

# Interacting with the Dead

Perspectives on Mortuary Archaeology  
for the New Millennium

Edited by Gordon F. M. Rakita, Jane E. Buikstra, Lane A. Beck,  
and Sloan R. Williams

University Press of Florida  
Gainesville/Tallahassee/Tampa/Boca Raton  
Pensacola/Orlando/Miami/Jacksonville/Ft. Myers

## Introduction

Gordon F. M. Rakita and Jane E. Buikstra

Mortuary rites and their materialization in the archaeological record have been of enduring interest to anthropologists since the beginning of the discipline (for example, Kroeber 1927; Bendann 1930; Gluckman 1937; see also Bartel 1982; Humphreys and King 1981; Huntington and Metcalf 1979). Indeed, since mortuary rites involve manipulations of material culture, social relations, cultural ideals, and the human body, they represent a nexus of anthropological interests. Within the closing decades of the twentieth century, mortuary studies became a highly visible focus of anthropological inquiry.

This volume represents the fourth in a series of edited volumes on the archaeology of mortuary behavior, published approximately every ten years since 1971. The first in the series, *Approaches to the Social Dimensions of Mortuary Practices* (Brown 1971a), marked renewed interest in mortuary analysis within archaeology as well as the development of influential new analytical techniques and theoretical frameworks, many of these drawn from general anthropological theory. Subsequent decades have seen the publication of *The Archaeology of Death* (Chapman et al. 1981) and *Regional Approaches to Mortuary Analysis* (Beck 1995), both having expanded the themes, techniques, and scale (both geographically and temporally) of mortuary analysis. Each of these important volumes was based upon papers presented at symposia or conferences. Similarly, this volume is based upon papers presented in two symposia organized by the editors for the Society for American Archaeology (SAA) Annual Meetings held in New Orleans in April of 2001.

*Interacting with the Dead: Perspectives on Mortuary Archaeology for the New Millennium* continues the tradition of earlier works by exploring the behavioral and social aspects of mortuary behavior in past societies. We expand the interdisciplinary focus of mortuary practices by examining and utilizing a variety of models and theories drawn from ethnohistory, bioarchaeology, and sociocultural anthropology. Subjects that have been of ongoing concern are combined with those that have recently emerged. Because of its wide-ranging scope and interdisciplinary approach, this monograph's relevance extends beyond anthropological archaeology to other social sciences and the humanities.

The first part of this introduction will contextualize this volume within a brief history of anthropological and archaeological works on explaining and understanding mortuary behavior. In doing so, we review the major paradigmatic shifts, key theoretical debates, and methodological advances. We finish with a discussion of the themes developed in this volume. We thus examine the role of the ancestors in the world of the living, the nature and meaning of secondary burials and secondary corpse treatments, and the methodological importance of considering historical, social, cultural, regional, and archaeological contexts in explorations of funerary remains.

### Mortuary Studies in Historical Perspective

Modern anthropological approaches to mortuary behavior have emerged in reaction to early-twentieth-century critiques of the assumption that funerary rituals hold social meaning. Kroeber's (1927) classic cross-cultural study of funerary practices is among the earliest and most prominent of such criticism. Kroeber's impetus was his impression that patterns of the disposal of deceased members of native Californian societies seemed uncorrelated to other customs and practices. An examination of mortuary practices from culture areas in South America and Africa appeared to confirm his suspicion. Kroeber (1927:314) concluded, "In their relative isolation or detachment from the remainder of culture, their rather high degree of entry into consciousness, and their tendency to strong emotional toning, social practices of disposing of the dead are of a kind with fashions of dress, luxury, and etiquette. . . . It may be added that in so far as mortuary practices may be accepted as partaking of the nature of fashions, they will tend to discredit certain interpretations based upon them." Although a few anthropologists continued to contribute to the literature on funerary rites (for example, Bendann 1930; Gluckman 1937; Wilson 1939), Kroeber's work was widely cited and appears to have influenced a generation to approach social interpretations of funerary behavior cautiously. As recently as 1969, Ucko echoed this conclusion in his examination of the relevance of ethnographic material on funerary practices in the interpretation of archaeological remains.

However, in 1960, the English translation of Robert Hertz's "Contribution à Une Étude sur la Représentation Collective de la Mort" was published. Focused upon the meaning of extended mortuary rituals and secondary burial, Hertz's influential work was originally published in the *Année Sociologique* in 1907. As it was published in French, it had limited immediate impact upon English-speaking anthropologists, particularly in the Americas. The translation of Hertz's work, along with the simultaneous publication of the English translation of van Gennep's (1960 [1908]) *Les Rites de Passage*, stimulated a florescence of anthropological thought about the role and meaning of mortuary practices in traditional societies.

As part of renewed interest in death rites [or rituals] during the 1960s and

1970s, a number of ethnographic studies explored the nature of funerary practices. These include but are not limited to Forde's (1962) study of Yako mortuary rituals, the study of LoDagaa of West Africa by Goody (1962), Freedman's (1966) examination of Chinese lineages and ancestors, Douglas' (1969) study of Basque funerals, the detailed exploration of Merina mortuary customs by Bloch (1971), and Coffin's 1976 study of American funerary practices. Several of these works (Bloch's and Goody's, for example) explicitly addressed Hertz's earlier assertions concerning secondary burial.

It was within this milieu, though not based explicitly upon Hertz's work, that Arthur Saxe completed his dissertation at the University of Michigan. Saxe's 1970 work is perhaps the most frequently cited unpublished dissertation dealing with mortuary practices. Indeed, Morris (1991:147) noted, "Few doctoral dissertations win a wide readership; fewer still make a lasting mark on archaeological research. Arthur Saxe's *Social dimensions of mortuary practices* (1970) did both." In his dissertation, Saxe attempted to develop a cross-cultural, nomothetic model of how mortuary practices were interrelated with the sociocultural system of the society. Indeed, he suggested that the model should provide a means for "monitor[ing] social complexity" and inferring organizational "type" (Saxe 1970:2). Saxe formulated eight hypotheses that he tested against ethnographic data from three societies (the Kapauku Papuans, the Ashanti, and the Bontoc Igorot). Most of Saxe's hypotheses dealt with ascertaining whether in certain situations the deceased's social persona or the complexity of the sociopolitical organization of the society are represented or symbolically manifest in the mortuary practices of the community. While criticism has been leveled at Saxe's approach (Hodder 1982c; Parker Pearson 1982; see also Brown 1995b:9–12), his dissertation clearly had a profound effect upon archaeological approaches to mortuary studies.

The combination of cross-cultural ethnographic study with formal hypothesis testing encouraged archaeologists to again seek social meaning in mortuary behavior. In addition, Saxe's Hypothesis 8, which linked the presence of formal disposal areas to territoriality, has stimulated further ethnographic and archaeological research by Saxe (Saxe and Gall 1977) and by others (Charles and Buikstra 1983; Goldstein 1980; Morris 1991). We discuss the intellectual extensions of this hypothesis in greater detail below.

In 1971, *Memoir 25* of the Society for American Archaeology, edited by James Brown, was published. Brown's introduction acknowledged (1971a:2) the precedence of Saxe's work in regard to themes explored within the chapters of his volume. While Saxe contributed to the 1971 volume, the most widely cited chapters were those by Brown and Lewis Binford. Brown's chapter examined the mortuary practices from the Mississippian-period Spiro site. In analyzing the burial treatments at the site, Brown drew heavily from Saxe's approach. Specifically, he used the same formal analysis technique, a method sometimes referred to as key or paradigmatic diagramming. Brown noted, "A comparison of the burial

paradigm [diagram] with the distribution of the most important and precious grave goods shows that there is a correspondence that supports the ranked status inferences drawn from the formal analysis alone” (Brown 1971b:101). While Brown himself did not generalize this inference, his conclusions were used to justify the assumption that the presence of rare or unique items in a burial denoted an individual of high rank or status (Peebles and Kus 1977; Tainter 1978).

Utilizing cross-cultural ethnographic surveys, Binford (1971) identified several behavioral regularities between the subsistence strategy of a society (as a proxy measure for social complexity) and the elaboration of that society’s mortuary ritual. He interpreted his results as indicating that as societies move from hunter-gatherer or shifting agricultural strategies to settled agricultural lifeways, burial practices increase in complexity. The interpretative assumption behind this generalization, as with Saxe’s work, was that as the number of social roles an individual held during life increased, so too would the number of symbolic representations of those roles. Additionally, it was expected that these symbols would be accurately and unambiguously reflected in mortuary treatments and grave accoutrements.

Binford (1971) also offered an extensive critique of Kroeber’s (1927) seminal work on the interpretation of funerary practices. For Binford, this criticism is a crucial preamble to his demonstration that mortuary practices do indeed correlate with other cultural features, such as elevated social status (contra Kroeber). However, Kroeber’s point was simply that specific funerary treatment forms (such as burial in trees, pit burials, burial in crypts) are not correlated with “biological or primary social necessities.” Binford’s argument is slightly different. He asserted that the number of distinctions displayed in funerary practices is correlated with social complexity through his surrogate measure, subsistence strategy. One example is Binford’s assertion that “Status was most commonly symbolized by status-specific ‘badges’ of office and by the quantities of goods contributed to the grave furniture” (Binford 1971:23). Despite his somewhat flawed critique of Kroeber, Binford’s observations were widely accepted as firmly establishing that funerary practices do indeed correlate with subsistence practices and by extension with sociopolitical complexity.

The conclusions by Brown and Binford are often summarized to justify the assumption that there is a direct relationship between the social status of the deceased and the relative amount of treatments, grave goods, or energy expended in the burial of the individual (Crown and Fish 1996; Hohmann 1982; Mitchell 1994; Shennan 1975; Tainter 1978; Whittlesey and Reid 2001). Thus, as the complexity of a society increases, so too should the complexity of the burial remains. Frequently, this perspective is simplified even further. Some researchers simply assume that there often is “a direct correlation between higher rank/status of the deceased . . . and the amount of energy invested in grave and body treatment” (Hohmann 2001:99) or that “mortuary practices are a mirror of social organization and the social roles that individuals held in ancient society”

(Whittlesey and Reid 2001). This processual perspective, often referred to as the “Saxe-Binford approach” (Brown 1995b), still represents the dominant interpretive framework for mortuary data throughout much of Americanist archaeology (for example, see chapters in Mitchell and Brunson-Hadley 2001).

The late 1970s and early 1980s witnessed continued visibility for ethnographic studies of mortuary practices, including Huntington and Metcalf’s seminal 1979 work. This monograph, reissued as a second edition in 1991, drew inspiration from the fieldwork locations of the authors, Madagascar and Borneo, and the classic theoretical approaches to mortuary practices that had been presented for these locales by van Gennep and Hertz. By emphasizing these world areas and these predecessors, the work naturally focuses upon extended funerary practices and the treatment of the corpse. Humphreys and King 1981, Ariès 1974 and 1981, and Bloch and Parry 1982 are other widely cited monographs from this period. The works by Ariès (1974, 1981) explored the cyclical nature of human social response to the biological fact of death in recent European history. These responses oscillated over time between a metaphorical denial of death and an embracing of death that is tamed. Much like Hertz’s secondary mortuary rites model and Van Gennep’s rites of passage schema, Ariès’ approach is intuitively convincing as a descriptive heuristic but deficient in explanatory substance (see also Meskell 2001). Humphreys and King (1981) sought to begin a meaningful conversation between archaeologists, physical anthropologists, and social anthropologists—contrasting the perspectives inherent within each of these subdisciplines as well as cross-cultural comparisons of mortuary rites. Although this book was largely unsuccessful in stimulating subsequent conversations regarding death practices between practitioners from the anthropological subdisciplines, it did demonstrate the utility of cross-cultural, comparative perspectives. The volume assembled by Bloch and Parry (1982) focused upon a perennial anthropological topic—the relationship between death and fertility. Contributors explored facets of revitalization and regeneration among various societies, including those at different levels of sociopolitical complexity. It thus provided a series of new ethnographic case studies for archaeological theorists. Moreover, in their introduction, Bloch and Parry provide a critical overview of key anthropological studies of mortuary practices, including Hertz’s seminal work. Such ethnographic or ethnohistoric volumes were complemented by publications within archaeology, particularly studies of prehistoric burial practices in the North American midcontinent (Braun 1977; Brown 1979; Chapman 1977; Tainter 1975a, 1975b) and later from the desert Southwest (Brunson 1989; Hohmann 1982; Ravesloot 1988). Many of these were quantitatively complex and drew inspiration from the Saxe-Binford theoretical perspective.

Two publications in the early 1980s have proved to be enormously influential among students of funerary archaeology. In 1980, Goldstein published a study of two Mississippian-period cemeteries from the lower Illinois River valley. Her study focused upon the spatial dimension of mortuary practices, including a

critical reexamination of Saxe's Hypothesis 8. On the basis of her evaluation of globally representative ethnographic data, Goldstein found the relationship between bounded cemeteries to be more nuanced than Saxe had appreciated. She rephrased Hypothesis 8, concluding that "not all corporate groups that control critical resources through lineal descent will maintain formal, exclusive disposal areas for their dead. . . . But if a formal, bounded disposal area exists and if it is used *exclusively* for the dead, [then] the society is very likely to have corporate groups organized by lineal descent" (Goldstein 1980:8). The relationship between bounded cemeteries and resource control was later extended to hunter-foragers (Charles and Buikstra 1983). As we discuss below, more recently Morris (1991) has reaffirmed the ongoing utility of Goldstein's reformulation.

In the sequence leading to this volume, the second influential publication on archaeological approaches to mortuary data was Chapman, Kinnes, and Randsborg 1981. This volume, which included authors from Europe and the United States, focused on "the evolution and critical appraisal of the ideas presented in 1971, as well as the subsequent emergence of new approaches." The influence of the Saxe-Binford approach is apparent in chapters by Goldstein and O'Shea, as well as in the introduction to the volume by Chapman and Randsborg. Chapman's chapter on megalithic tombs in Europe provided new perspective on the meaning of formal disposal areas in prehistoric populations and reinforced the conclusions Goldstein had reached a year earlier. James Brown contributed an important chapter in which he reemphasized the need to consider the full sequence of the rites leading to archaeological residue of funerary practices. That is, the resulting burial is a part, but often only a part, of the full ritual process. Among the newer approaches was Goldstein's chapter on spatial organization. Buikstra and Cook each contributed chapters that illustrated the potential benefits of integrating biological data from the skeletal remains with the material remains of the burial rites.

Critiques of the Saxe-Binford approach were, however, soon to develop. In 1981, for example, Braun developed a nuanced and pointed dissection of the quantitative approaches used by processual researchers, particularly Tainter (1975a, 1975b, 1977a, 1977b). Braun's compelling argument (see also McHugh 1999:8–11) demonstrated that such quantification failed to support Tainter's interpretative model, in part because quantitative ranking of various mortuary treatments was subjective or presented with no explanation for why one treatment ranked higher than another (Braun 1981:407). For example, Braun (1981:402–403) pointed out numerous cases in which classes of objects found in burials were assigned a ranking in terms of energy expenditure relative to other artifact classes that were based upon faulty interpretations of their region of production or origin (local versus imported). A further limitation in such quantification is the difficulty of accounting for nonquantifiable aspects of mortuary behavior, such as variation in the spatial location of burials (McHugh 1999:11).

On the other side of the Atlantic, criticism of the Saxe-Binford approach de-

veloped within the symbolic, structuralist, and interpretive theoretical backlash against processual archaeological theory (Hodder 1980, 1982a, 1982b, 1991; McGuire 1988; Miller and Tilley 1984; Parker Pearson 1982; Shanks and Tilley 1982; Tilley 1984). We use the term “postprocessual” here to refer to the multiple theoretical approaches that developed in the wake of processualism. All of these approaches have their own nuanced theoretical arguments. They are united, however, in their indictment of processual thought and their assertion that mortuary rituals are frequently utilized by the living to negotiate, display, mask, or transform actual power or social relations. They further argue that the processual perspective glosses over significant variation that exists in the perception and practice of mortuary rites within a given society. Indeed, they argue that mortuary rites are often an arena in which status and other social distinctions can be negotiated, appropriated, and reappropriated, thus serving as agents of cultural change. Additionally, these scholars asserted that the processual focus upon the identification of vertical social structure obscured or neglected alternative aspects of society (horizontal divisions, for example; see also Whittlesey 1978). Ethnographic (Parker Pearson 1982; Ucko 1969) and archaeological examples (Hodder 1984; McGuire 1992) lent support to these criticisms and led to arguments that cross-cultural generalizations are not appropriate for archaeological contexts; rather, social structure could be inferred only in the context of specific (and historical) cultural traditions. Unfortunately, apt critiques (for example, Parker Pearson 1982; Shanks and Tilley 1982) were seldom linked to convincing archaeological case studies, except in historical contexts.

In an elaboration of ideas first expressed in Parker Pearson’s (1982) ethnographic study, Cannon (1989) suggested that while mortuary elaboration is frequently seen as an unbiased indicator of the deceased’s social status, a society’s mortuary displays are cultural phenomena that are frequently unassociated with social and economic organization. Consequently, the traditional status-based interpretation of mortuary material neglects the historical nature of status symbols and cycles of competitive display. Cannon refined his thesis by suggesting that these cycles often assume a predictable pattern whereby funerary elaboration by elites is followed by adoption (or cooption) of elite symbols by lower-status groups. In response, elites abandon elaborate forms to retain a distinctive funerary symbol set. In his widely cited article, Cannon (1989) provided three examples of this cycle drawn from eighteenth- through twentieth-century England, historic Iroquois groups, and pre-Classic Greece. Cannon also echoes the postprocessual critique’s context-specific emphasis (see also Miller 1982).

At the beginning of the last decade of the twentieth century, two scholarly themes regarding mortuary practices developed. The first represented continuing attempts to utilize, support, extend, and respond to criticisms of the Saxe-Binford approach. Examples of attempts to support the Saxe-Binford approach are by Carr (1995) and Kamp (1998), both of whom reassess the cross-cultural evidence lending support to the original nomothetic generalizations of Binford (1971),

Saxe (1970), and others (Peebles and Kus 1977; Tainter 1978). In part, these studies have been successful in underscoring the robusticity of certain generalizations and to a lesser degree in providing a more nuanced interpretation of those generalizations in the same way Goldstein's (1980) work refined Saxe's Hypothesis 8.

Morris (1991) also built upon Goldstein's contributions (1980) and sought to refine Hypothesis 8. Morris focused upon the original anthropological distinction (based on African ethnographies) between funerary rites per se and ancestor cults or rituals relating to continued interactions between the living and the dead. By examining this fundamental distinction, Morris was able to provide a theoretical foundation for Goldstein's reworking of Hypothesis 8.

This late-twentieth-century revision and revitalization of the Saxe-Binford program was capped by the publication of Beck's (1995) edited volume entitled *Regional Approaches to Mortuary Analysis*. The objective of this volume was to extend the geographic scope of studies beyond the examination of intrasite variability in mortuary practices. However, by expanding the geographic focus of such studies, the volume also opened the door to greater emphasis on diachronic variability.

A second theme has emerged from the critical tradition of the postprocessualists. In part, these works have continued to criticize the use of cross-cultural generalizations in mortuary analysis (for example, Parker Pearson 1993). However, these approaches have moved beyond the constraining critiques of the 1980s and have begun to provide relevant and convincing archaeological case studies of their own (for example, Cannon 1995; Curet and Oliver 1998; Hill 1998; McGuire 1992; Parker Pearson 1995; and see Chesson 2001; Silverman and Small 2002). Many of these studies have embraced the idea that the deceased and their death are opportunities for the active manipulation of social, political, ethnic, and material structures. Other researchers have worked to engender studies of the funerary practices of past societies (Crown and Fish 1996; Meskell 2001). Additional productive research venues have included increasingly comprehensive analyses of mortuary ceremonialism in historic archaeological contexts, often using techniques and methods developed within bioarchaeology (Buikstra 2000; Dockall et al. 1996; Grauer 1995; Saunders and Herring 1995; Rainville 1999). Finally, landscape archaeology has moved from a preoccupation with "sacred landscapes," dotted with shrines and monuments to the dead, to a more inclusive and informed broad definition of an imbued landscape that recognizes a deeper meaning to the placement of ancestors (Ashmore and Knapp 1999; Silverman and Small 2002).

An outgrowth of this second theme is a renewed interest, at the end of the past millennium and in these first few years of the new, in the role of the ancestors and the dead in structuring the lives of the living (Buikstra 1995; Curet and Oliver 1998; Helms 1998; Hingley 1996; Parker Pearson 1999; Parker Pearson and Ramilisonina 1998; Rakita 2001). Complementary concerns have, however,

been expressed about the overreliance upon explanations referencing ritual interactions with the ancestors in models of social or cultural change (Bawden 2000; Potts 2002; Whitley 2002). However, the ancestral-descendant approach remains a robust endeavor, and in many respects this volume draws not only on these recent works, but also on their theoretical foundations (Morris 1991; Goldstein 1980; Saxe 1970; Gluckman 1937; Kroeber 1927; van Gennep 1960 [1908]; and Hertz 1960 [1907]). In many ways, these *ancestral* works are structuring the research lives of today's living scholars.

### Themes Present in This Volume

This volume represents a continuation of earlier traditions by exploring the behavioral and social facets of funerary rites in both past and present societies. These authors expand earlier methodological and theoretical frameworks, drawing inspiration from ethnohistory, ethnography, bioarchaeology, and sociocultural anthropology. In so doing they focus on the overarching themes of variability through time and space, extended and secondary mortuary ceremonialism, individual agency, and ancestorhood.

The chapters in section one present explorations of and extensions of the classical theoretical developments discussed above. The various authors delve deeply into the assumptions and expectations of mortuary theories and discuss these in relation to empirical examples. Charles, for example, reemphasizes the contextualized nature of both mortuary practices and our inferences from the funerary record. Chapman focuses upon the connection between theory and the empirical record especially as that connection relates to diachronic analytical approaches. Cannon is concerned with elucidating how cyclical patterns of funerary “fashion” may be indicative of women's agency. Buikstra and colleagues present their work with prehistoric Andean mortuary patterns as an example of how an integrated bioarchaeological perspective can enrich an examination of funerary behavior. The final chapter in this section, by Ashmore and Geller, draws on the comparatively new interest in landscapes and the examination of how the placement of the dead affects the lives of the living.

Section two groups together eight chapters that explore the physical treatment of the corpse and possible symbolic meaning behind both that treatment and other postmortem conditions of the body. Rakita and Buikstra, in the first chapter of this section, reexamine Robert Hertz's original formulation and suggest that an alternative view of mummification and cremation offers a more comprehensive understanding of these treatments. Oakdale presents an ethnographic perspective on the Hertz–van Gennep sequence, one that should be quite illuminating to those researchers who focus only upon the physical remnants of funerary activities. In his chapter on Ohio Hopewell extended funerary practices, Byers provides a detailed reminder of James Brown's original warning that recovered funerary features do not necessarily represent the end of the entire mortuary

process. Guillén takes Charles' admonition to heart and provides a rich and contextualized discussion of the Chinchorro mummification practices of Peru and Chile. In a reanalysis of Hohokam cremations, Beck utilizes ethnographic data to infer that some of the recovered cremation features may represent reburial of previously cremated remains. Two chapters, by Weiss-Krejci and Naji, examine historic funerary practices from European contexts. Weiss-Krejci looks at how postmortem treatment of Babenberg and Habsburg dynastic members relate not to ancestor cults but rather to political, economic, or biological constraints. Naji considers diachronic change in interment practices at the abbey of Saint-Jean-des-Vignes near Soissons, France. In the final chapter of this section, Malville describes traditional Tibetan Buddhist practices of exposure or cremation of corpses and how these treatments might appear in the archaeological record.

Section three of the volume contains chapters that expand upon the issues raised in section two, especially as they relate to human sacrifice, cannibalism, violence, and veneration of the dead. The section begins with a chapter in which Duncan, using a theoretical model derived from Maurice Bloch, examines violence against and violation of the corpse as part of Mayan ritual sequences. Stodder and colleagues describe a possible case of cannibalism from New Guinea, utilizing taphonomic and contextualized depositional information to suggest possible alternative interpretations of the evidence. In two studies from South America, chapters by Verano and Forgey and Williams present discussions of prominent Andean cases of body mutilation in the human sacrifices of the Moche and Nasca trophy heads. Verano combines both archaeological and osteological data to describe how sacrificial displays may have impacted the construction and maintenance of Moche society. Forgey and Williams analyze the formal and contextual variation in Nasca trophy skulls to evaluate current competing theories for the origin and purposes of these ritually charged items. In their chapter on the Cenote at the Mayan site of Chichén Itzá, Beck and Sievert explore the various pathways and processes by which the skeletons of both adults and children were deposited in this specialized location. The final chapter of this section and the volume is by McNeill, who scrutinizes the funerary practices of the Chamorro of Micronesia with special emphasis on the postmortem procurement of human bone for use in manufacturing spear points.

Thus, this volume builds upon earlier theories and methods, refining some and critiquing others. The complexity of interment and other mortuary procedures is emphasized, as is the importance of social, political, and economic contexts in the interpretation of ancient sites. By drawing on interdisciplinary methods and knowledge in ethnohistory, bioarchaeology, and sociocultural anthropology, the various authors in this volume are able to elucidate issues regarding mortuary practices across the globe and through time. Subjects, such as sacrifice and secondary interment, that have been of perennial interest are reexamined, and newly emerging research interests are explored.

As emphasized at the outset, this volume is not the first attempt at addressing the various issues involving human interactions with the dead. Nor is it likely to be the last. It represents, however, an important illustration of a maturing field that has deep roots within anthropological inquiry into the relationship between the living and the dead.