hall was added with three arched windows and small rooms to protect the corridor towards the chemin de ronde; from there it was possible to reach a small hanging latrine. The windows of the lower rooms were bricked over and transformed into slits. Many doors were equipped with an interior counterdoor near the duty offices. One of the arches was closed on the two-fornix gateways, apart the Porta Portuense, probably because of the intense trade circulation. The ancient source testify for some restorations at the beginning of VI and some reinforcement measures made by Belisarius during the following Greek-Gothic war (535-553). In the next centuries, the defensive walls which remains until 1870, as Rome was annexed to the Italian kingdom, underwent various preservation measurements made by the different popes, starting from Middle Age until the second half of 1800 with pope Pius IX (1846-1878). As a consequence, the current walls are the result of multiple restorations, sometimes reported on documents and testified by inscriptions of the popes who ordered the interventions. Once the defensive function was lost, the monument was consolidated. The Aurelian walls included a big part of Trastevere: from the shore next to Porta Portuense, they went back to Janiculum Hill up to Porta Aurelia (San Pancrazio) and then climbed down towards Porta Settimiana, from where they reach again the Tiber shore, next to Ponte Sisto. Unfortunately, the remains of the whole pattern are scarce, because the walls were abandoned and most of them shooted down to build a new defensive walls, ordered in the first half of XVII by pope Urbanus VIII Barberini, including the whole Janiculum in order to be reconnected with Vatican fortifications.

Tomb of Geta: this remains are attributed to the Tomb of Geta, son of emperor Septimius Severus, murdered by his brother Caracalla in 212 a.C. Actually its identification is uncertain because it seems that the bodies of Geta and his brother Caracalla were buried into Adrian tomb. The sepulchre was probably tower-like, with many descendents orders similar to that called of "Pompeus Magnus" and it can be dated back to the early imperial age.

The so-called Priscilla Tomb: the monument was once attributed to the Scipios and then identified with the Tomb belonged to Priscilla, wife of Titus Flavius Abascanto, a freedman of the emperor Domitian. Since XI century, the monument was included by Tuscolo counts within a fortification which in XIII century went to Caetani properties. To this Middle aged structure belongs the tower erected in place of the original cupola, by reusing the bricks removed from the tomb itself. Successively, two farmhouses were flanked to the original structure and one of these, the one on the backside of the Appian way, was used for some years as dairy farm. The monument was defined as “tumulo con podio”, with a sepulchral square-based cell, by tipological comparisons.

Colombarius of Augustus Freedman: in the interior of a farmhouse today used as restaurant, there are the remains of a big colombarius built by Augustus for the freedman of the imperial family. The original system, well recognizeable until the half of XIX century, is testified by some studies and engravings by Piranesi and Canina where it is still possible to individuate a three- communicating chambered building housing about 3000 burial recesses.

Colombarius of Livia Augusta Freedman: at a short distance (300mt) there was the Colombarius for the Livia Freedman. It was built at the end of Augustan age, discovered in 1726 and shortly after destroyed. The building should have a very rich decoration on the walls, made by stucco moulding, terracotta and even golden copper sheets decorated with flower, mythological and egyptian themes. The floors were made by black and white mosaics with geometrical decorations. Many inscriptions and sarcophagus are today spreaded in various museums all over the world.

Catacomb of St. Callixtus: The Catacomb of St. Callixtus is believed to be the ancient cemetery of Rome christian community. It have been created by future Pope Callixtus I, then a deacon of Rome, under the direction of Pope Zephyrinus, enlarging pre-existing early Christian hypogea. Nine pontefices are buried here and gave name to the crypta housing them. The area of the catacomb proper is about fifteen hectares, and it goes down for five levels. A rough estimate puts the length of passageways at about twenty kilometres, and the occupancy at about half a million bodies. The first nucleus of the cemeterial complex dates back to the II century and it was situated within an area owned by the family of "Caecili", according to the opinion of archaeologist G.B. De Rossi, after many pieces were found bearing this name. From this nucleus, known as the crypt of Lucina, and constituted by a double cubicle decorated with paintings, developed a big necropolis, one of the widest in the ancient subterranean Rome. At the beginning of III century, the area was owned by the christian community and pope Zefirinus (199-217) gave its administration to the first of his deacons, Calixtus. So the name of the necropoli decends neither from a martyr nor a from a donor or from the toponym, but from its administrator. Calixtus, became pope in 217, was a martyr under Alexandrus Severus and he was buried in a cemetery on the Aurelian way. In V century the catacombs of St. Calixtus were one of the most frequented place by pilgrims who swepted the dark galleries according to the forced "**itinera**" created by pope Damasus to celebrate the martyrs cult which laying there. The catacombs were abandoned in IX century after the translations and regained fame only in '800s due to G.B. De Rossi. At that time the scholar, who was always looking for remains of monuments and epigraphs, was attracted by two triapsed building as he was visiting a vineyard on the Appian way. One of them was used as farmstead whilst the other, became a wine cellar, contained wine barrels. The architectural tipology of the constructions, convinced the archaeologist about the paleochristian origin of

the buildings. His studies led him to assert that the eastern tricora (the one on the left) was the tomb of pope Zefirinus and of the martyr Tarcisius, the young who was murdered because he refused to consign the consecrated hosts to the pagans. Following excavations identified instead the building with a mausoleum of late Roman age, square-planted in which many fragments of sarcophagus are conserved. More probably, the tomb of Zefirinus and Tarcisius is located in the western tricora: it was restored at the beginning of '900 and it still preserves the ancient walling from the floor to the height of the arches, where the building, once covered with a cupola, was cutted for the vault to be reconstructed. The survivor walling doesn't allow for a precise dating because the system employing bricks rows with large lime coats was widely used from III century. After the terrain purchase decided by pope Pius IX, G.B.De Rossi starting to excavate and, in few years, he made exciting discoveries: in 1849 a broken slab allowed him for the discovery of pope Cornelius tomb which came into light in 1852, whilst in 1854 he recovered the "Crypt of the Popes" and the adjacent "cubicle of St. Cecilia". This area, defined as "Area I", is achievable by means of two stairs: the first thereof ends into a vestibule with the walls covered by graffiti representing the bury of venerated persons. Then the "Crypt of the Popes" is reached which contains 17 burials: 4 urns for sarcophagi, 12 burial recesses and a main tomb in front of the entrance, where are probably to be found some of the 14 popes mentioned by the source to be buried in the cemetery. The left inscriptions, etched on marble sheets which closing the recesses (with the pope name, wrote in Greek, and his title of "episkopos") testify for the presence of the popes: Pontian, Anterus, Fabian Lucius I, Sixtus II, Dionisius, Felix ed Eutychian, buried here from 235 to 283. The one who gave celebrity to the chapel was surely Sixtus II, the pope beheaded by Valerian soldiers while celebrating Mass: it was on August 6th 258, that the emperor ordered to confiscate the church assets, including the "coemeteria" and forbidden to meet in those places. For a long time, the crypt was called the crypt of Sixtus II, even if his burial still remains uncertain: why they waited until 258 for occupying the main tomb, being the first death in 235? The crypt was excavated under a well-defined area because, according to the Roman law, the excavation must coincide with the above property. The excavation started from two parallel stairs: at first there must be only two galleries going southwards. Later the galleries were connected, on the bottom, by a third. Parallel to this, other corridors were excavated. Maintenance and restoration works were made by the future pope Callixtus. The Crypt of popes, was probably made after his death in 222 and this could explain the lacking of his tomb within the pope chapel. In V century, during the triumphant christianism, with the monumentalization of tombs ordered by pope Damasus, the burial of popes was decorated and enriched. Two spiral columns support the votive lamps; marble barriers, upholstered the important tombs. At the same time, the crypt was connected with the "cubicle of St. Cecilia" by means of a passage: here was rediscovered in IX century, the body of St. Cecilia wrapped in a golden quilt and miraculously intact, according to the tradition. Today in the same recess, it is possible to admire the copy of the famous statue made by Stefano Maderno in 1600, in the same position in which the Saint is said to be found: the original statue is located in the church of St. Cecilia in Trastevere. Cecilia descended from a noble Roman family and, as she was discovered christian, was murdered. The legend says that she lived yet three days and said to the faithfuls came to visit her, among them bishop Urbanus, to build a church upon her house in Trastevere. Also the recovery of her body is surrounded by mystery: in 820 pope Paschal I, during the translation of the bodies of the martyrs in their respective churches, convinced that her body was stolen, dreamed about her which indicated him the place of her burial. Next to Crypt of popes, there is a straight gallery along which six cubicles said "of the Sacraments" are facing. The chapels are painted with symbolistic scenes, quite original in their iconology and painted with an impressionistic technique. In particular are worth to mention the "Jesus' Baptism", the "Eucharistic banquet by the Tiberias lake" and the "Multiplication of the loaves and the fish", painted between the end of II and the beginning of III century. In 296 died pope Gaius, the first not to be buried in

the crypt: his cubicle is located on a foot of a very large stair. IN front of it there is the tomb of pope Eusebius, died in 310 and translated in 311 from Sicily. Into an external chapel, are buried Calogerus and Parthenius, two martyrs murdered in 304, during the Diocletian persecution. In the area was recovered the inscription of deacon Severus, dated back to the beginning of IV century, etched on a marble barrier. It was very important since for the first time the word "pope" is used to indicate the Bishop of Rome. The inscription says "the deacon Severus, authorized by his pope Marcellinus, made a double cubicle, with arcosolia and skylight, a calm dwelling of peace for him and his familiars". Since pope Marcellinus pontificated between 296 and 304, it descends that the inscription dates back to the end of III century or to the early IV. It is very important also the reference to the resurrection of the flesh: Severus says that the "cubicle hosts the body of the child Severa (died at 9 years old) which will remain in this place until it will be resurrected by he who stolen her chast soul, for eternity: the soul will be gave back to the body adorned with spiritual joy". Another very important room within the Callixtus catacombs are the "Crypts of Lucina" from the name of the matron which picked up the remains of pope Cornelius to put them down in a "crypta iuxta cimiterium Callisti in via Appia", i.e. a crypt next to St. Callixtus cemetery. Pope Cornelius died in Civitavecchia in 253, where he was deported during the persecution of the emperor Trebonianus Gallus, and was then translated in Rome between 258 and 260. In front of the recess, a marble sheet etched in latin which said "Cornelius martyr ep(iscopos)" i.e. "Cornelius, martyr bishop". In a nearby cubiculum are some of the most famous Roman paleochristian frescoes of two fish with a basket of loaves behind it, a symbol of the Eucharist. Pope Damasus imposed an epigraph for Cornelius whose only few remains are left. The pope highlights that thanks to the staircase, the entrance for people is easier to the tomb of Cornelius where the dark is defeated thanks to the skylight. The pope said to made such works encouraged by his devotion for martyrs tombs and invite the faithfuls to pray for him.

Villa of Maxentius

This impressive building, known as the Villa of Maxentius, is located at the III mile of the Appian way and it is constituted by three main monuments: the palace, the Circus and the familiar mausoleum, known also as the "tomb of Romulus", from the young emperor's son which was buried here. The Villa descends from an ancient rural villa of the late Republican age (I b.C), which was remodernated during Julius-Claudian age (I secolo a.C.) until its radical change, around the half of II a.C. by Herodes Atticus who included it in his big Villa known as "Pago Triopio". The last phase was that of Maxentius when around 310 a.C., he transformed the Villa in the imperial residence by making build some eminent spaces as the basilica, a new monumental entrance and the build of a circus and a mausoleum. With the map it is possible to distinguish the different spaces: the Villa rose on a conveniently smoothed hill, with a terracing supported by a cryptoportic 115 mt long with two parallel galleries, divided by pilasters and vaulted. The cryptoportic belonging to the original phase of the Villa, was successively interrupted by a group of three rooms, while at the two edges two panoramic tower-shaped pavilions were added. Above the terracing, probably opened towards the valley by means of a portic, there was the palace whose rooms are still recognizable at the edge of a large apsed room of 33 x 19,45mt which was the most important space of the whole building, devoted to meetings and ceremonies and for such a reason, even heated as highlighted from the terracotta pipes inserted into the walls. In front of the hall, few remains of an entrance are left, while on the northern side a long and narrow cistern, and on its eastern side, a place rounded and vaulted which should have been the monumental entrance. This was connected to the circus, the best preserved and interesting part of the building. The circus spreaded into the valley from east to west for 520mt, with a width of about 92mt. On the short western side, delimited by two three-floored towers, 16 mt height, there were the *carceres*, 12 closed rooms

whose opening started to go the running wagons. On the central part of this side, opened the biggest among the building entrances, which was arch-shaped. Another entrance, the “triumph gateway” arched too, opened on the opposite eastern side and was reserved to the public. Here was recovered in 1825 by the archaeologist Antonio Nibby, the dedication slab to Romulus which allowed for the identification of the whole building; a copy is located within the fornix and it says: “*Divino Romolo, uomo di nobile memoria, due volte console ordinario, figlio del nostro signore Massenzio invitto e perpetue Augusto, nipote del divino Massimiano*”. Actually, nonetheless the solemn epithets, Romulus was a child as he died. Two further entrances opened also between the towers and another one along the southern side, opposite to the emperor tribune. The two long sides were occupied by bleachers, resting on a vaulted structure. It is supposed that the presence of two orders of stairs could house up to 10000 places. On the long northern side there was the imperial tribune made by a long rectangular space and a roundabout, covered with a cupola, leaning against it. In the middle of the arena it is still recognizable the “*spina*”, i.e. the longitudinal element around which the wagon turned; it was 1000 Roman feet length, about 296mt, at its edges there were two circular spaces, the “*metae*”. The spina was made by a series of tanks interrupted by aedicules and statues which altogether formed a sort of canal (*euripus*), bearing in the middle the Obelisk of Domitian which Maxentius presumably had moved from the Isaeum as part of the tribute to his son and later used by Bernini in 1651 to decorate his fountain of the Rivers. The third element of the Villa, the Romulus’ mausoleum, his son who died in 307, drowned in the Tiber. Actually the large circular tomb was built by Maxentius in the early 4th century, probably with himself in mind and as a family tomb. It was posed in the middle of an area included within a quadriportic of 107x121mt. bearing walls and pilasters made by bricks and covered with little cross vaults. The tomb was circular with a diameter of 33mt with a forepart (pronaus) similar to that of the Pantheon. The pronaus, was rectangular of 21.5x8.60mt, completely without covering blocks, was substituted in 800s by a still existing farmstead of Torlonia family; it had six columns on the front side and it was formed by two spaces, the former under the frontal staircase. Then, the big circle, which on the ground floor had a monumental corridor around a big pilaster with a diameter of 7.5mt and barrel-vaulted. Along the eperimetral walls, two entrances and six recess devoted to housing sarcophagus. Other eight niches alternately posed, was on the central pilaster. The whole building was acquired in 800 by the Torlonia family, dukes of Bracciano: in 1825 the prince Giovanni Torlonia started to excavate the area with the aid of the archaeologist Antonio Nibby, transferring the copious recovered artworks into the private collection of palazzo Torlonia and transforming the area in a farm, until the expropriation in 1943. On the eastern side of the quadriportic there is the nucleus of an ancient tomb, perhaps dating back to Augustan age, known as the Tomba dei Servilii. The tomb is made by a squared concrete basement surmounted by niches and in its interior there is the funerary chamber still well preserved and decorated with stuccoes. The circus were probably no longer used after the death of the emperor, undergoing a progressive degradation.

Tomba di Cecilia Metella

The Tomb of Caecilia Metella is a mausoleum located just outside Rome at the three mile marker of the Via Appia. It was built between 30 and 20 BC to honor Caecilia Metella as reported in the inscription on the upper part of the tomb: “CAECILIAE Q(UINTI) CRETICI F(ILIAE) METELLAE CRASSI”, i.e. “to Cecilia Metella, daughter of Quintus Caecilius Metellus Creticus who was, a Consul in 69 BC, and wife of Marcus Licinius Crassus (quaestor), son of the famous Marcus Crassus who served under Julius Caesar. The family rank explains well both the dominant position, respect to the street, on a hill which ensure

visibility even from long distance and the conciseness of the inscription, since the illustrious names sufficed to remember the class of the dead woman. The monument is made by an impressive squared concrete basement, once covered by travertine but later removed during Renaissance and by a cylindrical body (height 11 and diameter 29.50) whose covering, made of travertine too, is decorated with a marble frieze of garlands and bucrani, i.e. a decoration with the shape of an ox head, very common at that time, and from which the name of the place "Capo di Bove" - is derived. The frieze, at the height of the inscription, is interrupted by a high-relief with an army and the figure of a barbarian made prisoner. Originally, it was probably covered by a stack of ground, covered by vegetation. The interior was a unique room covered by bricks (one of the most old examples thereof) with a slightly conical shape and a diameter of ca. 6.5m. In the XI century, the tomb was used as the tower of a castle owned by the counts of Tuscolo, to whom succeeded in 1299, the Caetani. These latter occupied the tomb and transformed it in a fortified place called "Castrum Caetani" from which they controlled the traffic on the street, earning expensive duties. The wide three-floored building next to the mausoleum is the *palatium*, where it is possible to distinguish doors, windows and corridors: the current triangular shape lets us suppose that the covering was hut-like; the interior, due to the falling lofts, appears nowadays as a series of separated courts. The original entrance was bricked up by Luigi Canina around 1850-1853 to put some marble remains recovered in the proximities. It is surmounted by a marble sheet (XIV century) which bears a bucranium in the middle and at the edges, two emblems of the Caetani family. In the XIV century, the fortress went to the Savelli and then to the Orsini, which held it until 1435, after which it became property of the Roman Senate.

Incredibly, the structure suffered its major dangers during peace times: Pope Urban VIII (1623-44), allowed in writing Bernini to demolish an ancient circular monument, of beautiful marble, in proximity of S. Sebastiano, said "Capo di Bove", i.e. exactly the tomb of Cecilia Metella, to finish the works on the Trevi fountain, but the Roman population protested so much that Bernini must have given up the project. In the 1500s, the building was abandoned and Sixtus V made it partly demolish, because it was believed to be a refuge of criminals. In the Castrum Caetani was included also the church of St. Nicholas at Capo di Bove (image 5) of which only the apse is left. The church, built according to the middle age habit of built sacred buildings inside the castles' courts, has a unique rectangular room, with plain facade and it is surmounted, on the left, by a little bell tower with different walling. A wide portal, decorated only by a marble frame, is surmounted by an oculus.