
Symposium: Archaeology of the Sacred Domain

Thomas Levy

The question of the idea of next life in the world outlook of south Ural nomads in VI-V centuries B.C.

Alexey Bogorodtcev

For the primitive peoples, death is often considered a transition, and therefore close to the traditions accompanying birth, initiations and marriage. Thus, a man passing initiation died in his previous status to be reborn as another man - with different rights and duties. In the ideas of ancient man, the same applied to the dead.

Social inequality, which existed in the society of many primitive peoples, existed not only in this life, but the next too. People who occupied high social position during life preserved their high status after death in the other world. In this paper, I consider the possibility of reconstructing these beliefs according to the data of the burial traditions of the social elite of the early nomads of South Urals. To do this, I address those signs that mark the burial of noblemen of these nomads. These include precious metals, particularly gold, which held numerous symbolic associations (it was seen as neutral, pure, in the sense that it could not be ruined, and was linked to the solar sphere to which military men were admitted) and the sacrifice of horses. I also show how the orientation of bodies in the graves indicates the influence ones standing in life had upon the sphere one entered after death.

In search of the Byzantine genotype: An application of space syntax analysis to Jordanian Byzantine Churches

David Clark

Within the past decade, more scholars have turned their interests and attention to the Byzantine Churches of Jordan and their rich archaeological record. Yet, within the geographic framework of the 'Holy Land', the understanding of architectural regionalism has not been fully examined. Regional spatial characteristics have not been identified, nor placed within their larger geographic and ecclesiastical, diocesan frameworks. From Northern Syria to Southern Jordan, little is understood quantifiably of the architectural configurations, or cultural genotypes specific to each region. These churches had specific functions. They housed the ritual worship and archived the life of communities that built them. Do their architectural genotypes give us clues as to how these communities functioned liturgically?

Architectural remains of the building layouts constitute some of the clearest patterns of material culture within the archaeological record. Space syntax analysis, developed in the field of architecture, is assisting archaeologist to examine these characteristics and patterns. By plotting integration values, and comparing architectural configurations, it may be possible to discover particular patterns or "genotypes" related to movement, socio-ritual encounter, and visibility for the structures of Byzantine churches and their relational regions of influence.

Phenomena of the religious life and their social background in the Hungarian Late Copper Age

Anna Endrodi

Several rescue excavations carried out in and around Budapest over the last decade, have revealed numerous religious aspects of the Late Copper Age Baden culture (middle of the 3rd millennium BC). My lecture will address the erection of steles and ritual sacrifices. Cattle and animal skull burials are known already from the Neolithic and are often connected with building sacrifices. Late Copper Age evidence from Hungary indicates the importance of cow sacrifice, and archaeo-zoological investigations of the bones revealed that the cattle belonged to a different species. Some cattle skeletons were buried not after the death of the animal but after its immolation. The number of animals burials increased in the younger phase of the classical Baden culture and steles, too, appear in this period. The appearance of these steles is probably linked to the spread of inhumation, indicating a distinguished social status of the deceased. It could mark also a ritual place closely connected with religious life. In the Late Copper Age symbolism and abstraction to related religious beliefs has undoubtedly great importance and they were closely linked to changes in social and economic structures. Phenomena of religious life of the Late Copper Age in Hungary, are probably due to these changes, and reflect changes that took place in spiritual life.

Subsidiaries of the Egyptian pilgrim route in Africa

Ali Ibrahim Ghabban

The ancient Egyptian pilgrim route was the main road used by African Muslim caravans from Egypt to the sacred places in Hijaz. The route begins at Cairo and goes eastward across Sinai Peninsula to the north west of Saudi Arabia and thence southward to Makkah and Madinah.

During its different periods of Islamic history the Egyptian pilgrim route had numerous subsidiary inland roads coming from different parts of the African continent. The African pilgrims used to come from northern, western, eastern, and central and southern regions of Africa and congregate in Cairo where they joined the official Egyptian caravan of pilgrimage.

This paper attempts to give a short account of the Egyptian pilgrim route, its historical stages and archaeological remains. It will deal elaborately with the major routes used across Africa by pilgrims in their way to perform the Haj or pilgrimage.

The emergence of pan-regional ritual centres: A case study from the southern Levant

Thomas E. Levy

In searching for cultural universals, anthropologists such as Pascal Boyer, suggest that a belief in non-physical beings is the most common feature of religions. This view of religion crosscuts the wide range of social systems found in the ethnographic and archaeological record from simplest band level societies to the most complex state level organisations. However, each of these idealised social types is also characterised by different levels of complexity with regard to religious beliefs and practices that are intimately connected to maintaining and changing the social order. This paper examines the emergence of the first pan-regional ritual centres in the southern Levant during the late 5th- early 4th millennium as a lens for identifying the role of religion in social evolution. Through an analysis of exchange goods, production and the economic metaphors embedded in cult-related objects from a ritual site excavated in southern Israel, it is possible to monitor the role of ideology in promoting and maintaining social change. It is suggested that these observations can serve as a model for explaining the role of religion in promoting social evolution in other parts of the ancient Near East and perhaps other regions of the world.

The establishment of churches and the Church: Ideological and political change in the medieval North

Keth Lind

In Norway the medieval period is usually taken to begin when Christianity became the official religion at around AD 1000, a point in time when the formative state emerged. The period 'ended' around AD 1500. The medieval society was based on the Christian religious world-view and ideology, but with strong influence from older societies. The period represented a blend of old traditions and new ideology, in which the Christian ideology eventually gained dominance. Some areas of the north were on the fringe of Christian European 'civilisation', while major parts of Fenno-Scandinavia and north-west Russia belonged completely to the 'barbarians', the unknown Beyond. I will focus on the role of the Church in the entrance of 'Europe' into the north. I believe that medieval Christian Europe's desire for control was initially ideologically based, and that it was only later in the medieval period that economic and political factors grew more important. Large areas of northern Norway were populated by the Sámi, and there the ideological influence came from the Roman Catholic church. In north-west Russia, inhabited by many different ethnic groups, the main influence came from the Russian state based in Novgorod, and from the Russian Orthodox Church.

Archaeology of 'sacred' domain: Mathura and Kashi revisited

K. M. Shrimali

Mathura and Kashi have occupied a place of distinction in the Indian psyche for over a millennium as places of hallowed existence. Both are renowned centres of pilgrimage. The paper seeks to enquire into the antiquity of this tradition, its overall material context and archaeological correlations.