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This volume is the third in a series of publications resulting from the Cotsen Advanced Seminars held at the Cotsen Institute of Archaeology at the University of California, Los Angeles. *The Archaeology of Ritual* enters an increasingly crowded market with various publications focusing upon the archaeology of ritual and religion having appeared in recent years (e.g. Insoll 2004a,b; Barrowclough & Malone 2007; Hays-Gilpin & Whitley 2008). The volume is underpinned by a useful premise in seeking to explore 'the discourse on the archaeology of ritual today' (p. 1) which means that it is not structured by a dominant theoretical perspective. The book is well produced and only a couple of minor typographical errors were seen whilst the figures are generally of good quality, with the only exceptions being figures 3.1 and 11.1 which are rather murky.

Turning to the papers themselves, these will be considered individually, but in general terms rather than always being a new offering, some seek to distil the authors' existing research and thinking in a new format and perhaps with a push in a new direction. Hence there is definitely value in the enterprise. Thirteen papers by a range of contributors are contained in the volume. These are by both well-known names in the field of ritual studies such as Catherine Bell, and Caroline Humphrey and James Laidlaw, through to lesser-known archaeologists such as Marianna Nikolaidou. The material covered is also eclectic, geographically, temporally and in terms of

disciplinary focus, with the latter including archaeology, history, anthropology, sociology and psychology. Thus, in total, a rich selection is offered the reader (and reviewer) interested in the archaeology of ritual (and religion).

The first paper is a brief introduction by Evangelos Kyriakidis. This, as was recurrently seen with the contributions (three in total) authored by Kyriakidis, needs greater bibliographic support given the points made which seem under-referenced and supported only by a limited range of case studies. However, as noted, this is merely a brief introduction so not much can be expected. In contrast, Kyriakidis's second lengthier contribution, attempts to consider 'the challenges peculiar to the archaeology of ritual' (p. 4). The criticism just offered again applies, and when we are led onto a consideration of rituals in archaeological contexts various questions can be asked. For instance, why will it not be possible for archaeologists 'to differentiate among specific rituals uncovered'? This assertion seems unduly negative when, for example, using ethnographic analogy we can begin to differentiate between a ritual perhaps linked with negotiating personal destiny, or sacrifice, as opposed to the founding of a village, house, or shrine (Insoll 2008). It is true that the 'archaeological record represents a ritual pattern' (p. 15), or rather, can do, but in contrast to Kyriakidis's position this reviewer would suggest that it is the 'potential dark alleys' and 'red herrings' (p. 20) which might lead to new insights in the archaeology of ritual being made.

Lars Fogelin in Chapter three considers the archaeology of religion and ritual in South Asia with primary reference to a Buddhist mortuary landscape in Andhra Pradesh in India. Of immediate interest is that Fogelin uses the term 'religion' as well as 'ritual'. This is of obvious significance for, as it should be, ritual is considered within the frame of reference in which it often exists, i.e. religion. Fogelin is here assisted by working with known religious 'forms' or at least partially so in archaeological contexts, Buddhism, but even if we do not have this more privileged viewpoint it is probably as well for the archaeologist to recognize that the type of rituals with which this book is concerned sit within 'religious' frameworks. Interesting points are made about the limitations in the use of ethnographies of South Asian villages for interpreting ancient India. And whilst true that these should not be used with a perception based on 'the fallacy of evolutionary survivals' (p. 24), it is equally true that they can be of great use for archaeological interpretation. An interesting critical discussion is provided reflecting the seemingly healthy 'state' of relevant, primarily Buddhist, South Asian archaeology.

In the next chapter Joyce Marcus focuses upon Mesoamerica and argues that the study of ritual needs to be made 'a scientific endeavour' (p. 43). Marcus makes the point, rightly, that a social anthropologist who observes a ritual ceremony, 'receives a rich sensory experience' (p. 43). Marcus does not mention emotion or belief in this context but these can be inter-related, and their existence, as subjective components that can also shape ritual practice can undermine its scientific study. Otherwise, Marcus describes a common sense approach to defining rituals archaeologically, albeit with primary reference to the rich contexts of Mesoamerica with its ethnohistoric support, and through emphasizing a 'checklist' type approach that can be criticized for being somewhat restrictive from the outset. The emphasis placed upon attempting to reconstruct the perishable elements, offerings etc., of ritual is to be highly commended and something this reviewer has certainly struggled with in investigating shrines in West Africa.

Christine Hastorf continues the Latin American geographical focus in her discussion of ritual in the Lake Titicaca Basin. This is a very interesting contribution that considers how ritual constructions – structures – were used for purposes of inclusion and exclusion. The case study might be specific to the Andes, but the ideas surrounding restricted knowledge and access in relation to ritual have more general implications and this is a strength of the chapter. A thought-provoking and nuanced discussion is provided that also indicates active participation with local communities and engagement with local beliefs and spirits prior to starting archaeological fieldwork.

Subsequently, Colin Renfrew returns in his contribution to his earlier work on the archaeology of religion, framed primarily within his notion of the archaeology of 'cult'. Much of the discussion is centred around Renfrew's past writings on various subjects with a ritual link, and it is more a reflection on work completed rather than anything new. He attempts however, in part, to move the discussion of ritual away from the religious domain to that of secular ritual by focusing upon the annual military ceremony of the Trooping of the Colour in London. Though, in summary, his point that 'any reader with knowledge of current anthropology is likely to be unsurprised at the direction this paper has taken' (p. 120) would have to be agreed with in that it signals nothing new.

The chapter by Terence Ranger is of great interest, not least for it considers material of primary interest to this reviewer, shrines, oracular caves, in the Matopos Mountains of South-western Zimbabwe and how these might be recognized in the archaeological record. The 'living ritual' (p. 125) Ranger himself has

witnessed in Zimbabwe adds to the narrative and a seemingly cautionary tale is provided for archaeologists in that the oracular cave shrines discussed appear to have 'little for an archaeologist to detect' for they 'have resisted the change from nature to culture to civilization which took place at Delphi' (p. 134). Here, of course, it could be argued that they are not 'natural' shrines as such, being manipulated and utilized by humans, but the point about their potential lack of archaeological visibility is of significance for archaeologists in general whereas the second part of the paper focusing upon the Great Zimbabwe site complex is of lesser interest to archaeologists outside of a Southern African specialization.

Ranger's contribution is followed by one by Alessandra Lopez y Royo discussing the (re)creation of the Odissi dance, a classical form from Eastern India. The role of archaeology within the creation of what Lopez y Royo describes as, 'this Odissi myth' (p. 155) is discussed. The content is very subject specific so its interest and resonance might be limited, though in considering ritual and its links with performance the importance of dance should also be obviously considered by archaeologists, where relevant. Similarly, Marianna Nikolaidou's chapter examining the possible ritual nature of technology in the Late and Final Neolithic communities of the Aegean is quite specific in focus. Nonetheless, the emphasis given to adornment is of interest and few are going to dispute her now generally accepted conclusions that technology can be ritually encoded, through both the materials used and roles involved.

The focus of discussion is then dramatically pulled out again through Robert McCauley's and Thomas Lawson's overview of approaches within the cognitive science of religion and their thinking about 'religious ritual competence and the ritual form hypothesis' (p. 209), in one of the lengthiest contributions in the volume. Elsewhere this reviewer (Insoll 2004a, 41) has noted the problems inherent in psychological approaches to assessing the cognitive foundations of religion. This contribution does not alter this opinion even if it is liberally scattered with diagrams attempting to illustrate the psychological place and meaning of ritual. The emphasis is firmly placed upon the 'explanatory' over the 'interpretive' (p. 209) in an attempt to redress what they describe as the 'imbalance' (Insoll 2004a) that has favoured the latter. This fundamentally disagrees with the perspective adopted by this reviewer, but leaving aside personal considerations for those that agree with cognitive psychological approaches to complex phenomena such as ritual and religion then this paper provides a convenient summary of cognitive perspectives and its interface with cognitive archaeology.

In contrast, this reviewer found himself in almost total agreement with the points made by Caroline Humphrey and James Laidlaw in their thought-provoking consideration of animal sacrifice in a Buddhist monastery temple in Inner Mongolia, a discussion which in turn leads to a reflection on both the meaning of sacrifice and 'ritualization' (p. 255). Like some of the other contributors Humphrey and Laidlaw are returning to previously published ideas, i.e. that ritual 'is a quality that action can come to have, rather than being, as many other theorists had assumed, a definable category of distinctive kinds of events' (p. 256), but here they are building upon it with new empirical data. The more general implications of the Mongolian case study are amply thought-through and presented and the central point that the killing of the living being as the 'key event' of sacrifice can be 'relatively little ritualized' (p. 263) is something that can be entirely agreed with.

Penultimately, in a short, fascinating, and highly readable chapter Catherine Bell returns to the definition of ritual. A commonsense approach is adopted ultimately encapsulated in the point that, 'we are never going to agree on a definition of ritual' (p. 283). It is also clear from Bell's contribution that archaeology has, unfortunately, not figured widely on her reading lists. This is a shame and undoubtedly a fault of archaeologists in not providing the relevant goods, rather than necessarily an omission on the part of Bell.

Finally, the volume ends with the third contribution by Kyriakidis entitled, 'Archaeologies of Ritual' (p. 289). Various subjects are considered including 'issues of definition and the relationship between ritual and religion' (p. 289). Again, these are subjects that have been considered by others (including this reviewer), and again the points made could be better supported through acknowledging existing literature, here, and in regard to landscape (p. 299), or nationalism and globalization (p. 303). Kyriakidis argues that the absence of definitions is 'counterproductive' in encouraging 'vagueness' and not facilitating 'critical arguments' (p. 290). These are all debatable points and ultimately he returns to the position that an archaeology of religion, 'if one takes religion to be a system of beliefs' (p. 298) cannot have as much scope as an archaeology of ritual that is concerned with practice or action. Kyriakidis does admit the importance of beliefs, but equally a rather reductionist cognitive approach is essentially promoted which contradicts some of the richer research possibilities hinted at by other contributors in the volume.

So, in summary, this is an interesting book that makes you think. As such it should be read and the

Editor should be commended for bringing together such a range of contributors and their case studies.

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