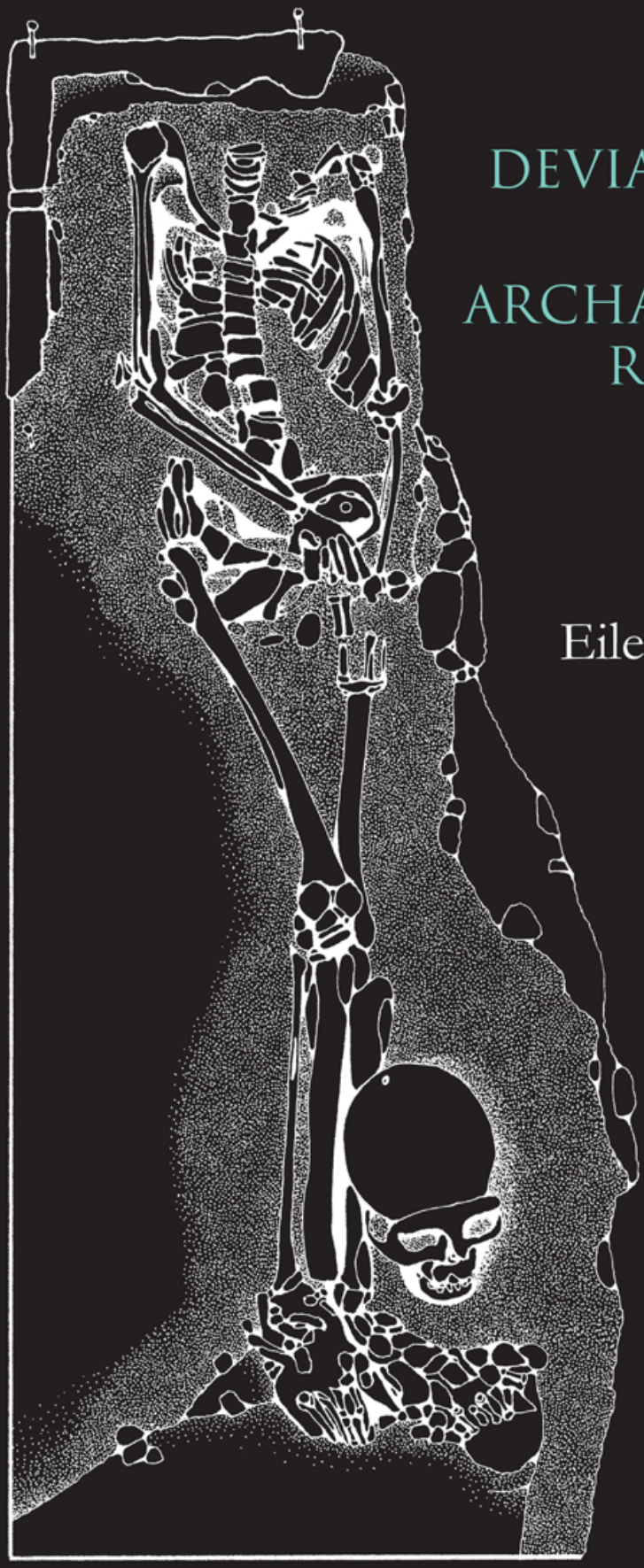

# DEVIANT BURIAL IN THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD

Edited by

Eileen M. Murphy

# DEVIANT BURIAL
## in the Archaeological Record

STUDIES IN FUNERARY ARCHAEOLOGY:

Vol. 1 *Social Archaeology of Funerary Remains*
Edited by Rebecca Gowland and Christopher Knüsel

Vol. 2 *Deviant Burial in the Archaeological Record*
Edited by Eileen M. Murphy

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*Front cover: Drawing by Libby Mulqueeny, Queen's University Belfast, of a decapitated male from Driffield Terrace, York (© York Archaeological Trust)*

*Back cover: Reconstruction drawing by David A. Walsh of the so-called 'live burial' at Sewerby, East Yorkshire (Hirst 1985, frontispiece). Reproduced by permission of English Heritage.*

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*This volume is dedicated to my children –*
*Abigail, Jude and Saul Murphy-Donnelly*

# Contents

Contributors ..... ix
Acknowledgements ..... xi

Introduction
*Eileen M. Murphy* ..... xii

1. Unusual Burials and Necrophobia: An Insight into the Burial Archaeology of Fear
*Anastasia Tsaliki* ..... 1

2. What Actually is a 'Deviant Burial'? Comparing German-Language and Anglophone Research on 'Deviant Burials'
*Edeltraud Aspöck* ..... 17

3. Odd One Out? Earlier Neolithic Deposition of Human Remains in Caves and Rock Shelters in the Yorkshire Dales
*Stephany Leach* ..... 35

4. The Value of Palaeoteratology and Forensic Pathology for the Understanding of Atypical Burials: Two Mediterranean Examples from the Field
*Philippe Charlier* ..... 57

5. Ritual Inhumations and 'Deposits' of Children among the Geto-Dacians
*Valeriu Sîrbu* ..... 71

6. Aspects of Deviant Burial in Roman Britain
*Alison Taylor* ..... 91

7. Normal, Deviant and Atypical: Burial Variation in Late Saxon Wessex, c. AD 700–1100
*Annia Kristina Cherryson* ..... 115

8. Charcoal Burial: A Minority Burial Rite in Early Medieval Europe
*James Holloway* ..... 131

9. Off With Their Heads: The Anglo-Saxon Execution Cemetery at Walkington Wold, East Yorkshire
*Jo Buckberry* ..... 148

10. Unusual Life, Unusual Death and the Fate of the Corpse: A Case Study from Dynastic Europe
*Estella Weiss-Krejci*.....169

11. The Origins of *Cilliní* in Ireland
*Colm J. Donnelly and Eileen M. Murphy*.....191

12. Grief, Grievance and Grandeur*:* An Eighteenth-Century Mausoleum in Mainham, Co. Kildare
*Mark Gordon*.....224

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Individual acknowledgements are included as appropriate in the papers which follow.

# Introduction

*Eileen M. Murphy*

It has long been recognised by archaeologists and anthropologists that certain individuals in a variety of cultures from diverse time periods and geographical locations have been accorded different treatment in burial relative to other members of their society (e.g. Saxe 1970; Binford 1972; O'Shea 1984; Shay 1985). These individuals can include criminals, women who died during childbirth, unbaptised infants, people with disabilities, and supposed revenants, to name but a few. Such burials can be identifiable in the archaeological record from an examination of the location and external characteristics of the grave site. Furthermore, the position of the body in addition to its association with unusual grave goods can be a further feature of non-normative burials. The motivation behind these differential burial practices is also diverse and can be associated with a highly complex array of different social and religious beliefs.

A range of high quality academic texts have been produced in recent years that cover the funerary practices and beliefs of past societies (e.g. McHugh 1999; Parker Pearson 1999; Taylor 2002). These generally make reference to the evidence for non-normative burials but the current volume focuses specifically on the evidence for minority and atypical burial in the archaeological record. As such, it is envisaged that the collection of papers contained within this book will go some way towards enabling a clearer understanding to be gained concerning the nature of the people accorded such funerary rites within the broader social and religious beliefs of the societies from which they each originated. The volume comprises some 12 papers that focus on non-normative burial practices from the Neolithic through to the Post-Medieval period and includes case studies from a diverse array of countries including Austria, England, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Romania, Scotland and Sweden. Both the broad time-span and the wide geographic nature of the contributions is a testament to the fact that certain individuals have been accorded a differential form of burial to the majority of their peers in most human societies at some stage in their history.

The issue of terminology when referring to non-normative burial is discussed in depth in the contribution by Edeltraud Aspöck (Chapter 2). Although the current volume is entitled 'Deviant Burial in the Archaeological Record' it is appreciated that the use of the word 'deviant' might be perceived to have overtly negative connotations, thereby suggesting

that the individuals accorded unusual burial practices had in some way been deliberately rejected by their societies for some wrongdoing. As the papers by Estella Weiss-Krejci (Chapter 10), and Colm Donnelly and Eileen Murphy (Chapter 11) demonstrate, however, this is by no means always the case. Individuals can be accorded deviant or non-normative burial practices for a variety of reasons, and in some cases the reasons lie well beyond their control, such as death before baptism, during childbirth or as a result of an infectious disease. A further problem with the use of the term 'deviant' is highlighted particularly well in the contributions of Annia Cherryson (Chapter 7) and James Holloway (Chapter 8). The former chapter looks at burial variation in Late Saxon Wessex, while the latter discusses the phenomenon of charcoal burial in a variety of European countries. Both Cherryson and Holloway are of the opinion that minority burial practices are not strictly 'deviant' but rather just a less commonly used form of burial which should be considered as part of the repertoire of normal burial practices.

The volume begins with two papers which primarily focus on theoretical aspects of the study of atypical archaeological burials. The remainder of the volume is ordered chronologically and comprises case study papers. In the first paper Anastasia Tsaliki introduces the concept of an 'Archaeology of Fear' and discusses a range of practices apparent in the global archaeological funerary record which appear to be indicative of necrophobia or a fear of the dead. She stresses the need for archaeologists and anthropologists to adopt a multidisciplinary approach, which draws on information derived from social, biological and burial evidence, to enable a clearer understanding of atypical burials in the past. The final section of her paper presents five case studies derived from Cyprus, Greece and Italy where individuals appear to have been accorded atypical burial practices as a consequence of necrophobia.

In Chapter 2 Edeltraud Aspöck compares European German-language and Anglophone research on 'deviant burials' which leads to her to challenge the usefulness of the concept of 'deviant burial'. She states that the term *Sonderbestattung* is the German-language equivalent to 'deviant burial' although, interestingly, this is a completely neutral term lacking the negative connotations of the English word 'deviant'. She charts the development of research on *Sonderbestattung* from the 1920s onwards before turning her attention to the Anglophone research. She believes the research in the two archaeological traditions displayed parallels until the 1970s when they then diverged. In recent years the post-processual approach, with its emphasis on 'individualism, agency and marginal groups in society' (Aspöck, this volume), has dominated Anglophone research, whereas the European German-language research has tended to focus mainly on classificatory issues which have arisen from the archaeological evidence itself. Aspöck concludes by discussing the problems associated with both approaches and suggests the way forward is not to view atypical burials in isolation but rather as an integral part of the normal mortuary practices of a society.

Stephany Leach's contribution (Chapter 3) focuses on a re-evaluation of human skeletal remains recovered from five cave and rock shelter sites in the Yorkshire Dales in England. A recent programme of radiocarbon dating has revealed the remains to be of Early Neo-

lithic date, and not Late Neolithic or Early Bronze Age as previously thought. Furthermore, it had previously been believed that the remains had derived from articulated burials but Leach's research has revealed evidence for the differential treatment and representation of the human remains. The paper includes a review of the evidence that exists for the Earlier Neolithic treatment of the dead in Britain and discusses the complex funerary rites employed by these communities, before the final deposition of often extensively manipulated human body parts within long barrows, chambered tombs and the ditches of causewayed enclosures. She questions the motivations that may have lain behind the various rites before attempting to interpret the reasons why the skeletons recovered from the cave and rock shelter sites may have been disarticulated. The osteological analysis indicated that the remains included those of young children as well as adults whose bones displayed signs of injury and disease. In her discussion Leach postulates that the remains recovered from the cave and rock shelter sites could simply have been deposited there as a result of random occurrences, the season of death or other practical matters. She also suggests, however, they might have been deliberately placed within the subterranean sites as a result of deeper community beliefs and that they represent specifically selected members of the community. In the conclusion she stresses that her study is based on a relatively small quantity of skeletal remains but she suggests that a clearer understanding of the diverse array of Early Neolithic mortuary rituals in Britain might be gained by undertaking similar detailed osteological analysis on other contemporary collections of human remains.

In Chapter 4 Philippe Charlier presents the evidence for two Mediterranean examples of atypical burial and demonstrates how a multidisciplinary approach can be used in the interpretation of such burials. The first case involves the burial of a girl with Trisomy 21, or Down's Syndrome, in Late Bronze Age Rome. He provides a detailed account of the palaeopathological characteristics of the skeleton and makes reference to the unusual nature of her burial context within an uninhabited marshy area. The presence of a perimortem blunt force trauma on the individual's skull in addition to the unusual nature of her burial, leads Charlier to suggest that she had been ritually sacrificed. In the second case study he discusses the burial of two female skeletons of late second century BC or early first century BC date recovered from the cistern of the House of Fourni on Delos Island, Greece. One of the individuals appeared to have been decapitated and both were associated with a series of iron nails. Charlier suggests that the nails represent the remains of hobbles which had been employed to restrict physical movement. Drawing on contemporary historical accounts he then proceeds to suggest reasons why the women were apparently tortured and killed. He concludes by advocating that a multidisciplinary approach is essential when attempting to interpret the evidence from atypical burials.

The paper by Valeriu Sîrbu (Chapter 5) discusses the various manners employed for the burial of children during the fourth century BC to the first century AD in the Carpato-Danubian region, the territory of the Geto-Dacians or northern Thracians. During this period the remains of young children appear to have been accorded a variety of funerary rites and their burials comprise whole skeletons, partial skeletons, skulls or isolated cranial

or post-cranial bones. The children's remains included in his study were recovered from a variety of site types, including settlements, isolated pits and apparently cultic sites referred to by archaeologists as 'fields of pits'. It is particularly interesting that the majority of the child burials date from the first century BC to the first century AD, a time when ordinary Geto-Dacian burials are extremely rare. The paper deals in depth with the enclosure of Grădina Casteluliu in Hunedoara where the burials of some 39 children were discovered. The features of these burials lead Sîrbu to conclude that they were the result of either human sacrifice or ritual inhumation.

In Chapter 6 Alison Taylor provides a comprehensive review of deviant burial practices in Roman Britain, drawing on evidence derived from an impressive array of archaeological cases and contemporary documentary accounts. She ends her introduction by citing examples to demonstrate the often ambiguous nature of such burial evidence and the difficulties involved with its interpretation. She then proceeds to run through possible explanations that may account for deviant burial, including human sacrifice, infanticide, execution, mutilation after death, witchcraft, and the fear of ghosts. This section is followed by an in depth discussion of the various types of physical evidence that Roman deviant burial might take, including decapitation, prone burial and unusually secure burial. The paper concludes by again referring to the potential ambiguity of the archaeological evidence for deviant burial across the Roman World. Taylor suggests that the creation of a database of all Roman burials and a greater understanding of Continental European burial evidence is necessary to enable British archaeologists to gain a clearer understanding of atypical burials. Furthermore, she believes they need to remain open-minded when attempting to interpret such burials.

Annia Cherryson's paper (Chapter 7) uses variation in the burial evidence from Late Saxon Wessex to address the issue of when should a burial be considered to be deviant rather than simply representing unusual, but acceptable, mortuary behaviour. The paper begins with an overview of what are regarded as normal burial practices for the period – primarily churchyard burial in addition to the growing body of evidence for the persistence of burial in field cemeteries. The following section provides a review of Late Saxon execution cemeteries in the region, burials which are readily classed as deviant. Cherryson then proceeds to discuss contemporary isolated burials and barrow burials. These have traditionally been classified as deviant but she queries this categorisation in light of the increasing evidence for the persistence of burial outside churchyards during the period. While some of the isolated burials appear to display characteristics that might be considered as deviant, others – although atypical – do not display features that might warrant such a classification. She suggests that one category of isolated burial in particular – those discovered in settlements and displaying nothing unusual apart from their location – should in fact be considered as a part of the normal range of Late Saxon funerary practices. She concludes by stating that each isolated burial needs to be examined individually within the wider context of contemporary burial practices.

The phenomenon of charcoal burials – in which the body is laid on, or beneath, a layer

of wood charcoal – forms the subject of James Holloway's work (Chapter 8). Such burials have been found in tenth to twelfth-century contexts in England, Ireland, Scotland and Scandinavia, while a similar rite is also known from Merovingian France. This minority burial rite is poorly understood and a variety of explanations have been proposed to account for it, including hygiene and as a symbolic comfort for the deceased. Holloway's paper provides a review of the different forms of charcoal burial in addition to their distribution and chronology. He looks in depth at the phenomenon in five cemeteries from five different areas before reviewing the various interpretations that have been proposed to account for such burials. He concludes by stressing that charcoal burial should be considered as a variant rite within the boundaries of normal Medieval Christian burial practices. He suggests that Medieval burial practice as a whole should not be considered in terms of normal and deviant burials, but rather 'as a vocabulary of symbolic elements from which a range of rites are produced and reproduced'.

In Chapter 9 Jo Buckberry's research focuses on the archaeological and osteological evidence derived from excavations undertaken during the 1960s at Walkington Wold, East Yorkshire, in England. Originally the burials were interpreted as representing a massacre that took place during the Late Roman period. This interpretation was later questioned by Andrew Reynolds (1997) who proposed that it was actually an Anglo-Saxon execution cemetery. Buckberry's research has confirmed this latter interpretation through a programme of radiocarbon dating and a detailed re-examination of the human skeletal remains. The new radiocarbon dates confirmed that the burials were of Mid to Late Saxon date. The osteological findings derived from each individual are provided in full in the text, and this demonstrates that all of the individuals were adult males, many of whom displayed evidence for perimortem decapitation and physiological stress. The location of the cemetery (around a Bronze Age barrow, close to the local Hundredal boundary), and the variation in the orientation and position of the bodies all assist in the verification of the site as an execution cemetery but, interestingly, this example is the most northerly in England.

The paper of Estella Weiss-Krejci (Chapter 10) examines how deviant behaviour during life, unusual circumstances of death, and death at a young age affected the mortuary treatment accorded to historically documented individuals from the Habsburg and Babenberg Dynasties of Medieval and Post-Medieval Europe. The study focussed on some 257 individuals whose lives or deaths were considered to be atypical, and the paper provides an introduction as to what proper burial should have constituted for these high status individuals; how their corpses should have been treated, where they should have been buried and who they should have been buried with. The author then proceeds to describe in detail individuals who were considered likely candidates for differential burial practices. The results indicated that 'social deviants' in addition to those who had died during warfare or had been the victims of disease or murder, as well as young children were provided with differential mortuary treatment. A particularly interesting finding is the fact that deviant treatment of the corpse could also happen to individuals who had made very positive contributions to society during their lifetimes. In these cases the unusual funerary

treatment was a sign of high and special status. Bearing this finding in mind, Weiss-Krejci suggests that in the absence of historical documents it can be difficult for archaeologists to understand why an individual may have been treated differentially in death and she advises that the interpretation of any atypical burial be undertaken in a cautious manner.

In Chapter 11 Colm Donnelly and Eileen Murphy undertake a detailed review of the dating evidence for *cilliní* – a class of Irish burial grounds reserved for the remains of individuals considered unsuitable for interment within consecrated ground. These poignant sites are most frequently associated with unbaptised babies and are found the length and breadth of Ireland. The paper focuses on the general lack of clarity concerning the origin of the monuments that exists within the Irish archaeological community. A review of the dating evidence obtained from 16 excavated sites, however, suggests that the *cillín* is a monument of the Post-Medieval period, and it is suggested that their proliferation in this period is associated with the Irish Counter-Reformation. The Council of Trent had reaffirmed Catholic doctrine and Canon Law and the new Continental seminaries produced priests and friars who returned to Ireland to administer the reformed Catholicism to the people. The importance of correctly administering the sacraments, including baptism, was emphasised and the authors suggest that this was the necessary catalyst for the creation of the *cillín*.

The final chapter of the volume is Mark Gordon's study of an eighteenth-century Irish mausoleum built outside the confines of the graveyard of Mainham Church, Co. Kildare. The work demonstrates how a consideration of funerary sculpture and architecture from an archaeological perspective can help elucidate further information concerning the motivational factors that may have lain behind the construction of a funerary monument. Planned by Stephen Fitzwilliam Browne as a mausoleum for his family and himself, it appears that the monument was constructed outside the graveyard following a dispute with the Anglican minister, John Daniel. This information is related to us in a plaque placed above the door of the mausoleum. Gordon, however, suggests that this may not be the entire story and proposes that Browne may have used the dispute as a means of deflecting attention away from the fact that he had constructed a large, elaborate monument to himself and his family – something that may have been frowned upon by his peers. As such, the dispute at Mainham may have actually provided Browne with an opportunity – a conclusion only apparent when the researcher looks beyond the obvious external plaque and interprets the more subtle clues held within the mausoleum's architecture and sculpture.

It is hoped that the current volume of papers will make some contribution towards our understanding of the complexities involved when dealing with non-normative burials in the archaeological record. The papers make reference to a wide variety of burial practices which can in some cases clearly be regarded as 'deviant' although, for others, the negative association of this terminology would appear inappropriate. In these latter cases the use of more neutral terms, such as 'differential', 'atypical', or 'non-normative', is more suitable. In some situations the burials appear to be displaying 'minority' rites which are simply part of the normal range of funerary practices utilised by a particular society. Whatever

the terminology, an underlying theme within the volume is an emphasis on the need to study atypical burials within the context of the normal burial rites of a particular society, rather than in isolation. It is clearly apparent that unusual forms of burial can be difficult to interpret and invariably a multidisciplinary approach is required.

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# 1. Unusual Burials and Necrophobia: An Insight into the Burial Archaeology of Fear

*Anastasia Tsaliki*

***Abstract***

*'Unusual' or 'deviant' burials are considered to be cases where the individual has been buried in a different way relative to the norm for the period and/or the population under examination. Deformity and disease received scholarly attention in antiquity but, at the same time, they have also been the focus of social prejudice and superstition. Anthropological and ethnographical investigation has revealed that socially deviant and diseased individuals may receive different mortuary treatment relative to unaffected members of a society. In some cases, unusual disposal is accompanied by evidence for practices, which indicate fear of the dead (necrophobia). These practices usually include methods for the restriction of the dead in the grave by weighing down the body with large rocks, decapitation or the use of nails, wedges and rivets. For example, vampirism can be seen as a notion based on necrophobia, since legend indicates the vampire is a reanimated dead body. Anthropology and folklore have studied superstitional social fear for long but the 'Archaeology of Fear', based on the study and interpretation of evidence from the funerary archaeological record, is a relatively new concept. Although deviant individuals were not always treated differently in life or death, and were not necessarily regarded as outcasts or misfits, it is important for anthropologists and archaeologists to combine social, biological and burial data, as this approach may enable us to improve our understanding of atypical burials in the past.*

## *Introduction*

In an effort to understand ancient humans, archaeology obtains a plethora of evidence from cemeteries and the burials within. By exploring the manner of death and the treatment of the dead it may be possible to gain a clearer picture of the living – of their society, practices and spirituality. Archaeological investigation has revealed the phenomenon of unusual burials: these are cases where an individual has been buried in a different way than what is considered the norm for the period and/or the population under examination. Unusual burials can also be termed 'atypical', 'anomalous', 'extraordinary', 'non-normative', 'abnormal' or 'deviant'.

## *Methodology*

The theoretical premise of the research presented hereinafter is that the type of burial together with the analysis of associated human skeletal remains may reveal significant information about the nature of the life, status, and manner of death of an individual. For instance, evidence of trauma, disease, and/or deformity in the skeleton may offer an insight into an individual's deviant treatment. An extensive literature review has been conducted for the purposes of establishing the necessary theoretical basis concerning death and its related subjects and to identify the usual burial customs and beliefs for the groups and periods under study. This was necessary to enable the detection and selection of the case studies included in the paper, and to enable these findings to be placed within their broader funerary context.

Unusual burials are often difficult to locate in the archaeological record as this depends on the experience of the excavators and recorders in addition to the background knowledge and aims of those responsible for interpreting the finds. Furthermore, it is difficult to associate every atypical burial with specific causes of crime or marginality. Both the bones and the burial context play an important role towards the achievement of this aim. As special treatment in the burial record can take many different forms within different cultures, a list of unusual human burial traits has been provided in Table 1.1. The list is not considered to be exhaustive, but rather as a reference guide to help with the adequate recording and categorisation of unusual cases.

In some cases unusual disposal is accompanied by evidence of practices, which appear to indicate fear of the dead (necrophobia). Necrophobia can be defined as a morbid fear of death and the dead. It is a term used also within medicine, which implies that the phobia may cause extreme and morbid reactions, such as intense anxiety, obsessions, or even a panic attack associated with acute distress, mental confusion and fear of impending death

| **Basic criteria applied to distinguish unusual burials:** |
|---|
| – Primary and secondary burials in unusual places and/or positions when compared to the ordinary burial customs of the cultural group or of the time period (e.g. skeletal remains in wells, pits or kilns, skeletons laid in a prone position). |
| – Mass burials (inhumations and cremations), especially those without evidence or historical documentation for a crisis (e.g. epidemic, war, civil unrest) or those unique in the given burial ground. |
| – Inhumations or cremations, in cemeteries or isolated, associated with indicators of unusual ritual activity (e.g. cut marks, unusual artefacts of possible symbolic or ritual use). |
| – Cremations found in an inhumation site and vice-versa. |
| – Skeletons with evidence that may be indicative of crime, torture or special mortuary ritual (e.g. victims of infanticide, senicide, human sacrifice, cannibalism). |

*Table 1.1. Basic criteria applied to enable the identification of unusual burials.*

(Youngson 1992). It is a Greek word deriving from 'necros' (*νεκρός*), which means 'dead', and 'phobos' (*φόβος*), which means 'fear', and in Latin it is known as 'terror mortis'.

Necrophobic practices usually include methods of restriction of the dead within the grave (Table 1.2). The fear of the dead seems to have had a substantial influence on burial customs from at least as far back as the Neolithic period, and it would appear to have had a worldwide impact (Tsaliki 2001).

## *Pathology and Deviancy*

It has been hypothesised that pathological conditions which cause deformities, pathologies that can affect an individual's mental state and behaviour, diseases with social stigma, or a violent death, may be linked to the nature of an individual's burial. Social marginalisation during life and/or death can occur for a wide variety of reasons, including disease (e.g. smallpox, leprosy, tuberculosis and other epidemic infections), congenital and mental conditions, an immoral life, murder, the nature of one's birth, family status, witchcraft, a curse, excommunication, heresy, death prior to baptism, violent death, death by suicide, and improper burial rites (Ucko 1969; Shay 1985; Sledzik and Bellantoni 1994). In his *Natural History* of AD 77, Pliny made a clear connection between a cross-eyed person and evil eye traditions. In Britain, information derived from folk superstition would tend to suggest that personal disability or deformity was often regarded as unlucky in the past (Roud 2004, 81).

Shay (1985) drew attention to pertinent information within the field of sociology and formed three hypotheses regarding deviancy, which were all tested and confirmed by burial data derived from ethnographic cases, but could not always be confirmed in archaeological material due to the often insufficient nature of the evidence. She proposed that:

– The criteria of deviancy vary in different societies.
– Deviant burials may not reflect the status of the deceased during his/her life, but the social identity they acquired by certain actions or circumstances of death.
– In simple societies volitional and non-volitional forms of deviancy are not distinguished, so they are treated equally at death.

| |
|---|
| – Skeletons with evidence of tied body parts. |
| – Skeletons in prone position. |
| – Bodies buried unusually deep in the ground. |
| – Burials being covered by rocks or other weights. |
| – Bodies found cremated in an inhumation site. |
| – Skeletons with evidence of decapitation. |
| – Burials with evidence of rivets/stakes. |

*Table 1.2. Possible indicators of necrophobia apparent in burials.*

Although deviant individuals were not always treated differently in life or death, and were not necessarily seen as outcasts or misfits, it is important for anthropologists and archaeologists to combine information derived from social, biological and burial data, as this approach may improve our understanding of atypical burials in the past.

## *The 'Special Dead'*

Ucko (1969) successfully demonstrated the variability of body treatment and the dynamic nature of human societies as early as in the 1960s using ethnographic parallels, which he believed could widen the horizons of archaeological interpretation. For instance, fear of the dead has been noted in Kenya and amongst other African people. These groups treated a wide variety of individuals within their society – leprosy sufferers, young children, those killed by lightning, those who died in childbirth, those who had a violent death in battle, those who drowned, those who died from smallpox or dropsy, witches, twins, priests, chiefs, murderers, suicide victims and the very old – differently at burial. The very young (infants who did not yet have their first teeth) and the very old could be considered to be closer to the land of spirits (Ucko 1969, 271).

In other cultures, such as among the Romans, neonates and infants were buried at night in a closed family ceremony, because the very young had a marginal status and no public identity, so their burial could not be a social event of the community (Norman 2002). Roman writers referred to the death of young children as 'mors acerba' (unripe death) or 'mors immatura' (untimely death) (Norman 2002). Similarly, special dead in the ancient Greek World were the 'aoroi' (*ἄωροι,* the untimely dead), such as infants, young adults, and the unmarried. They were feared because witches saw them as suitable couriers of 'katadesmoi' (*κατάδεσμοι,* curse-tablets) (Garland 1985; Kurtz and Boardman 1994). Special dead also included heroes and the war dead, who were highly respected, as well as the murdered and their killers. The latter constituted feared and 'unquiet' dead (*βιαιοθάνατοι*). The murdered were angry against their killers and those who did not avenge their violent death. The killers, on the other hand, were afraid of being haunted by their victims and were condemned to shamefully wander after death, as Aeschylus wrote about Klytaimnestra (Garland 1985). Plato in his *Laws* recommended that murderers should be executed and their bodies cast out of the victim's country without any burial rites performed. He stated that those found guilty of the murder of a family member or infanticide should be executed and dumped naked at a crossroads outside the city. He also suggested that a stone should be thrown by all the archons on the corpse's head in the name of the state, using overkill as an expiatory act for the crime, and that the body should then be left outside the city without burial. Xenophon in *Hellenica* wrote that in Athens traitors and tomb robbers would be thrown to the 'varathron' (*βάραθρον*, gulch or pit) situated in, or near, the demos of Melite (Stalley 1983; Garland 1985; Mikalson 2005). In Sparta the bodies of condemned criminals were thought to have been thrown into Keadas (also spelled as 'Kaiadas' or 'Kaeadas'), although there is no conclusive archaeological evidence to support this assertion (Pitsios *et al.* 2003).

Another category, suicide victims, were condemned by Christianity as early as the fifth century AD. It is difficult to determine the ancient Greek attitude towards such individuals, however, as Homer and the tragic poets saw suicide as appropriate under certain circumstances, although Pythagoreanism and Platonism condemned it as a kind of hubris (Garland 1985, 97). Aristotle indicates that suicide was seen as socially irresponsible and illegal in Athens (Garland 1985, 98; Brody 1989; Marks 2003). Suicide was viewed as an untimely and violent death; Aischines and Plato indicate the spirits of these dead were feared and that the interpreters of sacred law ('exegetai'/ *εξηγηταί*) needed to be consulted on purification rituals and the burial of a suicide victim (Garland 1985, 96–8; Brody 1989; Marks 2003).

'Diobletoi' (*διοβλητοί*), those struck by lightning, were regarded with reverence by ancient Greeks, as they were thought to have been killed by Zeus himself. Plutarch reported that their bodies were believed to be incorruptible and sometimes they were left where they had been struck without burial. 'Deuteropotmoi' (*δευτερόποτμοι* or *υστερόποτμοι*), those who were thought to have died abroad but subsequently returned home alive, were considered impure and had to go through cleansing rites. Finally, the most fearful and dangerous category of dead were the 'ataphoi' (*άταφοι*) – those who remained unburied. In epic poetry and tragedy it was stated they could not enter Hades and that they haunted the living (Garland 1985; Barber 1988; Johnston 1999; Lawson 2003).

The attribution of proper burial rites was a matter of dignity and responsibility for the living, as witnessed by Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and the tragedy *Antigone* by Sophocles. If the body was not found, it was necessary to create a cenotaph burial, sometimes with a stone as a substitute for the body (Kurtz and Boardman 1994).

## *Harmful Entities: Ghosts, Demons and the Undead*

Many peoples believe the soul of the deceased does not reach its final destination immediately after death but remains for a time marginally between worlds. During this liminal period the soul is believed to be vulnerable to attack by evil spirits. The fear of revenants is based on this theory (Barber 1988; Summers 1996). The corpse is thus seen as polluting, and cathartic measures are applied both before and after the funeral (Kurtz and Boardman 1994; Johnston 1999; Lawson 2003). Even in non-Western cultures, as in ancient and contemporary Japan, the spirits of the dead are considered to be potentially dangerous and may wander for many weeks. If appropriate rituals are not performed the soul cannot move on to the land of the dead to meet the ancestors. These wandering spirits suffer from bitterness and malice and can curse their descendants. Those who died a violent or untimely death ('bad death') are also believed to be filled with hate and spite and it is anticipated they will return to hurt the living. It is thus necessary to be purified by a series of rites before and after the funeral (Mullins 2004). Ghost stories are abundant in Japan.

In the ancient Greek and Roman Worlds, there was a plethora of harmful entities such as the 'lamiae' or 'larvae', the 'empussae' or 'lemures', the 'striges', the 'mormo', and the 'ephialtae' or 'hyphialtae', equivalent to 'incubi' and 'succubi', who were thought to attack people in their sleep. There were also special festivals for the honour and appeasement of

the dead, such as the *Anthesteria* in Athens and the Roman *Lemuria*, *Laralia* and *Saturnalia*, which were very closely connected to the idea that malignant spirits or ghosts existed who wanted to feed upon the vitality of the living (Summers 1996).

Ancient Greek and Roman beliefs concerning ghosts, witches and revenants have been preserved mainly in the writings of the following Classical authors (Summers 1996; Felton 1999; McIlveen 2001; Keightley 2003; Raucci 2005):

- Photius, in a summary of Antonius Diogenes', *The Wonders Beyond Thule* (c. second century AD), included the story of Paapis, an evil Egyptian priest, who had ensorcelled the siblings Dercyllis and Mantinias to make them live during the day and be corpses at night.
- Philostratus, a famous sophist of the late second century AD. He narrated the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, a wise man. It included an account of a Corinthian revenant in the story of Menippus, also known as *Bride of Corinth* (4.25). A vampiric or ghoulish creature in the form of a woman haunted men, devoured their flesh and drank their blood.
- Phlegon of Tralles, the Greek writer and freedman of the Emperor Hadrian (second century AD). In his *Mirabilia* (*Book of Marvels*) he presented the story of a young girl named Philinnion, who got out of her grave and seduced young Machates. A diviner ordered her body to be burned to ashes in a remote spot outside the city walls. After that the whole city was ritually cleansed with holy lustrations. In another story, Polycrites died suddenly but then returned from his grave to kill and eat his newborn hermaphrodite child, who was considered to be an ill-omen by the priests and the augurs. *Mirabilia* also includes other stories concerning the resurrection of corpses.
- Lucan (AD 39–65), in his poem *Pharsalia* (Book VI) talked about the Thessalian witch Erichtho, who slept in her grave and had the ability to raise the dead.
- Apuleius (second century AD) in his book *Metamorphoses*, also known as the *Golden Ass* (*Asinus Aureus*), narrated stories of witches who drank blood, hurt the living, and mutilated and stole members from corpses in graveyards.
- Propertius, a Latin poet of the first century BC, in his *Elegies* (4.7 and 4.11) referred to two women, Cynthia and Cornelia, who returned from the dead as spectres to proclaim their final wishes.
- Ovid (43 BC–AD 17), in his Latin poem, *Fastes/Fasti* (*Festivals*) (6.125–6.180), presented the 'striges' as blood-drinking birds.
- Pliny the Younger (first to second century AD), in one of his letters (7.27), narrated the story of Athenodorus and a house in Athens that was for sale at a bargain price because it was supposed to be haunted by a murdered man; the body was subsequently found and a proper burial put the ghost to rest.
- Finally, stories of haunting and haunted houses are also found in the writings of Plautus' *Mostellaria* and Lucian's *Philopseudes*.

It is probably the case that people sometimes practiced unusual burials with apotropaic and preventive purposes in order to deal with the fear of the rising dead and revengeful

ghosts. According to Kyle (2001), pagan Romans were scared of the bodies of executed Christians, even more so because they were aware that Christians believed in resurrection. As a response to this fear they burned the corpses of Christians to assure that they would not resurrect and seek revenge.

Despite a widespread general belief to the contrary, stories of the undead also existed in Medieval Britain. In William of Newburgh's *Chronicles*, Chapters xxii–xxiv narrate relative events, which allegedly occurred in AD 1196, during the reign of King Richard I. One story in the county of Buckinghamshire describes how a dead man wandered out of his grave, attacked his wife, harassed his brothers and beset animals. The living sought help from the church and the Bishop of Lincoln wrote a chartula of Episcopal absolution and sent it to the local archdeacon with orders to open the grave and lay the chartula upon the breast of the corpse. When the tomb was opened, the body was found to have been incorrupt but after the archdeacon acted as instructed, it was reported that the dead man never wandered from his grave again (Summers 1996, 78–82). In fact, the British vampire of this story shares a lot in common with traditions concerning the Greek vampire, which have been found to be slightly different to those of Slavonic vampires. In Greece, the term for a vampire is used to delineate a corpse reanimated by a demon who does not necessarily drink blood but seeks to harm the living by attacking them, killing their animals and disturbing the household (Mouzakis 1989; Tsaliki 2001).

After the twelfth century AD, however, the tradition of vampires seems to have died out in Britain, while the fear of witchcraft increased (Bunson 1993). It is interesting to note though that the classic study of witchcraft – *Malleus Maleficarum* – written in AD 1486 by two Dominican friars, Fathers Kramer and Sprenger, also mentions remedies against the vampiric demons 'incubi' and 'succubi' (Kramer and Sprenger 1996).

It is known that until AD 1823 those who committed suicide in Britain were denied burial in consecrated ground and were interred by the public roadway or at a crossroads, in some cases with a wooden stake having been driven through their bodies. Written evidence for this practice exists, for instance, from Derbyshire dating to AD 1573. This custom is believed to have been applied as a deterrent to others, but since a suicide victim's body was considered to be cursed by the church and deprived of a religious burial, the fear of the dead cannot be excluded. An Act of Parliament of AD 1823, banned the driving of a stake through the body and, after this time, suicide victims were interred in a proper burial ground, but between nine and twelve at night and without religious rites. These limitations were removed in AD 1882 (Roud 2004, 61–3).

As noted above, Greece has a long tradition of revenants and bloodsucking creatures dating back to ancient times. In Byzantium, Slavic influence in conjunction with the precepts of the Greek Orthodox Church formed the legend of the Greek vampire species 'vrykolakas' (*βρυκόλακας*). Related superstitions have been recorded in Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Christian texts, orthodox canon laws, novels, folk songs and manuscripts, which were written both by Greeks and Western travellers in Greece (Mouzakis 1989). Priests attempted to explain the phenomenon and also carried out destruction of the revenants. Major aetiologies for the creation of vampires were considered to have been excommu-

nication and the incorruptibility of the corpse; so special prayers were applied to enable priests to revoke an excommunication (Summers 1996). Related texts have been found in the codices of the monasteries of Mount Athos and Meteora. Many of them originate from the peak period of the 'vampire craze' in Greece – the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries AD. Protective amulets in the shape of crosses and pentagrams were worn by the living, placed on the corpse, or hung around the house. In addition, salt, garlic, vinegar, sulphur, onion, and quicklime were used as apotropaic substances, probably because of their strong smell and/or caustic action (Mouzakis 1989; Davias 1995).

## *Case Studies*

Researchers in anthropology and folklore have long studied superstitional social fear, but the interest in the 'Archaeology of Fear', based on the study and interpretation of evidence from the funerary archaeological record, is relatively recent. Five examples of deviant burials – one from Cyprus, three from Greece, and one from Italy – will now be presented and briefly discussed. The aim of this section of the text is to demonstrate the wide chronological and geographic span of the phenomenon.

### *1. Khirokitia in Cyprus (Neolithic period: 4500–3900/3800 BC)*

Burials at Khirokitia have been found within the settlement and in most cases they were placed under the house floor. The bodies were buried in pit graves in a flexed position. Heavy millstones, which were placed on the head or the body, may attest to necrophobic beliefs and practices (Niklasson 1991). Similar practices have been reported from other Neolithic and Chalcolithic Cypriot sites as well, such as Lemba and Kissonerga-Mosfilia. In addition, the first excavator of the Khirokitia site, Porphyrios Dikaios, identified two unusually flexed and prone individuals – Tholos XVII and especially one at Tholos XVII, Burial II (Figure 1.1). He interpreted the individuals as having been human sacrifices and considered the individual from Tholos XVII, Burial II, to have been associated with foundation rituals (Tsaliki 2000).

### *2. Capo Colonna, Trani, Italy (c. ninth–eighth century BC)*

Two cist graves excavated by Dr. Ada Riccardi in a possible sacred area and dated to Protogeometric times, on the basis of associated pottery, are considered to be unusual since a large sandstone had been placed over each of the interred individuals. The area was considered to be sacred because a building, which may have been a temple, and a circular pit of unknown function were located near the graves (A. Riccardi 2002, pers. comm.). Grave 1 was found to have included the remains of two young adult males and an adolescent, while Grave 2 contained the remains of a young adult male. All three of the individuals recovered from Grave 1 displayed palaeopathological lesions in addition to perimortem or postmortem tooth ablation of the right central maxillary incisor. Lesions apparent in the spine of one of the adult males from Grave 1 were considered to suggest that he may have suffered from spondylitis of traumatic origin (Saponetti *et al.* 2007). In addition, it was