



Archaeology of Death

2 Human perception of death & beginning of funerary behaviour

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Human awareness of death

‘From Womb to Tomb’

‘Being towards the death’ provides an indispensable context for human action
(Heidegger, M. 1962, Being and time)

Our experience of time is shaped by the knowledge of impending death - we strive to comprehend the human condition and to be conscious of life’s full meaning in face of the certainty of our personal extinction.

The knowledge that we must die gives us our perspective for living, ability to value every moment of our life and aim to transcend our physical life limitation.
(McManners, J. 1981: Death and the Enlightenment, Oxford)

Death & Time

Time dimension - Duration of transformation processes - decay

Exit transformation in archaeological Terms (Neustupný, E. 1986: Nástin Archeologické metody, Archeologické rozhledy; 1993: Archaeological Method, Cambridge; 2007: Metoda archeologie, Plzeň).

Such transformation was also perceived by our ancestors, the time was metaphorically measured:

Examples (Huntington & Metcalf 1979: Celebrations of death)

- fermentation of rice in Asian wine making
- Delimiting the time of mourning by shaving hair and growing it back (Madagascar, Hindu India)
- Vegetation seasons

Burial timing

How soon after death....?

Examples of measuring time from death to burial:

- Muslim and Jewish burials within 24 hours after death
- Christians about one week
- Ancient Egyptians 70 days

Regeneration

The liberation of the soul from the body – decay or cremation and often even shifting remains and their secondary reburial ensures the soul's readiness for reincarnation.

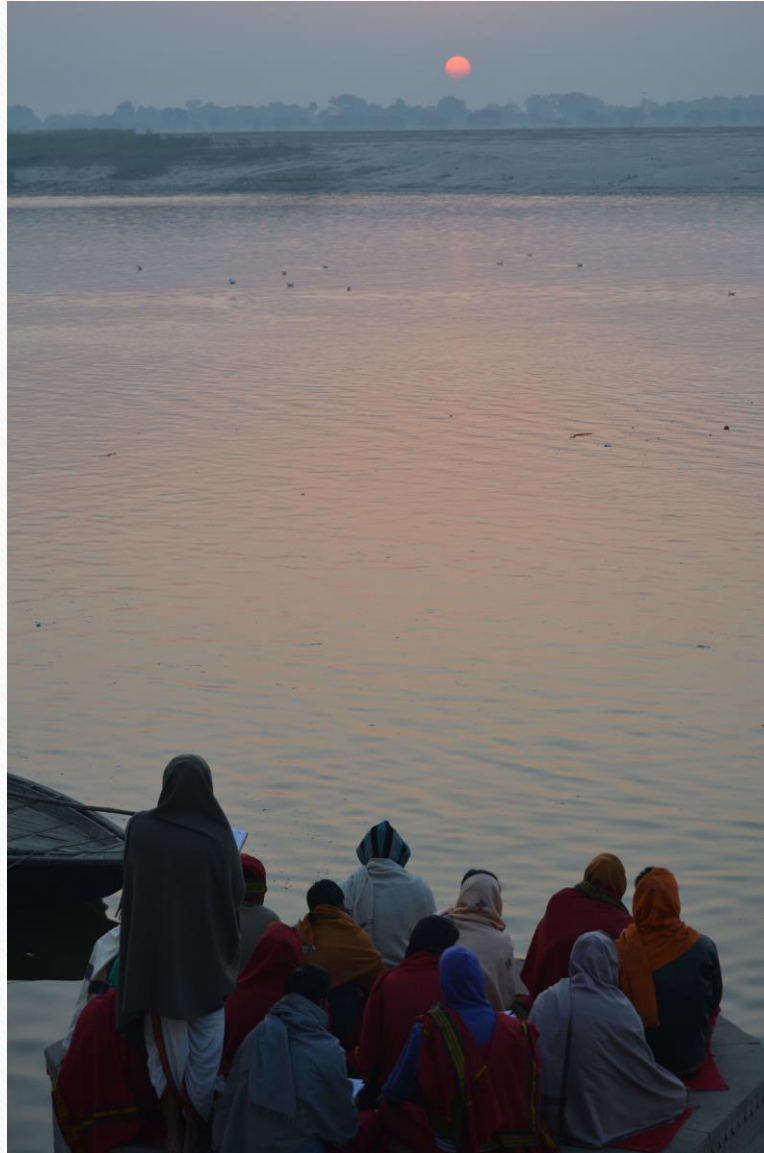
The mourners are “contaminated” by the contact with death until the completion of rites of passage when the soul of their deceased ancestor is reincarnated.

Regeneration is the source of transcendence in human time, which is reflected in our perception of death in the quest for its meaning.

Rebirth is celebrated as a denial of the finality of death.

Hindus see every cremation in Varanasi as a self-sacrifice replicating the original cosmological sacrifice.

INDIA – Varansi



Ganghes River 2012





10:46 am



10:47 am



10:52 am



10:52 am



10:55 am



10:55 am



10:56 am



10:57 am



10:59 am



11:05 am



11:08 am



11:08 am



11:08 am



11:15 am

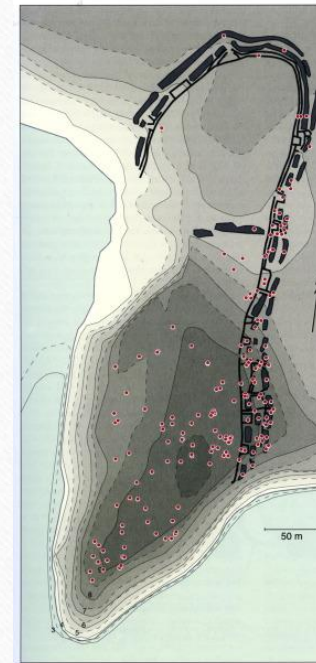


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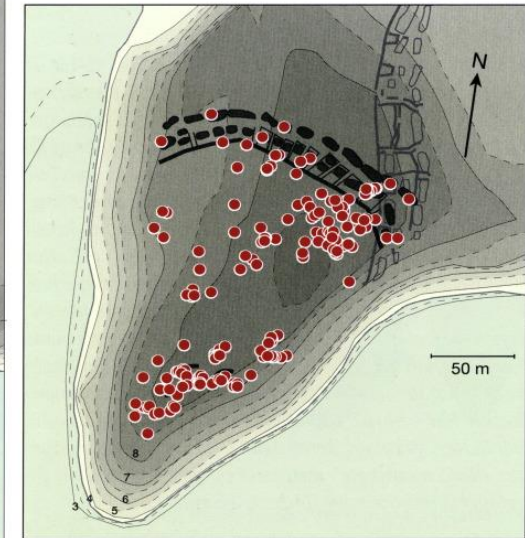
EXAMPLES: Regeneration - Rites of passage

Releasing the soul:

- Hindu ‘self-sacrifice’ cremation at Varanasi
- Lifting skulls from graves in Cameroon (male after 3 years, women after 4)
- Ancestral shrines
Roquepertuse →
- Jericho/Ein Ghazal modeled skulls



(a)



(b)

- Sårup (Denmark) TRB Sanctuary

Death – Sacrifice – Rebirth

Crucial principle of Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism etc.

Immortality

Everlasting desire for immortality - the Sumerian epic of Gilgamesh Death of Enkidu (ca 2800 - 2500 BC). Became icon of Sumerian legends during the Third Dynasty of Ur (c. 2112 – c. 2004 BC). The Epic written about 1800 BC



Mummification – Deification of rulers

Desire for eternity of spirit, ideas but also of the body

“LENIN IS ETERNAL ...”



Famouse surgeon Nikolai Pirogov † 1881 small family crypt in Vinnitsa





Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin
(born Ioseb Besarionis dze Jughashvili)
1953 – 1961 mummified, then removed from
the mausoleum



Chairman Mao Zedong - Beijing, China, Since 1956



Vladimir Kotozky
in a mausoleum in Podolsk, till 1941



President Klement Gottwald 1953-1962, Prague Vitkov

North Korean Kim Dynasty

Kim Jong-il
† 2011



Kim Il-sung
† 1994



Kim Jong-un
To be continued...

Built in 6 days



Yurii Dimitrov † 1949, in mausoleum up to 1999

CONSPIRACY THEORY NEWS



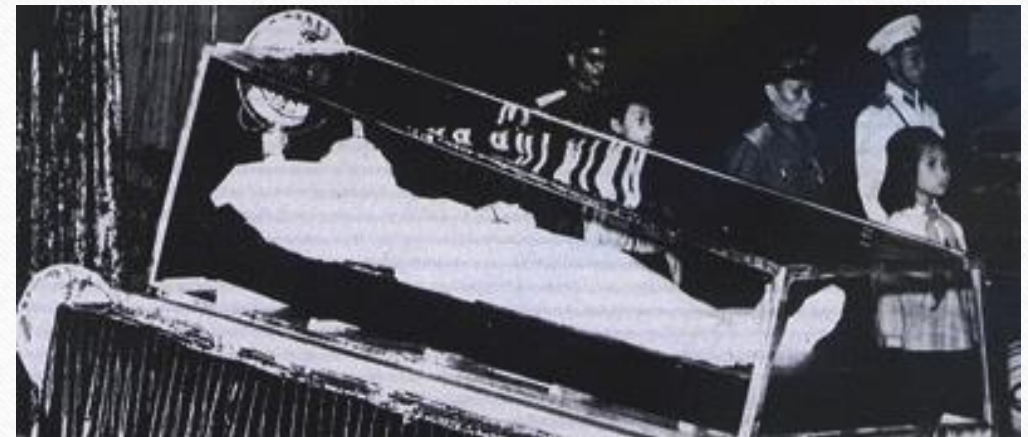
DISNEY'S FROZEN HEAD MOVED TO JAPAN

Walt Disney's head was cryogenically frozen, to eventually be implanted onto a
Walt Disney † 1966 – in fact cremated and buried in Glendale, California

CTN
FEBRUARY 03 2019



Eva Peron † 1952 - Buenos Aires, Argentina



Ho Chi Minh † 1969; Mausoleum built in 1973-75

Notion of death amongst animals

Homo Sapiens as the only creature on Earth has the awareness of the inevitability of death.

Some animals perceive the loss of pups - maternal depression

Loss of a partner – swans

Elephants - cemeteries - places of dying, most zoologists doubt it

Elephants visit cemeteries and trunks touch bones, trying to recognize relatives?

Cynthia Moss recorded the "funeral" of the female elephant.

Trying to hide the body from scavengers?



Primates – Chimpanzee Mourning and Depression



Sierra Atapuerca

Was anthropophagy the first ritual funerary treatment of dead?





Neanderthals/Homo S.S.
Bodies in Crouched position

Qafzeh (Israel)

115,000-92,000 BP

Mugharet es-Skhul

Mount Carmel (Israel)

96,000-66,000 BP

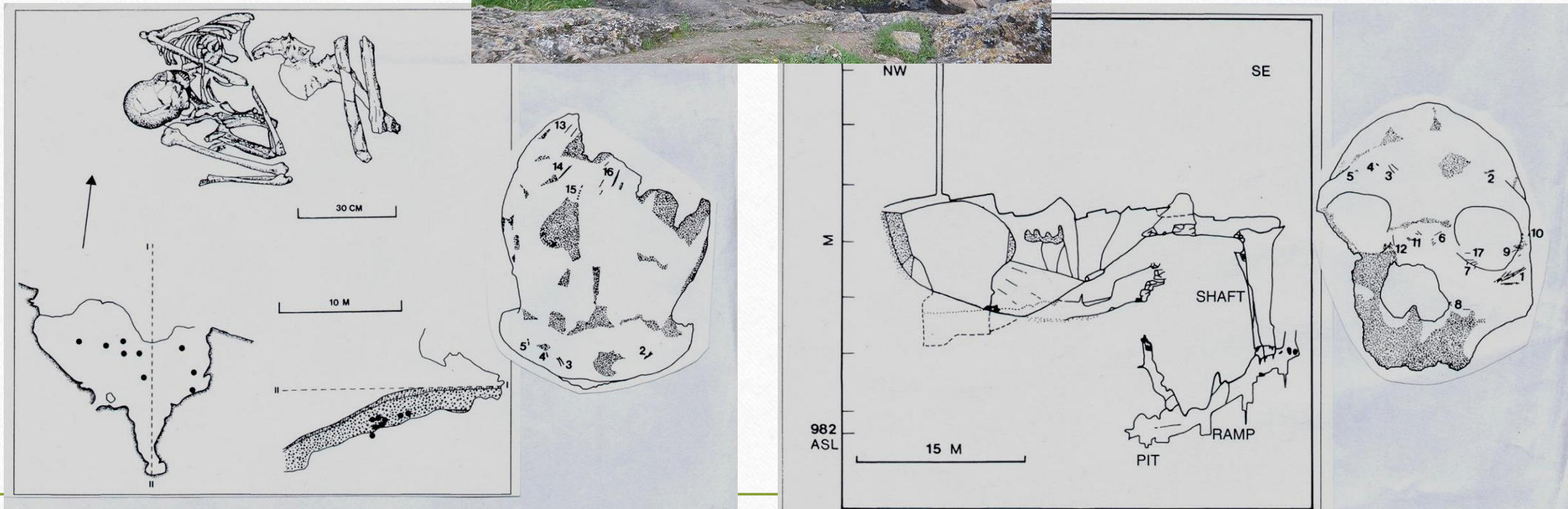


Atapuerca Gran Dolina

(Spain) Cutmarks suggesting
systematic defleshing of skulls
780,000 BP

La Sima de los Huesos

300,000-200,000 BP



Qafzeh - burials of adult and children:

An example of an adult man with a baby across his feet

Animal bones – such as Auroch or Elk skull - burial assemblage?

Shanidar - Neanderthal burials

Neanderthal skull, dated 80,000-60,000 BP. The skeleton of Shanidar 4, „Flower Burial“ an adult male aged 30–45 years



Shanidar (Irak – Kurdistan)







Thank you for your attention!

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