A Historical Review of Ethnological and Archaeological Analyses of Mortuary Practice

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For over a century, anthropologists have analyzed death-related phenomena to acquire knowledge concerning religion, social organization, and economic cooperation. There have been notable epistemological shifts in this inquiry by sociocultural anthropologists, with a "time lag" prior to concomitant archaeological shifts in explanation of similar phenomena. This article reviews many sociocultural and archaeological contributions to the development of a theory of mortuary practice. It is felt that although many advances in method have been made by modern archaeologists in terms of mortuary practice, they have been restricted by an exclusive British functionalist approach. Finally, it is suggested that incorporation of structuralist theory and examinations of the entire trajectory of death-related behavior may be an aid to archaeologists.

INTRODUCTION

Although some social anthropologists (e.g., Leach 1973, 1977) have been quite pessimistic as to the potential of archaeology for explaining and postdicting past social organization, many archaeologists during the last decade have felt that analysis of death-related behaviors offers great potential in this regard. Archaeological analysis of prehistoric and protohistoric social stratification, descent, economic cooperation, and trade have been attempted utilizing data from burials. This has been accomplished through many archaeologists (e.g., Clarke 1968; Renfrew 1972) arbitrarily denoting mortuary practice as an important variable within any society's "projective" system.

It is the purpose of this paper to look historically at the interplay between sociocultural analysis of mortuary practice, and that conducted by archaeologists. Many archaeologists seem to have lost sight of exactly where and how much of theory and method they have "borrowed" from sociocultural studies related to this phenomenon. For example, Chapman (1977) and Tainter (1978) have presented the most recent published syntheses of archaeological research devoted to mortuary practice. They reserve comments for the last decade of archaeological analysis, without any attempt to look for the history of sociocultural understanding, which is the basis for archaeological interpretations of data. We shall see that archaeological explanation has not been sui generis; shifting understanding of ethnographically observed death-related behaviors has made for many changes in the manner of archaeological interpretation.

This paper is not meant to be an exhaustive historical review of the analysis of mortuary practice, but to aid the archaeologist in understanding exactly from where much recent interpretation stems. Specific archaeological case studies will be kept to a minimum. Those case studies presented from archaeology will be in terms of social organizational reconstruction. No examples of the use of mortuary data to study demography, paleopathology, or past gene pools will be presented.

NINETEENTH CENTURY ANALYSIS

Many principal writings of nineteenth century anthropologists dealing with mortuary practice stemmed from earlier pseudopsychological principles relating to the universal occurrence of religious beliefs. The greatest influence during this early anthropological period came from the German anthropologist Bastian, who wrote, in Der Mensch in der Geschichte (1860), that there are contained within the nervous system universal components (Elementargedanken) which guide behavior, and are limited or modified only by environment. One universal component was belief in an afterlife.

After Bastian, researchers concerned themselves with the study of afterlife and ancestor worship within societies. This included formulation of evolutionary sequences for religious worship. One early analysis of religion and death-related behavior within a hypothetical evolutionary framework was given by Fustel de Coulanges in La cité antique (1901; first edition 1864). Discussing the effects of death on Greek and Roman life he wrote:

This religion of the dead appears to be the oldest that has existed among the race of men. Before men had any notion of Indra or of Zeus, they adored the dead; they feared them, and addressed them prayers. It seems that the religious sentiment commenced in this way. It was perhaps while looking upon the dead that men first conceived the idea of the supernatural. . . . Death was the first mystery, and it placed man on the track of other mysteries. (Fustel de Coulanges 1901: 28–29)

Unlike the later nineteenth century anthropologists who discussed death and religion, Fustel de Coulanges related the significance of funeral and other ceremonial death activities to specific kinship structure. In the case of Roman life, this meant a relationship between patrilineal extended family and relative monumentality of the burial of the pater familias.
The principal work on death and religion at this time was by E. B. Tylor (1866, 1871, 1878). His discussion of animism, which he divided into belief in individual souls or other spirits, became a focus for anthropological debate into the early twentieth century. Through ethnographic comparisons, Tylor viewed the afterlife as being associated with the universal body—soul dichotomy. Therefore, grave offerings for the dead were prototypes of ancestor worship sacrifices (Goody 1962:14). Offerings would act to ensure the deceased of helping protect the family. Tylor also constructed a typology of worship, which included categories of inanimate object animism, funeral rites, and religion. Concerning this evolutionary system, he wrote:

... there is no definite line of demarcation in the mind of man in a very early stage of education, on the one hand between the offerings to the spirits, or on the other hand between the sacrifices of animate creatures and of inanimate things. (Tylor 1866:78)

Goody (1962) states that Tylor’s typology of worship was not really evolutionary, and that it was only with Spencer’s (1876) revision of the Tylor typology that a true unilinear sequence of worship was created. However, it is clear from statements in the writings of Tylor (1866, 1871, 1878) that death worship was discussed in unilinear, or at least progressive, terms. For example, when discussing his systematization of religion into simple animism of inanimate objects, polytheism, and monotheism, he wrote:

Upward from the simplest theory which attributes life and personality to animal, vegetable, and mineral alike, through that which gives to stone and plant and river guardian spirits which live among them and attend to their preservation, growth and change, up to that which sees in each department of the world the protecting and fostering care of an appropriate divinity, and at last one Supreme Being ordering and controlling the lower hierarchy. (Tylor 1866:82)

He went on to discuss whether or not there had existed at one time a stage of mankind without any form of worship:

... it has not been necessary for me to assume imaginary or hypothetical states of human culture. The opinions in question are actually found in existence in a more or less perfect state, all that is hypothetical in the matter is the sequence in which they are supposed to have arisen out of another. (Tylor 1866:85)

Tylor (1866:77) found that the worldwide occurrence and uniformity in death display and ritual was related to the phenomenon of dreams as a source in afterlife belief, and that since those societies which were low on the evolutionary sequence were ignorant of “moral and physical knowledge” (Tylor 1866:77), they inherited and passed on by tradition many beliefs, such as funeral sacrifice, without knowing the reasons for such beliefs.

It is tempting to compare Tylor’s underlying philosophical motivation for analyzing death-behavior with treatments of modern structuralists. For Tylor, apparent uniformities of belief in soul, sacrifices, and fear/respect for the dead are related to similar individual dualistic patterns which result from cognitive uniformities. This proposition is akin to several cognitive—structural propositions concerning religion, myth, and language patterning (Lévi-Strauss 1963).

According to Tylor, a consequence of uniform cognition is that expedience becomes the motivating force behind societal mortuary practice. This is seen clearly when he states:

... the animistic doctrine of the lower races is not yet an ethical institution, but a philosophy of man and nature, so savage dualism is not yet a theory of abstract moral principles, but a theory of pleasure or pain, profit or loss, affecting the individual man, his family, or at the utmost stretch, his people. (Tylor 1871:318)

Tylor did not present much relevant information concerning patterning of cultural activity related to death and burial (i.e., that information which is of direct concern to archaeologists and which is potentially observable prehistorically). Although much of the extant ethnographical literature was used for synthesis by Tylor, he used a single instance of a particular burial type as the peculiar pattern for that society. No intrasocietal differentiation as to burial related to age, sex, role, or status is discussed. The only time a variable is related to strict cross-cultural burial customs is when Tylor discusses burial position aligned with orientation of the rising and setting sun as symbolic of life and death, respectively.

Archaeologists writing at the same time concerned themselves with seeking an ethnographic explanation for various megalithic tomb structures found throughout western Europe, as well as interpretation of grave groups found by Schliemann at Mycenae. A typical analogic argument of the time related the form of European passage graves to Eskimo igloos (Allen 1885), the grave seen as representing a copy or adaptation of house structure.

Sir John Lubbock was a principal archaeological synthesizer of Tylor’s time, and a user of ethnographic and travelers’ accounts. He devised a system of religious belief within an isodirectional (Carneiro 1973:99) framework which ran as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monotheism</th>
<th>Polytheism</th>
<th>Shamanism</th>
<th>Totemism</th>
<th>Fetishism</th>
<th>Atheism</th>
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(Lubbock 1882)
Unlike other anthropologists of the day, Lubbock proceeded to describe burial treatment per stage of the body belief and how the amount and types of grave goods associated with the corpse differ. He was also one of the first to recognize that burial treatment differed by age, sex, and religion. Lubbock believed that religious ideas, especially beliefs in an afterlife, are direct correlation with the individual, and the difficulty arises in the interpretation of grave goods. The correlation of monumentalities and grave goods is still a common archaeological interpretation of prehistoric mortuary practices.

Lubbock could not reconcile his original assumption that monumentalities were in direct correlative interpretation of grave goods without cross-referencing from other tombs. Lubbock suggested that tombs with similar monumentalities were likely occupied by other families as well. He then expanded his findings during the last 20 years of life. Lubbock's work focused on the complexity of early graves and their relationship to the burial practices of the past. Lubbock's findings were that the monumentalities of grave goods were not directly correlated with the size of the burial mound, but rather with the social status of the individual buried in the grave.

Thomson, Martin, and the others who worked with Lubbock's methods and ideas, have shown that the monumentalities of grave goods can be directly correlated with the social status of the individual buried in the grave. This has been confirmed by archaeological excavations of early graves.

ANALYSIS OF MORTUARY PRACTICE

FRENCH ARCHAEOLOGISTS, such as Durkheim, Hertz, Van Gennep, and Mauss, in the first two decades of this century, have developed theories to explain the origin and function of grave goods. These theories have been based on the idea that grave goods were a form of ancestor worship.

As we will see when discussing twentieth-century archaeological approaches, these early simplistic correlations with social status and monumentalities are not necessarily accurate. Lubbock's work, however, has provided a foundation for further research into the meaning and function of grave goods.
vacuo, methodological stress shifted toward correlating religious phenomena with other components of the entire social system (Goody 1962:25).

This different type of analysis is seen clearly in the work of Hertz (1960; original French edition 1907). His study was of mortuary practices of various Indonesian peoples, such as the Dayak. He showed that the practice of double burial (the first time in a temporary grave immediately following death, and the second, and permanent, occurring between 2 and 6 years later, when flesh had decomposed) was correlated with economic activities, status, and kinship obligations. The article concentrated on the living caused by a death, and viewed death as being a new existence. For example, he states that “death as a social phenomenon consists in a dual and painful process of mental disintegration and synthesis” (Hertz 1960:86). Throughout the article mention is made of the need for analysis of mortuary practice as it related to intrasocial differences in age, sex, and status. Belief in an afterlife was hypothesized by Hertz to be the resolution of contradiction between continuity of extant societal systems and the transitory nature of members in society.

One year later, Van Gennep (1960; original French edition 1908) in Les rites de passage reemphasized many of Hertz’s ideas. The basic tenet of this work was that through analyzing the historical development of a given society, and by comparative and functional associations, one should be able to delineate three rites. These include those of separation (séparation), transition (marge), and incorporation (agrégation). Life is then viewed as a constant ebb and flow, with transitions of birth, initiation, marriage, and death. Seasonal ceremonies were also incorporated within the system as passage rites. Death activities are separatory rites and are relatively simple, due to many intrasocial conceptions of afterlife and social diversity, resulting from sex, age, and status of the deceased (Van Gennep 1960:146). Mourning periods act as transition periods for survivors prior to reincorporation into society.

Foremost in Van Gennep’s study was its intention of acting as a classificatory system. However, as with Hertz’s study, the classification stresses social relationships in context. Later, Chapple and Coon (1942) presented a modification of Van Gennep’s system, with rites of passage being individual acts, and rites of intensification being related to periods of group crises. However, this modified division is idiosyncratic, since death was considered by Chapple and Coon to be an individual passage rite, while most anthropologists would interpret its actual importance as being in terms of the deceased’s relationship to the group.

Finally, important for archaeological consideration was Van Gennep’s conception of rites of passage as being correlated with territorial passage (Van Gennep 1960:192). In this example of death behavior, the body is symbolically transferred through a life “portal” and then isolated geographically in a cemetery, or an area conceptually different. This led to Van Gennep’s other terminology of preliminal, liminal, and postliminal rites (Gluckman 1962:3).

Durkheim did not concentrate on death-related matters. However, there are a few statements concerning the relationship between death and religion in Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse (1965; original French edition 1912). Tylor’s minimal definition of religion and his concepts of a body—soul dichotomy deriving from dreams and ancestor worship as the elementary religious type are rejected by Durkheim and replaced by what he sees as a universal concept of sacred and profane actions. His sacred and profane are derived from an etic orientation. For example, the corpse would be considered sacred during the time period of burial and mourning, with living participants in the ceremony as the counterbalancing profane element.

Although these sociologists did stimulate research into ethnographic problems, there are difficulties in accepting theoretical aspects of their work. To begin with, Durkheim, Hertz, and Van Gennep worked with only a few ethnographic cases in making universal claims. Durkheim almost exclusively used Spencer and Gillen’s The Native Tribes of Central Australia (1899) for construction of arguments for his sacred and profane dichotomy. More importantly, these claims are vaguely phrased and untestable, owing to a large psychological component involved.

BRITISH SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGISTS

Most contemporary research into mortuary practice by both archaeologists and sociocultural anthropologists stems from advances made by early British structural-functional researchers. Beginning with Radcliffe-Brown, we have the start of a long tradition of problem-oriented ethnographic research concerning mortuary practice within the context of social relationships.

Radcliffe-Brown was one of the first anthropologists to reject the position of instinctive corpse fear. Death is seen as the loss of group constituent parts. The following quotation from his ethnography of the Andaman Islanders represents his conception of the death process, a view later held by most other social anthropologists:

A person occupies a definite position in society, has a certain share in the social life, is one of the supports of the network of social relations. His death constitutes a partial destruction of the social cohesion, the normal social life is disorganized, the social equilibrium is disturbed. After the death the society has to organize itself anew and reach a new condition of equilibrium. (Radcliffe-Brown 1922:285)

He implicitly follows Van Gennep and Durkheim in believing that burial customs represent collective and ritual expression of group feelings acting
as a defense against an attack upon solidarity. Moreover, he reemphasizes the concept of mortuary practice as a rite of separation and reintegration (Radcliffe-Brown 1922:287). Added to these concepts is mortuary practice as a role behavior:

[burial customs act as]...means by which the society acts upon its members, compelling them to feel emotions appropriate to the occasion. (Radcliffe-Brown 1922:297)

Writing in the same period, Malinowski took a totally different view of mortuary practice. Relating it to biological dysfunctioning, self-preservation, and emotional revelations, he wrote:

All that relates to...death is invariably surrounded by physiological disturbance in the body of the participant and his associates...suggests to us that if we want to approach the difficulties and complexities of cultural behavior, we have to relate them to organic processes in the human body. (Malinowski 1944:73–74)

An interesting aspect of Malinowski’s discussion is that through their emotional reactions, funeral participants are actually physiologically traumatized by the event. This is unlike Radcliffe-Brown’s role-playing view, or collective ideas of Durkheim. What Malinowski was attempting to achieve was a theory of culture related to organic needs. Mortuary practice must be interpreted at complementary levels of group and individual behavior. Malinowski also believed that there is an innate tendency for fearing the corpse, as well as fear of death.

Most British anthropological students of the 1930s and 1940s chose to follow Radcliffe-Brown’s method for analyzing death-related practices. One example is the work of Raymond Firth (1967) on Tikopia society. The hypothesis he tested was that the “framework of ideas about the fate of the soul is in many respects a framework of ideas about the state of society” (Firth 1967:352). This hypothesis was not confirmed, since it was only qualitatively examined. As we shall see in a later portion of this paper, archaeologists have used this supposed reflexive quality of behavior in their interpretations of mortuary practice vis-à-vis ongoing social organization.

Firth relates the particular mortuary practice used to existing clan structure, and the economic system of reciprocity in funeral gifts and countergifts to kinship distance. In his concluding remarks, Firth gives his general impressions of mortuary practice in Tikopia society. Similar to Radcliffe-Brown’s approach, the relationship of social structure to death activities is at all times stressed:

...it is of the character of religious beliefs that it must bear some relation to the state of society in which it is held. These statements about the destination of the fate of souls, are restatements of social structure, at a symbolic level. (Firth 1967:340)

Then Firth continues with statements concerning the counterbalancing symbolic expression for the dead, implicitly following aspects of Van Gennep’s scheme:

Many of the funeral rites seem to be essentially associated with ideas of completeness of sequence in human affairs. That relations with the person who has died physically may be properly terminated socially, needs formal recognition. [Upon death there is a]...formal emotional shift from the ritual personality associated with the body to what may be called the survival personality associated with the spirit. (Firth 1967:342)

Another more recent approach to understanding death-related activities is that of Max Gluckman (1962). He criticizes Van Gennep for not being able to develop any more than a superficial theory about society. This he sees as primarily due to Van Gennep’s concern with counteracting Tylor’s work by showing as many ethnographic situations as possible where rites existed, rather than doing any deeper analysis.

Since Van Gennep was dealing with societies that could be classified as tribal, and these societies appeared to have a higher incidence of ritualization of transitions and social relationships than do modern state societies, Gluckman generated the following hypotheses:

1. There is a greater distinction made between male and female social, political, economic, and magico-religious functions within tribal societies than in modern state societies (Gluckman 1962:5).

2. There is a great development of special customs and stylized etiquette for differentiating and defining these sexual roles (Gluckman 1962:27).

3. The complexity of death-related activities is due to manifold (Gluckman’s term is multiplex) anxieties caused by uncertainty as to economic and health factors (Gluckman 1962:33).

4. The greater the secular distinction as to sexual roles, the less the amount of rituals. The greater the secular distinction, the less mystical the ceremonial patterns (Gluckman 1962:34).

5. The greater the multiplicity of undifferentiated and overlapping roles, the more ritual to separate them (Gluckman 1962:34).

Gluckman’s analysis is an extension of Radcliffe-Brown’s death-related role-play behavior model combined with a deeper understanding of Van Gennep’s work. Van Gennep was hampered in the analysis by his belief that this great elaboration in tribal passage ritual was due solely to cog-

1 Ritualization is defined by Gluckman (1962:24–25) as “"stylized ceremonial in which persons related in various ways to the central actors... perform prescribed actions according to their secular roles; and that it is believed by the participants that these prescribed actions express and amend social relationships so as to secure general blessing, purification, protection, and prosperity for the persons involved in some mystical manner which is out of sensory control."
native structure of "semi-civilized" minds (Gluckman 1962:34). Gluckman's work, although a great advance upon that of Van Gennep, is incomplete. The formal hypotheses presented were not tested by Gluckman, nor have they been fully tested by any other researcher (see below for Binford's analysis, which incorporates aspects of Gluckman's work).

Daryll Forde (1962) has been one of the few social anthropologists to follow aspects of Malinowski's concept of death behavior. When discussing the Yakö, he states that:

Beliefs and rites are by no means always evoked by concern for a particular social pattern, but may be stimulated by other conditions of the human environment. . . . It is important to recognize that it is ecological factors, stemming from biological and physical conditions [my emphasis], . . . that have called them [social relationships] into being, and which sustain their significance. (Forde 1962:31)

Forde's contentions are probably the easiest to correlate and test archaeologically. This has been done by relating aspects of corpse disposal (for example, platform or stone cist burial) to geographical and climatic variables (Bartel 1974). Demographic profiles of archaeological cultures can also be correlated with probable cemetery space allocation.

Many ethnographic studies which have discussed mortuary practice during the past 40 years have not only correlated death with observable social patterns, but have merged these social patterns with psychological variables. Much of this orientation is due to the impact of Freud's (1956; originally published 1912-1913) interpretation of dreams and corpse fear, which amounts to a psychoanalytic reevaluation of the work of Tylor, Frazer, Lang (1898), and Robertson Smith (1889).

Bendann's *Death Customs: An Analytical Study of Burial Rites* (1969; originally published 1930) is an early example of psychological input. Melanesian, Australian, Siberian, and Indian societies were compared as to mortuary practice and social organization. The specific societies were chosen because of the relative quality of ethnographic research. Bendann found that there were features held in common by the societies under study. These features include: (1) societal concepts as to what causes death, (2) specific attitudes toward the corpse, (3) dread of spirits, (4) significance of burial, (5) mourning rites, (6) taboos related to burial, (7) power of using the dead person's name, and (8) feasts for the dead (Bendann 1969:16).

These correlated features were explained as being the result of psychological uniformities or independent conceptions, although no firm conclusions were reached. There were no intersocietal correlations of burial and the age, sex, status, or kinship relations of the deceased. However, these same features of organization were found to be significant within each society (Bendann 1969:269).

Goody's (1962) work on mortuary practice of two African communities, the LoDagaa of the Tom, and the LoWiili community of the Birifu, stands as a recent attempt at merging social relationships with psychological concepts. He returns to the earlier belief in body-soul dichotomy and its relationship to dreams. This he sees as a probable human universal related to higher mammalian dream behavior, but then he adds that:

. . . it is difficult to deny the functional associations between the body-soul dichotomy and the explanation of dreams, beliefs in witchcraft, and beliefs in an afterlife, even though it is quite impossible, as Durkheim rightly insisted, to test the causal association. (Goody 1962:17)

He tests and confirms the hypothesis that differences in intrasocietal mourning practices are related to differences in nuclear social relationships. This then is related to differences in inheritance and domestic authority structures (Goody 1962:24).

Two other recent ethnographic accounts of mortuary practice (Douglas 1969; Bloch 1971), utilize the theoretical background of the earlier social anthropologists and French sociology school. Mortuary practice is related to the psychological effects upon participants, promotion of social solidarity, economic reciprocity, and the transmission of inheritance and authority.

**ROLE OF STRUCTURALISM**

Structuralism acts as more of an anthropological philosophy than an operational methodology (Nutini 1971). It has great potential for developing into a new methodology related to religion in general, and to mortuary practice in particular. I do not propose to elaborate on the controversies surrounding Lévi-Strauss, and other followers of structuralism as anthropologists, but rather give a brief summation of the foundation for structuralism, and how it could be used within archaeological interpretation of mortuary practice.

Rousseau, and later Durkheim, contributed what was to be the fundamental tenet of structuralism. This would be the harmonious correlation of humans as part of nature, and the inability of nature to err. Structuralism then rests on the analysis of unconscious behaviors, since these are closest to nature, and are the final determinants of human behavior. Structuralists have concentrated on linguistics and myth, since these are the subjects thought to be controlled by laws at the deep levels of thought, and not controlled by conscious deliberation. Rephrased, Sholte (1973:645) states that "phenomenal realities including cultural artifacts, are always reducible to a common infrastructure."

It is important to note that Lévi-Strauss's conception of the unconscious is not derived from Freudian psychology, but from structural linguistics.
The unconscious reflects the logic of language. Scholte (1973:653) shows the parallel as follows: "... the linguistic unconscious is logico-synchrony and neurological... Structural unconscious is collective and symbolic." The methodology for analyzing the unconscious is seen clearly in Lévi-Strauss's many examinations of myth (e.g., Lévi-Strauss: 1963, 1969a, 1972). The cultural infrastructure is determined by mythic element attribute analysis, comparing short phrases in all variants of the myth under consideration. This is superficially quite similar in technique to many attribute analyses of archaeological samples for classificatory purposes. With diffusion or traditional usage of a myth changes occur, often with inverted parallels developing.

Myth inversion is often used by structuralists as a model of unconscious patterning. A general rule can be formulated that "if, from one myth to another, the plot remains the same and the component actors change, the message is inverted" (Baal 1971:209). However, doubts have been expressed as to the validity of mythic reversal, since inversion could be a way to reinforce differences in identity between different ethnic groups (Baal 1971:211).

Mauss's *Essai sur le Don* (1923–1924) stands out as the most important early influence on structuralism from within anthropology. Lévi-Strauss used not only Mauss's ideas for mythic analysis, but also those for kinship and economics (Lévi-Strauss 1969b). Mauss's study showed that gift exchange was a systematic, relational, and synthetic process (Scholte 1973:645). Lévi-Strauss would add to this that the principle of reciprocity is made possible by, and is a reflection of, the unconscious. Important for explanation and demonstration is the total social fact, a unit of behavioral understanding combining physiological and sociocultural analysis. It would then be in relation to Mauss's social fact and its methodological application and elaborations that we have a basis for using structuralism in the context of religion and mortuary practice. Also, the conception of the total social fact in structuralism is complementary to the logic of situations, whereby the combination of all relevant variables should be analyzed.

Since Lévi-Strauss does not specifically discuss the analysis of mortuary practice vis-à-vis structuralism, we can only speculate on how such an analysis would be done. As an aid, Lévi-Strauss does make some statements relating to the methodology of structuralism in the study of religion, including certain ethnographic studies which would indicate the range which such analyses would take. Scholte (1973:655) succinctly focuses the methodological orientation:

> If social and religious phenomena are the results of cognitive rather than utilitarian interests, if their nature is logical and collective rather than emotional and subjective, then we must replace pragmatic and psychodynamic explanations with logical and structural ones.

Thus a structural approach would be in theoretical and methodological opposition to much of the analysis of mortuary practice undertaken by the aforementioned British social anthropologists. Although Radcliffe-Brown, Gluckman, Goody, and others were looking for social organizational relationships in order to explain specific mortuary practices, they combined fundamental conscious emotional behaviors (i.e., role play) as basic analytic units. Discussing the British social anthropologists' analysis of religious phenomena, Lévi-Strauss (1963:312–313) states that:

> ... no systematic studies ... can be undertaken without acknowledging that fact that social groups ... need to call upon orders of different types, corresponding to a field external to objective reality and which we call the "supernatural." ... The anthropologist's task is to discover correlations between different types of religious and different types of social organization. Radcliffe-Brown failed to achieve significant results for two reasons. In the first place, he tried to link ritual and beliefs directly to sentiments; besides, he was more concerned with giving universal formulation to the kind of correlation prevailing between religion and social structure than in showing the validity of one in relation to the other.

Therefore, a structural analysis of mortuary practice would entail a small-scale comparative analysis in order to determine how death-related behaviors fulfill a function in social life. (See E. H. Stanner 1959–1962 for an early analysis of religion with a structural orientation.) An analysis would seek the unconscious structure of mortuary acts by comparison with myth, kinship, or other societal relationships. One would look for aspects that reinforce the contrast between life and death. In *Structural Anthropology* (1963), Lévi-Strauss analyzed Zuni and western Pueblo myths as to life—death dualism. This type of analysis could then be extended to show the relationship between life—death dualism in myth, and contrasts, and/or inversions, in the actual mortuary practice. Such dialectics as life—death, body—soul, cemetery—village, white or black as mourning color, and others would be considered by Lévi-Strauss to be cross-cultural relationships through unconscious patterning.

There is one strictly structural analysis of mortuary practice (De Cospett 1970). This analysis of mortuary practice among the Melanesian people on the island of Malaita is done through contrasting sets of funeral gift exchanges between funeral participants during ceremonies for those who have died a natural death, and for those who have died through actual or symbolic murder. These two death forms would be representative of contrasting unconscious sets generated within the society.

Lévi-Strauss (1963:193) presents one archaeological example utilizing structural analysis, making analogies between the configuration of a South American Bororo village and one from the Poverty Point culture in the southeastern United States. The configuration of the Bororo village is concentric, with a men's house (also bachelor's residence) and a dance
platform in the center which is restricted to only male entry. At a distance from the center, and forming a circle, are the family huts organized through matriloclal residence and matrilineal descent. Between the center and the periphery of huts is a large circular uncultivated area. This settlement design is interpreted as a contrast between men controlling the central area and women owning peripheral huts. Also, there is a symbolic contrast seen when one applies the Durkheimian concept of sacred and profane. The central area is the ceremonial location (i.e., sacred), with domestic familial periphery as the profane element.

Lévi-Strauss not only sees these concentrically spatial contrasts, but also dyadic ones. The village is divided into two moieties by an east–west axis which divides eight clans into two units of four exogamous groups each (Lévi-Strauss 1963:138). There is also a perpendicular north–south axis dividing the eight clans into two groups of four, representing the “upper” and “lower” division. Outside the village, on opposite ends of the east–west axis line are located two cremation mounds for the moieties.

This spatial configuration is compared with that of Poverty Point. Here there are six concentric circles of eight houses each. Outside of the peripheral circle at each of four cardinal directions are cremation mounds. Using an extended form of analogic argumentation, Lévi-Strauss would suggest that the people at Poverty Point had both a moiety-clan system similar to that of the Bororo and an equivalent unconscious patternning.

In order to incorporate a structural methodology into archaeology, it is probably best for the researcher to work within a historical time period with written examples of myth, song, or poetry, or by extension from ethnographic groups to inferred prehistoric ancestors. For work within an isolated prehistoric period, examples of art form may aid in analysis of contrasting sets (e.g., Hill and Gunn 1977; Dressler and Robbins 1975). For example, when comparing Kwakiutl Northwest Coast motifs, including split representations of figures and stencil designs, to those of Shang Dynasty China, the Caduveo tribe of Brazil, and the Maori of New Zealand, and rejecting a diffusionist explanation for similarities, Lévi-Strauss (1963:250) writes that:

...art is intimately related to social organization: Motifs and themes express rank differences, nobility privileges, and degrees of prestige. The two societies [Kwakiutl and Caduveo] were organized along similar hierarchical lines the their decorative art functioned to interpret and validate the ranks in the hierarchy.

Similar attribute analysis of art style correlated with inferred sociopolitical organization, or comparison of art style found in cemetery grave goods versus that found in habitation areas, could be performed on a cross-cultural archaeological basis.

For purposes of restricting structural analysis to mortuary practice, the most fruitful results may come from a spatial comparison of cemetery areas in relation to habitation locality. A functional analysis of rooms, houses, and larger spatial divisions may determine ceremonial and domestic districts, as well as possible residence-descent patterns. Macrospatial patterning of cemetery areas and their location in relation to habitation may then be a reflection of life functioning.

RECENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF MORTUARY PRACTICE

During the last decade, anthropological archaeologists have become more aware of writings by sociocultural anthropologists which concern mortuary practice. Also, they have found that hypotheses relating to social stratification and descent may be tested through burials analysis, thus corroborating and independently verifying similar hypotheses tested on domestic-habitation data.

Ucko (1969) has made an important statement concerning the dangers of interpreting mortuary practices archaeologically, based upon what we know from the ethnographic record. He uses ethnographic analogy as a parametric tool to show the range of behavioral variability with which the archaeologist should work, assuming that the given range was the same prehistorically.

Selected ethnographic cases used by Ucko show the fallacy of equating burial methods with a belief in an afterlife, or of assuming that when burial methods change there must be a concomitant change in religious belief (Ucko 1969:263–264). Also, he finds no direct relationship between the quantity of grave goods and social position of the deceased. Ucko suggests that quantity of goods may be a reflection of social and ritual sanctions. Similar intrasocietal differences in corpse deposition found by social anthropologists related to age, sex, and status are described. He also agrees with others that mortuary practice is relatively unstable. The major difficulty in using Ucko's study as a guideline for archaeological interpretation of mortuary practice is that ethnographic accounts are selected piecemeal to show specific death-related anomalies. No hypotheses are generated to attempt an explanation of the diversity or instability of mortuary practice on a worldwide basis. Recently, Orme (1981) has continued the work of Ucko by selecting additional ethnographic examples to highlight archaeological dangers of interpreting past mortuary practice.

There are a few recent archaeological analyses of mortuary practice which are significant in their use of different methodologies and tech-
niques for explanation of phenomena and in the researchers’ understanding of the problem of relating mortuary practices to other sociocultural processes. Fleming (1972, 1973) divides mortuary ritual into acts involving participants (living individuals attending the funeral and other postmortem ceremonies) and the principals (in this case the deceased). Spatially there is a need for a circumscribed area large enough for both the principal and participants, but small enough to act as a focus for activities (Fleming 1972:159).

Fleming analyzes chamber tombs of the Bronze Age in the British Isles. In order to explain differences in formal structure of tomb burial, he constructs a continuum of tomb design, ranging from tombs that are effective containers for a corpse and unimpressive in monumentality to very large structures with limited burial space (Fleming 1973:178). In order to test the association of monumentality of burial with status, he compares the ratio of mound surface area with floor area of the chamber. If the ratio is high, that is to say, large mounds with limited burial space, he assigns the tomb to a high-status individual. Therefore, by studying volume of the chamber and mound we are in fact studying tomb capacity and relative labor requirements needed to build such a structure. Finally, Fleming concludes that changes in burial practice from single to multiple tomb burial is the result of the introduction of a segmentary lineage system. Others (e.g., Kinnes 1975; Tainter 1975; Renfrew 1973) have directly correlated monumentality with energy expenditure and social status.

Saxe (1971) hypothesized that variability in burial patterns (more variability in female corpse disposition than male) from a Mesolithic Sudanese site was due to patrilocal residence with an influx of females from various groups bringing their own burial patterns. Burial orientation was related to solar traverses with seasonal interment due to hunter-gatherer subsistence movements in a yearly cycle. There are other recent studies. Factor analysis has been used to distinguish various clans within an Iron Age cemetery (Rowlett and Pollnac 1971), while formal analysis has been used to generate alternative models of status through burial form, grave goods, and ethnographic analogy (Brown 1971). Gupta (1972) has done a diachronic study of change in Indian mortuary practice to test Child’s (1945) hypothesis that change in mortuary practice results from a change in subsistence base. Componential analysis and ethnographic analogy was used to test various hypotheses concerning mortuary practice, subsistence, and social relationships (Saxe 1970).

Some recent archaeological studies have a theoretical forerunner in the work of Kroeber (1927). He had found great irregularity in methods of disposing of corpses within aboriginal California. Variance in corpse disposal (cremation and inhumation) did not correlate with climatic or topographical variables in what he thought was a given culture area. The following quotation reflects his thinking on the apparent discrepancy:

... as there are bound to be variations in the stability of customs, a tendency of corpse disposal practices to be changeable would be of no special moment, were it not for the powerful affects released by death and the fact that affects are not expressed spontaneously in culture but in conditioning. The naive assumption would probably be that a charging with affect would cause an established custom to be adhered to with special tenacity, and thus make for its stability. But as there need be no positive relation between intensity and permanence of emotion, or the intensity of an emotion and its manifestation in behavior, a theoretical problem is raised. ... Sentiment is in part indifferent; but considerable elements of ... communities feel a quite powerful preference for one or the other of the conflicting usages [cremation or inhumation]. Is there perhaps inherently less stability in affect-laden customs, or is such stability as they possess due to factors other than the degree of associated emotion? (Kroeber 1927:308–309)

Kroeber then concludes that this apparent diversity and rapid change in corpse disposal is associated with degree of intersocietal contact. That is to say, relatively isolated groups would adhere to one, or a few, methods of corpse disposal over time, while those groups in close contact with other societies would tend to have relatively more methods of corpse disposal. Methods would fluctuate in use through time. Implicitly, Kroeber’s ideas on this subject were opposed to Malinowski’s, since Kroeber believed that the disposal of the dead had no relation to biological or social priorities. Also, he believed that emotions have little or nothing to do with death activities:

... the completeness and plausibility of a rationalization are no index of the reality of its purported motivation; the immediacy and intensity of emotion concerning a cultural practice are no index of the origin or durability of that practice. ... The emotion or some of it promptly adheres to the practice. But it has not caused the practice; it evidently does not maintain it; and it attaches itself to a new practice ... from causes which may be relatively uncharged with emotion. (Kroeber 1927:313)

Corpse disposal is viewed as a unique and isolated cultural phenomenon, separated from both primary biological and psychological factors, and social relationships. This is quite a different interpretation from that of the social anthropologists discussed previously. Kroeber’s view seemingly cannot be reconciled with the social anthropological view on mortuary practice. However, Kroeber’s arguments relating relative stability of method of corpse disposal to culture contact has some support in the work of Radcliffe-Brown. Kroeber’s conception of mortuary practice as an isolated social phenomenon may be a reflection is his culture-historical paradigmatic background, the type of data used in the California study, and reliance upon information by German culture area diffusionists on
corpse disposal in Africa. An analysis of discrete elements such as corpse disposal, out of social context, and without regard to possible relationships between disposal and other social variables, reduces the anthropological perspective to piecemeal reconstruction.

Binford’s (1971) work concerning archaeological interpretation of mortuary practice is of great importance. He has presented a concise review of past analyses, as well as testing Kroeber’s assertions that corpse disposal is an isolated social phenomenon, and that burial practices are basically unstable. Binford finds that a look at the ethnographic record dispels the notion that burial practices are unstable due to what Kroeber termed “affect-laden” customs. Stability is found by Binford to be interrelated with subsistence strategy and kinship systems. Regarding the other notion of social isolation of burial phenomena, there are three different arguments offered by anthropologists to explain intrasocietal differences in mortuary practice. They relate to the following: (1) environmental limitations on corpse disposal, (2) intersocietal contact resulting in variability, and (3) various associations between dead and living (i.e., how a society perceives age, sex, status, and social affiliation in nonkinship association). From this background Binford (1971:13) generates hypotheses for testing relationships between mortuary practice, social organization, and societal complexity:

...change or variability in mortuary practice... is commonly attributed to change or variability in beliefs. Although we are rarely enlightened as to the causes of changes in belief, it would appear... the change in belief is generally assumed to proceed from the cumulative experience of man in coping with his environment... we would expect that [contrary to Kroeber’s notion of a burial isolate]... the heterogeneity in mortuary practice which is characteristic of a single socio-cultural unit would vary directly with the complexity of the status hierarchy, as well as with the complexity of the overall organization of the society with regard to membership units and other forms of sodalities.

In order to study variability in mortuary practice one must divide it into its ritual and technical components. The technical part is the formal method of corpse disposal. This is related to removal of unpleasant organic matter. The ritual component comprises behaviors given “symbolic approval” (Binford 1971:16) and is composed of acts varying as to form and referents which vary as to number and kind. Referents in turn are composed of the social persona of the individuals (composite social identity) and size and composition of the living social unit which feels responsible to the deceased. Being symbolic, referent and symbol vary independently.

The above shows that in order to make intersocietal comparisons, one should see how mortuary practice is isomorphically distributed across the landscape, and “the degree identity between symbol and referent is symbolized” (Binford 1971:16). For example, two antagonistic adjacent ethnic groups may use identical corpse disposition. However as symbolic of the hostility one may use a given burial form for high-status individuals, while the other group in a mocking gesture used it for low-status persons. Obviously, prerequisite is knowledge of how the ethnic groups vary if the functioning of such symbols.

Any change in equilibrium state of mortuary practice, whether intra- or intersocietal, would occur as part of a change in the culture, since when a cultural system is altered in its internal organization, new units of organizational relevance are generated for the human participants. The recognition of such referential units by participants in that system may prompt the act of symbolizing and thereby result in a proliferation of symbols within the socio-cultural system... we would expect that, with respect to folk classification of role-differentiated statuses, there would be a high degree of isomorphism between the functionally differentiated status units and the symbolized social positions. We would therefore expect to discover a near identity between the number of social positions within a social organization and the number of symbols designating such units. (Binford 1971:17)

Binford tested his expectations of symbolic variability being directly proportional to societal complexity through the use of a worldwide sample from the Human Relations Area Files (HRAF). Nonstate societies of various subsistence types were selected as indicative of levels of societal complexity. The 40 societies used in his test were primarily selected because of the amount of usable information on mortuary practice included.

Binford found that there were no differences in burial form relating to status among hunter-gatherers, pastoralists, and shifting agriculturalists. However, there was a significant difference between these three groups and settled agriculturalists. Binford sees this as confirmation of the hypothesis that status differentiation as an indicator of social complexity determines intragroup variation in mortuary practice. Restated, there are functional determinants which limit the complexity and hence the “freedom” with which multiple forms of mortuary practice may be meaningfully employed by participants in any given social system. (Binford 1971:20)

This claim is in direct opposition to culture-historians such as Kroeber, who asserted that just the knowledge of other forms of mortuary practice was sufficient grounds for their use.

Binford then tests the hypothesis that the composition and size of the living group with responsibilities to the deceased will determine form of the burial (Binford 1971:21). The same sample of societies is used to calculate correlations among variables of body treatment, grave goods, and method of corpse removal. Results of analysis tend to confirm his hypothesis. Burial distinctions are made as to age differences. Adults have more elaborate burial due to greater social participation above family relationships. Societies that have some form of kinship or lineage organi-
zation tend to have distinct geographical burial locations within a cemetery. The most significant indicators of relative status are location of burial and simultaneous distinctions by a society as to form and quantity of grave goods.

What Binford has accomplished is the setting of archaeological interpretation of mortuary practice in line with what many sociocultural anthropologists believe are the actual processes surrounding death within a society, while also explaining occurrence of intragroup variability and diachronic change. Unfortunately, in the decade since the publication of Binford's article, there have not been many archaeological studies testing similar hypotheses.

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

This article reviewed interpretations of major anthropological paradigms during the last 100 years of studying mortuary practice. Major theoretical advances (for example the reaction to nineteenth century rationalism by the French) were brought about by paradigmatic changes. Archaeological changes in interpretation shifted in complementary association with fluctuations in theory and with more extensive fieldwork within sociocultural anthropology. Theoretical focus moved from the interpretation of mortuary practice as aligned exclusively with religion to multivariate association of mortuary practice with such social variables as subsistence, kinship, residence, and ecopolitical stratification. It was not until the last two decades that more formal testing procedure were instituted within anthropological archaeology in the United States, and significant advances began to develop toward a unified theory of mortuary practice. One line of evidence still not fully utilized archaeologically is ethnoarchaeological interpretation (e.g., Schiffer 1978). There remain differences between how sociocultural anthropologists and archaeologists use the term mortuary practice. These differences are directly related to the amount of information observable or potentially inferable.

The general structure of mortuary practice within a given society entails a lengthy process, which is the result of interrelationships between physiological aspects of death and societal socioreligious behaviors. For heuristic purposes, mortuary practice can be subdivided into distinct symbolic and temporal periods. What follows is a short, composite description of the trajectory which mortuary practice takes. It is meant as a generalization.

There is usually a distinct period of dying which can be instituted magically through death wish, social antagonism, ostracism, or simply as a result of an injury or long illness. It is during this phase that the dying individual is set apart from many normal social relationships. Depending upon the specific kinship system, a select group of family personnel may be part of the death watch, or be required to aid in making preparations for the subsequent death and burial.

When biological death does occur, certain symbolic acts may be performed, depending upon societal concepts of the soul or reverence for the dead and of death as a process. For example, the body of the deceased may be prepared by cleansing and dressed in special clothing for burial after being laid in state for friends and relatives to see. Some form of ritualized wailing may also occur.

If burial is to occur in an extramural cemetery, there may be some form of funeral procession composed of relatives and villagers along a structured route. During actual burial, grave goods of personal significance to the deceased or symbolic of position in life may be deposited. Another series of ritualized wailings or some funeral feast may take place at site of burial. After an initial mourning period, postburial activities of the living may take a cyclical form of individual grave visitations, or group-related remembrance services. Group ceremony may coincide with other seasonal activities.

Although this is a generalized and schematic description of the relationship between deceased and living participants, it represents a typical patterning of the entire mortuary practice. What archaeologists consider to be mortuary practice is that subdivision of the entire sequence involved with corpse disposition. The relationship between the ethnological and archaeological situations is outlined in Fig. 1. What is archaeologically observable amounts to a small part of the entire societal practice. Sometimes, archaeologists have interpreted surface distributions of artifacts within a cemetery to represent either funerary feasts or postburial grave visitations (Renfrew 1972:432). Only when one is working with a situation in which there is continuity between the prehistoric assemblage and a known ethnohistoric group is there some potential for positing the rest of the mortuary sequence.

Therefore, in interpreting most prehistoric mortuary practice, the archaeological researcher is working within an inverse black-box situation. The classic black-box situation used in psychology can be diagrammed as follows:

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A  B  C
Known input Unobservable object Observable output
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where B is transformed or altered to some state C when subjected to an input (A). In general terms, archaeological explanation follows a completely unobservable, or partially observable, black-box situation. This general archaeological situation can be diagrammed as follows:
Here, the midpoint in the full mortuary sequence becomes the only directly observable component while both input and output are unobservable archaeologically, resulting in an inverse black-box structure. However, the question amounts to whether or not the unobservable, and probably non-demonstrable, premortem and postmortem events within the mortuary practice sequence are important to an understanding of social attitudes toward death. Most probably, certain acts within the sequence, for example, periods of ritualized wailing or premortem death watch, add redundant significance to the social persona of the deceased, and to what can be learned from an examination of corpse disposal. That there is a large amount of redundancy along the entire mortuary sequential chain is shown in an analysis of mortuary practice from 27 ethnographic societies chosen from the HRAF (Bartel 1973). When the mortuary sequence was divided into its component parts and then multivariately analyzed cross-culturally, the component dealing with burial shifted in importance directly with other variables within the chain vis-à-vis age, sex, status, and social affiliation of the deceased. For example, among the Spanish Basques, Polish Catholics, and Irish Catholics the number of ritualized wailing periods is directly proportional to the status of the deceased. Within these groups the monumentality of burial is also proportional to status.

Thus it seems that the archaeologist can make the operational assumption that explanation and postdiction about social dimensions can be made solely from corpse disposal.

To conclude, archaeological interpretation of mortuary practice has been as wide ranging as sociocultural attempts. The data base of archaeology offers the only source for the development of a true theory of culture change. Refinements made in method and technique by archaeologists during the last century, combined with a more sophisticated understanding of sociocultural studies, should quicken such development.

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Approaches to Style in Lithic Archaeology

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A key issue in lithic archaeology is how to identify the respective roles played by ethnicity and activity—that is, style and function—in the formal variation exhibited by stone tools. This paper argues that style is most profitably regarded as the ethnic idiom imparted to lithic technology in each and all of its aspects due to the culture-historical context of its manufacture and employment. Style is thus a full complement of function, and it is to be looked for wherever artisans encounter options of form and use to “choose” from in pursuing a given task. Because it equates ethnicity with functionally equivalent choice, this is labeled the isochrestic approach to style. Contrasted to this is the iconological approach, which restricts style solely to those aspects of formal variation that artisans purposefully invest with symbolic content reflecting self-conscious social groups. Pottery decoration appears to reveal such investment and therefore ceramic sociolgy is a feasible enterprise. However, a parallel iconological approach to stone tools is much less promising. At least as it is exemplified by the writings of Lewis Binford, lithic sociology would seem to have little substantive grounding in the relevant empirical data, to be argued within what may be an unsound theoretical frame (including the distinction between curative and expedient technologies), and in any case to resist translation into a workable analytic machinery. Not least among the reasons for this last is the fact that stone tools do not possess formal variation wherein iconologically significant investment can be objectively identified and defined. The archaeological frame of reference within which the isochrestic and iconological approaches are discussed is largely contributed by the classic Paleolithic sequence of the Perigord region of southwestern France.

In comparison to the artifacts many archaeologists have at their disposal, stone tools seem particularly modest, silent, and alien. For more than a century we have known that they can be grouped as if they were fossils into types and assemblages, and that such groupings tend to vary in significant and fairly consistent ways according to the time period and geographic region from which they derive. Indeed, when viewed as an exercise in natural history, classification of the lithic archaeological record has become a fairly refined enterprise. Yet the actual cultural significance of our classifications remains obscure. Nowhere has this ambiguity been more vividly illustrated than in the recurring debate over “assemblage variability” in Paleolithic times. To cite the best-known stones of contention: do the four interstratifying assemblage types making up the