

Social Archaeology Of Funerary Remains

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human bones form the most direct link to understanding how people lived in the past who they were and where they came from the interpretative value of human skeletal remains within their burial context in terms of past social identity and organisation is awesome but was for many years underexploited by archaeologists the nineteen papers in this edited volume are an attempt to redress this by marrying the cultural aspects of burial with the anthropology of the deceased

in april 1485 a marble sarcophagus was found on the outskirts of rome it contained the remains of a young roman woman so well preserved that she appeared to have only just died and the sarcophagus was placed on public view attracting great crowds such a find reminds us of the power of the dead body to evoke in the minds of living people be they contemporary survivors or mourners or distanced from the remains by time a range of emotions and physical responses ranging from fascination to fear and from curiosity to disgust archaeological interpretations of burial remains can often suggest that the skeletons which we uncover and therefore usually associate with past funerary practices were what was actually deposited in graves rather than articulated corpses the choices made by past communities or individuals about how to cope with a dead body in all of its dynamic and constituent forms and whether there was reason to treat it in a manner that singled it out positively or negatively as different from other human corpses provide the stimulus for this volume the nine papers provide a series of theoretically informed but not constrained case studies which focus predominantly on the corporeal body in death the aims are to take account of the active presence of dynamic material bodies at the heart of funerary events and to explore the questions that might be asked about their treatment to explore ways of putting fleshed bodies back into our discussions of burials and mortuary treatment as well as interpreting the meaning of these activities in relation to the bodies of both deceased and survivors and to combine the insights that body centered analysis can produce to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the role of the body living and dead in past cultures

first comprehensive study of the processes ritual and practices involved in the cremation of human bodies and the methodologies that can be applied to the study of cremated human remains using both new and traditional methods of study

the archaeology of death and burial is central to our attempts to understand vanished societies through the remains of funerary rituals we can learn not only about the attitudes of prehistoric people to death and the afterlife but also about their way of life their social organisation and their view of the world this ambitious book reviews the latest research in this huge and important

field and describes the sometimes controversial interpretations that have led to rapid advances in our understanding of life and death in the distant past a unique overview and synthesis of one of the most revealing fields of research into the past it covers archaeology s most breathtaking discoveries from tutankhamen to the ice man and will find a keen market among archaeologists historians and others who have a professional interest in or general curiosity about death and burial

there is a considerable body of knowledge on the concepts and practices of inhumation yet our understanding of cremation ritual and practice is by comparison woefully inadequate this volume draws together the inventive methodology that has been developed for this material and combines it with a fuller interpretation of the archaeological funerary context it demonstrates how an innovative methodology when applied to a challenging material can produce new and exciting interpretations of archaeological sites and funerary contexts the reader is introduced to the nature of burned human remains and the destructive effect that fire can have on the body subsequent chapters describe important cremation practices and sites from around the world and from the neolithic period to the modern day by emphasising the need for a robust methodology combined with a nuanced interpretation it is possible to begin to appreciate the significance and wide spread adoption of this practice of dealing with the dead provided by publisher

during the last century s archaeological investigations of the advanced bronze age culture maintained by the so called minoans on the island of crete a number of tombs dated to the late minoan period and containing weapons have been discovered in the surroundings of the site of knossos the tombs are not confined to a certain area or cemetery but are rather dispersed around the palace and town although they are characterised by their weapons other artefacts such as bronze vessels and certain pottery types also distinguish these tombs the tombs are of three types chamber tombs with long dromoi shaft graves and pit caves various labels have been designated for them tombs with weapons warrior tombs warrior graves and weapon tombs the warrior graves are often discussed in relation to the question of when the mycenaeans arrived in crete most scholars agree that a mycenaean presence or power in crete existed in the late bronze age but when their arrival would have taken place has not yet enjoyed consensus previous scholarship raises a number of questions that are dealt with in this work in relation to the funerary landscape at knossos including to what degree do the burial customs in fact change in lm ii and what about the mainland influences if the archaeological material points in that direction how are we to understand such a transformation of the mortuary practices would this indicate an ethnic change if on the other hand the material points towards a gradual process beginning already in lm i or

earlier with elements of mainland traits what would that indicate the tombs shaft graves and pit caves of knossos are re examined in an attempt to put answers to these intriguing questions

the question of where to place the dead is a universal problem for mankind the body of the deceased is not regarded as ordinary carrion it must be cared for in a correct manner and disposed of in an appropriate place not simply for hygienic reasons but out of moral obligation hertz 1960 27 death creates similar psychological and social problems in all human societies consequently similar kinds of rites such as rites of separation of protection of reaggregation within a new order and of commemoration are very widespread as is the ritual sequence in which they are found hertz 1960 van gennep 1960 malinowski 1925 goody 1962 rosenblatt et al 1976 at the same time great variation is found in the specific ways in which mortuary ritual is given concrete form disposition of the body may consist of cremation burial in the dirt enclosure in a container placed either above or below the ground exposure cannibalism the keeping of relics or some combination of these procedures likewise the location considered appropriate for the disposition varies widely the meanings invested in the form and location of the disposition of the dead also differ in different societies it is my contention that these meanings can be usefully categorized the variation in meaning does not seem to be random my research project consists of a cross cultural study of mortuary ceremonialism in sixty societies the purpose of which is to investigate the influence of sociological and economic variables on certain aspects of mortuary ritual the aim of this thesis is to examine the extent to which predictable variation occurs in the way social affiliation is symbolized by the location of the disposition of the dead this work is built upon studies of both the relationships between ritual and socio cultural organization and also the social and psychological functions of funerary ritual it entails study of ecological adaptation in its widest sense involving the intersection within funerary activities of demographic economic sociological cultural in the sense of ideas and values including concepts of the supernatural and afterlife and psychological aspects of human behavior in addition an important purpose of this project is to increase the understanding of the ways in which mortuary artifacts excavated by archeologists can be expected to reflect the organization of the societies of which they are the tangible remains systematically searching out ways in which aspects of funerary ceremonies such as the location of disposition of the deceased vary with changes in such factors as population density fixity of residence degrees of political integration and social stratification systems of subsistence technological development systems of inheritance and measures of overall complexity should reveal the strength of the influence of each and the effects of

their interaction in addition the reliability with which one can predict backward from the mortuary practice to the presumed presence of one or another of the economic or social variables should become clear

the conference in manchester in 1992 which this book came out of was organised to raise the profile of the study of mortuary remains in the ancient near east thirty papers from the conference are published here covering a wide variety of regions and periods from epipalaeolithic to modern many different aspects are examined physical anthropology burial goods social structure ethoarchaeology etc this volume has a wide relevance not only to the areas specifically addressed but also in the interpretation of burial remains and the evolution of society

proceedings of a conference held in williamsburg va nov 7 11th 1999 the thirty four papers published in this volume represent the proceedings of a conference on human remains held in williamsburg va in november 1999 the conference was divided into six themes excavation and fieldwork conservation soft tissues and mummies curation analysis and ethics and law and public perception the excavated material discussed comes from all continents and significant time periods one of the principal aims of the conference was to address the current issues in the archaeology of human remains and encourage dialogue between the various specialists involved in conservation curating analysis etc the topical ethical and repatriation questions are also examined illustrated throughout with photographs drawings tables and figures

in this volume harding examines the deposition of iron age human and animal remains in britain and challenges the assumption that there should have been any regular form of cemetery in prehistory arguing that the dead were more commonly integrated into settlements of the living than segregated into dedicated cemeteries

the routledge handbook of archaeoethanatology spans the gap between archaeology and biological anthropology the field and laboratory and between francophone and anglophone funerary archaeological approaches to the remains of the dead and the understanding of societies past and present interest in archaeoethanatology has grown considerably in recent years in english language scholarship this timely publication moves away from anecdotal case studies to offer syntheses of archaeoethanological approaches with an eye to higher level inferences about funerary behaviour and its meaning in the past written by francophone

scholars who have contributed to the development of the field and anglophone scholars inspired by the approach this volume offers detailed insight into the background and development of archaeothanatology its theory methods applications and its most recent advances with a lexicon of related vocabulary this volume is a key source for archaeo anthropologists and bioarchaeologists it will benefit researchers lecturers practitioners and students in biological anthropology archaeology taphonomy and forensic science given the interdisciplinary nature of these disciplines and the emphasis placed on analysis in situ this book will also be of interest to specialists in entomology micro biology and soil science

this site report presents the findings from an august 2004 january 2006 excavation of a roman burial site in gloucester including a first century ce cemetery and a mass grave of at least 91 individuals from the second half of the second century long sections discuss the human remains and the grave catalogue the finds and environmental evidence and a synoptic discussion of the gravesite as a whole color images and black and white renderings accompany the text

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