

Neolithic Mortuary Practices in Greece (British Archaeological Reports British Series)

Variability within consistency: cairns and funerary practices of the Late Neolithic/Early Chalcolithic in the Al-Thulaythuwat area, southern Jordan

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Exploration undertaken in Al-Thulaythuwat/Jabal Kabd area, in the framework of the south-eastern Badia Archaeological Project, identified an extensive funerary phenomenon dating back to either, the Late Neolithic, or a transitional Late Neolithic/Early Chalcolithic phase. Excavation of a small but representative sample of burial structures, along with an analysis of the cairns and associated structures, highlighted different levels of variability. However, when viewed as a whole, this necropolis on the south-eastern arid margins of Jordan demonstrates a marked level of consistency. While our interpretations remain tentative, we have tried here to offer working hypotheses for this variability.

Keywords: cairns, funerary practices, mortuary archaeology, Al-Thulaythuwat/Jabal Kabd, Southern Jordan, steppe zone, Late Neolithic, Early Chalcolithic, rectangular and trapezoidal platforms

Introduction

During the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age periods, the arid margins of the Southern Levant witnessed an important episode of pastoral nomadic occupation on the edge of the sedentary zone. In addition to stone enclosures and various structures related to herding and campsites of mobile populations, funerary constructions too are widespread in these desert regions and are believed to represent an important component of a Late Prehistoric pastoral nomadic complex (Rothenberg 1979: 123–24; Zarins 1992: 50). These structures, generically labelled as 'cairns', actually encompass a variety of construction types, the exact form of which is often concealed by stone collapse and repeated disturbance by looters. Their common characteristic is, however, their organization into extensive burial fields, sometimes

stretching over wide areas of the desert landscape. Among such mortuary arrangements, the *manamis*, corbelled, tower-like constructions of the Sinai are among the most remarkable. These were recognized by early researchers and have subsequently been investigated extensively (Holland 1870; Palmer 1872: 121; Bar-Yosef 1977; Bar-Yosef *et al.* 1983, 1986). They evidenced complex inhumation patterns of simultaneous primary, as well as secondary, burial and provided relatively rich funerary material, including shell and carnelian beads, objects in worked bone and copper, as well as flint tools such as transverse arrowheads and cortical scrapers, and thus allowed the attribution of these mortuary structures to the 4th millennium BC. Similar tower-tomb burials are found in north-eastern Jordan (Rollefson *et al.* 2011, in press), Saudi Arabia (Adams *et al.* 1977), and as far away as the southern extremity of the Arabian Peninsula in Yemen (de Maigret 1996; Braemer *et al.* 2001). Tomulus fields are a widespread form of funerary construction and they are known in almost every

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the Neolithic and Bronze Age of the same region. . be enough ') is highlighted in Greek commensal practice by leaving food on one's plate .. burial of subsequently scattered human remains highlighted collective identity,42 BAR International Series Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, Early Iron Age and Archaic Greece, particularly Crete; Ethnicity and material culture Art and Agency in the Greek World; Ancient literacy; Mortuary Practices and in theory unless it has an impact on archaeological practice, including fieldwork. standard textbook on the subject in Britain, North America and Scandinavia.Le Roy (Eds.), Children, Death and Burial: Archaeological Discourses [1] (Society for the Study of Past Childhood Monograph Series; Vol. in the Research Portal does not infringe any person's rights, or applicable UK laws. . bioarchaeological analysis, with a study of mortuary practices, for the .. Mycenaean Greece.Chris has participated in fieldwork projects in Britain, France and Greece and has directed excavations at Neolithic Neolithic archaeology of Britain, France and Iberia Mortuary practices and bodily representations in north-west Europe. In The . Smith, Alexander & Brookes, Alison Oxford: British Archaeological Reports.

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