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The Bioarchaeology of Classical Kamarina: Life and Death in Greek Sicily

Carrie L. Sulosky Weaver. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2015. 336 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8130-6112-2. \$84.95.

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In *The Bioarchaeology of Classical Kamarina*, Carrie Sulosky Weaver seeks to integrate the study of the materiality of burial practices with human skeletal analysis to provide a more holistic perspective on life and death in Sicily during the Classical period. In this comprehensive and detailed book, the author makes an important contribution to Sicilian archaeology. *The Bioarchaeology of Classical Kamarina* is not only the largest study of its kind, but is also the first book of its kind to follow the trend of synthesizing classical archaeology and physical anthropology in analyzing a Sicilian-Greek necropolis (MacKinnon 2007). The book belongs to the series entitled *Bioarchaeological Interpretations of the Human Past: Local, Regional, and Global Perspectives*, edited by Clark Spencer Larsen, and is the product of research on a large sample of the Passo Marinaro necropolis dated to between the fifth and third centuries BC within the archaeological park of Kamarina. The sample consists of 258 skeletons and their associated tombs and grave goods out of a total of 1,007 burials that were excavated in the early 1980s by Giovanni Di Stefano. Kamarina was an ancient Greek colony in southeastern Sicily that underwent a turbulent history from its original foundation in the sixth century BC through its final abandonment in the third century BC. Sulosky Weaver's work contributes a great deal of detailed human history to the polis. The book follows in the footsteps of recent osteological work in Greek archaeology published in Schepartz et al. (2009), which also attempted to take a more synthesized approach to examining mortuary contexts. This shift towards a more synthesized approach is important in order to avoid the artificial disassociation of osteological and archaeological materials, which are both inherently a part of the human behavior constituting mortuary practices.

Sulosky Weaver provides a thorough examination of Greek burial practices in the wider Greek world, drawing on a wealth of ancient sources and modern scholarship in order to contextualize Sicilian-Greek mortuary practices on the island. As a rule, all anthropological concepts and arguments are examined thoroughly and critically, providing an extensive bibliography of many different aspects of the study. Even in places where certain techniques were unable to be used in the study, such as methods of sexing a skeleton (the Passo Marinaro sample was too poorly preserved to do so), Sulosky Weaver provides the reader with the basic methods and challenges of the practice. She even explains the possibility of sex determination through the extraction of ancient DNA (aDNA) as well as the exact method of aDNA extraction.

There have been other studies done on skeletons from Kamarina that have examined 23 and 11 skeletons, both of which are still unpublished (245). Sulosky Weaver's sample, with a minimum number of individuals of 258, dwarfs these. Considering the relative scarcity of data available from other Sicilian contexts (Becker 2002), Classical or otherwise, these data are espe-

cially helpful. The study also provides a large dataset that would be otherwise hard to find. The dataset is accessible from an online data repository hosted by the University of Pittsburg (abbreviated as PDR in the volume) at no additional cost (Sulosky Weaver 2014). This PDR contains a summary of burial data, additional data tables that are cited in the book, the original skeleton recording forms, and the two relevant DNA reports. The PDR is a valuable source for anyone wishing to do research of this kind or for examining the methodology of the study.

The book opens with two forewords. The first is by the editor of the series, followed by a foreword by Giovanni Di Stefano, the former director of the archaeological park of Kamarina. An introduction provides the reader with a brief history and the nature of the osteology in classical archaeology today, as well as the theoretical backdrop for the work. The concept of materiality developed by Fahlander and Oestigaard (2008) provided inspiration for the theoretical approach of the book, which is divided into six chapters. The first two chapters act as introductions to the wider context of death and burial in the Greek world and to the site of Kamarina. Chaps. 3 and 4 cover the osteological analyses of the Passo Marinaro sample, while chaps. 5 and 6 cover the artifact assemblages and the final analyses of the necropolis as a whole.

Chap. 1 covers the burial practices in Kamarina and how they compare to the rest of the Greek world. The chapter is divided into three sections, a common pattern throughout the work. The first section reconstructs funerary rituals and public festivals associated with death, while the second provides a summary of beliefs of the afterlife, and the third examines Greek burial practices through time and space. The overview is quite comprehensive, and even cites modern ethnographic examples in rural Greece (Danforth 1982) that some scholars believe to be closely related to ancient Greek burial practices. Sulosky Weaver finds that the ritualistic treatment of the dead in Kamarina reflects the practices of other Greek necropoleis on the island.

Chap. 2 consists of a discussion of the larger site and its historical and archaeological context. This chapter is divided into three parts, which cover the historiography of the polis of Kamarina, then its history and archaeology, and finally a discussion of the book's case study, the necropolis of Passo Marinaro.

Chap. 3 begins the analysis of the skeletal remains and covers the demographic attributes of the sample. This chapter is split into sections following the various information that osteological analysis can provide, including age determination, sex determination, stature estimation, nonmetric traits, and ancestry estimation. Of particular note is the discussion of the possibility of Sub-Saharan African individuals living in Kamarina, determined through cranial measurements. The reader is also further informed about the severe limitations of the sample that restrict its analysis. For example, the skeletal material recovered from Passo Marinaro was so degraded that no individuals were able to be sexed. Nevertheless, the author explains the methods that can be used to sex a skeleton and to what degree these methods are accurate. In this chapter, Sulosky Weaver demonstrates a catastrophic mortality profile (112). This corroborates what we know of the turbulent history of Kamarina in this period.

Chap. 4 covers the state of health of the sample population. Sulosky Weaver determines that the prevalence rates of pathological conditions are lower than other similar sites in Sicily during this period. Unfortunately, there is very little interpretation offered as to why. Considering the catastrophic mor-

tality profile discussed earlier, some explanation from the author would have been welcome. The sections of this chapter are copious and cover topics such as discerning disease in the archaeological record, the prevalence of malaria, physical trauma and trepanation, non-specific infections, degenerative joint disease, pituitary dwarfism, and dental disease. Each of these larger sections is structured like an osteological report. The last of these is even divided into further subsections discussing the different types of dental anomalies.

Chap. 5 consists of the analysis of the grave goods. This chapter is split into three sections covering the general interpretation of grave goods/grave gifts. The author begins by providing an overview of what she calls processualist and postprocessualist approaches to mortuary studies. Summarizing the concepts of “methodological collectivism” and “methodological individualism” (processual and postprocessual concepts respectively), she argues that the concept of materiality as used by Fahlander and Oestigaard (2008) can bridge the theoretical gap between the two (172). Using examples from around the world she funnels her investigation into the use of grave goods in the Greek world and ends with an analysis of the assemblage of grave goods from Passo Marinaro. The third section goes over the various forms of Greek pottery that were found as grave gifts and how they compared with finds from other necropoleis in Sicily and southern Italy after using Fisher’s exact test. Unfortunately, there is no distinction made between local or imported ceramic types, but her statistical treatment of the types of grave goods confirmed past associations between Sicilian necropoleis, and also determined that the presence of *olpai*, or ritual pouring vessels, might be associated with higher status burials.

Chap. 6 examines the ritualistic treatment of the dead, examining and quantifying head position, grave/burial containers, grave orientations, and body position. Each category is given its own subsection and is treated statistically using Fisher’s exact test to determine whether the sample’s similarities with other necropoleis are statistically significant. The next section provides an often overlooked overview of ancient Greek deviant burials, of which there are two in the Passo Marinaro sample. The last section presents a cluster analysis that took into consideration the various ritualistic treatments of the deceased combined with the various categories of material goods. While there were no groundbreaking new patterns inferred from the evidence, there was some indication that “social status is probably reflected in one cluster,” though the relationship was somewhat weak (221).

The wealth of sources that the author uses makes the work read like a textbook introduction to the field as well as a focused study. Each chapter functions as a standalone piece, cutting the book into manageable portions. For the novice, this book is not only a study of the remains of a Classical Greek population but also a thorough guide on what such a study entails and how to approach it. This sort of thorough treatment of all the aspects of the study makes it an excellent introduction but can sometimes make the chapters seem unfocused. Some of the examples seem out of place at times, such as the mention of rituals from the Mexican formative period to explain the use of grave goods, since a more closely related example from the Mediterranean may have sufficed (169). Another point in which the text seems to lose some of its focus can be found in the section discussing deviant burials. There are two examples of deviant burials in the Passo Marinaro sample that prompt the

author to explore in depth the belief in “revenants” (or the undead) among both the ancient Greeks and more recent populations. The lengthy discussion of what sort of rituals may have been required to prevent the deceased from coming back as well as the processes of decomposition that may have inspired these beliefs in the undead seem a little removed from the topic at hand.

Yet, there is no doubt that Carrie Sulosky Weaver’s contribution to Sicilian archaeology is extremely welcome. While some aspects of the work suffer from treading the line between a focused research project and a macro-examination of burial practices in the Greek world, the work as a whole is successful and makes itself useful to both the student and the established scholar.

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