

AUORE SCHMITT / ELISABETH ANSTETT (eds), Sans sépulture: Modalités et enjeux de la privation de funérailles de la Préhistoire à nos jours. Archaeopress Publishing Ltd., Summertown 2023. £ 29.00. ISBN 978-1-80327-426-3 (Print). ISBN 978-1-80327-427-0 (e-Pdf). doi: <https://doi.org/10.32028/9781803274263>. 128 pages with illustrations.

Every culture has its own customs meant to ease the transition of the dead to the status of ancestors. Some leave archaeological traces, while others do not. Regardless, it is striking when one finds in the archaeological record situations which deviate from the norm, namely individuals who are denied proper burial / funerary rituals. The aim of this collective volume is to reflect on what it means to be denied ‘proper’ burial, why it happens and how we can identify such situations from a methodological point of view. This is an important topic, and a strength of the book is the attempt to discuss it from a theoretical point of view. Even so, it is worth noting from the start that the attempt to discuss interments in a systematic manner which do not follow standard norms of funerary rituals is not that original, as the editors seem to imply (e.g. see the volumes edited REBAY-SALISBURY et al. 2010; BETSINGER et al. 2020). Furthermore, based on the case studies selected, the volume seems to imply that normal / typical burials involve whole bodies. However, there are sufficient examples from prehistory which point to the fact that funerary rituals can comprise multi-stage manipulations of the body, including the creation of secondary burials, or the manipulation of fragmentary bodies.

That being said, the volume gathers interesting contributions. It was designed as a multi-disciplinary project, including authors with different backgrounds: anthropologists, historians, and archaeologists. There are twelve contributions in the volume, which were initially presented at two scientific events held in 2021 and 2022 at the Faculty of Humanities and Environmental Sciences at Paul Valéry University Montpellier, and at the Faculty of Medical and Paramedical Sciences d’Aix-Marseille at the Marseille University. The breadth of specialists was meant to bring a comparative dimension to the topic.

In their Introduction (pp. iii–vi), the two editors, Aurore Schmitt and Elisabeth Anstett, highlight some of the key issues: the need to establish a clear terminology in regard to the topic, the ways in which we can identify such burials in the archaeological record, or the cultural norms that exclude certain individuals from the proper rites of passage. In the following chapter (pp. 1–21), archaeothanatologist Bruno Boulestin takes the theoretical considerations further. He discusses the terminology we employ, like the concept of grave – *sepulture*. B. Boulestin places the analysis of denied funerals under the umbrella of the concept of “bad death” (*malemort*). In essence, a bad death leads to social exclusion. This is a useful methodological chapter as it looks at a range of examples from anthropological studies, and shows what archaeological traces they would leave.

The following chapters focus on case studies from the Neolithic to contemporary times. A. Schmitt discusses in detail Neolithic deposits (pp. 22–33). This is an interesting text which talks about excarnation, possible cannibalism – either funerary or exo-cannibalism (of strangers), and sacrifices. Their nuanced discussion brings together taphonomic details with contextual data, and shows the limits of archaeological interpretation. This is one of the strongest chapters in the volume.

Cécile Paresys, Vincent Machaïsseau and Cédric Roms’ (pp. 34–43), and Laure Ziegler’s (pp. 44–54) chapters focus on prisoners and convicted individuals’ graves, who were denied proper burial rites in the Middle Ages. Both chapters comprise interesting cases as they are rare. The researchers faced a methodological dilemma captured by Michael LAUWERS (2005) cited by Ziegler (p. 44): the difficulty to distinguish between a grave isolated from the rest of burials, or one which has been excluded from the funerary area.

The following three chapters focus on unborn / newborn children's graves. Marie Daugey's contribution is a cultural anthropological analysis which looks at a traditional society – the Kabyle population in Togo (pp. 55–64). Here these dead babies are excluded from society as they are seen as dangerous, with the potential to pollute. Therefore, they are relegated to boundary places. The other two chapters, signed by Vincent Gourdon and Nathalie Sage Pranchère (pp. 65–75), and Lisa Carayon respectively (pp. 76–84), are historical in nature and discuss the legal status of the dead body based on documentary evidence. V. Gourdon and N. Sage Pranchère's chapter is particularly inspiring through the examples regarding the fate of unbaptised children in Imperial France. They show the divide between legal provisions and the reality in the terrain, and these are some of the situations which would leave no archaeological trace.

The next three chapters deal with textual sources about individuals who have been denied funerary rites or graves in three different cultural backgrounds. Enrique Santos Marinas discusses Middle Ages eastern Slavic contexts (pp. 85–91), Myriam Gilet analyses the case of the death of the noble Bernard VII d'Armagnac (pp. 92–101), while Piotr Kuberski takes us to ancient Israel during the 1st millennium BC (pp. 102–109).

“Mourir en bord de mer: naufrages et inhumations des « corps noyez » sur les côtes du golfe du Lion au XVIII^e siècle” by Léa Tavenne and Sébastien Berthaut-Clarac (pp. 110–117) is one of my favourites in the volume, as it blends textual sources with archaeological evidence. When discussing the fate of the shipwrecked dead, it also takes into account social inequalities and the limits of methodology in recognising past events.

The penultimate chapter signed by Christian Jeunesse and Boulestin is an ethnoarchaeological case study of a contemporary community in Indonesia (pp. 118–126) which still retains traditional practices, such as animistic beliefs, and collective internments in megalithic monuments. This was a fascinating case of rituals performed to appease the soul of a dead relative. But what made it interesting was that the individual has been dead for a century, and he had suffered a bad death. Thus, the goal of the rituals where to help him find his peace.

Finally, the book ends with concluding remarks by the editors (pp. 127–128). They correctly stress how social anthropology can open up a field of comparative studies for archaeological case studies. But, of course, this is something which has been known for a long time. What is maybe less taken into account by the practitioners dealing with funerary materials is another concluding remark: that being denied a proper funerary ritual is a situation that can be reversible. That later generations, or changing norms in a society can reverse the fate of an individual.

I understand and admire what the editors wanted to achieve with this volume. The aim was to discuss cases of denied funerals/graves, from a methodological view, placed in a cultural and historical context. The cases also took into account social/gender identities and social anthropological comparisons. However, the book has the minuses of a conference proceedings to become a landmark volume, bridging in too many directions.

I found particularly interesting those chapters which discuss methodological issues – like those signed by Schmitt, C. Paresys, V. Machaieisseau and C. Roms, Ziegler, L. Tavenne and S. Berthaut-Clarac. However, the geographic and time periods throughout the volume are too wide, and the case studies too diverse to allow for fruitful comparisons. It is true that each society has its own prescriptions regarding those who were excluded after death from the social body. In this respect the volume illustrates how complex is the topic, something which Estella WEISS-KREJCI (2013) has also pointed out in the past. Some individuals have been excluded from society as a punishment (the prisoners), others have been denied equal status to the rest of individuals (sacrificial victims),

while the fate of the shipwrecked dead had an element of fate affecting their outcome. They are all deviant inhumations, but their biographies are quite different. This doesn't diminish the value of each individual chapter, but it takes away from the theoretical coherence of the volume.

Even so, I would recommend it to any researcher interested in the study of non-normative burials, or in methodological reflections regarding the ways in which past societies have dealt with those individuals who have had a "bad death". This is an important topic as it is also emotionally charged. The ways in which communities have chosen to remember or forget their dead speaks about power relations, social inequalities, pain and violence. And the ultimate act of violence is that which crosses the boundary of death. In the words of George Eliot, "Our dead are never dead to us, until we have forgotten them."

References

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alexandraion.antropo@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3393-6388>

Alexandra Ion

Independent researcher

ANNA SÖRMAN / ASTRID A. NOTERMAN / MARKUS FJELLSTRÖM (Hrsg.), Broken Bodies, Places and Objects. New Perspectives in Fragmentation in Archaeology. Routledge, London, New York 2023. £ 39,99. ISBN 978-1032394992 (Paperback). 316 Seiten mit 44 Abbildungen in Schwarz-Weiß, 16 Tabellen.

Nichts scheint im Arbeitsalltag von Archäolog:innen omnipräsenter und „normaler“ zu sein als die Fragmentarität von Fundobjekten, Kontexten und Körpern. Der Begriff „Fragmentierung“ (lateinisch *frangere* „brechen“) steht für Teilung, Aufspaltung oder Zerstückelung einer Entität, die als eine Einheit verstanden wird. Doch genau darin liegt ein archäologisches „Fetisch-Denken“ begründet – zurückzuführen auf den Antiquarismus des 18.–19. Jahrhunderts. Bei diesem tendieren Archäolog:innen dazu, stets von einer primären Ganzheit, Vollständigkeit und Intaktheit von Dingen auszugehen sowie ihre „Ursprungsform“ oder den Prozess der Fragmentierung rekonstruieren zu wollen. Somit werden Fragmente von Dingen im archäologischen Kontext oft negativ assoziiert und wurden lange Zeit gar als „Müll“ verstanden.

Der vorliegende Sammelband, herausgegeben von Anna Sörman (Université de Nantes, Frankreich; Stockholms Universitet, Schweden), Astrid A. Noterman (Stockholms Universitet, Schweden; Centre for Medieval Studies, Frankreich) und Markus Fjellström (ehemals Lunds Universitet, Schweden; Stockholms Universitet; Silvermuseet), widmet sich dem Thema der Fragmentierung