

## **The Legitimacy of a Project: the Varrese Tomb between Urban Landscape and Preservative Instances**

**Marisa Corrente, Carmine Robbe, Matteo Ieva**

Soprintendenza per I Beni archeologici della Puglia,  
1 Strada Lamberti - Borgo Antico – Bari – Italy

marisa.corrente@beniculturali.it; [robbecarmine@gmail.com](mailto:robbecarmine@gmail.com); [matteoieva@yahoo.it](mailto:matteoieva@yahoo.it)

**Carmine Robbe, Marisa Corrente, Matteo Ieva**

IR Architetto,

14 via Trieste e Trento – 76012 Bari – Italy

marisa.corrente@beniculturali.it; [robbecarmine@gmail.com](mailto:robbecarmine@gmail.com); [matteoieva@yahoo.it](mailto:matteoieva@yahoo.it)

**Matteo Ieva, Marisa Corrente, Carmine Robbe**

Department dICAR - Course of degree in Architecture – Polytechnic of Bari,  
4 via Orabona – 70125 Bari – Italy

marisa.corrente@beniculturali.it; [robbecarmine@gmail.com](mailto:robbecarmine@gmail.com); [matteoieva@yahoo.it](mailto:matteoieva@yahoo.it)

### **ABSTRACT**

The <normalization> of the cultural offer, represented by the chance to see in their own original location, cultural heritage otherwise intended for cultural containers of different geographical areas, has dictated during these recent decades the cultural policy of reconstruction in an exhibition project, fulfilled in the city of Canosa (BT), of the “corredo gentilizio” belonging to the Varrese Tomb that was dismembered following its discover in 1912 and where its evidences have become part of the National Archaeological Museum of Taranto and the Bari Provincial Museum collections.

Within the set-up experience of Palazzo Sinesi, the first founding elements of a more ambitious valorization plan have been organized (exhibition "The Varrese Tomb: from old excavations to reconstruction of the archaeological landscape").

The evaluative dynamics of a communication and promotion plan for the city of Canosa have been enforced by the identification of a protection and appreciation project of the Varrese hypogeum, in the past, object of excavations campaigns that stressed the architectural structure of the Tomb divided into several rooms, the compliance of the hypogeum to complex build history, the need for monumentalizing of the system that invested the underground spaces and areas close to them.

The cover design of the funeral system has achieved a milestone, as planning application within a heavily degraded context, for the purposes of reconstruction of archeological landscapes in Daunia epoch. The structure, achieved only partially, does not deliberately close itself towards outdoor areas and has a significant importance in the prospects, in order to avoid the idea of a minimization of unjustified and archaeological “ingabbiatura”.

The search for appropriate solutions in the field of enhancement of the archeological heritage in Canosa has time and ways of implementation I certainly not suiting to optimal working schedule but it appears important to the definition of a "design model" which safeguards the archeological heritage fragmented by the long history of its research.

**KEYWORDS:** archaeological research, protection and conservation, coverage design.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The approach of the Superintendence of Archaeological Heritage in Puglia including the needs of protection and conservation of the archaeological heritage of Puglia, has been very complex; the analysis leading from the distribution and organization of settlements has given concreteness, for example, the size of the funerary dimension, defining the diachronic development of the cultural events; such as reading archives of collective and individual stories set in a landscape built and shaped.

In this sense, the history of archaeological research in the town of Canosa (Cassano, 1992; Corrente, 2009), in recent decades, in the conditioning imposed by the limits of urban excavations, and on the basis of partial data, it may be regarded as of great importance, for the purpose of pre-Roman knowledge of the settlement.

Observations on the daunia necropolis highlight indeed as the recovery of non disturbed contexts, is increasingly limited: the misuse of the funerary structures, observable as a wide distribution phenomenon, reduces the number of valid contexts for the purposes of scientific observations. These assessments refer to the systematic use of the soil, with the aggravating circumstance of illegal excavations in an urban setting in which the exploitation of the calcarenite benches, for the recovery of building materials, has severely altered the morphological structure of the areas. It is a fact that over time decreases the ability to recover valid space settlement Timelines and remain difficult to define, for the aspects of its grossly unequal archaeological documentation, several issues concerning the analysis of the daunian archaeology, such as its topography, typological – functional, and technical-constructive shapes of the settlement.

The archaeological research sheds new light, on how the rest of daunia times survive, even where the level of urbanization and structural organization of the Roman period have left blank spaces, or in areas where the process of urban ruralisation has preserved significant areas of pre-Roman settlements.

In these areas of the suburban landscape of the city of Canosa, in which the environment has preserved elements of the nineteenth century rural architecture and un-built open spaces, which give back significant places of the archaeological reality of the daunia *facies*.

On the eastern suburb of the city, along an ancient driving line represented by the road to Lavello, lies the Tomb of the multi-cellular funerary unit, Varrese, one of the most significant areas of daunian funerary architecture. The tomb represents the rank and specific symbols of a noble group and at the same time expresses, with the attendance and the growth of funerary environments for over a century, from the mid-third to mid-fourth century BC, the stability of the deceased prerogatives in power and status.

The excavation related to the monument has undergone a variety of approaches: from the clandestine excavation in 1912 (Nachod, 1914), with the sale of part of the materials to the Archaeological Museum of Taranto and the purchase by the Provincial Museum of Bari of numerous exhibits, to the "rediscovery" of part of the hypogeum by Giuseppe Andreassi (Andreassi, 1972; Andreassi, 1992; Corrente, 2004), until the later stages of abandonment and restart of archaeological research. The distinctive features of the tombs history are marked from the outset by the apparent fragility of the logic of conservation of the unit as a whole.

The dismemberment of the ceramics unit, consisting of more than four hundred vases and the distinction between two of the same museum collections with the consequential legitimacy of separate legal ownership of the goods transformed into museums; the cohabitation of the Hypogeum with a hard urban reality, have represented the city limits to overcome under the perception that the dramatic tear represented by the logic of the dispersion had to be sorted out.

The recovery of the environment as a whole between architecture and spatial and visual relationships with its materials was implemented at different times. The finds are now accessible at the Palazzo Sinesi, in a stratification of archaeological traces to make it easy to read the richness of the metal and vases remaining from the rooms of the Hypogeum. At the same time, the recovery of the monument raised the issue of the spatial relationship between the excavation and the project, subject to the condition

of the funerary monument and the methodological approach for a fair coexistence of architecture and archaeology (Carlini, 2009).

The awareness of the change lies in the recovery of the spatial value of the archaeological area in which its stratification and trend inversion, compared to the past that makes the Varrese Tomb public and integrated into the city.

## 2 THE FUNERARY MONUMENT

The archaeological excavation has clarified the different building stages of the multi-cellular unit. Phase I: The funerary structure articulates with a long *dromos* and a Hypogeum environment axis (Varrese I). At this stage there is not yet an idea of an architectural apparatus, facing outwards and structured with fine mouldings and rich spatial solutions even within the depositional area. The attention paid to the axial chamber, possibly devoted to a prestigious character, is evident from the particular structure of the façade made of blocks, with a texture that defines a uniform coated curtain of the prospectus. Even in the Barbarossa hypogeum and in Lagrasta hypogeum returns the perspective visual that, from the *dromos* establishes the focal point that unifies the spacial axis and is underlined by the representativeness of the axial chamber.

The criteria for the exaltation of the prestige of the deceased pointing on the quantity and richness of the goods deposited. On the basis of recent excavations, it seems certain that the allocation of ceramic fragments recovered on the floor of the unit deposition merged in the National Archaeological Museum of Taranto.

The rank of the deceased was indeed evidenced by the richness of the ceramic apparatus, while the presence of the anatomical armour well defined the character's virtue warrior.

Phase II: Later, the need to organise the funerary space came out. This meant the lowering of the floor of the vestibule, the new slope of the *dromos* greatly elongated the ceiling, the ceiling of the outer wall of the axial chamber with a layer of rough plaster that covers evenly the curtain of tuff blocks as well as the structuring of the new underground spaces whose construction proceeds as a gradual expansion of the so-called "eastern nucleus": In the same period must have been produced the cell located west of the *dromos* (Varrese II).

The multiplication of the environment responds to the logical burial for more members of the same generation: three bedrooms (Mazza III -IV- V) are developed to the east of the entrance passage and celebrate, with the prospect of semi-columns of the structured door, a different sensitivity for the construction of a funeral environment, now felt as "monuments", evolved shake off self-congratulation by a part of the indigenous aristocracy that it has acquired in the meantime and a different sensitivity to the proportions and architectural language.

The new rooms, as well as being emphatically framed on the outside by a monumental prospect, already well highlighted by the findings of Giuseppe Andreassi, have special design features that distinguish the ceilings and paintings depicted by the wooden frame of the flat roofs or the door framing.

Phase III: to date, the formal and decorative repertoire responds to the known shapes in the funerary achievements. They are the genealogical references suggested by the illustrious ancestor placed in the central chamber which lead to the new organisation, functional to the monumental outdoor spaces and to the connection between the Hypogeum implant and the representative areas of ceremonials that took place around the monument.

The functional relationship is given by the setting of a pillar, made with blocks juxtaposed, stuck in the floor of the vestibule, off-centre for the purpose of an easier access to the eastern burial core.

The archaeological observations highlighted how the pillar has been fundamental in the architectural plan of the Hypogeum -perimeter of the outer space; from the floor of the vestibule, to the pillar that was connected outside with a clear view of the observer.

We do not know if the pillar had a load-bearing function, but it is the archaeological context, in its definition and architectural floor plan, that justifies the hypothesis of a symbolic and allusive scan of the space. Indeed, the pillar has not a marginal role in the value of a transition between reality and outer space however, as it connects with the northern arm of the colonnade area that grows on the north and east of the Hypogeum. The pillar seems to be an indemnificatory element of a sacred space, as an important sign of the deceased and sign of rituals celebrated in his honour. On the other hand, the monumentality of the parabolas is archaeologically of absolute importance. Made with continuous foundations of tuff blocks, which have survived with good continuity of stone elements in the colonnade side, where the setting of the columns is readable only for the preservation of the footprints, the bounded space, in his self-configuration, does not constitute an accomplished unit, for the obvious interpretation, and tends to fractionate the structuring of the whole. The reading plan of the various components of the space takes place in the connection of the organizational elements: the tomb and the perilous. The last suggests the dimensioning of the Hypogeum space and the placement of the underground environment. The colonnade space would cause an effective illusionistic effect of light and shadow, qualifying, through the architectural order, the spatial dimension of those who walked the path between the tomb of the founder and the rooms destined for his noble family.

The solid culture underlies this architectural apparatus is obvious and self-celebration of the dead status sanctioned by the very illustrious ancestor doubt. The solution adopted by one side does suggest a temporal space in which the funerary monument was not buried but then it was visible on the outside, on the other hand it demonstrates a planning project in which the pillar - *sema* was combined with the strict spatial relationships of the architectures outside the tomb, a metaphor of the relationship between the community of the dead and community of the living (Lippolis, 1994).

So, *sema* and fence at the moment are exceptional examples of the deployment of a new monumental architecture, clearly marked by the ideological forms of Hellenized elites.

It is a chapter of undoubted importance in the history of funerary architecture of Canosa, in good harmony with the figurative tradition handed down to us from the representations of the *tardoapula* (late Apulian) ceramic and the monumental funerary space that in Taranto reaches developments of particular architectural ambition.

### **3 PROJECT FOR INCREASING THE VALUABILITY OF THE FUNERARY AREA METHODOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES**

Before describing the project we think it is useful to introduce the topic with a question that inevitably appears in these cases and regards the choice of the covering system to be adopted, whose main purpose, in addition to the protection that is on top of that of exploitation of the monumental site. The issue, then, seems more complex as more, as it is reported to the archaeological sites that occur in entirely hypogeum structures, and are placed in urban areas where other buildings are located.

That said, the problem already arises a reflection on the "value" to be given to the area as an element in itself, whose visible appearance, as part (special and of particular value) of a more general system, cannot be underestimated and at the same time how to relate to the surrounding built area. This outlines, to be noted, a grid of questions, to be answered through a clear hierarchy of values that can define the relationship and the critical choices to be taken.

The Varrese Hypogeum, as previously indicated, is located in the suburb of the village and it is accessible by a road that connects the city with the valley system of *Ofanto* river and with that of the *Murgia* Mountains. The area is located between a house and a building used, in the nineteenth-century, as a residence and a oil mill, no longer active, and an white area private property that puts it in a direct relation with the wide plain of the *Tavoliere*. On the other side of the path appeared manufacturing facilities and warehouses.

The height of the stratum of limestone on which the coverage structures were put in ancient times is, on average, at Mt. - 2.00 from street level, while the height of the available lot is quadrangular and very different from the reconstructed geometry of the monument. This placement imposes immediately

the problem, “how and how much” to make see the presence of area to the external perception, relating to the constraints constituted by the surroundings, and most importantly, how to define the protection without give up that aspect (most likely this existed at the time of its completion in the fourth century BD) characteristic of the relationship between the burial area and the natural uncontaminated surrounding area.

Given these initial considerations, it is, therefore moved onto the project conjectural hypothesis taking into account both, the type of "casing" to be used, either, the building system to be employed in order to make the spatial articulation of the burial area readable.

Given the circumstances, the principle adopted was not oriented to the choice of the so-called "container" that hide outside its content. Consider, for example, the interesting project of L. Franciosini for the villa Faragola at Ascoli Satriano, in which it was proposed a white parallelepiped that defines and organizes its internal space perfectly regularly, in an isolated place in the flat country of the *Tavoliere*, which shows only the volume of protected structure.

In this case, instead, the *idea-cogito* of design has not given up preserve for the protective structure, the fundamental condition of significant “meaning” that, in addition to being the external coverage as an emergency, had to evoke critically the ancient arrangement.

### 3.1 The coverage design

Chosen the construction system consisting of lightweight structures made of laminated wood, we proceeded to define the main organism by placing the pillars supporting the roof next to the visible traces of the bases of pre-existing columns that supported the roof of the *sema*.

The geometry of the covering system, evoking the ancient order and organization, was not limited to one part of the porch, but was also extended to the *dromos* and the intermediate zones in order to protect the underlying cells (*cellae*) from the atmospherically elements that had already partly compromised the statics. The entire coverage combines together, the need to safeguard the underlying burial area, with the necessity to invoke a hierarchical system with which distinguishes every single part of the fenced area. For that reason it has been imagined a complex composition consisting of the said covering system, to which have been added two service chambers in the residual area. The project includes, in fact, a different arrangement of the *sema*, which once again, reinterprets in an evocative way, the constitutive characters and an access compartment to the area, defined by a nearly triangular shape due to the geometry of the lot, together with a space to be used for conferences and exhibitions.

In the first case, the rule on which the volumetric hierarchy of the coverage is based precisely on the specific “value” of the *sema* in its role as an emerging element. The coverage of the *dromos* is juxtaposed to this and assumes a configuration that tends to enhance prospectively the ideal centre of the entire funerary unit, in this case defined by the front cell of the *Pater families*. The intersection between the *sema* and the *dromos* generates a specialization consisting of a few raised coverage that, in addition to demonstrating the different valence of the “node”, conceptually recalls the *naiskos*. An element that occurs in nineteenth-century images of the Hypogeum’s of Canosa. It comes out, therefore, from the other parts along with that of the *dromos* which follows the sloped descent to the cells.

The areas inside the perimeter of the porch system were also covered, although subordinated hierarchically to this, to connect the two main parts.

Access to the area to visitors, drawn moving back the street alignment that testifies its uniqueness compared to the serial elements of the fence, that joins the two prevalent directions, takes place through a staircase that makes irregularities on its own and is in harmony with the geometry of the covered area. In addition to the staircase, there is a ramp with an adequate slope for the handicapped, developed along the sides of the perimeter to the south and west until reaching the farthest end of the exhibition / conference room in which the services are obtained.

The triangular space entry / bookshop, which directly faces Lavello way, has a completely opaque wall to the full height of the fence, on which is engraved the cliché inscription of the Hypogeum, then a break by continuous ribbon window, shielded from *brise soleil*, which allows the entry of light, and finally the cover. Also in this case, a hierarchical system of wooden beams, together with the simplicity of

the white perimeter, will try to unify the choices made for all covers. Inside the room, next to the window that opens the view to the archaeological area, is provided a staircase by which it is possible to reach the lower level, which coincides with the room that is raised from the ground outside, so as not to undermine the ancient structures and a skylight that allows for ventilation to an anthropogenic cavity underlying.

Both service areas open completely to the archaeological area and give the observer who stands inside them, the opportunity to enjoy the outdoor space obtained with the protective structures; conversely, the user visiting the monument, captures from outside the activities that take place in the rooms. This creates a bond of strong interaction between interior and exterior space that is confirmed, moreover, by the perception of the surrounding landscape, considered an element of value of the arrangement proposed here.

Among the technical specifications that deserve to be recalled, it is highlighted the different shape (circular or rectangular) of the pillars that make up the coverage of laminated wood, as a consequence of the meaning given to the zones. These structural elements, parallel to the traces of walls emerging or rebuilt of the *sema*, are founded on micro-poles reinforced concrete. This is in order not to transmit the loads of the cover on the underlying *cellae*.

Above these, some perimeter beams connecting it allow to organize a series of additional and secondary transverse beams having a function of solar shading and support for translucent roofing material.

The images presented neatly show some aspects of the funerary unit, describe the full project of enhancement of the monumental area and they document the current situation that shows the partial realization of the project described here in which the utility rooms are missing.



Figure 1: Varrese Tomb. Plan and sections



Figure 2: General project. Draws in 3d: plan, sections, views



Figure 3: Conferences and exhibitions room; photos of partial realization of the work



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