

In search of past identities

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ABSTRACT – *This paper discusses the conceptualisation of ‘partible’ and ‘permeable’ dividual personhood in archaeology. It focuses on flows of substances as media which produce relations with others and are used in altering the composition of the person according to specific doctrines of practice. It presents the manipulation of the dead in funerary and other mortuary practices that may have been correlative with interpretations of identity in the past.*

IZVLEČEK – *V članku analiziramo konceptualizacije ‘(raz)deljive’ in ‘prepustne’ dividualne osebe v arheoloških zapisih. Osredotočamo se na pretoke substanc, ki vzpostavljajo odnose z drugimi in v različnih doktrinarnih praksah omogočajo spreminjanje individualnosti. Predstavljamo manipulativnost pogrebnih in ritualnih praks pri interpretiranju identitet v preteklosti.*

KEY WORDS – *identity; personhood; (in)dividual; mortuary practices; rituals; Neolithic*

Introduction

In the last four decades, since the introduction of the concept of ‘social persona’ into archaeology, the debate on the relationship between individuals and the societies of which they form part was a feature of both processual and post-processual archaeology in English-speaking countries and Scandinavia. This debate has had huge implications for the study of identities and individuals in prehistory. It is worth remembering that in processual perception, the individual is recognised as part of a group’s passage through a sequence of egalitarian, ranked and stratified societies on the one hand, and passivity and submission to their respective social norms and pressures on the other. In the post-processual model, the focus shifts to agency and the role of social action.

Parallel to the Giddens’ concepts of ‘knowledgeable social actor’, Bourdieu’s concept of ‘habitus’ was introduced into archaeology. The first of these postulates an explicit understanding of the agency of an individual social actor capable of manipulating or transforming the rules which govern their behaviour. The latter relates to people’s understanding of the world; an understanding that was not based on explicit rules, but on the principles that governed practice. The focus has recently shifted from the notion of the ‘bounded individual’¹ to the ‘dividual’ and ‘partible’ person as the main paradigm for personhood and agency, not in order to discuss the position of the person in the social system (agency) only, but the position of the person within the cos-

¹ Descartes’ view of ‘person’ was discussed by Marcel Mauss (*[1938] 1985:20–21*). The classic Cartesian conceptions of the person as a ‘well-defined, stable entity with impermeable boundaries, and a unified and essential core’ were regarded as being unique to Western thought. In his classical essay on the notion of person, Mauss considered this as a category of the human mind. The essay reviews various forms of person-related beliefs across societies and through time. The analysis is framed in cultural evolutionary perspective, which describes a progressive transformation from a person’s character (personnage) being organized around ascribed roles into that of a person-subject of rights and duties, and into an autonomous self-centered individual. In the Maussian perspective, ‘modern’ and ‘western’ societies are considered paradigmatic of egocentric societies, while African and Asian societies are presented as typical examples of sociocentric societies.

mological universe (personhood) (e.g., Barrett 2000; Brück 2001a; 2001b; 2004; 2006a; 2006b; 2009; Chapman 2000a; 2000b; Chapman and Gaydarska 2007; Fahlander 2008; Fahlander and Oestigaard 2008; Fowler 2004; 2010; Gillespie 2001; Graham 2009; Guerrero et al. 2009; Jones 2005; Morris 2000; Meskell and Joyce 2003; Nilsson Stutz 2003; Thomas 1996; 2002). However, we must be aware of how perceptions of the individual (autonomous) and dividual (social and cosmological relational) aspects of personhood vary across different cultures and in different contexts within the same culture (e.g., the Euro-American capitalist notion of a person as wholly individual, autonomous, self-contained, and self-moving agent versus the complex negotiation of contextual and interpersonal constructions of the self in India's caste system) (LiPuma 1998; Chaudary 2008).

Personhood

In its broadest definition, personhood refers to ...*the condition or state of being a person, as it is understood in any specific context. Persons are constituted, de-constituted, maintained and altered in social practices through life and after death. This process can be described as the ongoing attainment of personhood. Personhood is frequently understood as a condition that involves constant change, and key transformations to the person occur throughout life and death. People may pass from one state or stage of personhood to another. Personhood is attained and maintained through relationships not only with other human beings but with things, places, animals and the spiritual features of the cosmos. Some of these may also emerge as persons through this engagement. People's own social interpretations of personhood and of the social practices through which personhood is realized shape their interactions in a reflexive way, but personhood remains a mutually constituted condition.* (Fowler 2004:4).

The dividual perception of the person stresses that each person is a composite of the substances and actions of others; each person encompasses multiple constituent things and relations received from other people. Not only substances, but also objects, or even animals are incorporated into the person by the agency of ceremonial gift exchange. In a funerary rite, all of these different elements of the person are brought together around the deceased. The rite thus brings the person together. The implication is that, while alive, the person is distributed through

out the social and material world, and only becomes a whole person temporarily during this mortuary rite. All the things that the person embodies are brought together and made explicit for everyone to see. They are then divided again, and these parts are redistributed through mortuary exchanges. Thus personhood is neither fixed nor stable; it is a composite and partible 'artefact' that marks the handling of relationships through the possession and manipulation of things, especially those that conceptualise wealth and exchange.

Using ethnographic data, Chris Fowler identified several 'modes of personhood' that provide the forms that relationships are supposed to take. Contemporary modes of personhood are as follows: (i) individuality and indivisibility, (ii) individuals and, (iii) dividuals and dividuality. The first two refer to the perception of the 'western individual' and to the 'state of being a unitary' in which a constant individuality and a persistent personal identity are stressed over relational identities. The latter is grounded on ethnographic data and relates to perceptions in which 'the person is recognized as composite and multiply-authored'. The dividual person is a composite of the substances and actions of others, which means that each person encompasses multiple constituent things and relations received from other human beings, animals, material objects on the one hand, and ancestors and spirits on the other. In this context, persons are believed to be 'partible' and 'permeable'. The component parts of the 'partible' person are identifiable as objects and can be extracted. The partible perception of a person is recognizable through mortuary and marriage rites and in ceremonial exchanges in many Melanesian contexts. The permeability and permeable person are not, however, identifiable as objects, but as flows of substances. The permeable person is thus constituted in the flow of substances (blood, semen, etc.) between members of the group through exchanges, marriage and feasts. The notion is based on Busby's (1997) and Marriott's (1976) cross-cultural ethnographic studies of permeability in South India and on Strathern's (1988) studies of partibility in Melanesia (Fig. 1).

Persons are thus composed of social relations with other human beings, or with others who are objectified as ancestors, animals, objects etc., and therefore owe parts of themselves to others, as revealed in mortuary and marriage rites. Alternatively, persons are constituted in the flow of substances ratified by exchanges, marriage, feasts and so on between members of the group.

<p>Dividual and partible (Melanesia)</p> <p>A person is a collection of relations, any of which may be temporarily brought to the fore. Qualities can be added and extracted.</p> <p>Persons identify relations which are objectified; as animals, objects, body parts, substances, etc. These can be externalised through separation or incorporated through encompassment. As well as being objectified they may be personified.</p> <p>Things fluctuate between being male and female, and singly and multiply gendered, depending on the context of their use.</p> <p>Personhood is highly relational, and identities are performed or presented.</p>	<p>Dividual and permeable (southern India)</p> <p>A person is fundamentally a collection of relations, and is a bounded being from whom qualities cannot be fully extracted though ratios may change.</p> <p>Substance-codes can permeate the 'fluid boundaries' of the person. Flows of substance extend from persons, they are not objectified as a specific part of the person.</p> <p>Substance-codes have fixed properties (e.g. hot or cold).</p> <p>Personhood is relational, but is also strongly substantial.</p>
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Fig. 1. Differences between 'partible' and 'permeable' dividual personhood based on Busby's (1997) ethnographic studies. The flows of substances are media which produce relations with others and are used in altering the composition of the person according to specific doctrines of practice (from Fowler 2004.Tab. 2.1).

It is not that obvious, as it has been widely suggested, that the Asiatic dividual, 'partible' and 'permeable' notions of personhood are very different from Western (e.g., capitalistic) perceptions of the person as a wholly individual, autonomous, self-contained agent. Exploring the conceptual and historical relationship between Western and Melanesian persons, LiPuma (1998.59–60) argues that, in the West, both individual and dividual modes of personhood exist: "For the West the notion of person as wholly individual, as an autonomous, self-contained, self-moving agent is characteristic primarily of capitalism (Bourdieu 1984; Postone 1993). The person in capitalist society has two defining features. (1) the person is composed, historically and culturally, of dividual and individual aspects; and (2) paradoxically, the person appears as the natural and transhistorical individual. The double character of the person is intrinsically bound to, and homologous with, the character of commodity-determined labor. Unlike Melanesia where products are distributed by ties of kinship and community, and over relations of power and domination, in capitalist societies "labor itself replaces these relations by serving as a kind of objective means by which the products of other are acquired [such that] a new form of interdependence comes into being where ... one's own labor or labor products function as the necessary means of obtaining the products of others. In serving as such a mean, labor and its product preempt that function on the part of manifest social relations" (Postone 1993.6–7). So it is that commodity-determined labor is mediated by structures such as that of personhood (and also class) that it itself constitutes. The social relations of capitalism are thus based on a quasi-indepen-

dent structure that stands apart from, and opposed to, persons understood as individuals. Labor, here, as socially mediating activity creates relations among persons which, though social and containing dividual elements, assume a quasi-objective and individualist character."

In capitalist society, labour thus replaces the rites, ceremonial exchange and feasts which structure kinship and community by serving as a kind of objective means by which the products of others are acquired. A new form of interdependence comes into being, where one's own labour functions as a necessary means of obtaining the products of others, thereby liberating one from dependence on lineage ties. The person becomes, at least in ideology, materialised as a self-contained and self-shaping independent agent.

Almudena Hernando (2010) agrees that individuality is a form of personal identity 'resulting from the gradual historical development of socio-economic conditions of functional division and work specialization'. Thus it is suggested that a subject's attachment to the surrounding world is central in their perception of themselves in egalitarian societies. This perception is embedded in a complex network of relationships comprising humans, animals, plants, and any other significant objects of reality (i.e. nature). On the other hand, a subject's detachment from the surrounding world is associated with 'increasing technological mastery over nature' and, the process of 'individualization'. Increasing power over nature leads to a perception of nature as no longer human-like, and therefore, personal relations with it are lost. Norbert Elias (1991.140) in his chapter on 'Prob-

lems of Self-consciousness and the Image of Man', states that "*It is probably unusually difficult to realize today that qualities of human beings related to by terms such as "individuality" are not simply given by nature, but are something that has developed from biological raw material in the course of a social process. This is a process of "individualization", which in the great flow of human development is inseparable from other process such as the increasing differentiation of social functions and the growing control of non-human natural forces.*"

With the growing specialisation of societies, social positions became increasingly differentiated, and within such a network of separate functions 'more and more people came to live in increasing dependence on each other, while each individual was at the same time growing more different from the others'. Parallel to this, the demand of 'social control' (*i.e.* commands and prohibitions) that a person 'internalizes as his or her conscious and unconscious self-control' increase. Elias (1991.13) thus postulated that control of nature, social control, and self-control form a "*kind of 'chain ring'; they form a triangle of interconnected functions which can serve as a basic pattern for the observation of human affairs. One side cannot develop without others; and if one of them collapses, sooner or later the others follow*".

The concept of the individualisation of the self as the cognitive counterpart of a process of increasing technological domination over nature is applied in the studies of indigenous groups in the South American Lowlands (Hernando 2008; 2010; Hernando et al. 2011). The Awá-Guajá, a small indigenous group of around 300 individuals living in a seasonally dry tropical forest area of the state of Maranhão (Brazil) on the eastern flanks of the Brazilian Amazon region, was systematically studied in recent years. They are hunter-gatherers in transition to agriculture. Since the early 1970s, after their first contact with Brazilian society and the deforestation of the forest, when they were removed from their traditional lands and relocated to demarcated reservations, their way of life has changed. Their mobility has been reduced and they have been forced to take up cultivation.

Hernando (2010.295) suggests that in this and any other egalitarian group without a division of tasks or specialisation, individualisation does not define the personal identity of anyone, since all (men and women) need to feel bonded to the group to feel safe enough in the middle of a universe which they do not dominate. On the other hand, she hypothesises that gender differences "*may be universal in 'egalitarian' societies at the symbolic level because they result from the social construction of male and female personhood, which in turn is partly determined by the different degrees of mobility involved in male and female tasks*" (Hernando 2011. 191). She suggests that the 'slightly higher individualistic component of male personhood' is connected with the greater degree of mobility inherent in men's tasks within the gendered distribution of productive activities, which is in turn mainly aimed at protecting fragile and vulnerable human offspring. Male and female activities in egalitarian societies are complementary; the difference is determined by the need to avoid exposing women to dangerous tasks that might harm their infant children, who are extremely vulnerable and completely dependent on maternal care. Women can work as hard as men, but they take fewer risks, and that small disparity has a huge impact in the construction of personhood, because greater risk and higher mobility stimulate a person's perception of individuality, autonomy, and independence from the social group to which they belong. Male specialisation in affinal relationships² could grant men a kind of autonomy related to the power they may exercise, which is not yet material nor economic, but only symbolic. This specialisation is not yet patriarchal, since it does not involve power relations between the sexes, although it creates conditions for the development of male dominance when functional divisions increase within the group.

Hernando's deduction that men's greater mobility results in increasing power, which leads to increasing emotional isolation, which contributes to individualisation, is reminiscent of Elias' conception of the 'subject's detachment from the surrounding world' as a cognitive prerequisite for individuality and the exercise of power and a 'a triangle of interconnected functions' that link the control of nature, social control, and self-control, as we mentioned above. How-

² Relationships established by women tend to be consanguineal, and those established by males affinal. The consanguine and affinal gendering relationships were initially hypothesised for hunter-gatherer societies. Men in these groups seem much more inclined to interact with the 'others', the different, the alien, while women tend stick to well-known things and people. According to Viveiros De Castro (*cf.* Hernando 2010.292), all dealings with the 'outside world', where 'potential affines' dwell, belong to the men's sphere, while the women's domain encompasses the 'inside world' of supporting bonds and familiar, domestic, unremarkable, well-known beings and things.

ever, Hernando *et al.* (2011:192) thus agrees “...with Conklin and Morgan (1996: 659) that personhood cannot be reduced to essentialist categories or reductionist dichotomies such as Western “individualism” versus non-Western “sociocentrism” (or “relationality”) (see also Spiro 1993). Personhood is “more an interactive process than a fixed location on a social grid” (Conklin and Morgan 1996: 667). Personhood is as much shaped by social practices as it is expressed in those practices themselves. We believe the key to understanding gender differences along the course of history lies precisely in the fluid interplay between personhood and social practices. In between a “relational” and an “individualistic” sense of personhood lies a whole range of possible combinations – which we believe are not socially constructed in the same way for men and women within the same social group.”

It is worth remembering that when discussing personhood “there is no question that relationships among self/person, body, mind, and sociality are universal cultural preoccupations”, but its perception “should emerge, not from our own Euroamerican philosophical or social science a priori categories, but rather need to be approached as they are in their own right”, and personhood may include “beliefs and practices concerning some, or all of the following: a soul or spirit; body; mind; emotions, agency; gender or sex; race, ethnicity, caste; relationships with other people, places, or things; relationship with divinity; illness and well-being; power; karma or fate, as ingrained in or written on body or soul in some way” (Rasmussen 2008:38).

The search for past forms of personhood

In the search for past forms of personhood, Chapman and Gaydarska (2007; 2011) focused on ‘dividuals’ as the embodiment of identities based on relations with places, things and other persons, and on individualised persons’ as the grounding of individual identities in linguistic, social, creative and task-based skills and capacities. They go beyond Lipuma’s (1998) approach in identifying the kinds of embodied skills and associated social roles that created Mesolithic and Neolithic personhoods. They suggest a number of skills and social roles for the creation of types of Mesolithic (14) and Neolithic (25) personhood in the Balkans (Chapman and Gaydarska 2011). The types of personhood range from ‘hunting’ and ‘plant-gathering’ to ‘farming’ and ‘herding’ skills; from ‘stone tool-making’ to ‘ploughing’ and ‘dairy producing’ skills; from ‘basket-making and

string-bag-making’ to ‘house-painting’ skills, *etc.* The interpretative legitimacy of Chapman’s and Gaydarska’s approach is based on the concept of ‘dynamic nominalism’, which holds that “numerous kinds of human beings and human acts come into being hand in hand with our invention of the ways to name them” (Hacking 2002:113).

According to Ian Hacking, human types have their genesis in the continuous interrelations between social labels and classes. A classificatory label is imposed on a group or class of people, who then begin to act intentionally under the label. The label is used to describe and denote a certain mode of behaviour, and then the label, and its associated appropriate actions, become normative for the members of the group. The forces that objectify the existence of human types are ‘vectors from above and below’, the social forces “from above, from a community of experts who create a “reality” that some people make their own. Different from this is the vector of the autonomous behavior of the person so labelled, which presses from below, creating a reality every expert must face” (Hacking 1986:234). While the vector from above is the act of labelling by authority, the vector from below is the intentional actions of individuals. Both vectors combine to create normative forces that constrain people described by different labels to act and behave in the appropriate manner. These vectors are to be understood as social forces that have the power across social times and places to bring some social worlds to an end and to create new ones. In the intersection of these social forces lies a virtual infinity of new ‘kinds of people’ and associated, new intentional actions and behaviours. In Chapman’s and Gaydarska’s approach, these vectors are interpreted as a generative power that combines agency, structure and things ‘in the formation of identities’ and ‘the creation of personhood’ (Chapman 2000a:34–37; 2000b; Chapman and Gaydarska 2007:16, 55). In other words, the acquisition and development of embodied skills and their combinations and competences are key facets of a person’s individualisation and participation in social life. The shift from dividual to individualising personhood is associated with settlement nucleation, which leads to a wider diversity of persons with different skills and a greater likelihood of new skills combinations leading to more individualised identities. The increase in the number of skills in the process of the transition to farming, Chapman and Gaydarska suggest, allow us to categorise persons in terms of their skills through their linkages to material culture, and to recognise

the rise in the diversity of personal identities in the Neolithic.

A different approach to the notion of agency and personhood takes agency as a moral category. Sofia Voutsaki (2010.71) suggests different modes by means of which people define themselves and their positions in a social system and cosmological universe. Thus “*every action bears, expresses and reflects upon moral beliefs, because people act in pursuit of certain goods that define the purpose and meaning of their life*”. She introduces MacIntyre’s concept of moral agent by saying that we “*always act, whether consciously or unconsciously, with a certain purpose in mind, a set of goals defined within a moral code, a cultural tradition and a set of historical conditions*”.

Alasdair MacIntyre, a moral and political philosopher, through his use of the concept of a practice (e.g., maintaining a household and a family in the pre-modern world), postulates that in heroic society, morality and social structure are conflated. When individuals in heroic society – as described by Homer in the Iliad and Odyssey – first engage in a practice, they have no choice but to agree to accept external standards for the evaluation of their acts and to agree to follow the rules set out for the practice. Practices are important, because it is only within the context of a practice that human beings can practice the virtues.

“*A virtue is an acquired human quality the possession and the exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goods ... we have to accept as necessary components of any practice with internal goods and standards of excellence the virtues of justice, courage, and honesty ... Now the virtues are those goods by reference to which, whether we like it or not, we define our relationships to those other people with whom we share the kind of purposes and standards which inform practices.*” (MacIntyre 2007.191). Practices involve moral standards of ‘excellence and obedience to rules as well as the achievement of goods’. MacIntyre makes a distinction between external and internal goods. Wealth, fame and power are external goods because they can be achieved by a variety of practices and are typically objects of competition. Internal goods can only be attained by adopting the standards of excellence and obedience definitive of a specific practice, and can only be achieved by those

who possess virtues, *i.e.* a disposition to act in the correct manner. In contrast to external goods, those internal to a practice enhance the position of the entire group who participate in the practice.

The main purpose of human agency in heroic societies, where the warrior is the paradigm of human excellence, is to realise the goods internal to practices such as fighting, hunting or feasting. The entire group thus ‘celebrates a victorious battle’, ‘benefits from a successful hunting expedition’ or ‘enjoys a generous feast’ to increase the glory of the kin and social group, and to ensure fidelity and reliability among fighting companions and allies. A moral agent is of necessity a social agent in so far as his perception must match that of the group. Moral standards are always bound up with society as a whole and differ between societies according to each society’s respective structure. Each individual has a fixed role resulting from their position in the social network, primarily through their particular ties to kin, and each individual has the specific obligations and privileges attached to that position. “*The self becomes what it is in heroic societies only through its role; it is a social creation, not an individual one*” (MacIntyre 2007.129). Each individual in such a society “*... has a given role and status within a well-defined and highly determinate system of roles and statuses... In such a society a man [sic] knows who he is by knowing his role in these structures; and in knowing this he knows also what he owes and what is owed to him by the occupant of every other role and status*” (MacIntyre 2007.122). Thus, people do not attempt to determine morality in terms of abstract objective rules which apply equally to all; to place oneself outside of society is to cease to exist, because each person’s identity makes sense only in the context of that society. In any particular situation, an individual is able to understand what she or he should do: whatever is appropriate for a person in their position to do which shows the proper regard for someone, meets the particular obligations they have, and accords with what duty requires of them, *etc.* It is also clear what and how actions must be performed in order to accomplish these things. “*If someone kills you, my friend or brother, I owe you their death and when I have paid my debt to you their friend or brother owes them my death. The more extended my system of kinsmen and friends, the more liabilities I shall incur of a kind that may end in my death.*” (MacIntyre 2007.124).

The genuine moral codex of rules and standards that developed in the past and is binding in present-

day societies leads Voutsaki to conclude that in heroic societies the self was not detachable from the social structure, or from history and tradition. A moral code, a cultural tradition and a set of historical conditions became central in interpreting past personhood and agency. Personhood, she suggests, is to be understood “*as fluid, but firmly embedded in social relations, moral traditions and historical conditions*”, and to be examined first “*by exploring the interfaces of the person*” that correlate to (i) “*the relation between the person and his/her kin, age, sex group and social community*”; (ii) “*the relationship with the ‘Other’, i.e. with neighbouring or distant ethnic and cultural groups*”; (iii) “*the relationship between persons and the ‘supernatural’ – gods, spirits, or supernatural beings*”; (iv) “*the relationship between persons and (animate or inanimate) objects*”; and (v) “*the relationship between persons and the natural world, specifically humans and animals*” (Voutsaki 2010.74).

The perception of the dead in the Homeric world, she suggests, was as a ‘relational, embedded, permeable and partible dividual’. Mortuary practice was a deeply moral issue that conveyed proper respect for the dead or piety towards ancestral spirits. Following the classic studies by Hertz and Van Gennep, she suggests that the tripartite structure of the mortuary ritual – in particular the disarticulation of skeletons and partial destruction of offerings during secondary treatment – indicate a belief in the gradual transformation of the dead into a ghost or spirit and ancestor. In this transformation, humans seem to recognise certain animals as equals, possibly as persons in their own right. The relationship between people and objects is deeply permeable. Objects become bound up with human projects/agency, and conversely, people absorb things into their own personal identities. The fusion between subject and object, *e.g.*, the use of valuables in bodily practices, takes place just as persons begin to dissolve into ancestors. The deposition of wealth in graves not only establishes communication across different planes of existence between mourners and ancestors, but it seems that it masks the disintegration of personal identities, as it displays the personal achievement and excellence of the deceased. Mortuary rituals therefore reassemble and manipulate personal identities on one hand, whilst also restricting the mourners by the agency of social obligations and relations, and by moral commitments, cultural traditions, and religious obligations summarised in the notion of proper respect for the dead.

The palimpsest: mortuary practices and the transformation of the person

The evidence for the manipulation of the dead in funerary and other mortuary practices has long been correlative with interpretations of identity in the past. They were central in interpretative trajectories from ‘social persona’ to ‘relational personhood’ (see Budja 2010). Treatment of the dead has been shown to be important for the realignment of personhood after death. It is believed that the manipulation of corpses was associated with ancestral rites and monuments on the one hand, and was used to reinforce the existing social order through the construction of collective memory on the other. It has recently been demonstrated how human and animal body parts or bones and objects acted as metaphors for the dividual nature of the person, and how they were central to the affirmation of identities and the power of the living (Berggren and Nilsson Stutz 2010; Brück 2001a; 2001b; 2004; 2006a; 2006b; Chapman 2000b; Fowler 2001; 2004; 2010; Fahlander 2008; Fahlander and Oestigaard 2008; Graham 2009; Guerrero et al. 2009; Kuijt 2008; Morris 2000; Nilsson Stutz 2003; 2010; Thomas 2000; Williams 2003).

Thus Howard Williams (2003) suggests that combs, deliberately broken and placed in the cinerary, acted as an extension of the body and were used as a metaphor for the transformation of the deceased ‘into a new ancestral material form’, the realignment of the personhood of both the living and the dead. Combs and toilet sets were selected, together with burnt human and animal bones, artefacts, and the ceramic urn used to enclose them, and placed with the dead to articulate the building of a new ‘body’ for the dead. Following ethnographic and historical evidence, Williams (2003.127) postulates that as symbols of vitality or regeneration, combs served “*to incorporate the dead into a new state in the post-cremation rites. Their efficacy built on their role as mnemonic devices connecting the living with the deceased and orchestrating the remembering and forgetting of the social person. Bones and material culture were retrieved, transported and buried together to articulate the social, ontological and cosmological transitions through which both the mourners and the dead had passed.*”

In a Roman funerary practice known as *os resectum*, the metacarpal bone acted as a metaphor for the dividual body and person of the deceased. Festus remarks that, in order to observe the obsequies after

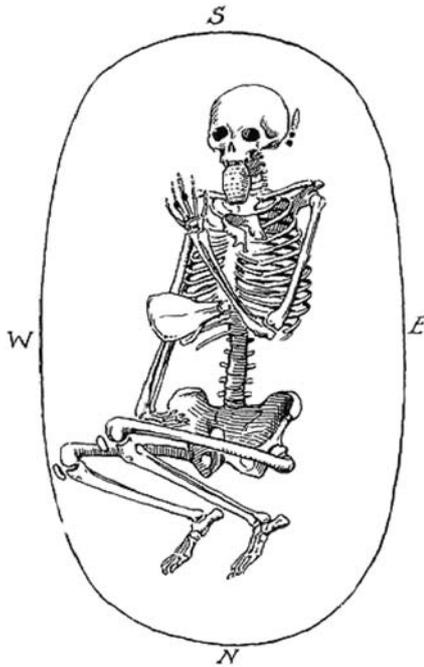


Fig. 2. Bronze Age burial in barrow 40 at Garton Slack. The mandible of the deceased was removed, and a miniature vessel inserted into the mouth (from Brück 2006a.Fig.4).

the cremation, a digit must be cut from the corpse and set aside; in his discussion of the end of mourning, Cicero comments that the severed bone should be buried in the earth; meanwhile, Varro states that 'if a bone of the dead man has been kept out for the ceremony of purifying the household, the household remains in mourning' until it is buried (cf. Graham 2009.55-57). The *os resectum* was removed from the corpse prior to cremation, kept during the mourning period - when it acted as a metaphor for the dividual body and person of the deceased - and then cleansed alongside the mourners during purification (*suffitio*), when they stepped over a fire while being sprinkled with water, and finally buried. Thus, Emma-Jayne Graham (2009) suggests this ritual may have acted as been a metaphor for the dissolution of the social body of the dead and the transformations that all participants experienced. The *os resectum* underwent a visible physical transformation that symbolised the changing status of all the participants. The personhood both of the dead and the living was deconstructed during the nine-day liminal period, when the house was considered impure (*funesta*) and the family and corpse were enclosed in a polluted (and polluting) liminal zone beyond the norms of society. At the end of this period, the new social persona of both parties was created anew and new relationships were created based on mutual dependency. The ancestors would not terrorise the living if regularly honoured and remembered.

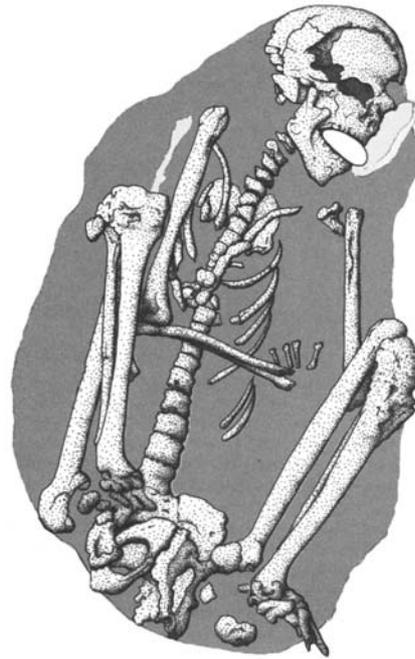


Fig. 3. Early Neolithic male pit burial at Nea Nikomedeia. A pebble had been placed in his mouth (from Perlès 2001.Fig. 13.2).

It has recently been demonstrated how body parts or bones acted as metaphors for the dividual nature of the person, and how they were central to the affirmation of identities in the British Bronze Age. In the recreation of a new body for the deceased, objects with metaphorical connections to the maintenance of the person were used. Artefacts and human and animal bones acted as extensions of the body and as metaphors for the transformation of the deceased and the realignment of the self of both the



Fig. 4. Early Neolithic (Körös culture) anthropomorphic vessel in which the fragment of a human skull was placed (from Kalicz 1980.Tab. 2).

living and the dead, and the reproduction of society through cyclical processes of fragmentation, dispersal and reincorporation. Thus skull fragments are frequently recovered from settlement contexts, where they were deliberately deposited in pits and ditches. Some fragments were carefully shaped in the form of a pierced disc or roundel. In a grave that contained two inhumations, the mandible of a third individual was deposited. Several bones from an adult male were found with the complete inhumation of an adult female. The inhumation of a juvenile was accompanied by a few bones from an adult. This suggests that “pieces of ancestral bone which had been retained, circulated, and perhaps passed down over the generations were on occasion considered appropriate for inclusion with the burial of a newly deceased member of the community” (Brück 2006a.83).

On the other hand, it has been suggested that a crouched inhumation with a deposit of cremated bone behind its lower back, broken human bones at the knees of a central inhumation, and a child's remains placed at the feet of an inhumation, were placed in positions where one might expect to find pots. These placements perhaps served to underline the metaphorical link between people and objects, in this case pots. Sometimes pots even became part of the human body. In the Bronze Age inhumation burial at Garton Slack in Britain, the mandible of the crouched inhumation had been removed. It was then placed on the deceased's chest and a miniature vessel inserted into the mouth of the deceased (Brück 2006a.84) (Fig. 2).

Similarly, the pebble stuck into the jaws of the tightly flexed male adult at Early Neolithic sites at Nea Nikomedeia shows the plurality of substances and metaphorical relations (Pérès 2001.278) (Fig. 3). There are also other ways in which substances were directed through human and non-human bodies, not least through consumption practices. For instance, the ‘Gorsza Venus’ anthropomorphic vessel from

Fig. 5. Lepenski vir Neolithic ‘Building 40’. A human mandible was placed upside down with a stone plaque placed between the caudal rami of the mandible. The mandible constitutes the ∇ architectural element in place of limestone plaques (from Srejović 1969.Fig. 70).



Early Neolithic Körös culture portrays a headless female body, and contained a fragment of a human skull (Kalicz 1980.23, Tab. 2) (Fig. 4). This vessel could be seen as ‘mediator in their own right, object as person whose major concern was the regulation of flows of substance’ (Fowler 2004. 63) or ‘as containers, just as the human head is seen in many societies as the repository of the human soul’ (Brück 2006a.84). We may suggest that the vessel and the skull fragment metaphorically build a new composite body of the deceased. This body can be seen as

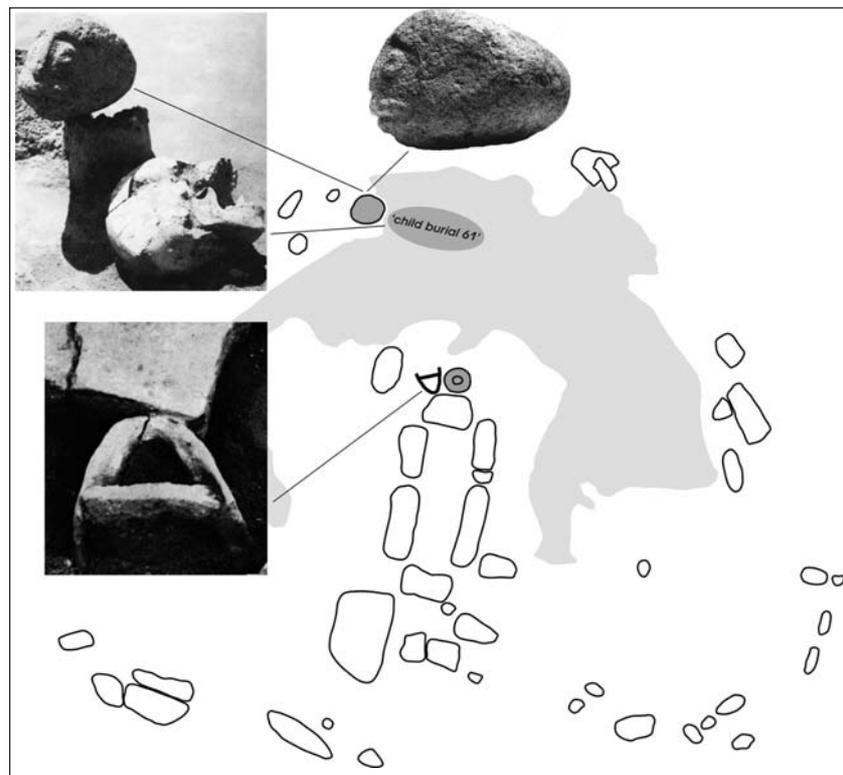


Fig. 6. Lepenski vir ‘Building 40’ context. A human mandible constitutes an ∇ architectural element. A child burial below the floor in the rear of the building. A sculpted boulder was placed above the child's skull (after Srejović 1969.Figs. 66, 70; Babović 2006.Figs. 186, 189).

a vessel through a flow of essences. Fowler (2008:52) suggests that in cases 'where flows are usually stressed over partiability the vessel of the body may be fragmented', but only after the death of the person 'in order to allow dispersal of personal essences'.

This link between fragmented human bodies extends further, in that there is evidence for the use of human bones in Mesolithic and Neolithic built environments in the Danube gorge in the Northern Balkans. In a number of buildings at Lepenski vir, limestone plaques were placed as multiple '∇' architectural elements next to the hearth slab. However, in one case in 'Building 40', a human mandible constituted this element instead of limestone plaques. It was placed upside down, with a stone plaque placed between the caudal rami of the mandible (Fig. 5) (Srejšović 1969.Fig.70; Borić 2007.114; Stefanović, Borić 2008.149).

Two other human mandibles were placed below the hearths of 'Buildings 31' and '54'. The mandibles are contextually associated with the child and neonate burials below the floors in the rear of the buildings. Sculpted boulders are embedded in all contexts, one of them being an architectural part, as the human mandible formed part of the stone hearth of 'Building 43' (Srejšović and Babović 1983.133).

In the intentional distribution and redeposition of human skulls within the built environments at Lepenski Vir some distinctive practices are evident:

- a human skull with mandible absent was placed in the rear of the hearth of 'Building 47', where it was contextually associated with two neonate burials and an aniconic boulder;
- skull removal was noted in 'child Burial 92' ('Building 28'), 'articulated Burial 28' ('Building XXXIII'), 'extended Burial 54e' ('Building 65/XXXV'), and 'extended Burials 15 and 16' ('Building XXVII');
- the skull in 'adult Burial 26' ('Building 34') was detached from the body and turned to face east, to the Danube River, while the mandible was slumped as if left in the anatomical position;
- the skull in 'contracted Burial 19' ('Building 54/XLIV') was removed and placed on the stone slab

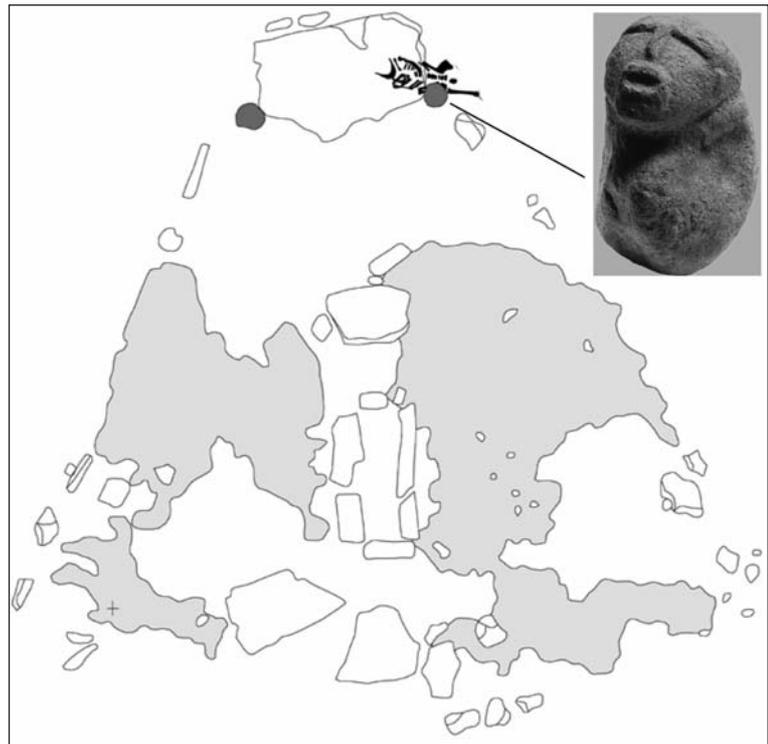


Fig. 7. Lepenski Vir 'Building 28' context. A child burial below a stone plate in the rear of the building. The skull was removed. A sculpted boulder was placed above the burial (from Stefanović, Borić 2008.Fig. 18; Babović 2006.Fig. 420).

that covered the burial (Stefanović, Borić 2008.20–21).

It is worth noting that in some cases sculpted boulders were placed on the floor immediately above the head of the deceased buried within buildings. A sculpted boulder in the form of a human face was placed above the head of an approximately seven-year-old child in 'Burial 61' in 'Building 40' (Fig. 6). It is noted that the boulder represents a human face with a schematic representation of its mouth and nose and 'opened eyes' (Stefanović, Borić 2008.26, 34). In contrast, in 'Burial 92' ('Building 28') a boulder with a schematic representation of mouth, nose, and 'closed eyes' was placed above a two- to three-year-old child. The skeleton was placed in the extended anatomical position, absent its skull, with only the mandible being present. This may indicate that the skull was removed (Stefanović, Borić 2008.25) (Fig. 7).

A decorated boulder was placed above a man's skull in 'Burial 7/I' in 'Building 21'. The burial was embedded next to the hearth, behind its rear. A detached human skull which was heavily worn, possibly from handling, was placed on his left shoulder, next to the head of the deceased. An auroch skull

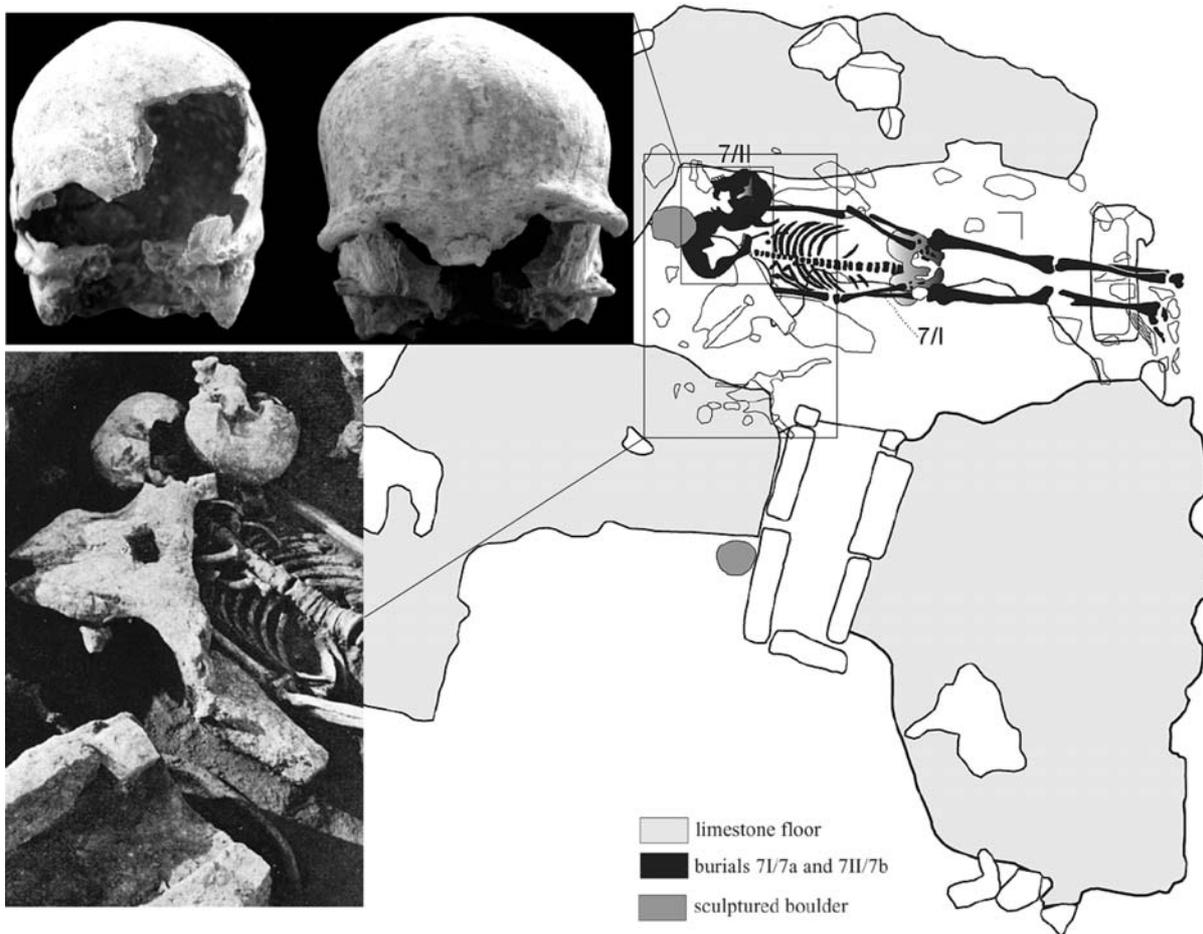


Fig. 8. *Lepenski Vir 'Building 21' context. Flow of substances of (i) an adult man buried in a burial pit cut through the floor of the building; (ii) the disarticulated human skull that was placed on his left shoulder; (iii) the auroch skull placed on his right shoulder, and a deer skull with antlers next to it; and (iv) the sculpted boulder placed above his head (from Srejšović 1969.Fig. 69; Borić 2005.Fig. 3.3; Babović 2006. Figs. 260, 312, 314).*

was placed above his right shoulder, and a deer skull with antlers next to it (Srejšović 1969.Fig. 69; Radovanović 1996.Fig. 4.3; Borić 2005.Fig. 3.3; Stefanović, Borić 2008) (Figs. 8 and 9).

The deposition of human jaws in built contexts associated with objects and animal skulls can be traced across Europe. Thus, in a settlement context of the Pitted Ware culture at Korsnäs in Södermanland in Sweden, the mandible of an adult human was found beside a small collection of fire cracked stones. Beneath the jaw was a hollow edged stone chisel. A dog skull, with lower jaw missing, lay beside it. A clay 'pearl', tightly packed inside a bundle of fish bones, had been placed in one of the dog's eye sockets. The assemblage was deposited in a two-metre-long dug feature, with a filling containing a large quantity of fish bones (Larsson 2009.118). The second deposition, which has been attributed to Early Neolithic Vlaška culture, was found in 1894 in the Pejca v Lascu rock shelter on the Karst plateau in the

Northern Adriatic. Below a stone plate, which was covered by a thick layer of ash, the fragments of a 'human frontal bone' and 'young girl's maxilla' were found. A dog mandible, mussel shells, sheep ribs, a deer antler hammer and two bone points were placed beside the bone remains (Moser 1899.62–63).

In the mortuary practices and relational palimpsest at Lepenski Vir we can recognise metaphorical links between (i) buried human bodies and buildings; (ii) secondary buried human skulls and mandibles and building parts; (iii) neonate and child dead bodies, secondary buried human mandibles, and sculpted boulders; and (iv) adult dead bodies, animal bodies, secondary buried human skulls, and sculptured boulders.

These may all indicate rites of passage and a trajectory from the corpse to bones, and to a new identity negotiated within the community as well as with the deceased. The context of human and animal bodies and secondary buried human skulls in indivi-

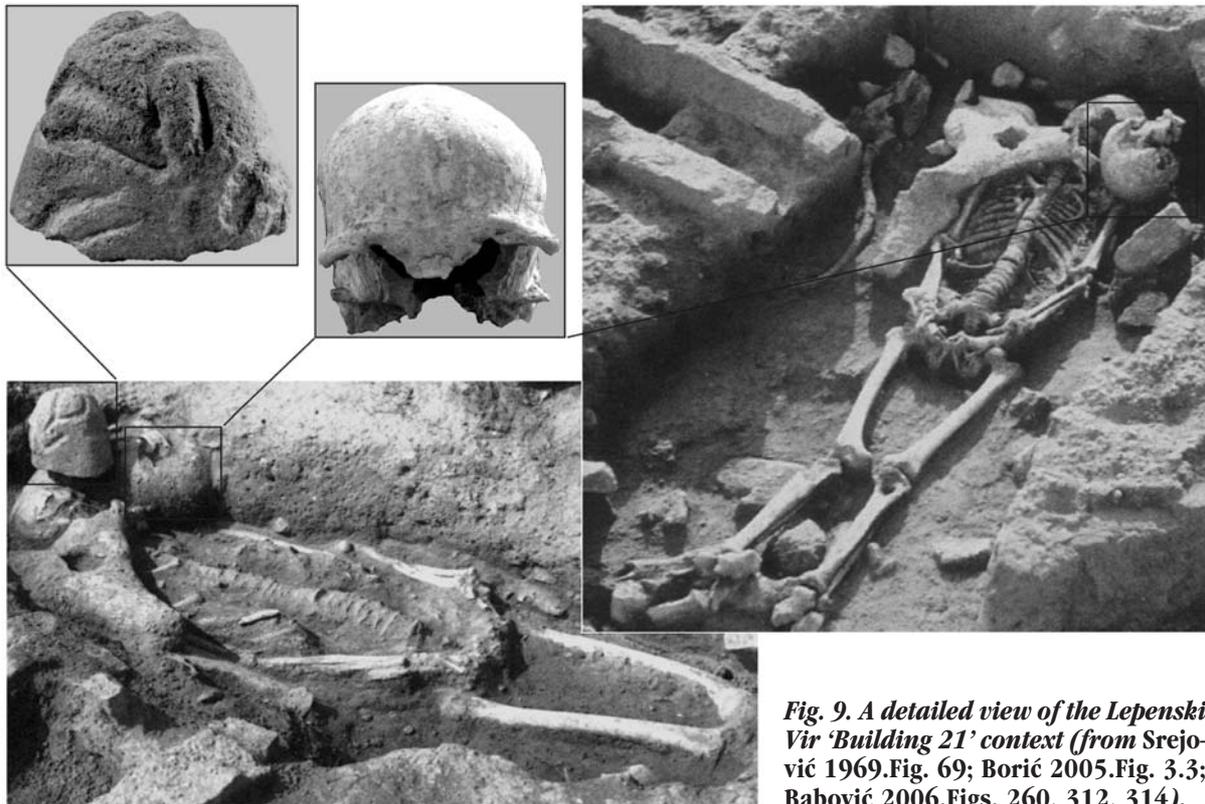


Fig. 9. A detailed view of the Lepenski Vir 'Building 21' context (from Srejović 1969.Fig. 69; Boric 2005.Fig. 3.3; Babović 2006.Figs. 260, 312, 314).

dual burials may indicate a fusion of the various substances that make possible the transformation of the deceased into ancestor, spirit or ghost. Thus the sculpted boulders placed above the burials may have to be seen as animate objects indicating the transformed identity of the deceased, and that some of them were selected to be archetypically representative of the whole community, or even the cosmos, in mortuary practices. We may hypothesise, therefore, that personhood was attained and maintained through the agency of active relationality. When death interrupted it, mortuary rites functioned to resolve the imbalance by the removal of one identity from society and the creation of another, and by reintegrating both the living and the dead into another state of existence. Burial contexts and rites of passage thus “[m]ay not be aimed at removing them from society, as we might expect, but at reintegrating them into society as different kinds of entities, different orders of person. The mortuary sphere is focal in the movement of personal substance, the renegotiation of value, and transformation of personal identity among survivors as well as the deceased. Mortuary practices therefore have multiple roles, including the deconstitution of the person, and their reclassification as spirits, ghosts, ancestors, and other subsets of the community. While the dead are transformed persons, they are often present among the community either as identifi-

able forces, or through the recycling of their elements.” (Fowler 2004.45).

Instead of conclusions

The recognised mortuary practices and fragmented ritual palimpsest in Lepenski Vir lead us to the notion of ritualisation as a strategic way of acting within ‘complex traditions and systems’ for the construction of certain types of power relationships effective within particular social organisations. Catherine Bell discusses (1992.109–110, 197, 218, 221) them as a codified and constructed social medium in which “complex and multifarious details of ritual, most of which must be done just so, are seen as appropriate demands or legitimate tradition”, the collective body seemingly “sees itself as responding to a place, event, force, problem, or tradition”. In this context, she suggests, some gradually come to dominate others by the prestigious and privileged status that ritualised activities claim. The flow of substances and manipulation of objects on the one hand, and gathering and following a fixed agenda and repeating this activity, are thus not necessarily associated either with social solidarity and conflict resolution, or with the transmission of shared beliefs and a dominant ideology as an internal subjectivity, but the production of ritualised agents and power relations within a society.

The flow of substances, the fusion of subject and object, and the perception of the individual as a relational, embedded, permeable and partible individual lead us to naturalism, animism, totemism and perspectivism, all which conceptualise non-humans as persons, as well as humans as non-human. They postulate subjective and social continuity between humans and animals, and between the living and the ancestors. Shamanism – in which the capacity evinced by some individuals to cross ontological boundaries and adopt the perspective of non-human subjectivities in order to mediate relations between humans and non-humans – is embedded in these contexts (Bird-David 1999; Descola 1996; Groleau 2009; Ingold 2000; Pedersen 2001; Sillar 2009; Viveiros de Castro 1998; 2004).

The embodiment of dead human and animal bodies in built environments, and the incorporation of fragments of human bodies into built structures may lead us to hypothesise that the flow of substances was symbolically embedded within a house, a “[m]oral person, keeper of a domain composed altogether of material and immaterial property, which perpetuates itself by the transmission of its name, of its fortune [destiny, chance] and of its titles in a real or fictive line held as legitimate on the sole condition that this continuity can express itself in the language of kinship [descent] or of affinity [alliance], and, most often, of both together” (Lévi-Strauss 1987:152). Thus, dividual, partible and permeable persons constitute a ‘house society’. The house as a social institution, on the other hand, symbolically and metaphorically mediates between humans and non-humans and the landscape.

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