

# 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

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

henri duday is director of research for cnrs at the university of bordeaux the archaeology of the dead is based on an intensive specialist course in burial archaeology given by duday in rome in november 2004 the primary aim of the project was to contribute to the development of common procedures for excavation data collection and study of roman cemeteries of the imperial period translated into english by anna maria cipriani and john pearce this book looks at the way in which the analysis of skeletons can allow us to re-discover the lives of people who came before us and inform us of their view of death duday thoroughly examines the means at our disposal to allow the dead to speak as well as identifying the pitfalls that may deceive us

this volume addresses the relationship between archaeologists and the dead through the many dimensions of their relationships in the field through practical and legal issues in the lab through their analysis and interpretation and in their written visual and exhibitionary practice disseminated to a variety of academic and public audiences written from a variety of perspectives its authors address the experience effect ethical considerations and cultural politics of working with mortuary archaeology whilst some papers reflect institutional or organisational approaches others are more personal in their view creating exciting and frank insights into contemporary issues which have hitherto often remained unspoken amongst the discipline reframing funerary archaeologists as death workers of a kind the contributors reflect on their own experience to provide both guidance and inspiration to future practitioners arguing strongly that we have a central role to play in engaging the public with themes of mortality and commemoration through the lens of the past spurred by the recent debates in the uk papers from scandinavia austria italy the us and the mid atlantic frame these issues within a much wider international context which highlights the importance of cultural and historical context in which this work takes place

this volume brings together studies on the disposal of the dead and the archaeological

research potential of found remains

the forms by which a deceased person may be brought to rest are as many as there are causes of death in most societies the disposal of the corpse is accompanied by some form of celebration or ritual which may range from a simple act of deportment in solitude to the engagement of large masses of people in laborious and creative festivities in a funerary context the term ritual may be taken to represent a process that incorporates all the actions performed and thoughts expressed in connection with a dying and dead person from the preparatory pre death stages to the final deposition of the corpse and the post mortem stages of grief and commemoration the contributions presented here are focused not on the examination of different funerary practices their function and meaning but on the changes of such rituals how and when they occurred and how they may be explained based on case studies from a range of geographical regions and from different prehistoric and historical periods a range of key themes are examined concerning belief and ritual body and deposition place performance and commemoration exploring a complex web of practices

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 archaeoethanatology 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

historical burial grounds are an enormous archaeological resource and have the potential to inform studies not only of demography or the history of disease and mortality but also histories of the body of religious and other beliefs about death of changing social relationships values and aspirations in the last decades the intensive

urban development and a widespread legal requirement to undertake archaeological excavation of historical sites has led to a massive increase in the number of post medieval graveyards and burial places that have been subjected to archaeological investigation the archaeology of the more recent periods which are comparatively well documented is no less interesting and important an area of study than prehistoric periods this volume offers a range of case studies and reflections on aspects of death and burial in post medieval europe looking at burial goods the spatial aspects of cemetery organisation and the way that the living interact with the dead contributors who have worked on sites from central north and west europe present some of their evidence and ideas the coherence of the volume is maintained by a substantial integrative introduction by the editor professor sarah tarlow this book is a first and a necessary one it is an exciting and far ranging collection of studies on post medieval burial practice across europe that will most certainly be used extensively professor howard williams

the oxford handbook of the archaeology of death and burial reviews the current state of mortuary archaeology and its practice highlighting its often contentious place in the modern socio politics of archaeology it contains forty four chapters which focus on the history of the discipline and its current scientific techniques and methods written by leading international scholars in the field it derives its examples and case studies from a wide range of time periods such as the middle palaeolithic to the twentieth century and geographical areas which include europe north and south america africa and asia combining up to date knowledge of relevant archaeological research with critical assessments of the theme and an evaluation of future research trajectories it draws attention to the social symbolic and theoretical aspects of interpreting mortuary archaeology the volume is well illustrated with maps plans photographs and illustrations and is ideally suited for students and researchers

places are social lived ideational landscapes constructed by people as they inhabit their natural and built environment an archaeology of place attempts to move beyond the understanding of the landscape as inert background or static fossil of human behaviour from a specifically mortuary perspective this approach entails a focus on the inherently mutable transient and performative qualities of deathscapes how they are remembered obliterated forgotten reworked or revisited over time despite latent interest in this line of enquiry few studies have explored the topic explicitly in aegean archaeology this book aims to identify ways in which to think about the deathscape as a cross between landscapes tombs bodies and identities supplementing and expanding upon well explored themes in the field e g tombs as vehicles for the legitimization of power funerary landscapes as arenas of social and political competition the volume recasts a

wealth of knowledge about aegean mortuary cultures against a theoretical background bringing the field up to date with recent developments in the archaeology of place

with archaeological practices being as varied as the cultures they study little advance has been made to standardize the nomenclature used in the western scientific world to describe the physical aspect of burial and other forms of body disposal which would allow researchers to describe and precisely compare these unique and revealing practices prominent archaeologist roderick sprague finally presents a long overdue and much needed logical outline of the variables that should be listed to describe bodies grave goods and tombs establishing standard terms for the archaeologists who excavate these burials drawing from examples and terminology in historical archaeology prehistory ethnography and forensic anthropology this well illustrated practical and user friendly reference text will be indispensable to all researchers in these and related fields

studies of mortuary archaeology tend to focus on difference how the researcher can identify age gender status and ethnicity from the contents of a burial jill l baker s innovative approach begins from the opposite point how can you recognize the commonalities of a culture from the funeral kit that occurs in all burials irrespective of status differences and what do those commonalities have to say about the world view and religious beliefs of that culture baker begins with the middle and late bronze age tombs in the southern levant then expands her scope in ever widening circles to create a general model of the funeral kit of use to archaeologists in a wide variety of cultures and settings the volume will be of equal value to specialists in near eastern archaeology and those who study mortuary remains in ancient cultures worldwide

this handbook reviews the state of mortuary archaeology and its practice with forty four chapters focusing on the history of the discipline and its current scientific techniques and methods written by leading scholars in the field it derives its examples and case studies from a wide range of time periods and geographical areas

this open access book explores the role of textiles in death to investigate questions into how the body was prepared before the funeral how the body was seen and perceived by its relatives and community and the role of textiles in its metamorphosis into a deceased the volume s geographic coverage is broad encompassing areas where textile and skeletal conservation is optimal the ancient nile valley and areas where only minute fragments could be preserved adhering to metal objects the case studies cover egypt sudan greece the iberian peninsula scandinavia and central europe ranging from the 12th century bce to the end of the 19th century ce going beyond this geohistorical

frameworks the book presents new methods for the study retrieval and conservation of funerary textiles in situ during excavations it offers useful tools for future research in both textile archaeology and bioarcheology and promote interdisciplinary collaborations between the two fields for a better understanding of burial practices contributors to this volume include experts from the fields of bioanthropology archaeology textile research and conservation

human societies have disposed of their dead in a variety of ways however while considerable attention has been paid to bodies that were buried comparatively little work has been devoted to understanding the nature of cremated remains despite their visibility through time it has been argued that this is the result of decades of misunderstanding regarding the potential information that this material holds combined with properties that make burned bone inherently difficult to analyse as such 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 timely volume therefore 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

archaeologists excavating burials often find that they are not the first to disturb the remains of the dead graves from many periods frequently show signs that others have been digging and have moved or taken away parts of the original funerary assemblage displaced bones and artefacts traces of pits and damage to tombs or coffins can all provide clues about post burial activities the last two decades have seen a rapid rise in interest in the study of post depositional practices in graves which has now developed into a new subfield within mortuary archaeology this follows a long tradition of neglect with disturbed graves previously regarded as interesting only to the degree they revealed evidence of the original funerary deposit this book explores past human interactions with mortuary deposits delving into the different ways graves and human remains were approached by people in the past and the reasons that led to such encounters the primary focus of the volume is on cases of unexpected interference with

individual graves soon after burial re encounters with human remains not anticipated by those who performed the funerary rites and constructed the tombs however a first step is always to distinguish these from natural and accidental processes and methodological approaches are a major theme of discussion interactions with the remains of the dead are explored in eleven chapters ranging from the new kingdom of egypt to viking age norway and from bronze age slovakia to the ancient maya each discusses cases of re entries into graves including desecration tomb re use destruction of grave contents as well as the removal of artefacts and human remains for reasons from material gain to commemoration symbolic appropriation ancestral rites political chicanery and retrieval of relics the introduction presents many of the methodological issues which recur throughout the contributions as this is a developing area with new approaches being applied to analyze post depositional processes in graves

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