

**Title: Burial archaeology and the evidence for settlement in the steppe area in the Late Roman provinces of Syria and Arabia**

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**Abstract:** Resafa is one of the few sites in Syria where systematic fieldwork since 1986, conducted by the German Archaeological Institute, has permitted insight into the topography and development of the ancient frontier post. This remote site with roots in the middle of the 1st century AD changed fundamentally following the martyrdom of St Sergius around AD 312, when it quickly became a center for pilgrimages to the saint's tomb. Recent excavations in the cemetery north of the town identified the northern necropolis, extending alongside the military road from Palmyra to the Euphrates, as the oldest cemetery on site, going back to at least the 3rd century fort. The tombs, which were for the most part rock-cut with a covering of stone slabs, point to a strong local element present in the burial customs. Discussed within a broader frame of the sepulchral culture of the steppe-desert in Syria and Jordan, they reveal a striking correspondence between tomb type and burial customs all along the Late Roman frontier. Furthermore, there is evidence at Resafa that Arcosolia emerged in a separate cemetery only after the site had undergone massive urbanization as a holy site.

**Keywords:** Late Roman Syria, tombs, burial customs, Roman cemetery, Roman desert frontier