

and flowers were essential elements. The well-known literary convention of the *locus amoenus* had from Homer onwards connections with religious and eschatological beliefs. Such a symbolic value is in the various "green references" (scrolls, garlands, branches) evidently pointing to the idealized abundance of nature and/or to its *amoenitas*, so to say, "built-in".

In such a large work small errors always remain. For example, in urn N. 18 there are in total four birds in the front instead of three as Sinn (p. 95) states, or the bird picking up an insect below the garland on the right side of the urn N. 53 is a heron rather than a pelican as Sinn (p. 105) identifies it. Needless to say that despite the above remarks – or as the lack of more serious criticisms shows – we should be very grateful for the author for providing the basis for future studies through her painstaking work.

*Antero Tammisto*

*Harald Mielsch - Henner von Hesberg: Die heidnische Nekropole unter St. Peter in Rom. Die Mausoleen A-D. Bauaufnahme von Kai Gaertner. Atti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia, ser. III: Memorie, vol. XVI, 1. "L'Erma" di Bretschneider, Roma 1986. 66 S. 9 Taf. ITL 150.000.*

The excavations of the pagan necropolis under the basilica of St. Peter were started in 1939, but it was not until 1951 that the studies concerning the western part of the necropolis were published by B.M. Apolloni Ghetti and others. In 1979 the Reverenda Fabbrica di S. Pietro, the Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia and the Deutsches archäologisches Institut decided upon a documentation campaign of the eastern part of the necropolis. The publication under review is the first of four volumes, which will present the results of the said campaign. The first three volumes will describe the architecture as well as the pictorial and sculptural decoration of the tombs, whereas the inscriptions as well as the sarcophagi, urns and altars will be dealt with in the fourth volume.

In the present volume H. v. Hesberg describes the architecture and H. Mielsch the pictorial decoration of four tombs (abbreviated A-D). Only a small part of the facade (the entrance) of tomb A (of C. Popilius Heracla) is preserved and in tomb D little is left of its paintings and, consequently, the mausoleum of Fannia (B) and that of Tullius Zethus (C) with their rich paintings occupy the largest part of the work (27 and 20 respectively of the total of 66 pages). The descriptions are clear and compact, a more general discussion of major problems being left to the concluding parts of the series. The number of good observations, even if limited to single details, inspire confidence and seem to

indicate the accuracy of the field work. The later phases and changes (in the third and fourth century A.D), both in architecture and the paintings of these tombs built in Hadrian's time (brick stamps confirming the stylistic analysis) are well presented. The documentation of now vanished later paintings, visible in photographs made shortly after the excavations, is especially valuable.

Indeed as a rule, the illustration of the work is abundant and of good quality, the colour photographs being particularly welcome. For some badly damaged paintings and unclear photographs, reconstruction drawings would be useful, though Mielsch's readings of the paintings for the most part seem trustworthy and accurate. A drawing might have helped for example in the case of fig. 30 from the paintings in tomb B, where Mielsch's interpretation seems to me somewhat misleading. Instead of a peacock suggested by Mielsch (p. 26), the bird seems rather to have represented a purple gallinule, which together with apparent water plants points to a small river or marsh scene. This is a less important detail. Of more general interest is Mielsch's observation of a peculiar type of vase as an "antiquarian detail", along with which the original of a couple of still lifes in the paintings from tomb B can be dated to the late fourth or early third century B.C. The two couples of birds around the vase might well have a similar character as antiquarian details; one couple clearly seem to be ring-necked parakeets and the other couple might indeed represent rose-coloured starlings as Mielsch suggests (pp. 22 and 36), though I have not found any information as to whether the latter species had become known to the Greeks as a result of Alexander's conquests (Mielsch's note 48 to Keller's work is misleading in this respect). Though the painting is damaged, the birds are very distinctive and – as far as I am aware – have no parallels among the numerous still lifes in Romano-Campanian wall paintings.

Mielsch's suggestion that the hunt and race representations in the paintings in tomb C point to the real activities of the deceased person(s) deserves further attention. Was the palm with stripes with blue flowers indeed added later between the two aurigae as a "Parteinahme" for the *factio veneta* as Mielsch suggests (pp. 47 and 57ff.)? It is to be hoped that further discussion of this, too, will appear in the concluding parts.

We can agree with the words in the preface: "Questa opera attesa da tanto tempo dagli studiosi di tutto il mondo... sarà un nuovo, fondamentale contributo per la migliore conoscenza e studio degli scavi...". However, we hope that the future volumes will be proof-read more carefully in order to avoid the many printing and spelling errors found in the present volume.

*Antero Tammisto*