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Panel 24: The Via Salaria Necropolis Project

Chairs: John Bodel, Silvia Orlandi

During the thirty years between 1885 and the outbreak of World War II, building operations conducted in the northern part of Rome in order to lay out a new residential district on the Pincian hill uncovered a large early imperial necropolis north of the Aurelian Wall between the Piazza Fiume and the modern Via Pinciana that contained more than 1,000 tombs and nearly 2,500 funerary inscriptions. Many of the artifacts recovered during these operations found their way onto the antiquities market and, through the hands of various dealers in Rome, into the collections of universities and museums in the USA and Europe. The origins of many of these objects are known to us only through archival documents and unpublished manuscripts that can now be consulted through the digital version of the *giornali di scavo* at the website of the Archivio di Documentazione Archeologica curated by Antonella Ferraro. This resource is fundamental for reconstructing the topographical contexts from which more than 1,000 of the 1,600 Roman stone inscriptions acquired by American collectors during this period derived. At the same time, understanding the diaspora of inscriptions from the Via Salaria burial ground requires tracing their histories back from their current locations through museum and university records often available only in the USA or elsewhere.

The goal of the Via Salaria Necropolis Project, co-directed by the panel organizers, is to unify and synthesize the disparate information aggregated in recent years by researchers preparing xml EpiDoc editions of these inscriptions for publication at the Epigraphic Database Roma (Orlandi) and the U.S. Epigraphy Project (Bodel). In many cases it has been possible to trace individual object histories of inscriptions from the Via Salaria necropolis now in American collections, and to contextualize their origins and transatlantic journeys more fully, but these stories have thus far remained isolated and independent, existing only in the form of individual linked entries in the two databases.

The aim of the present panel is to move beyond these isolated micro-histories by illustrating the types of research questions that can be investigated through consideration of the Via Salaria inscriptions more broadly. Possible topics might include: the historical character of the Via Salaria cemetery; the topography and archaeological history of the zone; American collecting practices; the epigraphic antiquities market in Rome at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries; inscriptions as cultural patrimony; and the roles of key individuals (archaeologists, dealers, collectors).

