doi: 10.2143/ANES.59.0.3291196 *ANES* 59 (2022) 331–340

BOOK REVIEWS

James F. Osborne, *The Syro-Anatolian City-States: An Iron Age Culture*, Oxford Studies in the Archaeology of Ancient States. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021. Pp. xi + 275. US$ 99. ISBN: 978-0-19-931583-3 (hardcover).

Drawing on extensive research and fieldwork, James Osborne has produced a highly compelling and sensitive treatment of the Syro-Anatolian city-states in the Iron Age (c. 1200–650 BCE). The aim of the book, as the author remarks in the Introduction, is to capture a synchronic "portrait" (à la Oppenheim) of these city-states by exploring their overarching commonalities while accounting for their distinctive particularities. This quest for finding a productive balance between those two poles is not only a common thread throughout the book, but also the very motivation behind Osborne's coinage of the term "Syro-Anatolian Culture Complex (SACC)".

Following an introductory chapter which establishes the geographical and historical context and defines several key concepts, the author covers an impressive range of topics in four thematic essays. Chapter 2 focuses on the "origins" of the SACC in Iron Age I (1200–950 BCE), which, according to Osborne, were characterised by patterns of migration, sedentarisation, and ruralisation. The three major examples presented here are the sedentarisation processes traditionally associated with the Aramaeans, migration of Luwian-speakers from the Anatolian plateau into southeastern Anatolia and northern Syria, and the arrival of migrants from Cyprus or the Aegean in the northeast Mediterranean. Stressing the drawbacks of culture-historical models of mobility, he brings in theories of diaspora and cultural hybridity to explain the diverse but recognisably coherent formation that paved the way for the SACC.

The third chapter moves on to Iron Age II (950–700 BCE) and further elaborates on the notion of mobility which is regarded as "one of SACC's defining characteristics" (p. 73). Contrary to scholars who interpreted the existence of Phoenician inscriptions as a sign of prestige employed by certain rulers, the author favours a more straightforward explanation: Addressed to "a portion of the population […] who were themselves Phoenician speakers" (p. 80), these inscriptions were "a proxy indicator for the movement of Phoenician-speaking traders in and out of the region" (p. 73). This argumentation is in line with the author's assertion in the previous chapter that the Hieroglyphic Luwian inscriptions "were intended to communicate with Luwian speakers in the region" (p. 51) – an argument that was promoted in earlier scholarship (for example, Akurgal) but has been nuanced since then in favour of ideological use of languages and scripts. Indeed, while Osborne takes the Phoenician inscription of the famous Kulamuwa stele at face value, he later (pp. 142–143) regards the stele's other formal and iconographical elements as representing ideological manoeuvres showcasing hybridity. It should therefore be noted that the stele's communicative function is not mutually exclusive with its connotations of "prestige", and a clear divide between the two seems untenable.

The second half of this chapter is devoted to the mobility of two sets of objects. The first are ivory goods which, according to the author, were produced by artisans who obtained their raw material from central authorities but were "independent, dispersed, small scale, and part-time" (p. 93) – a variation of the itinerant craftspeople theories. The second set concerns ostensibly the most "immobile" features of many of these city-states, the orthostat reliefs that lined their gateways and the exterior walls of their buildings. Patterns of reuse of orthostats have recently received increasing attention, as exemplified by an article by Virginia Herrmann,[1] which must have been unavailable to Osborne at the time of publication. Both studies clearly demonstrate what an integral part mobility played in the material lives of orthostats. In terms of Osborne's treatment, a couple of points should be noted here. First, rounded dowel holes do not always

[1] Herrmann 2019.

indicate a second millennium BCE dating (for example, the Kulamuwa stele has two rounded dowel holes). Second, although the mobility of orthostats is taken as an exclusively Syro-Anatolian feature (p. 125), similar practices were attested in Assyria as well[2] and were most likely a property of orthostat carving in general. Lastly, a missed opportunity is the omission of the post-excavation mobility of orthostats in the 19th century which, as the author himself remarks (p. 226, n. 16), could have served as an excellent example in this regard.

Chapter 4 focuses on the relationship between the SACC and the Neo-Assyrian Empire. Rejecting unidirectional theories of acculturation, the author aims to situate that relationship in a "hybridized middle ground". A pyxis from Tell Tayinat (Kunulua) and several well-known sculptures are then discussed as material examples of hybridity. An important section here concerns the redating of the Kızıldağ monument (and its commissioner "Great King Hartapu") to the eight century BCE, which is now supported by the recent find of the TÜRKMEN-KARAHÖYÜK 1 stele. Osborne then goes over the archaeological evidence on urban continuity after the Assyrian conquests and concludes that the Assyrians "were unwilling or unable to impose entirely new city plans on local inhabitants" (p. 162). This continuity is taken as another line of evidence for the "cultural agency" (p. 217) of the SACC in negotiating with the colonial power. Although the objective of dispensing with the Assyro-centric nature of historical reconstructions is on point, the author's discussion of those features of the SACC which had "major cultural influence" (p. 129) on the Assyrians (for example, orthostat carving, feasting iconography, *bīt-ḫilāni*) gives the impression that he is just reversing the direction of "influence" rather than situating it within a middle ground. Indeed, one of the critiques of theories of hybridity is how its pervasiveness actually causes its subversive potential to subside, which makes one question whether the author regards those "influences" as acts of resistance against the coloniser.

The fifth and final thematic chapter investigates the spatial properties of the SACC through multiple scales of analysis and by drawing on social theories of space. First, Osborne focuses on settlement patterns, which represent a three-tiered hierarchy corresponding to the categorisations attested in Assyrian records. The emerging patterns disrupt the assumptions of contiguous, evenly distributed territorial control with well-defined borders. Instead, the control is patchy and the borders are fluid – a situation convincingly termed by the author "malleable territoriality". Second, Osborne turns to capital cities, which are characterised by a tripartite spatial division (lower and upper towns each encircled by a fortification wall, together with a fortified palace compound). Each spatial division is imbued with royal symbolism encapsulated in gateways, statuary, palace architecture and thrones. Carrying out a spatial analysis of the Building I/VI at Tell Tayinat, Osborne explores the relative accessibility and segregation of palatial spaces. This is followed by a short section on "counter-monumental practices" (p. 196) that are limited to acts of defacement, destruction and ritual interment of royal or other symbolically charged statuary. It should be noted that such acts are not exclusive to the Syro-Anatolian city-states and are widely found in both ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt. Finally, the discussion leaves the capital cities and turns to towns and villages, where Osborne argues for a direct correlation between the reach of political authority and the extent of evidence for urban planning: "If the nature of space is any indication, then beyond the capital city there is little evidence that the political authority of the rulers in Kunulua was felt at all, particularly in the villages" (p. 206). Though convincing from a spatial point of view, this argument leaves out other potential ways through which political authority could have been "felt" by second- and third-tier settlements. The most obvious is their potential economic significance, which is reflected by their occasionally changing hands through purchase (for example, the Cekke inscription mentions a settlement purchased by Kamani, king of Carchemish – this text is discussed by the author in another context on p. 174).

The book closes by providing the reader with "a set of guiding principles" (pp. 214–215) for "group membership" (p. 217) to the SACC, which essentially reiterates the conclusions of the preceding chapters. The author is careful not to take these principles as parts of fixed trait inventories, a mistake so often made

[2] Reade 2000, pp. 611–612.

in earlier scholarship. The geographical reach of this dynamic "membership" encompasses Tell Halaf (Gozan) in the east, Arslantepe (Melid) in the north, Hama in the south and Tabal in the west.

Because the author is meticulously attentive to terminological nuances in general, it comes as a surprise that "culture", one of the key terms used in this book, does not receive sufficient theoretical attention. In the subsection devoted to this term (pp. 7–9), we read not only of "cultural group", "cultural identity", "cultural expressions", "cultural norms" and "cultural processes", but also "cultural sphere" and "material culture", signalling that "culture" is used to denote a loose but all-encompassing conglomeration of social practices and their material correlates. If what is meant here is a normative understanding of an "archaeological culture" consisting of "a set of guiding principles" that are shared by some but not all Syro-Anatolian cities, then the inevitable question is what exactly the term "SACC" offers, and why the designation "Syro-Anatolian City-States", which is in the title of the book and which has already found increasing support over recent years, would not be sufficient to collectively refer to that "culture complex".

Indeed, the reliance on an overarching theoretical framework in each chapter appears at times unnecessary and has a tendency to divert the reader's attention away from the author's already sound argumentation. For instance, the theoretical backbone of Chapter 2 is diaspora theory, which presupposes the existence of primary migratory processes. However, the archaeological evidence for migration, as the author admits (p. 48), is notoriously ambiguous. On the other hand, hybridisation as theorised in post-colonial studies would work equally well without the assumption of migration, as it is taken as a fundamental feature of all identity construction that is based on difference. Osborne's reliance on diaspora theory leads to inconsistencies in his otherwise exceptionally careful narrative as to the nature of the migration in question: Were there "movements of significant numbers of people" (p. 34) or just "small-scale" (pp. 59, 69, 82, 215) migratory processes? If it is the former, one expects to see more unambiguous archaeological evidence; if it is the latter, how could migration become such a defining feature of Syro-Anatolian city-states? A similar point could be made about the author's use of the term "strange loop" (after the cognitive scientist Douglas Hofstadter) in order to explain the presence of royal symbolism in capital cities (from gateways to throne rooms) which is, in essence, ideology in action and is not exclusive to the Syro-Anatolian region. If reference to a modern theoretical model had to be included, creation of subjects through interpellation (Althusser) could perhaps have been a better fit.

The most salient thread that runs through every chapter is the author's refusal of the "nation-state model", which has for so long dominated the field with its essentialising categorisations along ethnic lines (especially in terms of teasing out particular "Aramaean" and "Luwian" stylistic markers). The range of evidence that is masterfully presented in this book will hopefully put aside such ethnicity-based classifications for good. Despite the author's claim that the growing evidence on this matter was "never understood as a direct challenge to the association of ethnolinguistic identity and state" (p. 46), it should be noted that the direct correlation between ethnicity, language and political identity in the Iron Age was already questioned by some scholars,[3] while the nation-state model based on fixed ethnic markers was entirely dispensed with as a category of difference and a system of classification by the reviewer.[4] However, Osborne's book indeed goes well above and beyond such studies by marshalling a much greater range of archaeological evidence, and except for very few instances (for example, "material culture that is unambiguously Phoenician in nature" on p. 74), the prose is free from the troubling, essentialising rhetoric.

The few critiques in this review do not lessen in any way the value of this truly admirable book. Diligently incorporating a tremendous array of archaeological and textual evidence, coupled with highly informative plans, graphs, and maps, this first book-length synthesis on the Syro-Anatolian city-states was a much needed, timely intervention. The author clearly accomplishes the goals he set out for himself, and this book will certainly remain a most reliable source in the field.

[3] For example, Bunnens 1999, pp. 614; 2019, pp. 353–356; Brown 2008, pp. 25, 34–35, 190–192.

[4] Tamur 2017.

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Rogério Sousa, *Gilded Flesh: Coffins and Afterlife in Ancient Egypt*. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2019. Pp. 194, 167 b/w plates, 4 b/w maps. £24.95. ISBN 978-1-78925-262-0 (hardcover).

The reception of any publication is invariably impacted by reader expectation and preference. In the instance of *Gilded Flesh*, author Rogério Sousa elevated my interest on the first page of the preface by describing his book as a study where the focal objects would be considered holistically within the framework of original archaeological context. The design, decoration and contents of excavated intact tombs would inform his investigation. Although ancient Egyptian coffins would be the focal objects, understanding of their evolution, intention and function is to be gleaned through examination of their application as one part of a semiotic unit, that is, the tomb as a representation of the ancient Egyptian belief system. The ability of objects to speak as texts, and the relationship of dependency promoting the progression of both, is central to the study. Sousa is therefore expanding on his previous exploration of pictorial decoration on the so-called yellow coffins of 21st dynasty Thebes.[1] Comprising a preface and nine chapters including the conclusion, the book is chronologically ordered, beginning at the predynastic and ending at the 21st dynasty. Aside from the concluding chapter, each chapter is devoted to a specific burial site. The writing is structured by means of a brief introduction and then sub-headings which have a single commonality across all

[1] Sousa 2018.

chapters, the first in each is "Discovery". Given the content, a more suitable terminology for this sub-section would be "Excavation history".

Chapter 1 introduces the Predynastic grave of "Gebelein Man A", dated to *c.* 3500 BCE and named after the tomb location site 30 km south of Luxor on the Nile west bank. Actual text in this section approximates to only five pages, and beyond that are three photographs, two drawings and one map. The subheadings in the chapter are "Discovery", "Mummification and burial" and "Concluding remarks". Ernest William Budge, in his capacity as the keeper of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities in the British Museum (BM) led the excavations in this area in the 1890s, and the subject mummy was located in a group of six graves where all were simple interments in the sand. The male adult was found in what is described as a perfect state of preservation, because since deposition the burial place had been protected from scavengers by strategically placed stones. In the late 19th century, however, these stones of protection became signposts for archaeologists. Contents of all six graves were removed and in 1900 were transported to the BM where "Gebelein Man A", accession number EA32751, remains on display in the permanent collection. Knowledge gleaned from this burial includes details relative to body orientation and disposition, while the nature of tomb goods is inferred because these details were not included in Budge's excavation notes. Computerised tomography (CT) scanning of the body, noted in BM records as occurring in 2012, revealed age at time of death as 18–21 years and cause of death as stabbing in the back with a single penetrating wound. Sousa concludes despite his youthful age the victim was an elite, and without expansive reasoning suggests his premature death may have been because of his social status. Interestingly, scanning of the Gebelein group also revealed tattoos including motifs consistent with contemporary pot decoration. BM records attribute the excellent state of body preservation to the natural conditions of the burial site, whilst acknowledging that more recent research suggests a form of mummification using resin has been dated to the prehistoric period. In recognition of this research Sousa considers the findings relative to a mummy held in the collection at the *Museo Egizio* in Turin, accession number S. 293, mistakenly also referred to as S. 93. This mummy was coated with a mixture of fats, resins and oils suggested as the forerunner to classic ancient Egyptian mummification techniques.[2] Although this same treatment on "Gebelein Man A" has not been confirmed, it is suggested the condition of the body alludes to preparation techniques intended to preserve. Although *Gilded Flesh* is primarily a study of coffins in their archaeological context, the opening chapter is appropriate because it sets a scene which identifies the beginnings of sophistication in afterlife beliefs, and the importance of visual culture in the expression of these ideas. It is therefore a very good starting point.

A late 5th dynasty mastaba at Saqqara, excavated in 1860 by Auguste Mariette and attributed to the ownership of a man named Ti, is the subject of Chapter 2. The chapter comprises 14 pages under the subheadings "Discovery", "The structure of the tomb", "Pictorial decoration", "The serdab", "The burial chamber" and "Concluding remarks". Thirteen photographs, three drawings and one map complement the text. Sousa provides background to the funerary complex at Saqqara prior to considering the excavation of the subject tomb, where no trace of a mummy was found. An examination of the tomb structure stands in stark contrast to the simple burial accorded "Gebelein Man A" but given the time lapse of 1,000 years between the two that is hardly surprising. Sousa describes the design of the tomb and visual decorative elements, noting the importance of the cult of the *Ka*, and the depiction of agricultural activities and nautical scenes, together with symbolic scenes illustrating the passage of the deceased through the underworld. The section of the chapter considering the undecorated burial chamber focuses on the in situ stone sarcophagus, which facilitates a discussion of coffin development from the early dynastic through to the Old Kingdom. Although there was neither coffin or mummy in the sarcophagus, the importance of this object and body orientation are noted. Unfortunately, some material provided in the serdab section was confusing, as were some puzzling references to Fig. numbers.[3] The shift of a millennium between the first two

[2] Jones *et al.* 2018.

[3] A larger than life-size stone statue of Ti held in the collection of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, potentially now moved to the new Grand Egyptian Museum, is mentioned at p. 11 as found in its original setting; Figs 17–18 are referenced against this statement but these figures feature photos of the wall decoration in the longitudinal gallery and

chapters is acknowledged in concluding remarks where Sousa recognises the considerable leap in time but observes despite this a genealogical continuum exists. The third dynasty sarcophagus of Nebka is noted as instructive in providing this link, as it features elliptical shapes reminiscent of a predynastic burial pit, although in this instance the sarcophagus was designed to hold an elongated rather than contracted body. From the beginnings in visual cultural expression nominated in Chapter 1, the second chapter describes Ti's tomb as "an outstanding achievement in terms of visual culture",[4] which features a collection of images inspired by the solar cult; tomb design and decoration now reflects a fully formed sophisticated system of belief in the afterlife.

Chapter 3 introduces the reader to Senebtisi, an elite woman who lived during the late 12th dynasty, *c*. 700 years later than Ti. Senebtisi was buried in a shaft tomb on the west bank of the Nile at the Middle Kingdom necropolis of Lisht, situated approximately 65 km south of Cairo. As a function of its location between the Nile floodplain and the Faiyum oasis, humidity impacted tombs in the necropolis, and the subject tomb was not immune to damage. The terminology "court type" burial is a descriptor adopted by Mace and Winlock in their publication of this tomb, based on the proposition that this type of tomb characterised members of the 12th dynasty royal court. The chapter covers 18 pages and includes 20 figures, some of which demonstrate Sousa's excellent drawing skills. Numerous photos feature Senebtisi's remarkable jewellery, and although I understand reproduction in black and white for reasons of cost, a small section of highlight photos in colour at the centre of the book would enhance the reader experience. Fortunately, all museum accession numbers are provided so items of particular interest can be pursued.[5] An introduction to the geography of the area precedes the chapter sub-headings which include "Discovery", "Rectangular coffins", "Anthropoid coffin", "The mummy", "Canopic equipment", and "Concluding remarks". The sections considering Senebtisi's coffins and mummy reflect experience in writing about such material, although I am a little surprised the 2014 work of Wolfram Grajetski, who considered the coffins and jewellery of Senebtisi at length, is not cited.[6] Unlike Ti's undecorated burial chamber but in keeping with a stated intention of the publication, Sousa describes this room in Senebtisi's tomb as being a "semiotic space", in which the contents worked together to transform their owner into a "cosmic manifestation of Osiris."[7]

Forward another 250 years to the late 17th dynasty, when Egypt was experiencing a period of political division which saw Thebes as the centre of authority in the south, the area of the under discussion in this chapter. In 1908, following previous discoveries at a site known as El-Khor, William Flinders Petrie uncovered a grave containing two coffins, the first of a woman who has become known as the "Gurnah Queen" and the second of a child likely her offspring. This burial is the focus of Chapter 4, which is quite brief at only 12 pages inclusive of three pages of concluding remarks and three full-page plates in a total group comprising six photos and two drawings. At time of interment the only protection afforded these coffins was a covering of boulders, but Petrie and his considerable team still took over one month to find them. The burial is important from the perspective of this book because the coffin manufacture, design and decoration, the jewellery on both woman and child, and the other recovered grave goods all combine to reveal a wealth of information. In the first instance, the decorative program on the large anthropoid coffin is what is known as a *rishi* type; it features depictions of feathers which give the impression of the deceased being wrapped and therefore protected. This coffin type is associated with the Theban ruling elite of the period. The quality of the jewellery speaks against the notion that during this time there was a scarcity of luxury resources, although the quality of workmanship on the coffin is inferior to the materials and work-

the offering chamber of the tomb. At the end of the first sentence of The serdab section at p. 18, the *Ka* statue of Ti is referenced as Fig. 12 on p. 13. Yet adjacent to this sentence Fig. 19, labelled The statue of Ti, Egyptian Museum in Cairo, is embedded in the text. Fig. 12 appears to be a photo taken in the serdab, the original deposition site of the statue, which I understand now displays a replica of the statue seen at Fig. 19 and in the museum.

[4] Sousa, p. 20.

[5] See New York Metropolitan Museum of Art online collection.

[6] Grajetski 2014.

[7] Sousa, p. 40.

manship evident in the jewellery. Grave goods support the suggestion the woman had a Nubian connection, but Sousa extends this link to suggest she "could have been a Nubian princess given as a wife to the king of Thebes", which leads in the closing paragraph of the chapter to him stating "the Nubian princess is shown in her coffin rising from her tomb and flying away to join the journey of the sun".[8] This sentence has the potential to be very misleading to the cursory reader. While the tomb of Senebtisi was designed in the Osirian tradition, the grave of the "Gurnah Queen" and child features objects of personal importance in everyday life, which Sousa nominates as a "profound transformation in burial practices",[9] whereby objects rather than visual culture were now satisfying the afterlife needs of the *Ka*.

The owners of the tombs examined in Chapters 5 and 6 were all residents of Deir el-Medina, a village established in the 18th dynasty to house the specialist workers engaged in the construction of the royal tombs in the nearby Valley of the Kings. The necropolis for the workers' village was located on a hillside adjacent to the settlement where, as Sousa observes, the tomb is now seen as a sacred space and constructed accordingly, invoking temple design in its layout. These two chapters consume 72 pages and are image rich, featuring 78 photos, eight drawings and one map. Chapter 5 considers the tomb of Kha and Merit, a couple who lived in the mid-18th dynasty, although far more attention is paid to the tomb furnishings intended for Kha than for his wife. This emphasis is reflected in the chapter citations, where over 50 per cent are attributed to a nine-page 2015 article authored by Enrico Ferraris.[10] Chapter 6 examines the family tomb of Sennedjem, in which three generations were identified, although the focus is on Sennedjem, his wife and their sons, who were village residents during the 19th dynasty. Much of the text in these two chapters is devoted to extensive description of tomb decoration and contents, resulting in many sub-headings not seen elsewhere. They are too numerous to list, but for example in Chapter 5 include "The funerary feast", "Cloths and linen", "Precious gifts", and "Ritual objects". Even though this information was engaging, there was potential to allocate more time to analytical insight rather than narrative description. For instance, the mummies of Kha and Merit were not unwrapped immediately after excavation, an agreeable scenario given this was not always the practice at that time. The contents of the tomb are held in the collection at the *Museo Egizio* in Turin, and in January 2014 CT scanning of the mummies was undertaken. This scientific exploration revealed many interesting details, some of which have been cited by Sousa in his book.[11] However, in concluding remarks to Chapter 5 he writes "it is also logical to assume that Merit's personal belongings had been stored after her death, which seemingly occurred many years before Kha's own death". A more definitive statement was possible because scanning had concluded an age difference between the two at death approximating to 30 years; Kha 50s to 60s and Merit 25–35 years. A number of "logical assumptions" are evident in concluding remarks, and these would have been more powerful statements if the reasoning behind stated conclusions was expounded. Even so, readers of these two chapters will glean a very good understanding of the nature of the Deir el-Medina complex, the beauty of its tombs and their contents, and the evolution in the belief system and its expression which they evidence.

At first reading, Chapter 7 appears as somewhat of a diversion from its chapter precedents, which all highlight undisturbed burials and include extensive details related to tomb design, decoration and furnishings. Unlike the respectfully treated mummies of Kha and Merit, the coffin set of Tabasety was purchased at a Danish antiquities shop in the 1940s and kept in a family home for a decade until it was donated to a university museum. The mummy has been subjected to numerous scientific examinations, and in 1953 the remains were unwrapped to facilitate an extensive investigation. Given holistic consideration of coffin development is the focus of the book, I assumed Sousa had chosen to include this particular coffin set because of it being an early example of the so-called "yellow" type, and because of the emergence of a new funerary object, the mummy-cover. However, this new type is now depicting scenes of the afterlife which had previously been illustrated on tomb walls. As a product of a codified decorative system, the coffin set itself could now be viewed as a burial chamber. It had evolved to be an independent semiotic space. The

[8] Sousa, pp. 50, 52.
[9] Sousa, p. 50.
[10] Ferraris 2015, pp. 244–253.
[11] Bianucci *et al.* 2015.

concluding remarks to this chapter speak at length about the severe levels of disability by which Tabasety was challenged and the support she must have received to live to the age she did. Aside from the inclusion of her coffin set in the publication under review, the picture painted by Sousa has encouraged me to learn more about Tabasety, a woman who lived during the 21st dynasty within the priesthood of Amun and who was most likely accorded an elite burial in a Theban necropolis.

The galleries of the tomb of the priests of Amun, located at Deir el-Bahari on the Theban west bank, successfully protected 153 coffin sets in an undisturbed state for more than three millennia until 1891. The introduction and "Discovery" sections of Chapter 8 provide background to the establishment, excavation and clearance of this extraordinary complex. The three illustrations by Émille Bayard of the tomb clearance activities are particularly evocative. Eight of the 18 figures in this chapter feature drawings of intricate detail, mapping out the complex decorative schemes of these 21st dynasty coffin lids. Sousa's familiarity with this material is evident in his description of these elaborate depictions. As observed in the "Concluding remarks", a most interesting characteristic of many of the coffins in this cache was their anonymity. Rather than manufacture following commission by their owner, many were made and decorated leaving blank spaces for insertions of inscriptions at a later date. Coffins were then distributed according to directives from the priesthood. Whilst the decorative programs on coffins continued to function as a symbolic representation of the tomb, their employment was now an expression of the collective being of greater importance than individual identity.

Chapter 9, a conclusion of 16 pages devoid of imagery, provides a summary under sub-headings which outline the evolution of coffin design as illustrated through the preceding chapters. Given the intention statement in the preface to the book nominated an exploration of coffin development as one aspect of a semiotic unit, I was surprised by the final section titled "Coffins, workshops, and commissioners", which is self-explanatory in terms of content.

Gilded Flesh considers ancient Egyptian burial practice across a 2,500-year time span, although over 70 per cent of the text, Chapters 4 through 8, concentrates on a much shorter period of six centuries. Therefore, a great deal of research which informs the developmental changes described in each chapter is absent. This does not detract from readability, however, and for those seeking an overview of burial traditions, coffin development, and visual and material culture which reflected the evolution of the ancient Egyptian belief system, this is a worthwhile publication. The expansive number of photos together with excellent drawings, in many instances by the hand of the author, enrich the reader experience. Some confusion with plate labelling and placement are disconcerting, and that considered with occasional spelling inconsistencies and assumptions without full explanation, suggest there may have been some haste in publication. Certainly more forensic editing would have enhanced the final result. Comments notwithstanding, I certainly enjoyed reading this book and would recommend it as a very accessible longitudinal comparative study of coffin development, which is enhanced by consideration of this discrete group of objects within the context of the tomb as a semiotic space.

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Janet Levy, *The Genesis of the Textile Industry from Adorned Nudity to Ritual Regalia*. Oxford: Archaeopress, 2020. Pp. 323. Basic index. ISBN 978-1-78969-448-2. ISBN 978-1-78969-449-9 (e-Pdf).

This book presents a serious and comprehensive examination of the development of textiles intertwined with issues concerning the progression of human cultural complexity. The focus of the study falls on the southern Levant, and its early cultures, from the Ghassulian times, through Natufian and Neolithic phases (PPNA, PPNB and PN) to the Chalcolithic period (spanning c. 13,000–3900/3800 BCE). As part of her research, Levy includes a detailed listing of data documenting spindle whorls from Sha'ar Hagolan (Yarmukian contexts) and Hagoshrim (Lod and Wadi Raba, PN contexts) and 22 Chalcolithic sites (pp. 2–3, §1.2.2, Appendix D). The author's deep interest and knowledge of the field of ancient textile production are clear throughout. That this volume grew from a PhD echoes through the prose in places. Aside from the results of her experimentation in recreating likely ancient technologies, the author trawled the available sources of information: archaeological finds, textual references, artistic representations and ethnographic accounts. Her discussions are convincing even though, as Levy states: "in many instances fibre-craft presence is not an archaeological reality but inferred, e.g., fishing hooks or gorgets without lines, notched arrowheads lacking binding material, and beads with use-wear friction but without string." Preserved textiles are indeed "flukes of preservation" (p. 161).

The opening chapter gives an overview of the main literature focused on production and application of textiles from the Natufian through to the Chalcolithic periods, with some discussion of the earliest known traces in the Middle to Upper Palaeolithic era. The range of textile production developed in these eras includes knot, cord, single loop and more complex manufactures using what the author terms "two system structures" (e.g., weft-wrapping, plaiting and coiling).

By the Pre-Pottery Neolithic A (Chapter 3), the evidence as presented points to widespread use of textiles in domestic settings and in architectural construction employing the use of 'gross vertical matting' (wattle-and-daub) and floor coverings (pp. 41–42). Matting in burial contexts is also discussed. Depictions of dress, aptly termed, "adorned nudity" (p. 94), appear limited essentially to belts, girdles, loincloths and headdresses. Technology continues to advance into the Pre-Pottery Neolithic B (Chapter 4) with the further development of basketry, knotting and needle-made fabrics (e.g., cross-knit looping; p. 62). Linen makes rare appearances in the archaeological record for the southern Levant after the domestication of flax had taken place elsewhere; perhaps northward in Syria or Turkey (p. 63).

Issues of yarn production and the merits of two methods of spinning, using spindle and whorl or alternately, thigh spinning, are fascinating aspects of thread manufacture explored in the discussion of the technological advances made in the Pottery Neolithic period (Chapter 5). No less interesting are the uses of textiles during the Chalcolithic period, when loom-woven cloth became an important element of local economies along with the commensurate and supporting technological advances in thread production (Chapter 6). The work concludes with a distillation of the data Levy presents throughout the volume. The

results are given systematically according to the various fibre resources exploited in antiquity and for the manufactured textile categories (knotting, netting, basketry, matting, cordage and clothing). Overall, the reader is furnished with a clear overview of the evolution of each aspect over time (Chapter 7).

There is a wealth of information presented in this volume, making it a difficult task to encapsulate in this review the range of crafts and tools, and the extensive array of organic resources used to make thread, cord, textiles artefacts and body adornments examined by the author. While the title of the work purports to focus on human adornment, there is in fact much more to this study. This is not a criticism, but a "heads up" to researchers that this volume has layers of research value on offer. In dealing with the early data for textiles in particular, the scope of this work also falls on the use of textiles in daily life and economic activities (e.g., Natufian fish nets, basketry, utility bags, matting, and so on; pp. 17–25) before settling into body adornment such as cords, beads and belts and the tools used in their manufacture.

Within the discussion, production technologies and the use of textile implements (not limited to spindle whorls), as well as the manufacture of cord, thread and cloth are also investigated. The author has cast a wide research net, and the reader will find a fascinating range of early representations of human adornment. Ethnographic observations bring a welcome extension to the interpretive overlay, providing a well-rounded and persuasive account of what textiles were being depicted in ancient artefacts and artistic representations.

Each cultural period is given a concise introduction spanning its geographic territory, economic subsistence strategies and cultural practices before burrowing down into how textiles figured in aspects of daily human life within these communities. Concise and well-reasoned discussions of the data conclude each section. Broader, theoretical themes emerge from this study, such as the consequences of sedentism in ancient societies, which necessitated the need for storage containers and household furnishings, and the role symbolic display played in ancient life and death, which drove textile development. The author also considers gender in the production of textiles. These are important issues characterising the path toward cultural complexity, in which textiles played a significant role.

Effective use of maps at the beginning of each chapter indicates the sites relevant to the period under discussion. Overall, numerous clear illustrations, in both colour and black and white, are used throughout the book to good effect. Four detailed appendices document the author's experiments in various aspects of textile production and facets of ancient textile manufacture: (A) the basics of fibre technology, (B) experiments carried out by the author to understand the processes involved in making cord and so on, (C) detail concerning production of the shroud from the Cave of the Warrior (3912–3777 BC), located southeast of Jericho, and (D) statistical data concerning the perforated objects (whorls and weights) from various sites examined by Levy. This is a methodical and well-presented book on the topic of textile technology and use; a good starting point for those interested in this important field and in the cultural periods it concerns.

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