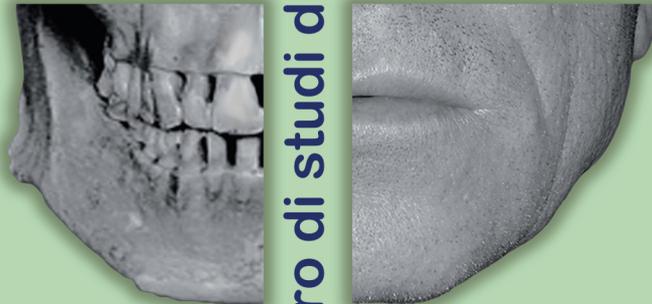


As part of RomArché 2015  
**3rd study meeting**  
**Anthropology and Archaeology at  
comparison**



**Archeologia e antropologia della morte**



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## Brief description of themes and contents of the meeting

The death is the only experience of life that unavoidably involves all but all can know it only through others experience, as it has been highlighted by Heidegger last century and as it has been seized very effectively by Luigi Pirandello when he wrote: «*The living ones believe to mourn their dead but they actually mourn their own death, their own reality that's no longer in the feeling of those who are gone*». French sociological anthropology, from the beginnings of twentieth century, codified in the conceptual form of a rite of passage, what the ancients have already exemplified in a metaphor of journey and transition; moments and events about death, for its condition of absolute liminality, therefore represents the core of collective experience and necessary mean to overcome that limit (*limes*) that allows to transit from one condition that's *no longer* to a new dimension, variably intended from culture to culture.

In that sense the death is the ultimate metaphor of border, of a "limit" that paradoxically is reached in the moment when *we aren't no more*, and therefore we cannot tell about it. A borderline, as defined, although it's a purely cultural construct, contributes to codify and strengthen the identity of realities that live on its margins. This is also why, the death as a border can contribute to define the identity of each one of us, because it's the highest point – natural or not – of the existence, and at the same time, the extreme act of earthly experience. It's the only tale we cannot tell but it's also the one through which other can tell about us, or the perception as Pirandello describes, they have had about our "reality" or even better about themselves through our "reality". A symbolical story, intimate and paradoxically choral, that nowadays we are used to experience in the form of television obituary and/or taking part at funerals. The death is also a biological event, during which the body goes through a metamorphosis that makes it transit from body dimension to mineral one, returning back to substance, in a process that can be altered randomly and/or intentionally by nature and by culture, providing space for ritual practices and/or cultural of symbolical codifying of our earthly essence, even those varying from society to society related to a notion that everyone of them can have dialectics between life and death, between death and what it's supposed will follow after it.

Who is confronted with past must necessarily overcome this border, outlining the features by what survives after it.

The third edition of the meeting *Anthropology and Archaeology at comparison* – taking a starting point of a wider retrospective observation recently merged into the volume *Archaeology and Anthropology of Death: History of an Idea. Semiology and funeral ideology of protohistoric level communities in theoretical observation between anthropology and archaeology*, Bari 2015 – (Nizzo 2015) will face these complex issues and provide to public and specialists an overall picture of the most fruitful theoretical approaches and the latest investigation methodologies put in place by cultural anthropology, archaeology, bio-archaeology and archaeoethanatology to seize the essence of this border, to decrypt the language of gestures, signs, feelings, rituals, fears and emotions that help to define it, with a focus on protohistoric level societies extincted or persistent but with an eye looking also to the contemporary, as always with an ambition like God Giano with two faces looking to the past in order to capture the essence of our present.

At the time depth of archaeology and its epistemological tradition with the material concreteness of our essence and our gestures will correspond, almost inevitably, the ability to synthesize and relativize to which belongs cultural anthropology, able to penetrate the complex mechanisms of ritual abstraction proper of human behavior, highlighting the emotional stratigraphy as well as conscious and unconscious contradictions of our feelings and our actions and the way in which we try - as far as possible rationally - to understand them and to decrypt them.

Among the issues upon which major international specialists will compare in an interdisciplinary dialogue (archaeological, anthropological, bioarchaeological, archaeoethanatology, semiotic, philosophical) stand out those related to the reconstruction of the ritual landscape and ritual performance, as interpretation of funerary praxis in its *formal* outcomes and in those *deviant* - in dual and often exciting implications of necrophilia and necrophobia – at analysis and reconstruction of the issues concerning the perception of death in its material and symbolic implications and its ritual abstractions (discussing themes and categories such as embalming, the *tanathosemiotics*, the *Anthropopoesis*, materiality/corporeality, individuality/dividuality, *material engagement*, *enchainment* etc. etc.), to the issues concerning the potentials and limitations of sociological and historical reconstruction through the investigation of the practices and funerary ideology and, more generally, to the discussion of the underlying problem of what is and is not and what it *means* or *doesn't mean* (in a semiotic meaning) a *burial*.

For those reasons, the results of this conference will provide one of the most ambitious and updated summary of the most controversial and complex aspects of historical debate on the society of the past and, at the same time, an important and in many ways unprecedented moment of reflection on one of the stages paradoxically more meaningful of existence itself, to the limit of being, when oneself finally reaches its fulfillment in the very moment when it's no longer – *when exists no more*.

## Organizational aspects and how to participate

The meeting is structured in four thematic sessions and a concluding panel discussion, coordinated and chaired by dedicated presidents, who will introduce and moderate the intervention of participants and their discussions, taking care of time schedule and content compliance.

Each session will be introduced by invited *keynote speakers*, who will have assigned opening speeches, with an aim to circumscribe and contextualize in a critical manner themes discussed and to preside the next debate. For each of these four sessions as for the final panel discussion there will be a possibility to submit a proposal for participation, in the manner set forth in the *call for papers*. The selected participations will be presented by the Authors during conference, after the introductory reports, in summary form, and **for a period not longer than 10 minutes**, based on an abstract previously shared among all participants. The synthesis of selected interventions will be followed by a broad discussion, which will include everyone interested.

The panel discussion that will take place in the afternoon of the third day, will provide an opportunity to final summary of the issues discussed previously and a further opportunity to discuss the prospects of the meeting; after an introductory report and synthetic speech of selected contributions, the discussion will be open to all the speakers and – to everyone interested and previously booked during conference.

During 20 days that precede this meeting, once disclosed the abstracts collected by call for papers, we will give the opportunity to all interested, to suggest additional questions and brief interventions online, in order to submit them during debate; both within thematic sessions as well as during the final panel discussion, upon evaluation of their relevance and usefulness (see below the paragraph: “*On line collection of questions and brief interventions*”).

The outcomes of the meeting, of discussions and panel discussion will be fully filmed and will be available to interested parties both through the website and *networks* of this event as well as during the final edition of the meeting, organized, as in past editions, by the publishing house *Editorial Service System* for Dià Cultura Foundation.

## Participation fees, refunds and certificates

There are no participation fees for speaker and the organization shall not give any refunds.

Participation in the meeting is **free** up to places and spaces completion. For those who will express request, agreements are being finalized to identify hotels and accommodation facilities affiliated with the event, which will be described in a special page of our site ([www.romarche.it](http://www.romarche.it)). Students and all interested parties who make a request by writing to our email [info@diacultura.org](mailto:info@diacultura.org), after the presentation of a valid ID and filling out the appropriate forms during the event, will receive a certificate to participation at this event, valid for the attainment of credits, where allowed and in terms provided by respective institutions to which they belong to.

## Chronological and geographical contexts

In the spirit that animated previous conferences of *Anthropology and Archaeology at comparison* and due to the multidisciplinary nature of the meeting, the purpose that it serves, as well as the breadth and complexity of topics, the contributions will necessarily be structured in a way to provide a summary of the issues discussed, to highlight first, with examples drawn from actual cases, methodological problems and the main interpretive perspectives implemented to contend them.

Whilst privileging reports on agricultural communities of pre-industrial and protohistorical level, are especially preferred and encouraged interventions highly interdisciplinary, without any specific limits on the geographical and/or chronological plan, as long as susceptible to a confrontation and a specific discussion, in theoretical and methodological framework traced for each of the sessions outlined below.

## Thematic scan and session problematics

### 1\_ The rule of exception: atypical death, atypical deceased, atypical ritual

#### **Summary of the main theoretical approaches and thematic units planned for this session**

- a) **The death as a boundary: ideological and cultural status of the boundary between norm and infringement, between human and inhuman, between burial and non-burial**
- b) **The “Atypical” death: «the Archaeology of War, Disaster, Violence, Crime and Disease»**
- c) **“Atypical deceased”: monstrosity, punishment and social marginalization**
- d) **The “atypical ritual”: «Burial Archaeology of Fear and Magic», from necrophobia to necrophilia**

#### **Problem definition**

Since its origin archaeology has always been more or less perceived in capturing - at least superficially, and often with interpretive ritualistic or ethnic-cultural excesses - some macroscopic demonstrations of funerary treatments considered deviant, such as, for example, localization of the deceased in urban environments with or without formal deposition (as in the case of human skeletal remains found in wells, caves or in other situations, apparently without any funeral coding), the practice of burial of corpses in the prone position or abnormally contracted, the absence/removal/intentional relocation of skeletal parts with peculiar symbolic importance as the skull, the use of special devices for the immobilization of the deceased, the mass graves related to war or pandemics, human sacrifices, capital punishments etc.

What's new on the epistemological level, therefore, isn't in itself the identification of the deceased and/or abnormal or deviant burials, but the methodological and theoretical systematization of their recognition and their interpretation (see on these issues RITTERSHOFER 1997, MURPHY 2008, *Sepolti tra i vivi* 2008, *Sepolture anomale* 2010).

From a purely sociological level, the comparison with the “deviance” and, more generally, with the “perception of deviance” presumes the existence of a collective representation coded as “normal”, possible only within communities relatively complex, able, for example, to process a net conceptual opposition between urban space and funerary space and, at the same time, to define rules and social roles through which, in a certain way, could determine the existence of a destiny of marginalization (in life and/or death) or, even, to inflict or cause death itself, in accordance to shared beliefs or to restore the “order” violated by behavior or by a physical or mental condition considered unusual.

In recent years, in terms of archaeological hermeneutics, the refinement of excavation methods and analysis - particularly through the bio-archaeology and archaeo-thanatology (DUDAY 2006) - combined with the results of the relativistic, semiotic and contextualizing approach to the post-processual critics have allowed to seize not only the extreme symbolic permeability of funeral gesture but also all its anomalies and exceptions, from the psychological and behavioral “denial” of grief to the extreme annihilation of the material corpses in the “non burial” and in his real “refusal-waste”.

The anthropological roots of this attitude were really well defined by A. Favole, especially for those civilizations in which, based on funeral gestures codified and shared, the denial of burial is set up as a discriminating choice, closely linked to the social features, identity features, or even biological features of deceased, in accordance with its age, sex, religion, ethnic origin, health, ethical or mental condition and, in general, to all those attributes that make him “different” compared with prevailing sentiment of humanity/civilization: *«Historically and ethnographically, the “corpse rejection” seems reserved for individuals who are situated outside the boundaries of humanity, or at least of the community: as bearers of a radical ethnic difference, as in cases of genocide; since they were considered unrelated to civil or religious society, as in the case of “executed/put to death”, heretics and suicides in the Middle Ages or even insane people and criminals in the modern age, when their corpses provide the raw material for anatomical studies [...]; and yet, as they still aren't part of humanity in the proper sense, as in the case of uninitiated children. In all these situations, the corpses can be treated as garbage, as such, are abandoned, thrown away, recycled, sold. The rejection seems to be defined in short as the exception that proves the rule: where there is full allocation of humanitas to an individual, the attention to remains is configured as an absolute necessity. Vice versa, the refusal of the corpses appears as an escape, often very dangerous, from the boundaries of humanity»*. (FAVOLE 2003, p. 30).

A discriminatory funeral treatment configures, therefore, as such when the identified individual is considered extraneous to the community and, therefore, also to its “ritual mechanisms”. This finding requires, of course, further contextualization, in order to, on one hand, define *habitus* of social reality in question and, on other hand, to identify ritual recurrences that distinguish within that same civilization burial treatment of the dead, to check, for example, if their assimilation to what is generally tend to consider (and, often, scornfully) as a “waste” actually can be understood as a punitive or if, instead, should rather be considered practice ritually codified and accepted, as they were in the past decades highlighted in parallel by the anthropological and archaeological research, focusing on the evolution of the concept of “waste/scrap/fragment” and its progressive making relative over time. The interpreter acts therefore on at least two different levels, the

combination of which is the only effective method to identify any deviations from normal behavior and, possibly, to try to explain its reasons.

Sometimes these two levels may coincide, therefore, to a differentiated treatment corresponds the more or less specular treatment in death. Clearly, for those civilizations without writing or alternative sources to those archaeological, funeral dimension is the only one that enables access in a sufficiently perspicuous manner even in everyday ambit. On this last point focuses the interpretive debate between a processual approach typically isomorphic and the postprocessual one that tends to be relativizing. If, however, the analysis focuses only on the ambit of death, the whole matter is altogether less random, leaving on a higher level of decoding any transposition even in the everyday ambit of an archaeologically deviant attitude and/or ethnographically found in the funeral ambit. All this, of course, on condition to don't deduce from practices or from recurring funeral customs in our society the reference points for the identification of "distinction" or "deviance" in communities of the past.

The ability, in this case also, consists in the exact recomposition of the "stratigraphy" of gestures and in the recognition of their intentionality. If, in fact, is quite clear the voluntary nature that may be hiding in a secondary deposition like a cremation (where it is, of course, the result of a conscious funeral gesture), is much more difficult to recognize the formative dynamics of a secondary burial, especially if multiple or collective, especially in those cases in which archeology is put in front of an incomplete context, of which is known only the terminal action and of which complexity can be seized only sometimes from time to time.

This applies, of course, even more in those cases where the anomaly predominates the norm and the repetitiveness usually implied to ritual gesture is substantiated by one of its more or less direct inversions, giving rise to what the critics, ultimately, began to define "deviant burial" or "anomalous burial". But also the key to decoding the "deviance" or the actual absence of intention of a formal deposition passes, necessarily, through the identification of the presence or absence of "gestures" and the reconstruction of their unequivocal randomness or voluntariness: "*Le geste funéraire n'est que la traduction du matériel rite, et le geste nous est seul accessible.*" (DUDAY ET ALII 1990, p. 44).

One of the objectives on which this session focuses is, therefore, to try to open the way to greater critical awareness about one of the most complex funerary archeology aspects, the ones in which the codes of the ritual are intentionally placed to discussion and logics that usually govern the dynamics of death appear reversed or, more or less deliberately, ignored. As mentioned, these conditions may give rise to various possible forms of "deviance", often interrelated, each of them, which - especially in the last decade - has been a subject of specific insights from specific areas of study, aimed to explore the ways in which such atypicality was perceived and, more or less as a result, reflected in the burial in the circumstances of the death, depending on the characteristics of the deceased or on those of the ritual. (Nizzo 2015).

The "anomaly" of the treatment, in fact, could have been totally released from the identity and condition of the dead, as a result of accidental external factors (war, epidemics, homicides, accidents, diseases etc.), that would dismantle the logic of ritual giving place, for necessity or, also, by choice, to abnormal behavior (the "**atypical death**").

In the second case the "anomaly" may isomorphically distinguish the deceased in life as in death ("**atypical deceased**"), due to a series of innate characteristics that, in the eyes of the community, made him "different", making him "discriminated" also in the funeral dimension; in other cases, however, this perception could have been limited to the terminal stages of life, for the appearance of "diversifying" connotations such as excluding him, conceptually and materially, from the community, up to decree the killing; a circumstance, the last one, which could also take place in contexts with sacred connotations and could have allow them to assimilate the victim to a "scapegoat".

The final category is the one in which the features of the anomaly are mainly absorbed by the ritual ("**atypical ritual**"), in often explicit forms and, however, presuming the existence of a "deviant ritual" obviously mortifying, connected to beliefs and superstitions that often could act outside of the formalism of the funeral ceremony, resulting in interventions after the deposition aimed at suppressing the nefarious influence of the dead. In many cases the necrophobia that distinguished them could have been related to common factors of these two above mentioned categories, but there are episodes in which such attitudes are completely separated from the specific characteristics of deceased or of his death, to find explanation in fear exerted by death itself and taphonomic phenomena associated to it, forcing the survivors to macabre prophylactic interventions on the corpse. In this case, even if a bit forcibly, can also fit in all those circumstances of "noise\intervention" extraneous to the mechanisms encoded by the funerary ritual, such as, for example, necromancy, necrophilia and, in general, all those forms "dialogue/interaction" with the deceased that diverge from customs encoded in the societies - subjects of this specific observation.

## 2\_The poetics of emotions: *performance* and *ritual landscape*

### **Summary of the main theoretical approaches and thematic units planned for this session**

- a) **Perception and meaning of the rituals emotional dimension**
- b) **Definitions, limits and meaning of ritual landscape**
- c) **Archaeology of rituals “performance”**
- d) **«Constructing deathscapes»: construction and reconstruction of “ritual landscape” in a funerary ritual**
- e) **The dialog between living and dead after burial: offerings, libations, cult of the dead and fragmentation ritual**

### **Problem definition**

«The qualities of performance can be analyzed in terms of several overlapping features. First of all, performances communicate on multiple sensory levels, usually involving highly visual imagery, dramatic sounds, and sometimes even tactile, olfactory, and gustatory stimulation. By marching with a crowd, crying over a tragic drama, or applauding an unconvincing politician, even the less enthusiastic participants of the audience are cognitively and emotionally pulled into a complex sensory experience that can also communicate a variety of messages. Hence, the power of performance lies in great part in the effect of the heightened multisensory experience it affords: one is not being told or shown something so much as one is led to experience something. And according to the anthropologist Barbara Myerhoff, in ritual-like behavior “not only is seeing believing, doing is believing”» (BELL 2009, p. 160).

In archeology all or almost all the emotional perceptions and multi-sensory referred by Bell are intended irreversibly to vanish without a trace that might have left any material importance. The performance component of funerary ritual of past civilizations, therefore, despite its conceptual and symbolic significance, is the most elusive, reconstructed only on the basis of the few, and often modest evidence left on the ground in those cases where the deposition place coincides with the ritual and/or it is possible to have some knowledge of the entire “topography of the ritual”.

Such contingency collides, then, with the growing awareness that for a proper understanding of the “ritual” is necessary to know, at the same time, the “context and the act”, as it has been recently highlighted by the archaeologist T. Insoll: «Yet to recognise the subtleties and complexities of ritual will require definition on a case-by-case basis: ritual can be both odd and routine, it can be undertaken within the prism of the “focusing lens” or elsewhere; it is both the context and the act which are crucial in understanding ritual.” (INSOLL 2004, p. 12).

This results in archeology or at least, should result, in a greater focus on those ritual attitudes that imply just as many intentional actions that contribute to articulate beyond simple appearance the symbolic context of the burial. The reconstruction of these aspects, as well as providing a useful critical support for the interpretation and reading of other surviving sources, allows to penetrate the logic of those behaviors that, often, tend to flatten by regulation of the funeral ritual, smoothing out differences and/or masking as superstitious, blasphemous, antinomian or oppositional was not considered adequate to represent the common perception or, rather, the “dominant” perception of the ritual.

In order to reach a better approximation from restorative framework of funeral practices through the filter of their archaeological reflection is necessary, however, that the attention of archaeologists spreads beyond the primary objective of their interest, represented, of course, from grave and its proximal accessory elements, as mounds and grave markers.

This means not only to put to analysis the plan of burials for the encoding of any logic that could preside over the “construction” (social and/or ideological; internal and external) of burial space and its wider dialectic with the surrounding area: paraphrasing the concept of “constructing death” of the anthropologist C. Seale (SEALE 1998), we could define “constructing deathscape”. In order to understand, at least in part, the essence of the “funeral beyond the grave” (which often represents only the final spatial dimension of a far more complex ritual process), it’s necessary to extend the stratigraphic exploration to entire ritual landscape, including in the analysis all those traces of activity that could have characterized it, as it happens in practical excavation of living contexts but with (almost) obvious awareness of being in front of a reality that’s profoundly permeated with the ritual, at least limited to those cases where the spaces assigned for burial practices result conceptually and operationally separated from those reserved to the everyday residential and/or production activity.

The same problem, of course, lays also in the field of anthropological research, where the funeral landscape or, more broadly, the ritual, for its intrinsic logics and dynamics, can hardly fit in the everyday of ethnographic observation, for reasons that cannot be simply or logistically related to available time but could also being related to accessibility itself and/or intelligibility of performed ritual actions, with significant changes from culture to culture, often pervaded by filters and/or interdictions difficult to penetrate from an “emic” point of view.

On a practical level this presumes a waste of resources and time often unusual for ethnographic investigation and/or for the dig of a necropolis. In archeology, in most cases, this approach is rather conditioned by circumstances which are essentially epistemological, related to a vision of the discipline aimed at favoring internal and and/or external material appearances of funeral evidence, ignoring the overall picture in favor of a limited vision of substantively, historically or artistically more perspicuous aspects.

On a specifically methodological level is now sufficiently clear how often the reconstruction of the ritual landscape is essential for a correct interpretation of ritual and symbolic aspects of burials, integrating reading on a sociological and on ideological level, as the ethnographic research has already highlighted earlier. The last one, in fact, has repeatedly highlighted the complex dialectic semiotics that can be hidden behind every single ceremonial act, before, during and after the burial of remains of the deceased, especially in the case of complex practices such as those incineratory, whose performance can assume, very often, distinct localizations and a conceptual separation more or less marked among its various stages, with all the difficulties that this may result from the point of view of the perspicuity of their archaeological "residues".

It is, more broadly, about key elements for a proper understanding of «that kind of dialogue that could have been established between the living and dead» (ORTALLI 2008, p. 140), made of gestures more or less unexpected or ritual practices regularly repeated such as, for example, the practice of libation and/or the "destruction/killing" (with fragmentation and dispersion) intentional of objects during the funeral ceremony of which there is ample evidence both on ethnographic and archaeological level.

Based on these assumptions, in this section we will try to deal problematically the conceptual definition of the spatial and emotional aspects of the ritual, with attention to the anthropological and/or archaeological approach to issues concerning reconstruction/interpretation of ritual landscape and *performance* as well as their mutual relations and interference.

### 3\_The social life cycle of bodies and things: reconstruct and rethink the ritual and social reality with material engagement, enchainment e actor network theory

#### **Summary of the main theoretical approaches and thematic units planned for this session**

- a) **The body as an object and materiality as a person: conceptual and ritual dialectics among objectification and personification**
- b) **The social life cycle of bodies and things: the configuration of a relationship (intended as «network», «enchainment» or «entanglement») between "men" and "things" in the social sphere and in its funeral projection.**
- c) **Dividuality and individuality: interpretive perspectives and material acknowledgment of ritual fragmentation processes in funerary environment**
- d) **Necropolis as networks and places of social production**

#### **Problem definition**

Among the constants of the latest theoretical reflection on performative aspects of ritual stand out in particular those related to the cognitive and perceptual factors of "agents", on one hand, and "observers" on the other. Within these terms archaeological criticism began to move from the '80s, thanks to incitement from a tighter and dynamic comparison with the contemporary social and cultural anthropology debate which allowed, proceeding by approximation, to assess critically, and so to speak, "dismantle" the main "western" intellectual categories (such as those based in particular on oppositions object/subject, culture/nature, intellect/material etc.), showing relativity in terms both historical and contextual, from the wider field of ideologies to the most specific of *gender*, *social age*, *ethnicity* etc.

Archaeology, in recent years, has variously attempted to adopt from anthropology and sociology some conceptual tools that can "direct" analytically and constructively the research. On the processual front, attention concentrated, mainly, on the reconstruction of the cognitive aspects of the past societies as well as can be learned from their material remains (so called "**materiality**") through what C. Renfrew has recently defined "**material engagement approach**" (RENFREW 2001, ID. 2004, *Rethinking Materiality* 2004, RENFREW 2005, ID. 2012).

A similar attention to cognitive aspects of material reality and the overall theme of "relationship/bind/dependence man-thing" ("**human-thing entangled**" or "**Entanglement Theory**") occurs also in post-processual approach but, rather than privileging in functionalist ways, analysis and reconstruction of the past mentality, is reversed on both "observed object/subject" and on "observer" and their mutual "interaction", based on a broader reflection on the mind mechanisms taking into account the most recent findings of neuronal-science, has highlighted how the neuronal processes that govern the perception are the same that determine the conceptualization of what is perceived. The investigation was therefore shifted from historical and contextual encoding of the symbolic meanings of gestures, objects or images, to the analysis of the dynamics that govern their formulation and are based, first, on their interaction with the reality (the last HODDER 2011, ID. 2011a e ID. 2012).

The centrality of the body in this interaction is one of major acquisitions of post-processual archeology in the '90s (with large shares also in terms cognitive-processual), which may give rise to a specific theoretical branch called *"Embodied archeology"* (SWEENEY, HODDER 2002, HAMILAKIS, PLUCIENNIK, TARLOW 2002, MESKELL, JOYCE 2003, NILSSON STUTZ 2003, GILCHRIST 2004, FOWLER 2004, JOYCE 2004, SOFAER 2006, JOYCE 2008, NILSSON STUTZ 2008, FAHLANDER, OESTIGAARD 2008, REBAY-SALISBURY, SØRENSEN, HUGHES 2010, SØRENSEN, REBAY-SALISBURY 2012, GOWLAND, THOMPSON 2013). The dynamics through which our body interacts with the surrounding environment, determine, inevitably, the way in which the body is perceived and conceptualized, with results which, of course, can vary depending of multiple internal conditioning (psychological, physical, emotional, neuronal etc.) and external (environmental, ideological, geographical, historical, cultural, etc.).

This has resulted in recent times in a general rethinking of the concept of *"materiality"* and led to focus attention on the network of relationships that it presumes, with specific regard to the *"physicality"* and its inevitable *"transversal"* position between the funerary field and the living field (FAHLANDER, OESTIGAARD 2008A). Under these assumptions, therefore, the body, as well as the notion of *"individuality"* and the resulting *"person"*, assume always more blurred boundaries, to the point of making *"equivocal"* the biological perception of corporeality, viewing objectively *"culturally and historically"* the apparent analytics: *«Different cultures and ages not only attribute personhood to different things (and not all biological humans are guaranteed personhood), but construct different criteria for where a person begins and where a person ends. In other words [...] the boundary around the self is not isomorphic with the biological body, which is itself culturally and historically mutable.»* (HODDER, HUTSON 2003, p. 104).

This theoretical perspective was further developed by J. Chapman (particularly CHAPMAN 2000, CHAPMAN, GAYDARSKA 2007, IID. 2010 e IID. 2011) who was responsible for the introduction in our discipline of the concept of **"enchainment"** (*«a chain of social relations achieved through exchange»*) and to that closely related of *"fragmentation"* (*«to divide, for the purposes of distributing relations either through enchainment or accumulation»*) (GAMBLE 2007, p. 137). These theories are inspired by anthropological discussion on the topic of *"dividuality"* and the *"partibility/fragmentation"* of the person, the subject of specific attention especially thanks to the investigations of Marilyn Strathern in a wider reflection on the dynamics of goods and gift in the Melanesian community, turn to relativize the essence that usually became paradigmatic in modern western cultures (STRATHERN 1988; cfr. inoltre EAD. 1992, EAD. 1992A, EAD. 1999 and EAD. 2004). For Strathern the Melanesian personality is the direct result of a *"concatenation"* of social relations, the same that supervises relational mechanisms of the *"gift"* on which is based their economy and Strathern has defined *"enchainment"*; referring to the notions of *"objectification"* and *"personification"* and the central role in this process held by the relation between *"objects"* and *"persons"*, the anthropologist achieved in to a relativization of the notion of *"property"*, demonstrating its inadequacy to represent a system disconnected from those mechanisms that in the Western world are conventionally related to *"individuality"*.

As a result of such *«partibility»* each person could therefore be considered a dividible entity and, at the same time, in itself constitute the synthesis of the larger *"set"* of which it makes part (such as, for example, the *clan*); in this way it simultaneously embraced all relational concatenations that countersigned it in the relational dimension *"unique"* as well as in the *"plural"* of its essence, so that a *"part"* became sufficient to represent the *"set"*.

Subsequent research has shown that the Strathernian concept of *"partibility"* could not be defined on the basis of a comparative debate limited only to Western cultures, but should be verified in terms even more relativistic and historically contextualized, as summarized recently by C. Fowler referring to the various epistemological issues raised by this argument and by operating an interesting comparison between the thesis given by Strathern on Melanesian *"system"* (*"Dividual and partible"*) and investigations of C. Busby in South India (*"Dividual and permeable"*): *«Partibility operates through isolating and extracting parts of the person, and permeability circulates quantities of substance between discrete yet pervious people. Both exhibit features different from the indivisibility that characterizes the western individual.»* (FOWLER 2004, p. 32).

Despite the undoubted difficulties related to alterations of this type, Strathern's intuitions have proven highly effective for in-depth analyses of *"materiality"* issues and, more generally, for a reevaluation of potential links between things and people, as seen clearly from the reflections of anthropologist J. Hoskins about the *"biography"* of objects and about their centrality to the recomposition of life and the *"story"* of men, where these weren't able or willing to tell, as she has been able to verify in her research experience among Indonesian Kodi's as its customary for archaeologists (HOSKINS 1998).

The idea of *"life cycle of things"*, as referred by J. Chapman and B. Gaydarska opening of their essay in 2007, significantly entitled *"Parts and Wholes"* (CHAPMAN, GAYDARSKA 2007), is inspired directly by the theoretic assumptions mentioned above, to integrate the concept of **«social life of things»** (APPADURAI 1986) with the Strathernian notion of *"enchainment"* and diminish the effects on archaeological practice. On the methodological level this was made possible by identifying in the documentation of the recent Balkan prehistory of behaviors related to intentional fragmentation of specific *"material realities"* (and, more or less, consequently, also their subsequent *"re-use"*), often with a particular symbolic importance (such as anthropomorphic statuettes, decorated ceramics, the so-called *"pintaderas"* or, even, the skeletal remains of deceased) or related to certain contexts with rich ritual values (such as burials, the repositories or places of

worship). Ritual fragmentation could therefore constitute an extreme metaphor of human “partibility” and the system of relations connected to it, obtained by splitting certain objects in “parts” that are capable alone, as well as through the whole, to represent the “whole”.

The outcomes of these hypothesis in the field of funerary rituals are quite obvious and have been variously developed by Chapman himself, especially regarding performative implications of gestures related to intentional fragmentation, allowing to transpose directly in on-the-spot practice a large body of theoretical speculations through which it became possible to consider alternative responses to gestures and behaviors otherwise left without adequate explanation. This occurred, for e.g. regarding the interpretation of some peculiar forms of manipulation of the skeletal remains, often compared to incidental disorders or deviant practices of necrophobic type, but after a closer examination have been potentially attributable to specific ritual beliefs such as those related to the logic of “**Enchainment Theory**”, that is - desire to create a tangible connection between the deceased and the survivors through the fragmentation of their skeleton and/or objects variously related to their sphere of identity.

This inserted in metaphorical logics of archeology a new possibility of interpretation, based on a conceptual equation between the behaviors related to the material body of the deceased and those characterizing their material culture, meaning the one as the projection of the other one, and vice versa, and including in the matter that network of relationships (“enchainment”) that could connote “fractionally” a specific person, the person’s group and their various possible cultural expressions. The analysis, therefore, ended almost inevitably to invest broader discussion on the individuality theme, in its anthropological dynamics as well as in its material evidence, at least limited to the way they tend to stratify and to be understood in their archaeological size/projection.

The main challenge consisted in clarifying a shared methodology in order to detect material residues of that “dividuality” theorized by Strathern, assuming that even in archaeologically observed realities could exist those peculiar identity and relational dynamics encountered ethnographically in India or Melanesia, as regarding the perception of the existence of a metaphorical relationship between people and objects as well as regarding the very concept of the community in the forms given above with “fractality”, “partibility” or “permeability”, as an alternative to the canonical opposition between “individuality” and “community” that the Western mind is traditionally accustomed to.

According to Chapman this purpose could be achieved by developing reliable operating methods for the reconstruction of the “**biography of things**” through the collection, verification and interpretation of cases of voluntary fragmentation and systematic use of defunctionalized objects; an aspect, this one, on which, almost inevitably, critics of “**Fragmentation Theory**” would be more focused to highlight the difficulties related to the recognition of a deliberate awareness in acts that could have been alike due to random factors or related to a simple need for reuse or as the direct result of involuntary mechanisms related to the post-depositional dynamics and/or method of formation of the deposit and, last but not least, to the circumstances of the discovery and the characteristics of dig’s procedures and the quality of documentation, very often such that don’t allow an extensive and thorough investigation of the complex subject of study or, even a comprehensive reconstruction of its diagenetic process.

The records collected by Chapman are quite wide and complete, although not always marked by an appropriate statistical survey to make it representative of a codified ritual and shared collectively. However, there are situations in which observed behaviors are undeniably attributable to an explicit symbolic desire, as occurs in those cases where parts of the same object are placed in separate graves in the same necropolis (“*inter-burial re-fits*”), with a time interval such that makes us presume estimated long-term storage in the time of the fragment found in this recent context. The aim of establishing a “material connection” between two or more individuals identified by parts of the same object (or, even, from portions of the same bone skeleton) lets very presumptively assume that at the beginning there was an intentional ritual gesture connected to its fragmentation, resulting in the division and prolonged storage in view of its final deposition; a set of deliberate acts that lend themselves therefore to be interpreted assuming the desire to create a deep “concatenation” between the world of the living and the dead, between ancestors and descendants, invoking consequently parental type relationships through “personified objects” or, vice versa, of “objectified persons”.

An «*objectification*» that could also take place by means of plastic metaphors of human physicality, as the anthropomorphic statuettes in terracotta widely spread in the Balkans, on which Chapman dwells with particular attention to check the existence of parallels between rituals treating them as treating human remains. In case of manipulation, the skeletal remains could have been, in fact the subject of separate behavioral strategies (not necessarily alternative), all related to their “modularity”, of which Chapman provides the following outline:

«**fragmentation** – the sub-division of the skeleton into different and major parts (e.g. the torso), some or many of which were never buried in the context of the “final” burial [...]

**addition** – the deliberate incorporation of human bones from another skeleton of the same age/biological sex identity into a burial of a more or less complete burial [...]

**removal** – the extraction from the grave of a largely complete skeleton of one human bone or a small number of human bones for removal to another context [...]

**re-combination** – the creation of a hybrid body by the placing of part of one human body in juxtaposition to that of part of the body of another human of different age/sex or another species [...]

**substitution** – the replacement of a human bone in an otherwise complete burial by the bone of another species or by a material object [...]

**re-integration** – the completion of a partial skeleton by placing the missing bone back in the anthropologically correct place but clearly without the previously destroyed articulation [...].» (CHAPMAN 2010, p. 33).

Of course, because the contexts characterized by such “behavior” may be relevant for the “ritual” it’s necessary that there are indications sufficiently insightful to reconnect the formation to a real cultural awareness, difficult to recognize not only in the presence of any unintentional post-depositional interferences, but, especially, in all those cases where such burials have secondary character, resulting in unintentional “fragmentation”, “selections”, “removal” or “contamination” of skeletal remains, as physical anthropology and, at last, archaeoethnology have shown, even with the support of a wide ethnographic documentation.

Despite these theories - next to adhesions more or less passionate - have raised critics, at least in part, embraceable (see about it FOWLER 2004, pp. 66-71, 114, SOFAER 2006, pp. 12 ss., REBAY-SALISBURY, SØRENSEN, HUGHES 2010, KNAPPETT 2012, pp. 199 s. e BRITAIN, HARRIS 2010), however, they raise a number of issues which, in our opinion, cannot be neglected in a mature reflection on the issues of ritualism and of funeral ideology; they, in fact, don’t just limit to introduce in archaeological context some achievements of anthropological criticism regarding the concepts of “personhood” and “(in)dividuality”, but develop at the same time a series of methodological and heuristic tools for a more careful and accurate perception of the various trends associated with ritual gestures such as those related to fragmentation, establishing important cognitive and symbolic parallels between “bodies” and “objects” and, especially, between material outcomes of attitudes related to concepts of “personification” and “objectification” and their dialectics.

The aspect that, however, seems oversensitive to further developments is linked to the concept of “concatenation”, in its assumptions as well as in its results; an issue that, independently, was simultaneously analyzed in-depth by funerary archeology inspired by “philosophical-anthropological” current of “**Actor-network-theory**”, replacing the concept of “enchainment” to the similar one of “network”.

The destabilization and the relativization of the concept of “individual/person” has caused, since the early 80’s, a progressive and almost inevitable decline of resulting theories centered on the notion of “social person”, essential for the processual interpretation of the social dimension of funeral practices. In this gradual process of deconstruction of Western thought categories the only concept that still preserved some “validity” was related to several times evoked “interaction”, on which the philosophical and anthropological critics had begun to dwell their attention, from the first theories on “agency” and “**social life of things**” to the most recent developments in the so-called “**actor-network-theory**” (“ANT”).

The essential point of this thesis focuses on the idea that reality is articulated by a complex system of interactions in which are involved not only men (individually and/or in groups), but also their cultural products (objects, images, concepts, words, etc.) as well as the natural and/or artificial surrounding around them.

Born from a post structuralist reflection of historical and ethnographic type about evolution of the scientific method and about the relationship between science and culture, and between scientists and phenomena from these discovered and observed, the ANT, in its later developments by its main theorists (especially M. Callon, J. Law and B. Latour), has gradually expanded to cover the entire plot of possible relationships between men and surrounding universe (see., in particular, LATOUR 2005, for more prospective critics, SALDANHA 2003). The “agency” that all objects have, means that they can interact with the reality, helping to alter and/or modify it, but this interaction doesn’t exist by itself (in the abstract or absolute sense, as it is usual to insinuate in structural-functionalist or processualist context), but only as a result of their contact with a human counterpart; the “agency”, is also not fixed in time but can vary depending on the historical context, on the prospect of the counterparty or of the observer’s and/or, in the last case, on the tools that are used to examine it.

For ANT theorists, therefore, this “network” determines the notion of “society” and on it should linger the “sociological” search, starting from an overall rethinking of the nature and essence of the categories for which is customary to assume that they compose the “social”.

It is, of course, a reflection in many ways paradoxical and unsettling that prompted its own theorists in the years to take back and precise their first formulations, in order to mitigate the excessive relativism, the “fluidity” or absence of orthodoxy by many attributed to their theories.

This, however, has not diminished the good fortune, as revealed by the application of ANT principles to most different disciplines from geography to medicine, to economy, to anthropology, to archaeology, to computer science, with implications not always faithful to the original intent but just as much potentially productive at a time when the concept of “network” has been proteically implemented thanks to the universal success of instruments based on “increase” and “exploitation” of “relationships” as “Internet” and “social networks”.

The opening of new heuristic perspectives, then, although not supported by a specific “methodology”, has the great value of having allowed the overcoming of insidious prejudices, directing research towards new cognitive objectives whose potential is yet to be fully explored. After all, as the same Latour specifies, «ANT is first of all a negative argument. It does not say anything positive on any state of affairs» (LATOUR 2005, p. 141); but it is precisely the absence of an argument constructed as the sum of “positive” observations, for ANT’s theorists,

that becomes possible to overcome those characteristic anthropocentric preconceptions on which it is customary to base the perception of social, to allow then to anchor it in an actually “objective” perspective even though, as he had at first assumed, not more literally “symmetrical” (LATOUR 2005, p. 76; for the “archaeological” prospect on the topic see. PREUCEL 2006, p. 151, OLSEN 2007, SHANKS 2007, OLSEN 2010, OLSEN ET ALII 2012, HODDER 2012, p. 94).

In this sense, therefore, can be embraced, what Latour says about the fact that no “interaction” can legitimately be considered “isotope”, “synchronic”, “synoptic”, “homogeneous” and “isobaric”.

Through the deconstruction of the social, as it is commonly understood, Latour arrives to its recomposition in a new perspective, which assumes importance not the abstract idea of the social itself but what relationships/associations produce as effect, helping to actively transform reality or - to use the term adopted by Callon borrowing it intentionally from linguistics and then reclaimed by Latour - to “translate”, giving rise to the “sociology of translation” (where the term “translation” is to be understood as «*a relation that does not transport causality but induces two mediators into coexisting*») which, for its theoretician, is the most suitable definition of “actor-network-theory”: «*can now state the aim of this sociology of associations more precisely: there is no society, no social realm, and no social ties, but there exist a translations between mediators that may generate traceable associations*» (LATOUR 2005, p. 108).

And it’s exactly in the traceability of such associations/translations and in the understanding of their meaning and their effects that, in the wake of ANT, began to deal with archaeological investigation both in the “cognitive-processual” as well as in the post-processual approach, stimulating a general reunion of theoretical perspectives.

The implications of this almost unexpected convergence, however, need yet to produce significant results but their potential, at least for what concerns the rethinking of the categories of social and interpretation of the relationship “human-things” are undoubtedly worthy of attention as highlighted recently by C. Knappett supporting an integration between the methodological tools of the “Social Network Analysis” (“SNA”) and theoretical ones of ANT: «*By combining SNA with ANT we can bring together people and things both methodologically and theoretically*» (KNAPPETT 2011, p. 8).

It is easy to imagine how one of the areas in which this approach can give most interesting fruits will presumptively be the area of “funerary sociology”, in which the “interaction” (understood in a “performative” sense) between the deceased, those who participate in funeral ceremony, the context in which its various parts are held (inhabited, grave, necropolis, landscape etc.) and objects that materially take part in it, create all together a group of associations with strong symbolic connotations that, moreover, are enhanced by virtue of their reciprocity.

The main novelty of the quickly described approach above can consist in the acquisition of awareness of the role of the dead as “network” communication vehicle of the relations of the group to which belongs and a “non-human actor” of such relationships; a kind of process of “materialization” of the deceased as an ancestor who, through his new status, continues to express his “agency” and to be an interpreter and actor of the reports of his “network”. The effort of the interpreters is, therefore, in a codification of such “transformations” in the sense of that «*sociology of translation*» theorized by Callon which causes reassembling of the categories traditionally static of social in a perspective in which prevail the dynamism and the fluidity typical for “human-thing” relationships.

#### 4\_The construction of identit[y/ies] after death: between *thanato-metamorphosis* and *anthropo-pòiesis*

##### **Summary of the main theoretical approaches and thematic units planned for this session**

- a) **The construction of identity during and after death**
- b) **Places and bodies: “disappear, remain, reemerge”**
- c) **The strategies of «cultural control of putrefaction» between archaeology and anthropology**
- d) **Beyond putrefaction: intentional interventions on bodies after death**

##### **Problem definition**

«*The ritual attention that universally surrounds the corpses (and that seems connected to the same phylogenetic origin of the human being), arises from the fact that they are “remains” of humanity and not simple organic residual. Preparing to take leave from the corpses, the community deals with that evanescent and residual humanitas that’s characterizing the remains. If life in humans “embed” culture through anthropopoietic operations of aesthetic type, or daily ritual, death threatens to put an end to these actions, placing the bodies in a sort of anthropological limbo, giving rise to the liminal category of the remains, suspended between culture and biology, between organic and inorganic, between presence and absence, between human and post-human. Cultural investments and affective whose bodies are subject in life do not dissolve completely in the onset of death: in the remains still resonates, even if fading, the echo of humanity carved in them.*» (FAVOLE 2003, p. 22).

The quoted passage condenses the results of a wider reflection that, since the early 90s, has been developing in Italy over the interpretation of the processes of “anthropo-poesis”, or “social construction” of a person, in

particular by anthropologist Francesco Remotti and his School. That issue is indissolubly linked to the debate on the concept of "identity" on which has been concentrated anthropological criticism in the last three decades, in an attempt, especially, to emancipate themselves from cultural and ethnocentric barriers that prevent us from seizing the essence in a definable perspective, finally, "post colonial".

Among the most innovative contributions of Italian anthropological reflection on the theme of the social construction of identity, is without any doubt, its conceptual extension to the "sphere of death", with the inclusion in the anthropo-poietic process the phase of "life" that extends beyond earthly experience, giving rise to what Remotti, integrating theories of Favole, defined "Thanatos-metamorphosis" ("Tmm", the "cultural transformation" of bodies and spirits of the dead), and had place, with "anthropo-poiesis" ("Ap", «interventions, conscious or not, by which individuals living is shaped, not only their bodies but also their minds, their emotions, their behavior») in the «general category» of "anthropo-metamorphosis" ("AMM") (FAVOLE 2003, REMOTTI 2006A). For Remotti the "Thanatos-metamorphosis", assuming explicit intentionality, arises at a level conceptually and symbolically more "significant" (or, better, "expressive") than the "anthropo-poiesis", since «a community can hide its anthropo-poietic (Ap) objectives and procedures, keeping them hidden in the folds of everyday life, but the operations of Thanatos-metamorphosis (Tmm) necessarily belong to the level of aware designs (although awareness cannot be related to assumptions, deep goals, and implications of these operations)» (REMOTTI 2006A, p. 6).

This reconstruction finds some of its assumptions more or less direct in theorizations of anthropologist A. Appadurai, to whom we owe the allocation of a "social life" on inanimate reality and, therefore, consequently, also to the one that can be considered the type of "material" par excellence of humanity: the "corpse" or, more generally, the "body", that it is alive or dead. Based on these acquisitions the "body" was started to be perceived not as a simple material reality, bounded and limited, but rather as a fluid "frontier" (in the Barthian sense), a construct of identity with soft edges, suspended between the cognitive sphere of "perception" and the cultural and social of "representation".

As shown clearly by Favole in the quoted passage, in this "plot" the corpse, condensing in itself, simultaneously, the human condition with the material one, represents not only the extreme synthesis of earthly experience but also the concrete product of a long anthropo-poietic process, the realization of which can last well beyond the extinction of the individual component that originally had the connotation and that death, as Hertz had guessed, with its biological metamorphosis risks to compromise deleting forever with corporeality also his "social being."

In order this does not happen and the body could become itself a product of so-called "material culture" - maintaining, therefore, its "social dimension" - is inevitable and necessary a confrontation with the organic appearance of its essence, which causes the body, independently of the human will, is subject to natural transformations that, in the absence of exceptional environmental factors, alter irreparably the appearance and texture, to cancel it altogether for by that Favole and Remotti have defined, very appropriately, "Thanatos-morphosis" ("Tm"), that is «the processes of natural order that attack the body with death».

The main novelty of the Remotti's and his School approach consists precisely in the detailed review of the multiple cultural values inherent to the processes of "Thanatos-metamorphosis", from which it became possible to systematize and categorize conceptually the main attitudes that follow the death and the "problem" of the treatment of the corpses of which there exist historical and ethnographic demonstrations.

Reworking on anthropological bases the Heidegger's philosophical intuition of "Dasein" and skimming some absolutist aspects, since 1993, Remotti highlighted the many similarities between the social perception of space and places/buildings, on one hand, and of body, on the other; an analogy which, however, was apparent even at the linguistic level, by means of concepts semantically polysemous like the one - well known to anthropology - of "habitus" ("appearance", "body shape", "attitude", "disposition", "character", "dress", "a way to dress", "clothing"), derived from the latin verb "habito" (a frequentative of the most common "habeo"), whose principal understandings are "use to", "have" or "hold" and "live", "dwell" (REMOTTI 1993, pp. 32 ss.). Through in-depth investigation of the relation between "sites/bodies understood as objects through which expresses the culture as much as power", Remotti forth came to an enucleation of a set of three categories which, refer to "the theme of time", would be common to both extremes of the analogy: «I) what disappears. II) What remains III) What emerges.» (REMOTTI 1993, p. 76).

Applied to the body this classification effectively summarizes what are the antropo-poietic strategies for Remotti regarding the handling of corpses and the "cultural putrefaction control", especially regarding the basic opposition between seeing "disappear" and "let remain" forms of humanity. Within these two alternatives for Remotti are carried on major cultural and behavioral strategies through which can be confronted with death and, in this case, with its unavoidable biological contingencies; an aspect that becomes even more explicit when the corpse in question is that of the "sovereign" and the "choice" between the one and the other option anticipates the way in which can be understood the transmission of political power and/or the same conception of the State. Generally, there is the problem of the "identity" concept because, as Remotti noted: «In a moment when the various communities decide what to disappear and how to do it - they decide about their identity. And when we find in the category of disappearing - as it is inevitable - the problem of death and

that of corpses treatment, the sense of identity is particularly acute, since death is the event that most of all puts into question the identity (social as well as individual). [...].

*In order to define "who we are?" we need to establish some distance (a difference) regarding those who came before us, as we need to establish some continuity. Continuity and discontinuity with the past are ingredients or essential factors for the construction of identity» (REMOTTI 1993, p. 77 and 87).*

It is not difficult to understand how these reflections are of vital importance in an archaeological perspective. The anthropological survey conducted by Remotti demonstrates, undoubtedly, as the focus of interpretation should be moved from the mere recording/viewing of the funerary ritual in itself with its "cultural" results, in the terms previously categorized, where this is, of course, possible and from the awareness that the choice of «What needs to disappear and what to remain, and how these two operations can and should be combined with each other, are issues on which every society never ceases to reflect» and that «when we talk about "building" identity [...] one must not assume that it is similar to a building that every society - and each generation in it - builds in a definitive manner (and much less definitive). "Construction" should instead transmit the idea of continuous creation and dissolution, dissatisfaction and discomfort that is felt in every statement of identity, the need for replication in different ways always the argument about proper identity. The construction of identity is in fact marked by a great and invincible insecurity» (REMOTTI 1993, p. 82 e 87; see more recently: REMOTTI 2004, FAVOLE, LIGI, VIAZZO 2004, REMOTTI 2008).

Since 1977 E. Leach has clearly shown to the archaeologists gathered at a major interdisciplinary seminar organized by M. Spriggs that the question to ask in dealing with the perception of death in other cultures isn't focused on the specific characteristics of their graves, but rather, on fundamental opposition between practices that could or could not foresee the use of a formal burial (LEACH 1977). The anthropological approach to funeral practices reveals to be, in this sense, clearly distinct from the archaeological, for the simple fact of being able to document by direct observation of reality or attitudes without a significant material consistency but, often, of equal or even greater importance than those destined to leave some tangible trace on the ground. The existence of anomalies in the demographic composition of the burial grounds and/or in their representativeness, however, may also reveal to the archaeologist, at least starting from "negative" assumptions made in the treatment of the funeral remains aimed at privileging (consciously or unconsciously) the "disappearance" rather than the "permanence".

This assumes, of course, a thorough awareness of the ways in which a given culture can face or not the problem of the management of "humanity remains", as highlighted recently by A. Favole, opting for different alternatives related to major intent that may preside over the most common forms of "cultural putrefaction control" which, have origin in a biologically inescapable requirement, may be, therefore, categorized within a «limited number of choices», corresponding to «different concrete ways to tackle the inevitable disintegration of dead bodies, without particular reference to the meanings and the elaboration of ritual which every community encloses these interventions» (FAVOLE 2003, pp. 38-39).

The analysis is by this shifted from the mere observation of the material aspects of the funerary practices (burial, cremation, mummification etc.) To the conceptual sphere of the aims that through them are intended to achieve (the disappearance, the remain and the re-Remotti's re-appearings) from "ground zero" represented by the waste of the corpse, to the more complex and advanced techniques for its preservation, such as denying even the very appearance of death (through complex processes such as mummification or criogenisation). In terms of content it determines, in our view, an inescapable fracture vs. traditional conceptions of historical-cultural type, still often quoted, under which the choice of the rite is variably reduced to preconceive ethnic factors and/or a misunderstanding cultural/ritual "diffusionism": «the treatment of the corpse itself is configured as a culturally organized response to the inherent ambivalence of dead bodies. [...]

*From this chart we can see how the choices that communities make regarding the treatment of the corpse aren't almost never exclusive. Although in cultural areas and historical moments in particular can dominate one or the other of these forms, mostly it is impossible to identify a community with only one of the specified category. [...]*

*The identification between a society and a precise mode of dealing with putrefaction perhaps begins from the assumption - very common in anthropology as in other areas of Western knowledge - according to which cultures are characterized by belief systems and practices rather homogeneous and consistent, but does not find evidence in ethnographic analysis.*

*If it's possible to summarize in a pattern, types of intervention on the corpse, it proves extremely difficult (and even impossible) to rank the societies based on how they treat the bodies of the dead. [...] The death event invites to cast an eye on how others, in other worlds, facing the edge of disintegration, as if before the horror of the dissolution of the body - the supreme negation of cultural nature of man - could not have been done other but take a look to other contexts. In addition, the celebration of a funeral is an excellent opportunity to affirm differences within society (rich and poor, men and women, leaders and ordinary people, children and adults etc.). Although no one can deny that there are preferential practices in body treatment, this is altogether wrong, or at least very simplistic to say that the Indians burn, the Mediterranean people bury, the ancient Egyptians embalmed» (FAVOLE 2003, pp. 40, 44).*

As highlighted most recently by the same Remotti, the strategies of cultural control of putrefaction can be further categorized according to whether they presuppose a “waste” or “acceptance” of this biological process and arise or less a continuation of the “work anthropo-poietic exercised in life” (in the broader frame of the so-called “anthropo-metamorphosis”), allowing or not the survival (more or less prolonged) of those “forms of humanity” that characterize potentially every bodily identity (REMOTTI 2006A).

In this reconstruction putrefaction is only the central moment of the wider process of “Thanatos-metamorphosis” (“stage II”), preceded by a phase of “pre-decomposition” (“stage I”) and followed by the “mineralization” (“stage III”).

While the steps II and III provide a clear biological action of “Thanatos-morphosis” which can be combined or not with cultural interventions of “Thanatos-metamorphosis” the stage «I» can be apparently a continuation of life (“Stage 0”), extending «between the time when the individual breathes his last breath, and the first appearance of signs (visual and/or olfactory) of putrefaction.». So this is a period that can obviously vary in duration, «according to the different climatic conditions, technological and cultural», but which is still «of great importance, both at the conceptual level, as on the operational level».

Ethnographic documentation refereed by Remotti shows, in fact, how in this stage can be held different attitudes, often consisting in “fictions of life,” through which various ways are searched to “refine” time to say farewell and/or prepare the deceased for its future “transformation” (material and conceptual) «Stage I is a moment, short and laboured, of forms conservation and, at the same time, preparation, arrangement, for future changeovers, before they happen, inexorable, the signs of putrefaction. It is precisely a phase of transition, and it is significant to see how cultures oscillate therefore between the need (or the illusion) to maintain an “appearance” of life and, instead, the recognition of an irremediable end».

This may also imply interventions cultural “deconstruction” of that humanity that the “anthropo-poiesis” had hardly built, that is restoring with death of that natural dimension that men, with their antropo-poietic interventions, have altered.

Also what follows putrefaction, that is the process of “mineralization”, assumes a set of attitudes variable according to the way in which one chooses to relate to what is survived or choses to preserve the human materiality in its transit from the biological to mineral condition. Behaviors that may occur in an extremely heterogeneous manner even within the same culture, caused by factors that depend on ideological differences, cultural, social and economic, but that does not necessarily provide ritual solutions aimed at preserving the integrity and/or the dissolution of the corpse.

For Remotti the classification of cultural behaviors results from the mineralization of the remains of the deceased essentially provides four possible “solutions”: «integrity», «fragmentation», «dissolution with remains», «dissolution without remains». A process during which, if it is not possible to preserve the integrity of the deceased, may also occur a substitution of body materiality with a surrogate symbolic or with the preservation of a specific part thereof, such as, for example, the jaw of the “ómwami” baNande or relics of Christian saints. This happens in cases when prevails intentionality to preserve the remains, because the “thanatopolitics” can assume also intentional processes of dissolution of the bodies and, with them, the memory of the deceased, through forms of discrimination which, in recent years, also archeology began to rediscover, giving rise to those forms often defined as “deviant burial,” in which the “violence” (by contrast, for Remotti, the “enhancement”) replaces the ritual, simply denying and/or altering the essence relative to the customs of a particular culture.

But, as Remotti underlines, this latest aspect is equally relative and what remains of the base is always the idea of metamorphosis and transformation, even when on the other side of the scale there isn’t nothing concrete, but a simple “nothing”, charged, however, with cultural values, as it’s an element of balance or recovery (and acceptance) of the natural condition of departure:

«There are many destinations and outcomes of Tmm processes: relics and spirits, ancestors and cultural heritage (monuments, cultural tools or instruments), natural realities (trees and banana plantations [...]) or supernatural entities. In all these transformations there is always, inevitably, the component of “disappearance”, combined with varying doses with the component of the “remain”.

But among the possible outcomes of the Tmm transformations we must not forget the “nothing”, an outcome in which the “disappearing” clearly dominates the “remain”. [...] It is about [...] a desired nullification, culturally determined: a way to “dismantle humanity” culturally shared and for this humanly acceptable and accepted. [...] It would be a great mistake to think that the culture of Tmm methods and techniques is always taut to the “memory”, preservation, “remain”; it gives way, in different sizes, to “disappear” and all “oblivion”. [...] The “right to be forgotten”, the “right to disappear” total and definitive, can indeed be interpreted as a conscious and culturally accepted solution: not only as a final farewell by the survivors of the deceased person, but also as a leave of culture from itself, a renunciation of its claim to extend after death the will to action, a recognition of the impotence and ambitions of their “fictions”, an acceptance of nothing and of proper dissolution in nature. Culture can be done (nurture thoughts and emotions) about this dissolution, about the end of the person and with them of the culture as well.» (REMOTTI 2006A, pp. 30-31).

## Panel discussion: the social dimension of funerary practices[?]

In November of 1966, at a symposium held in Pittsburgh, the most vital component of those who had recently started calling themselves *New Archaeologists* met to discuss the complex and ambitious theme of “*Social Dimensions of Mortuary Practices*” and to define a shared strategy for its proportioning, according to what was the hypothetical-deductive practice at time taken by those who aspired to pursue a processual approach in archeology.

In little less than half a century away from that important occasion of discussion it seemed appropriate to reflect and compare with a constructive verification (and without schematic preconceptions) how much of interpretative paradigms have survived until nowadays, as well as methodologies and heuristic desires of processual positivism about issues related to the sociological interpretation of funerary practices.

With these objectives, the discussion, in addition to reconsider the findings from previous sessions, will be compared with the broader issue of the dialectic between isomorphism and ideological distortion in the funerary projection of a social dimension of a single individual and/or community he belongs to.

The debate will focus on the effectiveness or limitations of various heuristic strategies (paleodemography, analysis of grave goods, evaluation of rarity index, determining the funerary variability, set-theoretical-combinatorial approach, determining the funerary complexity, etc. etc.). put in place time after time in the sociological survey and, consequently, also in the historical and anthropological surveys about necropolis.

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## Call for papers

Participation in the conference as speakers is subject to the submission of an abstract (minimum 300 words / 2000 characters), containing session reference as a mandatory field (indication of subsection theme is optional), the title of the proposed contribution, the postal/ mailing address, the home institution/ or reference institution of proponent(s) and the email address to use for communications. The *abstract* and data listed above should be sent exclusively by email at [info@diacultura.org](mailto:info@diacultura.org), as a Word format attachment, named by surname and first initial of the main proponent. The proposal must be received **not later than March 20th, 2015**.

By March 22, the Scientific Committee will select proposals regularly received in the manner and within date given above, according to their coherence with the themes and the scientific setting of the conference, based on parameters related also to their interdisciplinary approach and to innovativeness of the approach, trying as much as possible to balance and harmonize the participation of scientists belonging to different disciplines.

The selected authors will be contacted via email to the address specified and shall promptly provide confirmation of their participation for the purposes of their inclusion in the provisional agenda of the meeting and the online publication of the abstract of their intervention.

**By 26<sup>th</sup> of April** all selected speakers **should send the extended summary of their contribution**, that will be shared with all interested by a specific page of the editor's "*academia.edu*" profile ([www.sumitalia.academia.edu/ValentinoNizzo](http://www.sumitalia.academia.edu/ValentinoNizzo)). This summary should match the one that will be read by the proponent during the conference (with the possible support of an appropriate *powerpoint presentation*) and, therefore, must be adapted to 10 minutes available for the exposure, in order to respect the timetable for the next debate. It is the faculty of the speakers to send with text expanded summary a more ample text and/ or the definite one, in order to share it with other participants and to discuss it. For this purpose, when posting participation confirm and, in any case, by the beginning of April, we will provide for all speakers editorial guidelines for final publication of their contributions in the proceedings of the meeting.

If no extended summary is received in terms indicated, unless for justified reasons, will be excluded from the official program of the meeting.

It is reminded that the participation in the conference as speakers does not involve fees and does not provide for the organization any form of refund.

## Deadlines

- **March 20th 2015:** delivery of *abstract* relations
- **March 22nd 2015:** selection of contributions and communication of the outcome to the proposers
- **April 6th 2015:** definition and *online* publication of the provisional agenda, with its *abstract*
- **April 26th 2015:** delivery of *abstracts* extended relations and/ or the final texts of the contributions
- **May 2nd 2015:** on-line sharing of texts in a dedicated section of editor's *academia.edu* profile, activating a special "session" to discuss contributions and gather questions and comments; *online* publication and disclosure of the final program of the meeting
- **May 2nd 2015-May 19th 2015:** deadline suggested for enrollment to the conference of auditors who need a certificate of participation; registration will also guarantee access in case of places depletion.

## On line collection of questions and brief interventions

At the beginning of May expanded abstracts will be uploaded in a dedicated section of the editor's *academia.edu* profile, where for each one of them, with the aim to broaden the discussion and debate even in the virtual dimension, will be created an appropriate "session" for discussion, comments and interventions that, if considered worthy, will be presented at the conference and then will be inserted in the paper edition of conference documents.

## Locations

École française de Rome, Piazza Navona 62, 00186 Roma  
Stadio di Domiziano, Via di Tor Sanguigna 3, 00186 Roma

## Documents disclosure

The interventions of the *keynote speakers*, the speakers and the transcript of the discussions and outcomes of the *panel discussion* will be published in the conference proceedings that will be printed by the **E.S.S. Editorial Service System Srl for Dià Culture Foundation**, in the series of **Anthropology and Archaeology at comparison**, within the next edition of the Event.

## Contacts and organizational office

### **Planning, organization and scientific curatorship**

Dr. Valentino Nizzo

### **Scientific committee**

Prof. Stéphane Bourdin (École française de Rome)

Prof. Henri Duday (CNRS - Université de Bordeaux)

Prof. Adriano Favole (Università di Torino)

Prof. Michel Gras (Accademia dei Lincei)

Prof. Christopher Smith (British School at Rome)

Dr. Valentino Nizzo (Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici dell'Emilia Romagna - Fondazione Dià Cultura)

### **Event coordination and organization**

Dr. Irene Caporicci

Dr. Chiara Leporati

Fondazione Dià Cultura

### **Contacts**

Secretary of the event

Email: [info@diacultura.org](mailto:info@diacultura.org)

Valentino Nizzo

Email: [valentinon2008@libero.it](mailto:valentinon2008@libero.it)

Simona Sanchirico

Email: [s.sanchirico@diacultura.org](mailto:s.sanchirico@diacultura.org)

Francesco Pignataro

Email: [f.pignataro@diacultura.org](mailto:f.pignataro@diacultura.org)