

Book Reviews

Body parts and bodies whole: changing relations and meanings. Edited by Katharina Rebay-Salisbury, Marie Louise Stig Sørensen and Jessica Hughes (Oxbow Books, Oxford and Oakville, 2010); pp. 148; £30.00; ISBN 978-1-84217-402-9.

The book *Body parts and bodies whole: changing relations and meanings* is a product of the Leverhulme Research Programme “Changing beliefs of the human body: comparative social perspective”, a five-year long (2005–2009) cross-disciplinary initiative, based at Cambridge University, and the scientific session (organized within that project) during the European Association of Archaeologists in 2007 held in Croatia. The Project was interdisciplinary in nature, pulling together scholarly work from the realms of prehistoric archaeology, classics, social anthropology, and history. The contributors to the volume were guided by Aristotle’s famous question—is the whole more than the sum of its parts? With the body in mind, the focus of the programme was to examine the image of the fragmented and whole body in the archaeological record over time and space.

As a whole the contributors discuss the importance of the fragmentary remains of both animals and humans found at archaeological sites—evidence that is usually overlooked as occurring by accident. The contributors discuss how such fragmentary remains are not only the result of post-depositional processes but can be interpreted as the physical remains of a deliberate and perhaps more meaningful act (ritual or religious) of fragmentation carried out to obtain a part that was subsequently used to represent the whole body. The authors argue that such fragmentary portions should be studied, allowing for complex examinations of cross cultural beliefs in the past.

The contributions to the volume examine cross-cultural changing beliefs regarding human body—whole bodies and their fragments. In particular they survey how bodies can be used as a means to express social and biological relationships in the past, both archaeologically and historically. Within the volume, the reader will find information about the physical remains of human bodies found during archaeological excavations around the world. Specifically, the papers address the objects more or less directly associated with bodies, about the representation of the human body or its parts in artifacts (e.g., art pieces and architectural remains), and also about different concepts of fragmentation of the body in the beginning of medicine or treated as a source for the reconstruction of the past social processes. Each paper, presents a different perspective and draws on different evidence depended on chronology and location.

As a whole, the volume has a wide scope in terms of chronology and geography. Chapter one introduces the reader to the programme and explains the approach taken by the contributors to the volume. Chapters two, three, and four discuss human remains from the Neolithic and Chalcolithic periods. Geographically speaking, these chapters cover primarily the Near East and central and southern Europe. Chapters five, six, seven, and eight deal with the Bronze Age of Europe. Chapter eight is also partially devoted to the finds of the Iron Age, as is Chapter nine, and part of Chapter seven and eleven. Chapter eight discusses evidence from the region of the Lower Danube, while chapter seven discussed the cremains

found through Europe and Chapter nine—from the southern part of France. Chapter ten appeals to the classical Greek world while Chapter twelve, and portions of Chapter eleven deal with the Middle Ages—from Viking times to the post-medieval period. And finally, Chapter thirteen touches the subject of the beginning of modern medicine and deals with eighteen and nineteen centuries.

From the point of view of the readers of *Bioarchaeology of the Near East*, the most interesting and the most important and relevant chapters from the volume are those that discuss skeletal material and/or focus on the Near East. Therefore I will focus the following discussion on Chapters two, three, and four.

Chapter two examines the evidence of body fragmentation and its possible meaning from four Near Eastern sites—Çayönü Tepesi's Skull Building (7600–6600 BCE), Domuztepe's Death Pit (~5500 BCE), Yarim Tepe I (early 6th millennium BCE) and Yarim Tepe II (~5800–5400 BCE), all of which contained a high percentage of fragmentary skeletal material along with deliberately fragmented material culture remains. The Skull Building from Çayönü Tepesi contained, for example, the remains of more than 450 individuals (primarily skulls and long bones) that were interpreted as either being head hunting victims or the remains of the burial custom, different from the one observable in the nearby cemetery where human remains were usually articulated and crouched inhumations. At Domuztepe, the remains of both human and animal (cattle, sheep/goat, dog and pig) skeletal material was discovered in a pit that was 4–5 meters in diameter and a meter deep. The skeletal material was commingled, fragmentary, and interpreted as bearing evidence of post-mortem processing for consumption. The evidence from the third site, Yarim Tepe II, came from the cemetery, where bodies were treated differently in comparison to the other two sites. There was evidence for both primary (inhumation and cremation) and secondary burials. Similar to the bodies, the material culture (e.g., pottery), went through “defragmentation” as well, being intentionally smashed or broken and placed with the dead. Similar treatment of the dead was observable at the next site described in the Chapter, the site of Yarim Tepe I. A few dismembered bodies were found there, interpreted as remains of their consumption.

Chapter three examines the evidence of intentional fragmentation of the dead in Cyprus, especially focusing on a few burials from the Chalcolithic cemetery from Souskiou-Laona (~3500–2800 BCE). Two main types of the burials are described: primary inhumations containing complete, intact, and articulated skeletons (single and multiple burials), and so-called “bone stacks”—burials secondary in nature, consisting of mixed, disarticulated bones, located usually at the feet of the primary ones. The author discusses the skeletal material in combination with the material culture—the anthropoid shaped clay figurines that are treated in the same fragmentary way by the inhabitants of the site.

Chapter four deals with so called “deviant” burials from Central and South Eastern Europe, dating to the Neolithic and Chalcolithic periods. The author divides mortuary practices into six different types: *fragmentation*, when the body is intentionally divided into pieces, and all of them are buried together; *addition*, deliberate incorporation into one burial of a piece from the other one, but similar in sex/age characteristic; *removal*, removal of a single bone (or a small number of bones) from an articulated, and otherwise complete skeleton; *re-combination*, the creation of a “hybrid” body consisting of pieces of at least two different (also different in sex/age characteristics) individuals; *substitution*, replacement of a human bone with animal bone; and *re-integration*, when a previously removed skeletal element is returned to its burial but there is no articulation. Following this introduction, a large number of the

sites and burials are analyzed to see if there is any kind of the pattern over the millennia (from the early Neolithic until the end of the late Chalcolithic). It was shown that the main type of the burial was the “individual” burial of the complete body, but there was always a small, but meaningful percent of “deviant” burials (up to 27% of all of the burials dating to the Early Neolithic in a Bulgarian sample).

All three chapters are well-written and based on well-documented evidence. They present not only the actual osteological finds, but in each case they also discuss the local traditions of body representations (e.g., clay figurines). The study of the incorporation of the body and the material culture leads to the similar results—providing insight into the relationship between the living and the dead communities, as well as between people (human remains), animals (animal bones), and material culture (grave goods). It allows to reconstruct the social process that effects in the fragmentation of the human remains and accompanying objects, as the author of the Chapter 4 concludes that *all types of deviant burials—but especially fragmentation and removal—can be interpreted largely in terms of the enchainment of human body parts from the world of the dead to the world of the living*. Unfortunately, however, the authors, or rather the originators of the research program, did not examine the evidence and make interpretations of the body fragmentation and its social and cultural meaning in later periods of the area. For those interested in the Near East it would be a great and stimulating research avenue.

Other articles within the volume focus on the human body in two ways—they use the physical body as the center of interpretation or use human remains to support some more abstract, conceptual model. The example of the first approach, besides the three examples discussed in the aforementioned chapters, is Chapter Twelve, where the author examines so-called “heart burials” along with written sources (including gravestones) to identify and reconstruct the social meaning of such practices. Chapter Five, on the other hand, serves as an example of the second approach—using sex and age distributions in the fragmented burials and the description of the finds. The author tries to prove that ageing could be, and possibly was, viewed by the ancient societies as a form of bodily fragmentation. There are also some chapters somehow “detached” from the others, like for example Chapter Nine, that focuses on the architectural representations of the Iron Age cult of the head, especially of the structures created to accommodate actual heads.

The book *Body parts and bodies whole: changing relations and meanings* is a valuable publication to those interested in the concepts of the human body. Yet, the wide scope of subjects the authors represent in their chapters are both this volume’s strength and its weakness. It should not be considered an introduction into the subject. Each chapter is an independent creation, and therefore, when one decides to read each one, one must read several similar introductions to the subject. It would possibly be more readable if the chapters were dealing with the subject in a more chronological and/or geographically-restricted way. It is, however, very important that the authors did not feel it was enough just to present the evidence for the cultural phenomena, but attempted to explain and interpret the practice of the deliberate body fragmentation within the cultural context. As a result, this volume is a great illustration of the ways of explaining the incompleteness of the archaeological record, and the ways people have dealt with their dead, although using only the theory of fragmentation and enchainment to explain the phenomena is not always sufficient.

New directions in the skeletal biology of Greece. Edited by Lynne A. Schepartz, Sherry C. Fox and Chryssi Bourbou (The American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Princeton, 2009); pp. 284; £50.00; ISBN 978-0-87661-543-0.

This volume, the first of its kind under *Hesperia's* new series of *Occasional Wiener Laboratory Series*, represents an important contribution to the archaeological sciences conducted in Greece and with particular emphasis on skeletal biological and bioarchaeological research. It contains seventeen articles, the vast majority of which involve rich interdisciplinary backgrounds, contributed from scholars of a rather varied range of seniority, however not reflected as such in the level of quality of the articles involved; introduction, chapter titles and contributors may be found in www.ascsa.edu.gr/pdf/uploads/OWLSIntro.pdf.

Both editors and contributors labor from a similar premise to methodically investigate and to deductively retrieve a plethora of otherwise untapped biocultural data permanently recorded on the non-renewable resource of the human skeletal record ranging in this case diachronically from the Mesolithic to most recent historic time periods. Such contributions based on sound method and theory frameworks, comprehensive laboratory protocols of research and state of the art analyses' techniques allowing the re-evaluation of old dictums and the asking of new questions in conjunction with the rest of the archaeo-historical records and tangential contributing fields of study may better elucidate, enhance and transform our knowledge on the human condition and population dynamics though time in Greece, at the cross-roads of Africa, Asia and Europe.

At first glance the volume may appear to be wide ranging, lacking the strict boundaries usually set by a single thematic unit, and possibly even missing a coherent concluding chapter. However, starting with the "Introduction" there is a careful, appropriate and adequate presentation serving to explain the inception and the scope of this endeavor, the particular lay out and sequencing of the chapters, integrating where pertinent specific chapters to select subject matters, subsequently successfully bringing together the multiple, significant strings of the varied elements presented in each chapter to an inclusive integral component.

The volume offers a good sample of well written reports and analyses of considerable gravity in Greek bioarchaeology ranging from skeletal biology to demographic dynamics to paleopathological profiles and archaeometry to mention a few, supported by a significant number of explanatory images, tables and graphs with an nearly even editorial rigor and is thoroughly recommended for established scholars and students in the broader domain of the archaeological sciences.

Sharing in the enthusiasm, the professionalism and the commitment of the editors and contributors as it appears clear from this first endeavor, it is hoped that this volume will be the first of many to follow in the near future.

Anagnostis P. Agelarakis,
Adelphi University, USA

Book received: *Wetlands of mass destruction*. Edited by Robert Lawrence France (Green Frigate Books, Sheffield VT, 2007); pp. 195; \$20.00; ISBN 978-0-9717468-3-1.