Deposits of bodies in circular pits in the Neolithic period (mid-fifth to the mid-fourth millennium BCE): deposits, waste or ritual remnants?

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Abstract

Among the numerous human remains found in circular pits belonging to the fourth millennium BCE cultures north of the Alps, there are many examples of bodies laid in random (or unconventional) positions. Some of these remains in irregular configurations, interred alongside an individual in a conventional flexed position, can be considered as a 'funerary accompaniment'. Other burials, of isolated individuals or multiple individuals buried in unconventional positions, suggest the existence of burial practices outside of the otherwise strict framework of funerary rites. The focus of this article is the evidence recently arising from excavation and anthropological studies from the Upper Rhine Plain (Michelsberg and Munzingen cultures). We assume that these bodies in unconventional positions were not dumped as trash, but that they were a part of the final act of a complex ritual. It is hypothesised that these bodies, interpreted here as ritual waste, were sacrificial victims, and a number of possible explanations, including 'peripheral accompaniment' or victims of acts of war, are debated.

Key words: Neolithic, burials, storage pits, ritual wastes

Introduction

The practice of depositing human bodies in circular pits within settlements, usually abandoned storage pits – the type of structures also frequently re-used as refuse pits – is characteristic of numerous cultural groups that inhabited the area between the south of France and the Carpathian Basin during the fifth and fourth millennia BC (Figure 1). Storage pits are the type of structure most often found in settlements of the period, with other types of construction, including ruined buildings, only

Figure 1 Distribution of cultures practising the deposit of bodies in circular pits in the fifth and fourth millennia BC (Computer-aided design (CAD), P. Lefranc).

rarely observed. Pit silos, often found in relatively spaced-out clusters, and more rarely in large groups,¹ have a circular opening and are cylindrical or pyriform in shape (Figure 2). The bodies deposited in these structures are found at different levels, showing that they were indeed re-used pits, sometimes already partly filled, rather than structures dug specifically to receive deposits.

This practice has long intrigued researchers, who have sought to make sense of these highly varied groupings.² The most recent research has made use of new field data to highlight the existence of a coherent system, from which a certain number of recurring aspects emerge.³ The practice of depositing items in circular pits, which includes other kinds of deposit that will be mentioned in this article (deposits of whole animals and collections of complete vases) is part of a widespread phenomenon that likely originated in the Münchshöfen culture⁴ in Lower Bavaria around 4500 BCE⁵ and spread to a limited extent within contemporary neighbouring groups⁶ before seeing a resurgence, first in the early fourth millennium,⁷ with its adoption by the Michelsberg, Munzingen and Baalberge cultures, and then in the second half of the same millennium, which saw the phenomenon spread towards the Carpathian Basin.⁸

In this article we focus on deposits uncovered in the south of the Upper Rhine, numbering ninety-two in total. A small number of these are linked to groups that occupied the region in the fifth millennium BCE⁹ (twelve deposits), with the remainder belonging to the Michelsberg (fifty-five deposits) and Munzingen (twenty-five deposits) cultures, active during the fourth millennium BCE. The

Figure 2 'Layered' deposit at the Colmar site (Upper Rhine), pit 49. The lower, asymmetrical deposit combines an adult in a conventional position (ind. C) with a child in a non-conventional position (ind. D) (CAD, C. Leyenberger).

number of individuals recorded, whole or in the form of separate parts, is currently 183: a high total that can be explained first by the common nature of multiple burials, particularly in the Munzingen culture, and second by the existence of two particular deposits, linked to acts of war, which alone contain the remains of twenty-six individuals.

Classification of deposits and interpretation

In both the south of the Rhine valley and elsewhere the deposits fall into a number of clear-cut categories:

- individual deposits of bodies in a conventional position.¹⁰ Individuals – men, women and immature individuals – were placed on their side, with their legs

Figure 3 Individual in a non-conventional position at the Gougenheim site (Lower Rhine), pit 1076 (CAD, C. Leyenberger).

bent (see Figure 2, middle deposit). Some individuals had objects buried with them, primarily ceramic or deer-antler cups, bowls or bottles;

- individual deposits of individuals in a non-conventional position. These individuals were placed in very different, probably random positions. With one sole exception, to which we will return, none was buried with grave goods (Figure 3);
- multiple deposits with several individuals in a non-conventional position (Figure 4);
- multiple deposits with several individuals in a conventional position;
- multiple 'asymmetrical' deposits with one individual in a conventional position and one or more individuals in a non-conventional position (see Figure 2, lower deposit);
- deposits of body parts – with or without the bone remains found in conjunction – and isolated bones.

It is important to emphasise that the area of distribution for the practice of deposits in abandoned pits, and its development within this space, can be precisely delimited, and that the phenomenon was not necessarily widespread within each of the archaeological cultures affected. For example, over two-thirds of Michelsberg burials have been excavated in the Lower Alsace settlements and less than a third in Baden-Württemberg. In the greater part of the territory covered by the culture,

Figure 4 Deposit of three individuals (two women and a child) in a non-conventional position at the Gougenheim site (Lower Rhine), pit 1077 (CAD, C. Leyenberger).

which includes Westphalia, Lower Saxony, the Paris basin, northern France, west Belgium and Limburg in the Netherlands, no cases of human deposits in circular pits have been recorded to date. We must conclude therefore that only some of the groups living on the Rhine, likely due to historical factors (such as former relations with the groups living on the Danube), adhered to a new ideology involving the use of storage structures as deposit places. The distribution of this practice, which appears to have spread from a central European hub, and the strong similarity of specific practices recorded between the Carpathians and Alsace, suffice to demonstrate that, despite their differences, these deposits were part of a coherent symbolic system.

In this article we focus in particular on bodies placed in a random position, which appear to have been simply thrown into pits and which did not, in all likelihood, receive funeral rites. We consider the status of these bodies, which might at first glance be considered either as ordinary waste or as deposits.

It is easier to interpret the burials of individuals placed in a so-called conventional position, i.e. on their side, with their legs bent, and sometimes with a vase (usually a cup) placed beside them: in all likelihood they did receive funeral rites, and these deposits can therefore be considered as true graves. As for the asymmetrical

deposits combining one individual in a conventional position with one or more individuals in a random position, recent studies have jointly concluded that these reflect the practice of 'funerary accompaniment'.¹¹ This practice, observed throughout the world and well documented by ethnologists,¹² involved putting one or more 'companions' – always subordinates, usually slaves – to death during the funeral rites of an important individual. Such an interpretive framework is easily applied to the asymmetrical deposits discovered, still in small numbers, between Alsace and Hungary.

In contrast with these two types of deposit, the status of individuals buried in a non-conventional position, found alone or within non-asymmetrical deposits (i.e. only with bodies in a random position) cannot be determined either by analysing how the bodies were treated or by studying the other items buried with them. Multiple interpretations are possible, but an analysis based on the existence of a coherent symbolic system makes it possible to narrow down the possibilities.

Expulsion and peripheral accompaniment

The first hypothesis is that of expulsion: simply disposing of a body considered to be waste and for which deposit served no other purpose than that of abandonment. Abandoning the bodies of individuals with no social standing, such as slaves, is a well-documented practice in ethnology and history, and the hypothesis cannot be entirely discarded. However, it should be highlighted that within the symbolic system which we posit to have existed during the Neolithic period it seems unlikely that the bodies of individuals with no social standing would have been deposited in the same spaces and identical containers as those containing individuals who received the funeral rites proper to their group.

The hypothesis of expulsion has also been considerably undermined by the excavation of the Colmar deposit, a puzzling deposit featuring an individual placed on their stomach in a random position along with fifty-six copper beads imported from western Switzerland, i.e. more than 500 grams of a metal that was extremely rare in the Rhine valley at that time and that, in all likelihood, had high social value (see Figure 5).¹³

The characteristics of apparently isolated individuals found in a non-conventional position can be analysed in the case of the Michelsberg culture, which offers a relatively rich, primarily Alsatian corpus that provides initial insight into the phenomenon. The majority of these groups have been examined during recent excavations and have been studied by anthropologists. Of the thirty-five individuals in question, most (71 per cent) were adults and, although the sample is not as yet representative, female adults largely dominated the spectrum, representing 72 per cent of the corpus of sexed adults ($n = 26$), which may reflect a clear trend in characteristics. These data alone do not make it possible to discard the expulsion hypothesis, since it might still be suggested that any slaves acquired during raids were female (males being killed instead), but it must be agreed that the argument remains flawed.

Figure 5 Deposit of an adult and two copper bead ‘necklaces’ at the Colmar site (Upper Rhine), pit 23 (photo P. Lefranc).

The second hypothesis, also difficult to discard definitively, is that of peripheral accompaniment, i.e. the deposit of companions who were killed during funeral rites but did not share the burial place of the primary deceased. This practice, also documented by ethnologists, is, regrettably, impossible to confirm based on the archaeological data, although this does not of course invalidate it as a hypothesis. However, when we compare the characteristics of individuals found in asymmetrical deposits (the undisputed companions) with those of the individuals found in isolated deposits mentioned above, two clearly separate groups emerge: 90 per cent of companions in asymmetrical deposits are immature individuals (ten out of eleven), but they represent less than 30 per cent of bodies found in isolated deposits. These results are of course weakened by the relatively limited size of the available sample (forty-six individuals in a non-conventional position), but analysis of the six asymmetrical deposits at Munzingen in the Mulhouse region provides similar results, with a clear majority of immature companions (71 per cent). It therefore seems reasonable to consider the existence of two groups with different characteristics, forming two types of deposit with different purposes.

Sacrificial practices?

One of the authors of this article has suggested a third hypothesis:¹⁴ that the deposits represent the remains of ritual practices in which humans were killed, but not as part of funeral rites.¹⁵ We believe it is difficult to ignore this alternative, as human sacrifice *stricto sensu* was extremely widespread in agrarian societies,¹⁶ including in lineage-bonded societies. Its existence in the Neolithic period is therefore not improbable. The second reason is that populations practising funerary

accompaniment – such as the Neolithic societies discussed here – also readily sacrificed human beings on a range of different occasions.

Examples taken from stateless societies can be found across all continents: among the Khonds of Orissa,¹⁷ the Ibo and Adiokrou lineage-bonded forest societies of Côte d'Ivoire,¹⁸ on the north-west coast of Canada,¹⁹ in New Guinea,²⁰ Tahiti,²¹ the Marquesas Islands,²² North America²³ and among the Dayak people in Borneo.²⁴ It should be noted that in both lineage-bonded and state societies the usage and fate of the victim's body did not tend to vary; the primary difference lay instead in the astonishing scale that some sacrifices could reach in state contexts.²⁵

In stateless societies, where the victim's status is known he or she was most commonly a slave,²⁶ sometimes bought for the occasion,²⁷ an individual captured in a raid on a neighbouring enemy group²⁸ or, in the case described by Frazer in relation to the Meriah sacrifice, a child sold by a poor member of the sacrificing group. This latter case appears to be the exception, with victims generally being taken from a competing or geographically distant group.

It is of course not possible – any more than for the others – to provide conclusive evidence for the sacrificial hypothesis. Mitochondrial DNA analysis performed on twenty-one of the individuals buried in the Gougenheim site,²⁹ in the Lower Rhine, nevertheless provides new information that is entirely compatible with what is known about these practices from contemporary accounts.³⁰ This study showed that individuals buried in a conventional and non-conventional position all shared haplotypes from south-west Europe, but were clearly distinguished by the haplogroups represented within each group: the haplogroups W and X appeared only within the population buried in a conventional position, while the haplogroups N1a, U5 and T were specific to the population buried in a non-conventional position. Only two haplotypes – those most common among the Neolithic peoples – were shared across both groups. These results clearly indicate that the groups were genetically different from one another, which may be the result of geographical and/or social distance. The group of individuals buried in a non-conventional position consisted of individuals from groups that were excluded from marital exchange – allied groups being characterised by genetic exchange – and, in all likelihood, were considered to be outsiders who could not be given funeral rites. Such evidence supports the hypothesis that these were individuals taken during raids within distant communities and held captive. These data do not prove the existence of sacrifice *stricto sensu* (funerary companions taken from the subordinate class would have the same genetic profile), but we believe that, in view of the other elements outlined above, such as the significant proportion of women and the existence of deposits combining abandoned individuals and object-signs, they support the hypothesis that such deposits were the result of a more complex act than simple expulsion or funerary accompaniment.

However, this observation does not answer the question of the significance of these deposits, which can be considered either as waste – cadavers in refuse pits – or as organised deposits.

Ritual deposits or 'structured deposition',³¹ in the sense generally accepted by archaeologists, i.e. organised and 'operative' deposits (designed to summon, create

or satisfy a supernatural being), are very rarely observed in the ethnological literature.³² In the context of stateless societies, and focusing our search on deposits including human victims, we identified only the 'foundation deposits' of the Indians in north-west Canada,³³ the Batak in Sumatra and the Dayak people in Borneo, where slaves were killed and buried in the central columns of new houses.³⁴ These specific examples are a poor fit for the archaeological data.

Body parts buried in order to favour crop growth can be considered as true deposits. The practice is recorded in Odisha (India) as bringing the Meriah sacrifice to a close;³⁵ among the Pawnee, who buried parts of the victim in their fields;³⁶ in New Guinea, among the Oksapmin, where the dismembered remains of the victim were shared among different tribes before being buried;³⁷ and also in Kabiye territory (Togo), where victims, dissected in the same way as animals, were buried within the sacred space or shared among officiants, then spread across a number of shrines.³⁸

Aside from foundation rituals and these few examples of fertility rites, burying the bodies – or body parts – of victims has only rarely been recorded: we found only four truly explicit ethno-historic sources, only two of which related to a stateless society, namely the burial of the dismembered victim in the shrine in Kabiye territory, mentioned above, and the sacrifice to the war god Oro that James Cook witnessed in Tahiti in 1777.³⁹

The two other examples of post-sacrificial burials took place in state societies: reference to the practice can be found in Diego de Landa's account of human sacrifice in the Maya kingdoms in Yucatán, and in Boisragon's account of the punitive British expedition to Edo (Kingdom of Benin, Nigeria) in 1897.

In *Relación de las Cosas de Yucatán*, written around 1566, Diego de Landa dedicates a chapter to the sacrificial rites of the Indians of the peninsula, in which we learn that the bodies of some victims were buried within temple enclosures⁴⁰ – an observation that echoes the 'cemeteries' of individuals buried in a non-conventional position, sometimes mutilated, that have been discovered near temples in El Salvador, Maya territory,⁴¹ Mexico⁴² and Peru.⁴³

Landa and Cook's accounts suffice to demonstrate that the burial of victims in sacred places is a possible option. We do not know what may have warranted such burials, given that they were neither foundation deposits nor organised ritual deposits designed to have an effect on the real world, nor even offerings. In Landa's account it is clear that the key moment of the sacrifice was immolation on the altar and, in addition, burying the body was only one option, alongside consumption.

In our final example, in the town of Edo, Boisragon describes courtyards surrounded by portico gates housing the kings' altars, where sacrifices took place. He states that in the corners of these courts, huge pits, twelve to fifteen metres deep, held the bodies of victims.⁴⁴ It is possible that these bodies were also discarded near the place of sacrifice, within the sacred space, but the description of these huge dumps cannot be interpreted conclusively.

It is clear that burying the remains of sacrificial victims was not a widespread practice. The most frequent way to handle them in cultural areas where the bodies were not consumed, regardless of the type of society considered, was simple

disposal. This was very common in West Africa: after the ritual – which simply involved killing or a blood offering⁴⁵ – had been carried out, the body of the victim was considered to be simply a waste product and was removed to the forest,⁴⁶ to the edge of the settlement⁴⁷ or sometimes to a dedicated place.⁴⁸

Ritual waste

While burying the remains of sacrificial victims is in no way a universal practice, its existence enables us, in accordance with a principle of plausibility,⁴⁹ to consider it within the proposed framework.

To summarise: isolated bodies found in a random position were probably not simply discarded, as the most common practice appears to be removal in the open, in a dedicated space located on the edge of the territory rather than at the heart of the settlement. Nor, without further evidence, do they appear to be ‘foundation deposits’, as these latter are always strictly connected to monuments. However, we can posit the hypothesis of post-sacrificial burials, carried out in a sacred context. The hypothesis is supported by the location of the deposit itself, which is unlikely to have been chosen by chance: on the same sites and in the same spaces, circular pits also contain regular burials, whole-animal deposits and deposits of vases undeniably used during drinking or libation rites.⁵⁰ It is difficult to distinguish between the true deposit of buried offerings and the disposal of objects (or animal carcasses) used during rituals, themselves sacred and invested with a supernatural power, which could be discarded only with caution. However, the excavation of a series of whole cups and bottles in these pits appears to support the hypothesis of the burial of ritual instruments contaminated by use. These practices are well documented in the protohistoric period and in classical Greece, for example, and the possibility that they originated in the Neolithic period cannot be excluded.

The concept of ‘the refuse of offering and sacrifice’,⁵¹ ‘ceremonial trash’⁵² or ‘ritual remnants’ is able to account for the Michelsberg human deposits as deposits of objects or animal remains, whose ambiguous status may be situated somewhere between simple disposal and the deposit of sacred objects. In this sense, it is possible to define the bodies in a non-conventional position placed in storage pits as dangerous waste, not simply left anywhere, as would have been the case for profane waste, but in structures suitable for housing the remnants of a sacred act. As such, they are akin to the votive offerings (*anathemata*) that accumulated in ancient Greek shrines and were designed to be buried within the peribolos,⁵³ or the sacrificial remains buried in the sacred area in Kabiye territory.⁵⁴

Finally, we must emphasise the central role of the container, namely the storage pit, which for a small number of the Michelsberg communities was the favoured place for sacred deposits, for both normal graves and other ritual products: analysis of the significance of the container itself, a place where time is suspended (the long-term storage of seeds) or an underground space favouring contact with chthonic powers,⁵⁵ is worthy of further investigation. In either case, the practice of deposit, displaying a great deal of variation but forming an organised system, was constructed around this container and its symbolism, to the extent of attracting some

deposits that can be considered outliers to the system – for example, the deposits of the remains of war acts, probably victory ceremonies, excavated at Bergheim⁵⁶ and Achenheim⁵⁷ in Lower Alsace – but whose development cannot be explained beyond it.

The hypothesis of ritual remnants and ‘sacred refuse pits’ may not answer all the questions raised: it is possible that deposits which we consider to be similar in nature were in fact designed for very different purposes, and we do not rule out the existence within our corpus of some peripheral companions, or even a few bodies that were simply discarded. Nevertheless, we believe that the majority of the data are compatible with the hypothesis put forward in this article, which is the only hypothesis that accounts for the existence of the surprising configurations that capture the final episode in a series of complex acts, such as the Colmar deposit mentioned above or another collection fairly recently excavated in Obernai (Lower Rhine), which includes the tangled remains of two young children in a non-conventional position and four complete dogs.⁵⁸ It is also able to account for – and the ethnographic examples do not contradict us – the deposit of separate body parts such as animal deposits and certain objects that had high social value or were used during libation rites.

Notes

Translated from French by Cadenza Academic Translations

- 1 The former configuration indicates domestic units relatively spaced out from another, each one with storage structures close to dwellings. Although such buildings have not been preserved, the re-use of abandoned pits as refuse pits reveals the proximity of domestic activities. The latter configuration demonstrates the existence of spaces entirely dedicated to storage, located on the edge of settlements; ritual deposits may be numerous in such areas, but there is no evidence of domestic activities.
- 2 J. Lichardus, ‘Le rituel funéraire de la culture de Michelsberg dans la région du Rhin supérieur et moyen’, in J.-P. Demoule and J. Guilaine (eds), *Le Néolithique de la France: Hommage à G. Bailloud* (Paris, Picard, 1986), pp. 343–8; C. Nickel, ‘Menschliche Skelettreste aus Michelsberger Fundzusammenhängen’, *Bericht der Römisch-Germanischen Kommission*, 78 (1997), 29–233; A. Alterauge, ‘Silobestattungen aus unbefestigten Siedlungen der Michelsberger Kultur in Süd- und Südwestdeutschland – Versuch einer Annäherung’, in N. Müller-Scheessel (ed.), *Irreguläre Bestattungen in der Urgeschichte: Norm, Ritual, Strafe . . . ? Akten der Internationalen Tagung in Frankfurt am Maine, 3–5 February 2012* (Kolloquien zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte, 19), 185–96.
- 3 P. Lefranc, A. Denaire, F. Chenal et al., ‘Les inhumations et les dépôts d’animaux en fosses circulaires du Néolithique récent du sud de la plaine du Rhin supérieur’, *Gallia Préhistoire*, 52 (2010), 61–116; C. Jeunesse, ‘Les sépultures en fosses circulaires de l’horizon 4500–3500: contribution à l’étude comparée des systèmes funéraires du Néolithique européen’, in L. Barry and B. Boulestin (eds), *Morts*

- anormaux et sépultures bizarres, Les dépôts humains en fosses circulaires ou en silos du Néolithique à l'âge du Fer, Actes de la table ronde interdisciplinaire de Sens, mars-avril 2006* (Dijon: Éditions Interuniversitaires de Dijon, 2010), pp. 26–46; P. Lefranc, A. Denaire and C. Jeunesse, 'Human Remains of the 4th Millennium BC in the South of the Upper-Rhine Valley', *Tagungen des Landesmuseums für Vorgeschichte Halle*, 16 (2017), 521–31.
- 4 The Münchshofen group, linked to the epi-Lengyel complex, occupied the Danube valley between the Inn and Lech rivers. It covered Lower Bavaria, part of Upper Bavaria and the Upper Palatinate, and made some inroads into Bavarian Swabia and Lower Austria. It is believed to have lasted around 600 years, between 4550 and 3950 BCE. To date, fifty-three pits containing a total of eighty individuals have been identified as belonging to this culture. Older deposits in circular pits have been documented in the Prague region, in the Stichbandkeramik culture, but this appears to be an isolated and highly localised phenomenon (P. Lefranc, F. Chenal, A. Denaire et al., 'Les dépôts humains et animaux en fosses de plan circulaire du 5e millénaire dans les vallées du Rhin et du Danube', forthcoming).
 - 5 Lefranc et al., 'Human Remains'; D. Meixner, 'Ausnahme oder Regel – zum Phänomen der Münchshöfener Bestattungen', *Vorträge des 27. Niederbayerischen Archäologentages, Rahden/Westf* (2009), 91–144.
 - 6 In Alsace the phenomenon appears for the first time in sites attributed to the Bruebach-Oberbergen group (4500–4250 BCE), a group that had direct contact with the Münchshofen group, as illustrated by the presence of ceramics imported from Bavaria at the Achenheim site, in the Lower Rhine (Lefranc et al., 'Les dépôts humains', forthcoming).
 - 7 For an overview see Jeunesse, 'Les sépultures en fosses circulaires'.
 - 8 Identical practices characterise the Chasséen groups in the south of France, where deposits in circular pits also appeared from the middle of the fifth millennium (A. Schmitt and S. Van Willigen, 'Des morts chez les vivants au Néolithique moyen en France méridionale?', in J. Cauliez, I. Sénépart, L. Jallot, P. A. de Labriffe, C. Gilabert and X. Gutherz (eds), *De la tombe au territoire et actualité de la Recherche* (Toulouse, Archives d'Écologie Préhistorique, 2016), pp. 13–24). The community of practice across the area from the Danube hub to the southern France hub is too similar to result from the phenomenon of convergence; however, the methods of contact between the two groups are currently unknown.
 - 9 Namely the Bruebach-Oberbergen group, already mentioned, and the group that succeeded it between 4250 and 4050 BCE: the western Bischheim group of the Upper Rhine. The Michelsberg occupied the period from 4050–3850 BCE and the Munzingen from around 3850 to 3600 BCE.
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 - 11 Jeunesse, 'Les sépultures en fosses circulaires'.
 - 12 A. Testart, *Les morts d'accompagnement: La servitude volontaire I et II* (Paris, Éd. Errance, 2004); A. Testart, 'Doit-on parler de "sacrifice" à propos des morts

- d'accompagnement?', in J.-P. Albert and B. Midant-Reynes (eds), *Le sacrifice humain en Égypte ancienne et ailleurs* (Paris, Éd. Soleb, 2005), pp. 34–57.
- 13 P. Lefranc, R. M. Arbogast, F. Chenal et al., 'Inhumations, dépôts d'animaux et perles en cuivre du 4e millénaire sur le site Néolithique récent de Colmar "Aérodrome" (Haut-Rhin)', *Bulletin de la Société Préhistorique Française*, 109:4 (2012), 689–730.
 - 14 P. Lefranc, A. Denaire, C. Jeunesse et al., 'Dismembering Bodies and Atypical Human Deposits of the 4th Millennium in the Upper-Rhine Valley: Sacrificial Practices?', in E. Sibbesson and P. Bickle (eds), *Neolithic Bodies, Neolithic Studies Group Annual Conference, British Museum, London, 3rd November 2014* (Oxford, Oxbow Books), pp. 92–112.
 - 15 We should qualify this by specifying that here we refer to killings carried out beyond the practice of funerary accompaniment, which does not exclude a link with individuals buried in a conventional position; it is in fact possible, since 'true' graves and isolated bodies in a non-conventional position appear frequently in the same areas, that these possible sacrifices were offered to them.
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 - 17 Sir J.-G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (New York, Macmillan, 1922).
 - 18 G.-T. Basden, *Among the Ibos of Nigeria* (London, Seeley, Service & Co. Limited, 1921); H. Memel-Fotê, *L'esclavage dans les sociétés lignagères de la forêt ivoirienne (xvii^e–xx^e siècle)* (Paris, Éditions du CERAP/IRD Éditions, 2007).
 - 19 F. Boas, *Kwakiutl Ethnography* (Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1966).
 - 20 L. Brutti, *Du cannibalisme au capitalisme: Métamorphose d'un rite sacrificiel mélanésien* (Riga, Éditions Universitaires Européennes, 2011); F. J. P. Poole, 'Cannibals, Tricksters and Witches: Anthropophagic Images among Bimin-Kuskusmin', in P. Brown and D. Tuzin (eds), *The Ethnography of Cannibalism* (Washington, DC, Society for Psychological Anthropology, 1983), pp. 6–32.
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 - 22 M. Radiguet, *Les derniers sauvages: La vie et les mœurs aux îles marquises (1842 à 1859)* (Paris, Calmann Lévy, 1882).
 - 23 R. Linton, 'The Origin of the Skidi-Pawnee Sacrifice to the Morning Star', *American Anthropologist*, 28:3 (1926), 457–66.
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 - 26 Boas, *Kwakiutl Ethnography*; Roth, *Natives of Sarawak*; Frazer, *Golden Bough*.
 - 27 Memel-Fotê, *Esclavage*.
 - 28 Linton, 'Origin of the Skidi-Pawnee Sacrifice'; Brutti, *Cannibalisme au capitalisme*; Poole, 'Cannibals, Tricksters and Witches'; Radiguet, *Derniers sauvages*.
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- 31 D. Garrow, 'Odd Deposits and Average Practice. A Critical History of the Concept of Structured Deposition', *Archaeological Dialogues*, 19 (2012), 85–115.
- 32 Aside from deposits involving humans, in living societies our research identified only one example of a buried ceremonial deposit, among the Tlapanèques in Guerrero. The deposit, at the bottom of the pit, consists of various artefacts and plants symbolising the universe and is completed (or activated) by an animal sacrifice. Cf. D. Dehouve, *Offrandes et sacrifices en Mésoamérique* (Paris, Riveneuve Éditions, 2007).
- 33 Boas, *Kwakiutl Ethnography*.
- 34 Roth, *Natives of Sarawak*.
- 35 Frazer, *Golden Bough*.
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 - 55 This concept, almost a *topos*, finds its origin in *The Odyssey*. When digging a pit, a *Bothros*, and pouring in the blood of sacrificial victims, Ulysses invokes the souls of the dead (*Odyssey*, 10, 517–37).
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