

IAN MORRIS: *Death-ritual and Social Structure in Classical Antiquity*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1992. 264 p. GBP 35.00 (hb), 12.95 (pb).

Dr Ian Morris' book *Death-ritual and Social Structure in Classical Antiquity* is concerned with how the archaeological remains of burials can be used to write history of the social structures of classical antiquity. Morris believes that burials can be an important source of evidence for social historians of the ancient Graeco-Roman world because burials have a wider geographical and social range than the literary texts. However, he does not claim that archaeological evidence is somehow better than written evidence. The archaeological evidence can be used to augment the surviving texts; different kinds of evidence should always be combined.

Morris' book consists of five chapters, grouped around two major aspects of Greek and Roman burials: the body and display in burials.

Burial is defined as part of a funeral, and a funeral as part of a set of rituals by which the living deal with death. In rituals people use symbols to make explicit social structure. Such structures should be central to any attempt to write social history, but ancient historians have often neglected to study social structures because written sources have encouraged other approaches. It has been difficult to generalise to broad patterns from the individualised literary and epigraphic sources. Morris also complains that most ritual studies in classics have been intellectualist, i.e. ritual is seen as a form of philosophical speculation on the cosmos, concentrating on personal and psychological content rather than social context. The tradition in classics has drawn "a sharp line between 'religious' and 'social' explanations of rituals, instead of seeing them as complementary". Morris himself falls towards the 'social' end of the scale. A particular type of evidence should be examined within its total ritual context.

In chapter 2 Morris precipitates a long discussion about the switch from cremation to inhumation in the Roman empire. He argues that the corpse has been torn from its ritual context and interrogated with intellectual questions. He gives a fascinating comparative example of the switch from inhumation to cremation in Europe since 1900. Showing the limitations inherent in the direct interpretation of our own symbolism, he makes the problems of analysing ancient society clearer. Morris sees Augustus' mausoleum as a turning point in the switch from cremation to inhumation. Changes in painting, domestic architecture and epigraphic formulae make the impression of a new ritual order emerging during and after the reign of Augustus. Morris draws attention to why death ritual became more homogenised across the empire just at the time when economic and political regionalism was increasing. Morris connects the switch from cremation to inhumation to the changes in the social structure in the Roman world in the third century.

In chapter 4 Morris warns about the dangers of naïve direct interpretations concerning grave goods. He gives a wonderful example from Macaulay's book *Motel of the Mysteries* (1979) where a modern motel is excavated and everything from a television to a toilet seat is interpreted as ritual articles.

In chapter 6 Morris discusses funeral inscriptions. He points out that inscribing a tombstone was a ritual action and that everyone did not receive an epitaph. This makes Morris sceptical about the demographic conclusions made from the funeral inscriptions. Because the epitaphs were created to satisfy the needs of ritual performers, they do not reveal hard demographic facts. They rather tell about what the relatives burying their dead thought should be said in such a context. The epigraphical material is problematic if tombstones are expected to unlock the secrets of the empire just because they have writing on them, but as one element of the burial they are a formidable addition to our evidence.

Morris has wanted to make clear the need for and the potential of large-scale empirical analyses by researchers who are aware of historical problems. He has successfully avoided confusion of details in his book, though he has had to treat many important issues only on the surface. However, his intention has not been to provide a complete report on burial rituals but to raise questions. His book is a remarkable contribution to the methodology of classical studies.

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*Basilicata. L'espansionismo romano nel sud-est d'Italia. Il quadro archeologico. Atti del convegno Venosa, 23-25 aprile 1987 a cura di Mariarosaria Borriello. Leukania 2 Monografie di Archeologia della Basilicata. Edizioni Osanna, Venosa 1990. 344 pp. ITL 70.000.*

Questo bel volume è frutto dell'incontro di una trentina di studiosi provenienti, tra l'altro, dalle Università di Perugia e di Roma "La Sapienza", ma naturalmente anche da diverse soprintendenze archeologiche. Il convegno, organizzato dalla Soprintendenza Archeologica della Basilicata, risale al 1987: è un contributo fresco all'archeologia del mondo italico nel processo della romanizzazione in questa regione tra l'Irpinia e la Daunia – *Lucana an Apula anceps*. Il volume comprende anche articoli minori su aree adiacenti (Daunia, Peucezia, Sannio, Irpinia).

I venti articoli – e le discussioni – si muovono su diversi aspetti, cioè la topografia, epigrafia, culti e storia; varia pure la lunghezza, da quattro a 50 pagine. Le trattazioni più vaste sono dedicate ad aspetti della romanizzazione della Daunia (Marina