

Normative, Atypical or Deviant?



Normative, Atypical or Deviant?

Interpreting Prehistoric and Protohistoric
Child Burial Practices

edited by

Eileen Murphy and Mélie Le Roy

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For Saul (EM)

For Arzhéla and Célestine (MLR)

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Author biographies

Hala Alarashi is an archaeologist interested in the human communities that have lived and evolved under the techno-economic and environmental conditions of the Neolithisation processes in the Near East and Northeastern Africa. Through a techno-functional, morphometric and spatial approach to body ornaments (necklaces, belts, diadems, etc.) she investigates how the symbolic package of the Neolithisation process and the increased complexity of the social structures have played a key role in the development of production, circulation and consumption systems of Neolithic communities.

Alexandra Anders is a qualified (habil.) Senior Research Fellow in the Department of Archaeometry, Archaeological Heritage and Methodology, Institute of Archaeological Sciences, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary. Her main research field is the Neolithic of the Carpathian Basin, with a focus on the archaeology of death and the archaeology of gender. She has directed or participated in numerous excavation in the Polgár area of northeastern Hungary. Her current interests include the biosocial archaeological study and assessment of Neolithic burials discovered in this eastern Hungarian micro-region in order to gain a better understanding of the life of the communities who settled there. She is also responsible for teaching courses in museum studies and archaeological heritage at the Institute.

Ana Arzelier is a PhD candidate in Biological Anthropology at the University of Bordeaux. Through the perspective of palaeogeomics, her current doctoral research aims to study migration and social organisation of human groups during two periods representing major cultural transitions in Western Europe (Mesolithic-Neolithic and Neolithic-Bronze Age).

Marion Benz studied Prehistory, Near Eastern Archaeology and Social Anthropology at the University of Freiburg, Germany. In her PhD thesis, she designed a path-dependency model for the interlinked biological and cultural processes of Neolithisation in the Near East. Ever since, she has worked on the social, cognitive, and medial aspects of Early Neolithic communities. She has published numerous research articles and edited two volumes on this subject – *The Principle of Sharing* (2010) and *Neolithic Corporate Identities* (2017; with Trevor Watkins and Hans Georg K. Gebel). From 2018-2021, she co-directed the *Household and Death in Ba'ja* project with Hans Georg K. Gebel and Christoph Purschwitz at the Institute of Near Eastern Archaeology, Free University Berlin, coordinating the research on the burials from Ba'ja in southern Jordan.

Fiorenza Bortolami received her doctorate in Archaeology at the Ca' Foscari University of Venice in 2021. In this same University she undertook her BA (2011) and MA (2013) in Archaeology with dissertations focused on the Bronze Age in North-Eastern Italy. In 2017 she obtained her *Diploma di Specializzazione* in Archaeology from the University of Bologna. Her doctoral dissertation concerned funerary rituals and the symbolic representation of the deceased in Iron Age Veneto. Since 2017 she has been involved in the project of excavation and publication of the burials from the pre-Roman eastern necropolis of Padua carried out by the University of Venice.

Agathe Chen is a biological anthropologist employed by Hades, a rescue archaeological company. Her research is focused on central France and in northern Sudan with different teams (Northern State in Sedeinga - CNRS, Central State in Kerma - Neuchâtel University).

Shaheen M. Christie completed PhD research in 2023 in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Shaheen's research focused on social identity and violence in archaeological mortuary contexts in Roman Britain, specifically the role of decapitation and fragmentation practices, and so-called deviant burials. She is particularly interested in the use of approaches from bioarchaeology, forensic archaeology, and funerary archaeology (archaeothanatology, taphonomy) to help understand the (de)construction and transformation of bodies and their value in the lives of people in the past. She received an MA in the Social Sciences (emphasis in Anthropology) from the University of Chicago (2010), and a BSc in Archaeological Studies from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse (2009). She is currently the Lecturer of Humanities in General Education at American InterContinental University-Online.

Sélim Djouad is a biological anthropologist employed by a rescue archaeological company called Hades. His research mainly focuses in the south-west of France but also in Senegal notably on collective burials (Wanar). He also teaches at the University of Toulouse (Jean Jaures University).

Raphaël Durand is an archaeological and bioarchaeological operations and research manager in the preventive archaeology department of the urban community of Bourges (Bourges Plus). He received his doctorate in Archaeology and Archaeo-anthropology from La Sorbonne-Paris I University. He is also an associated researcher of the PACEA/UMR 5199 in Bordeaux. Since 2004, he regularly directs preventive archaeology operations, mainly related to funerary sites. His research interests include field archaeo-anthropology, bioarchaeology, forensic archaeology, palaeodemography and palaeopathology within contexts from the end of protohistory to the early Middle Ages.

Claire-Elise Fischer is a post-doctoral research associate at the University of York. Her research focuses on palaeogenomics of Iron Age populations in Europe to better understand the populations dynamics from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age and between the Early and Late Iron Age as well as the functioning of the communities.

Hans Georg K. Gebel worked for the German Research Foundation at the University of Tübingen and the Free University of Berlin, and was the founder and chairman of the research association *ex oriente e.V.*, Berlin: Production, Subsistence and Environment in the Near East for 25 years. He specialised in Neolithic and Late Chalcolithic social and environmental research and stone technologies. Main project directorships include the excavations and analyses of the Early Neolithic sites of Ba'ja and Basta and the Late Chalcolithic sites of Qulban Beni Murra and Rajajil in Jordan and Saudi Arabia. He has managed the publishing house *ex oriente* since 1994 and is the founder and co-editor of *Neo-Lithics* and two series. In terms of research policies, he currently is committed to developing the epistemic, theoretical and methodological foundations of archaeohydrology and prehistoric archaeothanatology as new disciplines.

Julia Gresky leads the anthropology unit at the Division of Natural Sciences at the German Archaeological Institute. Her research has a dual focus: palaeopathology and archaeological oriented topics, including post-depositional treatments of bones in the Neolithic Near East and Anatolia. Due to the actual debate on climate change, her work group is also engaged in investigations of different aspects of human interactions and the bioarchaeology of climate change. The strongest research emphasis, however, is on ancient rare diseases, with the idea of creating a network and a common ground for this under represented topic in paleopathology.

Ana Mercedes Herrero-Corral is a post-doctoral researcher at the Austrian Archaeological Institute of the Austrian Academy of Sciences (Vienna). She has a master's degree in Physical Anthropology and a PhD in Prehistory from Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Her main research focuses on the social role that children of recent prehistory would have within their communities through the bioarchaeological analysis of the funerary record. Since 2017 she has been part of the Humanejos research project, one of the most important cemeteries of the III and II millennium BC in Iberia, financed by the Spanish Ministry of Culture. She is the author of *Bioarchaeological Analysis of Child Burials from the III and II millennium BC in the Upper and Middle Basins of the Tagus* (2022). She was awarded a Marie-Curie Post-doctoral Fellowship in 2022 to undertake a project on biological and non-biological kinship relationships between adults and non-adults in multiple graves of recent prehistory.

Alexia Lattard defended her PhD in archaeoethanatology in 2018 at the University of Aix-Marseille. Her work focused on the study of Gallo-Roman communities of the *Forum Iulii* territory. Before starting her research on archaeoethanatology, she completed two Masters degrees, one in biological anthropology (Marseille, 2012) and one in archaeology (Aix-en-Provence, 2014). She is interested in the funerary practices of the Roman and Greek communities in the Mediterranean area and participates in research excavations in Greece (Anavlochos) and Italy (Porta Nocera). She currently leads a research project on funerary space in the Alps during Classical antiquity. Her research interests include how to socially and culturally characterise Classical communities through the study of funeral practices in southern Gaul.

Anthony Lefort is an archaeologist for the French National Institute for Preventive Archaeology (Inrap). He completed his doctorate in archaeology at the Université de Bourgogne in France under a joint supervision arrangement with the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. His work focuses on cross-Channel connections during the Late Iron Age and Early Roman period.

Mélie Le Roy is a Lecturer in Biological Anthropology at Bournemouth University, UK. Her research centres on the social consideration of children in an archaeological context to provide insights into past social organisation. She co-edited the book *Children, Death and Burial: Archaeological Discourses* (2017; with Eileen Murphy) and was guest co-editor of a volume of the journal *Childhood in the Past* entitled *Children at Work* (2019; with Caroline Polet).

Cormac McSparron studied Archaeology and Modern History at Queen's University Belfast, graduating with a BA in 1989. He was awarded an MPhil in 2008 and a PhD in 2018 from the same institution. Since 2002, he has worked at the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, Centre for Community Archaeology, and Centre for GIS and Geomatics at Queen's, and he has directed and published a large number of important excavations in Northern Ireland. He is the author of the monograph, *Burials and Society in Late Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age Ireland* (2020).

Eileen Murphy is Professor of Archaeology in the School of Natural and Built Environment, Queen's University Belfast, Northern Ireland. Her research focuses on human skeletal populations from prehistoric Russia and all periods in Ireland. She is particularly interested in the use of approaches from bioarchaeology and funerary archaeology to help further understanding of the lives and experiences of people in the past. She has published widely and is the co-editor of *Children, Death and Burial: Archaeological Discourses* (2017; with Mélie Le Roy) and *Across the Generations: The Old and the Young in Past Societies* (2018; with Grete Lillehammer). She is the founding and longstanding editor of the international journal, *Childhood in the Past*.

Caroline Partiot is a post-doctoral researcher in the Austrian Archaeological Institute at the Austrian Academy of Sciences. The aim of her research is to use bioarchaeological analyses to study the significance and meanings of the lives and deaths of children in past populations. She investigates the life trajectories of children by analysing the interactions between their skeletal development and both natural and social environments and uses this biological dimension to analyse the specifics of the funerary practices dedicated to children.

Christoph Purschwitz is a lithic specialist. He did his PhD at the Free University of Berlin on lithics of selected Early Neolithic sites of the Greater Petra Area, Jordan. He has worked for various projects in the Near East with a special focus on Southern Jordan. From 2018 to 2021 he co-directed the *Household and Death in Ba'ja* Project.

Stéphane Rottier is Maitre de Conférences, bio-anthropologist and archaeologist, at the UMR PACEA, at Bordeaux University since 2007. His research focuses on funerary practices in late European prehistory (Neolithic, Bronze and Iron Ages) and on methods and theory for archaeoethnatology, with a particular interest in the use of archaeogenetic and isotopic data.

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Anna Serra is an archaeologist and her research focuses on the Etruscan Po Valley. She completed her studies in Etruscology and Italic Archaeology at the University of Bologna in 2017, when she finished a Specialisation School in Archaeological Heritage. She has participated in the research project on the Etruscan necropolis and the city of Valle Trebba of Spina (EOS project) and in the excavations of the Etruscan city of Marzabotto. From 2018 to 2022, she undertook her PhD at the University of Salerno with a project focused on child funerary rituals in the Etruscan Po Valley. She is currently conducting post-doctoral research on the Etruscan Po Valley at the University of Bologna.

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Dr Lynne McKerr

General Editor, SSCIP Monograph Series

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Introduction: Normative, Atypical or Deviant? Interpreting Prehistoric and Protohistoric Child Burial Practices

Eileen Murphy¹ and Mélie Le Roy²

When faced with a death, the response of the living is one that is intricately linked to belief systems, concern for the fate of the deceased in the afterlife, as well as a desire to protect the living and ensure they are not negatively affected as a consequence of the death. Appropriate funerary rituals are necessary to restore the natural order and these generally follow a standard recognisable format for each culture. Discussions of ‘deviant’ burials in the archaeological record refer specifically to funerary practices that differ from the expected common burial rites within a given society (Reynolds 2009). The term ‘deviant’ can be somewhat problematic, however, since its association is overtly negative. The term may have had innocent origins in the world of statistics but, within sociology, it is used to define someone whose behaviour violates social norms (Bryant 2014). It is only in a minority of cases, however, that clear evidence of a body having been treated in a negative manner is apparent in the archaeological burial record. As such, more nuance is required in the terminology used in relation to burial practices and in many cases more neutral terminology, such as atypical, irregular, or non-normative may be more appropriate (Murphy 2020, xviii).

This volume has its genesis in a session entitled ‘Systemic Approaches to Juvenile Funerary Rituals. Atypical, Deviant or Normative? Going Beyond Paradigms’ organised by ourselves and Ian Gonzalez Alaña at the European Association of Archaeologists’ 25th annual meeting held in Bern, Switzerland, in 2019 (Figure 1). It comprises 12 papers that focus on pre- and protohistoric examples of juvenile burial from a wide geographical area, including Europe and the Near East. The contributors were challenged to consider whether they could classify child burials as normative, atypical or deviant, or indeed if this system of categorisation was too simplistic in itself.

If the study of standard mortuary practice informs on the social status and consideration of an individual within a group (Parker Pearson 1999), then atypical burials provide further information regarding the social position of an individual, either during their life or in the context of their death, thereby reflecting a more complex functioning of the society (Aspöck 2009). However, the question of atypical burials is difficult to address solely based on the archaeological record. Indeed, in archaeology one important bias affects all data that we study. By definition, the archaeological record is incomplete due to preservation issues and/or missing elements (research biases). Therefore, we must discuss this issue based on gaps rather than hard evidence. Interest in atypical burial practices first gained attention in the 1970s and 1980s through the seminal works of Arthur Saxe (1970), John O’Shea (1984) and Talia

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Figure 1: Presenters from the session entitled ‘Systemic Approaches to Juvenile Funerary Rituals. Atypical, Deviant or Normative? Going Beyond Paradigms’ at the European Association of Archaeologists’ 25th annual meeting held in Bern in 2019 (Photograph: Colm Donnelly).

Shay (1985). Since then, many scholars have undertaken studies that focus on atypical burials across a broad geographical and temporal span and it is generally accepted that these involve special treatment of an individual in the burial record and can be identified based on features including the location of the burial, position and treatment of the body, and association with particular grave goods or furnishings amongst others (see e.g. Betsinger *et al.* 2020; Damman and Leggett 2018; Gardela 2017; Milella *et al.* 2015; Murphy 2008; Reynolds 2009). The breadth of this body of work demonstrates that people have deliberately imbued burials of particular individuals with difference across 1000s of years. Atypical burial is thus a powerful cross-cultural phenomenon and, when the burials are carefully disentangled, it is possible to learn much about the social order and belief systems of different communities of the past.

Differentiating Between Practices

The application of social bioarchaeological approaches has positioned the deceased individual at the centre of studies of atypical burial. Previous work has identified that the age at which an individual died can have a direct impact on the nature of the burial they were afforded (e.g. Le Roy 2017; Perez 2016). The authors in the volume each demonstrate the importance of applying an integrated biocultural approach (see Betsinger *et al.* 2020) for determining why an individual was buried in an unusual way and with interpretations based on local context and associated socio-cultural considerations. The results clearly demonstrate that a dichotomous conception of deviant and normative burials conflicts with much information

derived from ethnographic research. In actuality, many societies practiced a range of different mortuary practices, which can be classified as normal, atypical or deviant depending on their characteristics (Aspöck 2009).

If we accept that many societies had a spectrum of burial practices the challenge is then to attempt to recognise which may be defined as deviant, atypical or normative. It is most straightforward to identify normative burials since these are the most common practices observed within a society and those that we use to define the burial practices of a particular culture (Duday 2009; Parker Pearson 1999), but it is more difficult to differentiate between deviant and atypical burials. Archaeology only sees the end result of the burial process and much of the evidence for the funerary rites that led up to the burial are invisible (see Murphy 2020, xvii for an example from modern Ireland). This can make the interpretation of burial practices difficult, particularly when attempting to decide whether a burial should be considered to be deviant or atypical.

Drawing upon ethnographic studies, atypical burial illustrates a funerary practice that differs from the normative scenario identified for a given society but does not necessarily imply a negative connotation. In the Dayak culture of Borneo, for example, infants who died before or around birth benefit from a well-defined mortuary practice, specific to their age group, that reflects a special status (Hertz 1970: 77). Indeed, when these young individuals die, they are deposited in a dead tree trunk or hanging from the branches. These cultures consider this act as a way of returning the infant to their origins since they died before they had a chance to integrate into the social group and therefore do not require a long and painful funeral. As such, their burials, which are impossible to identify archaeologically, involve a complete reduction of the normative practice but the intention does not bear any negative connotation. In contrast, deviant burial evokes a rather negative response, that can aim to punish the dead and/or prevent bad things happening to the living or the dead themselves. The case of the Papal children from New Guinea is a perfect illustration of deviant practice that aims to prevent harm to the living. These children are considered to be non-human (*iran* children), based on a disability, physical deformation and/or odd behaviour. They are likely to be victims of infanticide and their funerary rites are drastically reduced, involving simple deposition in a pit, separate from others in their society (Einarsdóttir 2005). In this case it would be the location of the interment and absence of a more elaborate burial that would mark them out as different in the archaeological record but, without oral history information, it would be impossible to identify them as deviant as opposed to atypical.

The ethnographic examples demonstrate that to differentiate between atypical and deviant practices it is necessary to identify the intentionality in the agency of those who undertook the burial rites. This is often impossible for the archaeological record, however, and we are reliant upon reading the physical clues of the burial and comparing these to normative practices. It is generally agreed, however, that deviant burials tend to include evidence that a lack of reverence was shown towards the deceased whereas this is not necessarily the case for atypical burial practices. The Later Anglo-Saxon execution cemeteries of England provide a good example of deviant burial practices. Within these spatially segregated sites, often located on principal administrative boundaries, the burials include 'prone burials, multiple interments, decapitation, evidence of restraint, shallow and cramped burial and mutilation' (Reynolds 2009: 44). The context is key to interpreting such burials and while similar practices,

such as prone or multiple burial, can be found in community burial grounds the normative context of the latter makes it less likely that the variations are deviant and it is therefore more acceptable to class them as atypical. Within Irish Medieval burial grounds, for example, the standard Christian rite would have been interment in an extended supine position with the head towards the west, but a range of variations from this formula have been observed through minority practices, including double burial (Murphy and Donnelly 2018) or the use of more reposeful positions for children (Murphy 2017). In these instances no less reverence is shown towards the deceased than in contemporary normative burials and, indeed, it is often the case that evidence of grief and emotion is all the more tangible in such burials (Murphy *et al.* 2022: 153-184).

The Specific Case of Children

The issue of differentiating between atypical, deviant and normative rites becomes even more difficult when considering children since differences are often age dependent (Le Roy 2015), thereby reflecting a specific social status within the community (Murphy and Le Roy 2017). Rites afforded to children may appear as atypical or deviant compared to adult burials but in actuality fall into the normative practice for the subadult cohort.

The unbaptised children of the Medieval Christian world can be used to illustrate the complexity of interpretation. Church teaching at the time dictated that Christians were to be buried in consecrated ground. Death prior to baptism meant these young souls should therefore not have had access to graveyards, and instead they were to be buried near houses and domestic areas (Tzortzis and Séguy 2008). However, the archaeological record reveals that, despite this strict rule, infants are still recovered from within excavations of Medieval Christian cemeteries. Historical sources and several archaeological studies have highlighted the practice of performing baptism prior to birth, or directly at the time of birth, thus assuring access to consecrated ground. In countries including France, Belgium, Germany and Austria the body of a dead infant could be taken to a ‘sanctuaire à répit’ (respite sanctuary) where it was placed on a warm altar and, having been seen to have miraculously ‘breathed’, was hastily baptised and permitted burial in consecrated ground (Carron 2016; Gélis 2006). However, not everybody could afford such practices, or the ritual did not work, and the archaeological record shows that some unbaptised infants were buried in graveyards (Tzortzis and Séguy 2008). Extensive research has identified that most of the unbaptised infants were located in a specific area of the cemetery (most often associated with a Saint Catherine Chapel – ‘sanctuaire à répit’ – along the walls of the cemetery or the church). It was believed that infants would benefit from the holy spirit of the building by being in direct contact with it (Carron 2016; Tzortzis and Séguy 2008). A similar but perhaps more definitive spatial segregation of unbaptised infants also occurred in Post-Medieval Ireland where the babies were interred within *cillíní* – unconsecrated children’s burial grounds that were completely separate to normative graveyards (Donnelly and Murphy 2018). While this spatial segregation may be reminiscent of the Later Anglo-Saxon execution cemeteries, the burial practices afforded to the infants mirror those evident in consecrated burial grounds and therefore cannot be classed as deviant. Clear reverence and affection has been shown to the dead infants buried in *cillíní* through, for example, the association of quartz, within or on top of the graves, or even the inclusion of toys within the graves (Murphy 2011).

In these instances, infant burials practices clearly differed from the normative burial rite, essentially through the location of the burials. However, these practices became so common that they defined a new practice in itself, becoming normative among the infant cohort, though atypical for the rest of society. These examples clearly illustrate the difficulty of defining normative, deviant or atypical burial, because it is a definition depending on the point of view and this is very often adult-centric.

This complexity is mostly related to the rites of passage that occur during childhood (although such rites can also be seen during adulthood) leading to a redefinition of the social role of the individual within society (Van Gennep 1909 [1960]). As such, it is rare that juveniles are treated socially in the same way throughout the entirety of their childhood. Indeed, different biological (e.g. appearance of first tooth or puberty) along with social (weaning, ability to talk) events change the place in society of each individual. Funerary practices can reflect these different stages of childhood, with rites depending on the age at death, and thus the social position of a child (Le Roy 2015). Each culture has its own definitions of the life course and associated rites of passage, and it is important to consider these within a specific cultural context. To identify the normative practice, it is standard practice to base our observations on the adult cohort and explore how these differ for younger individuals. However, within the burials of juveniles, consistent trends can also be identified, thus defining a normative practice for a specific age cohort. The case of atypical versus deviant is then questioned in term of context and interpretation of the intentionality of the practice. The papers within this volume aim to discuss and define those differences focusing on juvenile burial practices in Europe and the Near East during recent prehistory and protohistory.

Structure of the Volume

The editors chose to present the different papers in broad chronological order to introduce a notion of changes and/or consistencies across time and within different societies. The volume commences with a paper from Marion Benz and collaborators on an extraordinary child burial discovered at the late Pre-Pottery Neolithic site of Ba'ja, in southern Jordan. The burial, of an 8±2-year-old child, possibly a girl, is outstanding in several respects regarding the burial ritual and the tomb construction compared to others from the site but also in relation to Early Neolithic juvenile burials of the Near East in general. The authors note that the display of the child in the cist grave fits within local traditions but differs because of the meticulously choreographed ritual whereby the burying community confirmed social belonging and created long lasting moments of collective memory. In the second paper, Alexandra Anders has undertaken to make visible the children of the first Neolithic communities living in the territory of Hungary and to interpret their roles within their communities. She provides an overview of graves containing juvenile burials dating from the 6th and 5th millennia BC in Hungary, and highlights a significant under-representation of the youngest individuals in the prehistoric mortuary record.

Mélie Le Roy analysed several collective burial sites – caves and megalithic tombs – dating to the end of the Neolithic and the beginning of the Bronze Age in the south of France. Through a holistic approach her chapter highlights that a special treatment (exclusion, localisation etc.) was afforded to the youngest individuals (under five years of age) suggesting a different social status and also the presence of different cultural groups. Some of these

tombs (i.e. the megalithic tombs) would have required a huge investment of time and labour in their construction and the author ponders who ‘deserved’ to be buried inside these tombs, focussing on the variable of age. Ana Herrerro-Corral explores the reasons that may have been responsible for the paucity of non-adults in funerary contexts compared to what should be expected in pre-industrial societies. She aims to verify the real proportion of non-adults in Copper and Bronze Age cemeteries (3rd-2nd millennia BC) from the centre of Iberia, as well as to undertake archaeological and anthropological analyses of the funerary practices afforded to children. Cormac McSparron and Eileen Murphy’s paper examines how atypical burials can give nuance to the results of larger statistical studies which focus more on standard normative practices. Through the study of six unusual burials of children dated from the Irish Later Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age period, they discuss potential emotional responses to tragedy, adding texture to an era about which more is known at a societal as opposed to individual level.

The following chapter from Fiorenza Bortolami investigates child burials in Iron Age Veneto in northeastern Italy. She discusses the differences observed in the archaeological record in terms of status, rank and the role of the deceased and his/her family and/or different ways of expressing lineage. Through the case study of the northern necropolis of Este, Padua, she aims to identify differences in grave structure, furnishing and the ritual practice of child burials from the same family group, to demonstrate how these vary even within the same household. Ana Serra’s paper focuses on child burial practice in the Etruscan Po Valley of Italy from the 6th to the 3rd centuries BC. The author re-evaluates old excavations through a contextual approach. Here again, child burials appear to be strongly under-represented compared to the expected death rate. The author discusses the possibility of a differentiated burial practice for infants/children that could effectively influence the archaeological record, leading to their ‘invisibility’. She further explores this idea through examination of the Valle Trebba necropolis of the city of Spina which shows different strategies of representation/integration in which child tombs play an active part. Ana Arzelier and collaborators undertook a study of a necropolis of the 2nd century BC in Urville-Nacqueville, Normandy, France. Using an osteobiographical approach on a corpus comprising 46 out of the 86 buried individuals, they aimed to assess the biological identity of the deceased and to explore the different treatments observed. The spatial and genetic data demonstrate that a specific treatment was directed towards the youngest individuals and was connected to social status among this population. The dichotomy between cremation and inhumation appears to be linked to age at death but is also suggestive of the presence of two distinct entities selecting different funerary treatments for the youngest children.

The next chapter focuses on the specificities of funeral practices related to the death of children during the Roman period. The author, Raphaël Durand, acknowledges that the term ‘child’ refers to very distinct realities that encompass very young children who do not yet have a societal identity; children who are fully-fledged members of the community; and adults, from a social perspective, that are still biologically immature. The paper focuses on *Avaricum*, Bourges, France, where a large corpus of child burials have been discovered that emphasise the diversity of practices afforded to children. Alexia Lattard and Aurore Schmitt question the premise that the funerary treatment of children is always described as being very specific, and sometimes atypical or deviant, compared to those of adults. The results from their study of the site *Forum Iulii*, Fréjus, Provence, France, demonstrate that juvenile

tombs mirror socio-cultural interactions stemming from the micro-local history of this *civitas*. Indeed, children are integrated into families or groups, sharing the same funerary system, and their graves convey choices made within the family's private sphere. The paper helps us to consider heterogeneous funerary practices as possible choices made within the family circle. Shaheen Christie then investigates decapitations in juvenile Romano-British burials. This practice was enforced both pre- and post-mortem on individuals of all ages, sex, origin, and health for diverse reasons as part of a sub-class of mortuary treatment expressing communal membership rather than deviant identities. The paper explores the intersecting relationships between violence, ritual and bodies, by presenting a contextual mortuary analysis of 12 juvenile decapitation burials from ten sites in western Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire, England. A life course approach is applied to determine if those communities utilised specialised mortuary rituals for decapitated juveniles; whether those practices may be classified as normative, atypical, or deviant; and, whether the social life course of juvenile bodies served to construct specialised identities in Late Roman society. Finally, Sélim Djouad and Agathe Chen revisit the case study of the site of Lunel-Viel, France, that yielded a large necropolis that was active between the 3rd and the 6th centuries AD. Within this last phase of exploitation, 19 burials were discovered most of which were associated with a network of agricultural boundary ditches. All of the burials were those of young children and illustrate the particular status of these immature burials. The paper aimed to integrate the information derived from the necropolis with that from the agricultural sector.

We hope that the present volume will help to contribute to the understanding of the complexities when dealing with interpretations of archaeological burial practices. We also hope that scholars will reflect on how our adult-centred approaches to the past influence our use of terminology. While it may be impossible to move beyond this position for practical purposes, careful consideration is needed to determine whether child burial practices are deviant or atypical. Hopefully the volume will encourage further studies that focus on discussions of the purpose and meaning of juvenile funerary rites and to go beyond paradigms.

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