

Mercourios Georgiadis and Chrysanthi Gallou (eds), *The Archaeology of Cult and Death*, Archaeolingua Alapítvány, Budapest, 2006.

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It is stated that this slim 'volume is an accumulation of a number of contributions delivered at the session "The Archaeology of Cult and Death" held at the 9th Annual Meeting of the European Association of Archaeologists in St. Petersburg, Russia in September 2003' (p.7). As an accumulation of anything, even over a short period of time, can be somewhat haphazard, the editors are matter of fact about the wide ranging nature of the various papers contained within. This lucidity is a good thing. It is also useful that the papers have been arranged by chronology. This arrangement allows the varied subject matter to be made more approachable and further reinforces the intelligibility of the overall volume.

A total of nine papers are contained within this edited collection. The chronology covered by these papers stretches from approximately 7,400 BCE to the fourth century CE and the geographical breadth of these papers ranges from the south of Italy to the west of Siberia. The *Archaeology of Cult and Death* does not include any papers which deal primarily with archaeology from Africa, the Americas, Australia, the Pacific, South Asia, or East Asia. This is not a problem as the number of papers found within this volume is limited and the editors are not making any attempt to universalise the content of the papers. Three of the nine papers focus on the Near East. Of the six remaining papers, two are concerned with Crete, two are concerned with Greece, another focuses on Italy, and the last is concerned with Siberia.

K. Crocher's 'Death, Display and Performance: A Discussion of the Mortuary Remains at Çayönü Tepesi' reappraises the role of the 'Skull Building' within the Neolithic community at Çayönü Tepesi. Crocher details how the architecture and the contents of the 'Skull Building' changed over time and how these changes could reflect developments in the ritual lives of the inhabitants of Çayönü Tepesi. M. Bonogofsky's 'Cultural and Ritual Evidence in the Archaeological: Modelled Skulls from the Ancient Near East' meticulously re-examines the plastered human skulls recovered from Neolithic contexts within Anatolia and the Levant.

This reappraisal concludes with the suggestion that as a number of these plastered skulls were the skulls of juveniles, prior claims of a uniform ancestor cult throughout the region may become harder to maintain.

Z. Gal's 'The Peqi'in Cave: Ancestor Worship in the Chalcolithic Period' is a brief overview of an important archaeological discovery from northern Israel. The author suggests that this collective burial is indicative of ancestor worship but no analysis of the age at death of the abundant human skeletal remains was provided.

J. M. A. Murphy's 'Religion and Wealth: Aspects of the Social Dynamic in South-Central Crete during the Pre-Palatial and Proto-Palatial Periods' investigates in detail earlier claims about the objects which might have played important roles in religious activities undertaken during the Pre-Palatial and the Proto-Palatial periods in Crete. While detailed reappraisals of settled contentions are always welcome, a number of the theoretical assumptions underpinning the conclusions of this paper are dubious. Any claim that religious experiences must be separated from the social, political, and economic contexts in which these religious experiences occurred cannot be seriously sustained. In contrast, H. Whittaker's 'Games and Funerary Beliefs in Proto-Palatial Crete' provides an excellent example of how various objects from the Proto-Palatial period in Crete can be credibly linked with Egyptian board games and argues that the Minoans adapted these objects for their own purposes.

C. Gallou and M. Georgiadis' 'Ancestor Worship, Tradition and Regional Variation in Mycenaean Culture' dwells on the probability that Mycenaean society venerated the dead and especially those dead individuals who in life were prominent members of their respective communities. It is also suggested that differences in how the dead were venerated can be seen in variations between regions, variations between cemeteries in each region, and variations between graves in each cemetery. This would seem to be a reasonable assumption. The following paper, C. Aamont's 'Priestly Burials in Mycenaean Greece', contends that the successful identification of dead persons who in life were important 'priests' or 'priestesses' within Mycenaean society can be somewhat problematic

but ultimately highly useful. Aamont's paper provides additional evidence which reinforces the conclusions of Gallou and Georgiadis.

M. Skele's 'Poor Relation's: A Pauper's Cemetery in Poseidonia/Paestum' is a short but engaging paper which advocates that due to the noticeable paucity of grave goods and the short period of utilisation, the cemetery at the Ponte di Ferro contained the graves of refugees from Sybaris. N. Berseneva's 'Archaeology of Children: Sub-Adult Burials during the Iron Age in the Trans-Urals and Western Siberia' examines the frequency, the dating, and the grave goods placed within burials of the Sargat culture which contained the remains of children. The burials of children from the Sargat culture are then compared with the burials of adults from the same culture. Both Berseneva and Bonogofsky present the most coherent and comprehensive arguments within *The Archaeology of Cult and Death*. It is to be hoped that Archaeolingua shall continue to publish editions of its Series Minor which concentrate on archaeological data from mortuary contexts.

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