knapped stone lithics which provided a basis for phasing the sequence, opens a window to long-term ornamental history and invites us to envision the individuals and the societies who made, wore and discarded them. The sheer amount of finds and the differing nature of the evidence lie behind its publication in two volumes: Volume 1 (considered here) presents the Palaeolithic and the Mesolithic assemblages and Volume 2 (to follow) shall be presenting the more diverse (in terms of materials and type) Neolithic assemblage of ornaments.

Perlès marries many different worlds. She is loyal to the French tradition of theoretically informed, meticulous work on the empirical record and at the same time she is an intelligent and daring analyst of an 'Anglo-Saxon calibre'. She delivers here a comprehensive account of a collection of more than 12,000 specimens, perforated beads and pendants and other artifacts such as perforated pebbles, without making it a chore. She is an insider of the chaîne opératoire approach with its emphasis on the biography of each object, from raw material procurement to manufacture, use and discarding as a token of technology, while treating ornaments as symbolic units, that is, as non-verbal means of communication that operate in a symbolic sphere. She has a deep knowledge of anthropological theory, which allows her to turn a collection of admittedly simple and repetitive objects into an exciting reason to cogitate not on cultural change, archaeologists' favourite topic, but on cultural permanence and the meaning of the transition from the Palaeolithic to the Mesolithic world. Last but not least, being a lithic specialist herself and having published the Franchthi Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic assemblages of chipped stone, she has an excellent command of the different perspectives offered by the stone tools and the ornaments from both a diachronic and a synchronic perspective.

This book offers a fresh and authoritative study of the ornaments recovered from the Franchthi Cave sediments. Perhaps its greatest contribution is that it prompts us to think along the lines of very long-term regional traditions, on a scale that has not been comprehended so far despite well-known evidence for it (parietal art, for instance). This, in turn, leads us to question the backbone of the cultural paleogeography of Europe, to question the proxies used to define past cultural entities and to question the use of stone tool typology to define chronological and cultural techno-complexes.

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Anastasia Papathanasiou, William A. Parkinson, Daniel J. Pullen, Michael L. Galaty and Panagiotis Karkanas (eds). *Neolithic Alepotrypa cave in the Mani, Greece. In honor of George Papathanassopoulos.* pp. 435, colour plates. 2018. Oxford and Philadelphia: Oxbow Books. ISBN 978–1–78750–648–6 hardback £70.

Since the occupation of caves became recognised as a specific feature of the Late and Final Neolithic in Greece,[1] widely differing interpretations have been offered. Schematically, the balance shifted from a purely pragmatic interpretation – caves were used as domestic places in the context of increasing pastoralism – to a mostly or purely ritual interpretation.[2] However, as illustrated by a recent publication devoted to the use of caves,[3] the question is far from settled. Yet, to better understand the status of LN/FN caves, or, more precisely, to better grasp how difficult it is to understand it, a key element was missing: the detailed publication of Alepotrypa Cave, in the Mani. More than any other cave site, Alepotrypa, with its apparently domestic occupations, wealth of human remains and exceptional deposits,[4] epitomises the impossibility to draw a clear-cut opposition between the mundane and the ritual, the *polis* and the *necropolis.* Paradoxically, Alepotrypa raises not such much the question of the definition of rituals as the definition of what is domestic.

The cave, located just above the Bay of Diros on the Western coast of the Tainaron Peninsula, is about 300 m long and 50 m wide in maximum width. Several distinct chambers are separated by narrow passages; after a deep slope, the largest, deepest and most remote chamber (Chamber L) reveals a large lake of slightly brackish but drinkable water.[5] The cave was sealed by the collapse of the porch in the late Final Neolithic, dated by U-Th on speleothems that sealed the floor, to ca 3,200 BC (Maighan Boyd and Kathrin Holmgren, Chapter 21). When speleologists discovered the cave in 1958, many intact vases and human remains were still *in situ* over the floor. Unfortunately, the anterior

[1] Renfrew 1972.
[2] E.g. Demoule and Perlès 1993, Tomkins 2009. This shift is not specific to Greece. See Bergsvik and Skeates 2012 ; Moyes 2012.
[3] Mavridis and Tae Jensen 2013.
[4] There seem be doubts, however, about the provenience of the silver beads, pendants and earrings attributed to Alepotrypa but not published here.
[5] A section of the cave would have been useful to the reader to better comprehend the contrasted topography of the cave and the impressive slope down to the lake.

part of the cave was totally destroyed, Chamber A was largely emptied, and other sectors severely disturbed when it was decided to open the site to tourism. The work was stopped and the site saved by George Papathanassopoulos in 1970, who excavated various sectors from 1970 to 2006 and published preliminary reports but could not, alone, exploit the enormous quantity of finds. It was saved again, scientifically speaking, by Anastasia Papathanasiou who had studied the numerous human remains and had realized the urgent need to catalogue and georeference the finds, and to assemble a team of specialists to study them. Three years of renewed excavations and arduous work (2012–2014) allowed her to achieve these goals, to collect essential geoarchaeological and bioarchaeological samples and to extend the already known stratigraphy in the main trench of Chamber B. Several 14C dates on newly discovered human remains indicate that the cave was occupied not only during the Late and Final Neolithic, but already by the late Early Neolithic (ca. 6000 BC) and at the MN/LN transition (ca. 5500 BC).

The outcome of this collective effort, supported by the American co-editors and with the decisive help of the Wiener laboratory of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, is an impressive volume with many up-to-date contributions that address taphonomic, environmental, technological, economic and ritual aspects.

To get rid immediately of the few criticisms, one regrets the lack of consistency in the denomination of the various parts of the cave, in the chronological framework and, especially for the pottery, the scarcity of photographic illustrations. The lack of consistency, which also applies to the pottery classification, is clearly related to the freedom given to each contributor, who could organize their contribution at will. Each of them was nevertheless encouraged to study the spatial patterning of the finds and interpret the meaning of their data in the context of the cave's potential status. The long discussions about cave uses in the Neolithic are sometimes repetitive but always well informed. The interpretations of Alepotrypa Cave itself vary substantially according to the nature of the material studied, and probably also to the sensibility of the author. Nevertheless one observation remains constant throughout the volume: the opposition in the nature or quality of the finds between the front chambers, in particular Chambers A and B, and the back chambers, Chamber Z and Chamber L (see Chapters 1, 2 and 23 by A. Papathanasiou).

This contrast is already perceptible in Alepotrypa's most exceptional feature, i.e. the very large amount of human remains (more than 3,500 human bones): the primary burials concentrate in Chamber B, the two ossuaries are located in Chamber A and D, while Chamber Z and L contain almost exclusively scattered isolated bones. Anastasia Papathanasiou had already published extensively on the human remains from Alepotrypa, and she chose to give here only a summary, somehow frustratingly brief given the importance and interest of her analyses (Chapter 13). Among the bone scatters, ossuaries, single or multiple burials, more than 160 individuals are represented (the updated NMI is not specified), making it by far the largest human osteological assemblage in Neolithic Greece. Part at least of this past population was genetically related, as indicated by the high overall prevalence of metopism and its unusually high ratio of 31% in Ossuary II. Although there was a low degree of stress during childhood and good sanitary conditions, as shown by the dentition, many individuals suffered from nutritional anaemia, possibly linked to a low consumption of meat. Primary burials are the exception rather than the norm: six individuals, including children, were buried in single graves, another seven in a multiple burial. Secondary burials are more numerous: 16 individuals in Ossuary I, 19 in Ossuary II. Finally, more than a hundred individuals are represented by scattered bones. In all cases, however, 'disarticulation, commingling, and moving the skeletal elements are the most prevalent characteristic of the sample' (p. 265). The analysis of the distribution of skeletal parts demonstrates that the disarticulated burials do not correspond to individuals originally buried in the cave: cranial and long bones predominate in the overall assemblage, while the small bones (hands, feet, ribs, vertebrae) are clearly under-represented. Long bones and skulls were thus selected to be transported and deposited in the cave. This pattern remains stable through time, as does the location of the ossuaries, used from the EN to the FN. Like Katsarou (Chapter 5), Papathanasiou views the secondary burials as an attempt to create ancestral authority and control of key resources, while reinforcing ties within the community. This presupposes that the community using the cave was local. The analysis of strontium isotopes by Julia I. Giblin (Chapter 15) provides somewhat ambiguous results on this question: most samples analysed are compatible with a local origin, but the signature, in terms of ratio $^{87}Sr/^{86}Sr$ is similar over vast areas of the southern Aegean, thereby potentially masking mobility patterns. A minority of the samples, from both humans and animals, show values comparable to the Vardar zone (Chios), while some are higher than any known sample elsewhere. Noteworthy is

the fact that the latter, dating to the FN, have also the most evidence for osteological disease. Contrary to several other authors, Giblin thus considers it possible that the site was visited by farmers from all over the Aegean.

The contrast between the anterior and interior parts of the cave is also clearly identified in the stratigraphy and sediments (Chapter 3). In the stratigraphic trench B1 (Chamber B), Panagiotis Karkanas distinguishes 15 layers with alternating constructed surfaces, mixed anthropogenic deposits, stony layers and hearths. They are mostly interpreted as the result of domestic activities and potentially small-scale stabling of stock (layer 8). Clay-lined pits were found in this trench and nearby in Chamber B. Further inside, in Chamber D, a thick burnt layer of dung covers human remains, and is topped by a sequence of hearths built on clay floors, with two enigmatic red clay bowl-like features. Finally, Chamber Z was filled with massive quantities of black, crudely stratified sediment interpreted as burnt dung deposits from sheep and or goats, interstratified with wood charcoal layers and corresponding to smouldering fires. These deposits are associated with human remains and a massive amount of broken fine pottery, in a Chamber of difficult access and too far inside the cave to consider the possibility of stabling.

The interpretation of the black sediment as burnt dung is confirmed by Georgia Tsartsidou, who succeeded in collecting a good sample of phytoliths from the different periods of occupation and sectors of the cave (Chapter 18). The samples from Chamber Z again stand out by the high organic content and by the presence of burnt faecal spherulites, which confirm the use of dung as fuel. Composted dung is very light, and would thus have been preferred to wood as fuel since access to Chamber Z was difficult. This does not explain, however, the 'greasy' appearance of this sediment, nor the enormous quantities that were carried to this remote and uninhabited part of the cave. Phytoliths are especially numerous in this black sediment. The range of species represented, which consist only of wild plants, indicates a free range diet for these sheep and goats. On top of the thick layer of black sediment, small hearths of pure white ash were fuelled with leafy wood and grasses, possibly for cooking or small-scale food processing. In the anterior part of the cave, on the contrary, the high carbonate content of ash in Chamber B indicates the predominant use of wood as fuel. Phytoliths were particularly rare in the clay constructions of Chamber B, although ash appear to have been used in their construction. Tsartsidou finds evidence for a more 'domestic' use of the cave, but on a modest scale: for instance, the sparse cereal phytoliths precludes their storage on a large scale. She underlines the difference in the construction of the hearths between the 'domestic' sectors of the caves and the sectors where ritual activities are demonstrated.

Her findings are largely corroborated by Maria Ntinou's analyses of the wood charcoals (Chapter 19), who also underlines sharp contrasts between the different sectors of the cave. Most species represented in the charcoal assemblage are characteristic of the Mani lowlands and mid-altitude areas, while the black pine and the fir could only grow on Taygetos mountain. Ntinou suggests that these conifers were especially sought to be used as torches in the inner part of the cave, where these species were exclusively recovered. Otherwise, scrub vegetation was used for firewood in habitation and ritualistic contexts. Several *Prunus* species, juniper and Maloideae, all local, were mostly used in the anterior parts of the cave, but *Cistus* was only found in the interior chambers. While small calibre wood was used in these inner parts, some of the charcoals in Chamber Z correspond to very small twigs, which may have been used as fodder for the animals and naturally incorporated into the dung. Ntinou notes diachronic changes in the proportion of the different taxa. She suggests that visits to the cave were few and of short duration during the EN/MN, making it possible to use exclusively the immediately local vegetation. With a higher frequency and intensity of visits during the LN/FN, the increased demand for fuel would have necessitated the systematic exploitation of the open woodlands. She also insists on the fact that olive, now an indicator of the thermo-mediterranean zone is conspicuously absent, except in the topmost FN deposits.

The studies devoted to the very rich pottery assemblages also confirm the opposition between the front and the back of the cave. Barbara Kastipanou-Margeli was entrusted with the pottery from the stratigraphic trench B1 (Chapter 4). She describes the stratigraphy and burials in details, but had to rely on the original stratigraphic scheme into 9 strata, rather than the updated scheme provided by Karkanas. This may be problematic since the original stratigraphy appears to cross-cut the more recent. Unlike many other authors, she also adopts Sampson's chronological framework, with an LNII instead of a FN. The pottery itself is first described by wares according to Phelp's classification, with details on the fabric, the shapes and decoration, followed by a discussion of the dating. The characteristic profiles, handles and decoration are precisely drawn and plotted against depth in the trench. Despite the precision of the recording

and the possibility to define the stratigraphic distribution of each ware, the final diachronic synthesis reveals several discrepancies between the accepted dating of the wares and the 14C dates from the trench (in particular for the Urfirnis, the Grey Burnished, Matt Painted, Rippled Wares), which all seem to appear earlier at Alepotrypa than elsewhere. Although Kastipanou-Margeli suggests that the pottery chronological framework usually accepted may have to be revised, she also explains that the excavations were carried out horizontally on layers which presented a double slope. This, added to the stratigraphic problem mentioned above, leads one to think that Alepotrypa should perhaps be used more to define the stylistic range of these classical types rather than their chronological distribution...

Large sherds of LN and mostly FN pithoi were also found predominantly in Chamber B. They are presented briefly by George Valvis (Chapter 7). The importance of the storage capacities they represent leads Valvis to evoke a 'considerable number of people or groups of people involved in the activities inside the cave' (p. 161). Unfortunately, no precision is provided for the actual number of pithoi, nor on potential remains of the goods in store.

A very different approach to pottery is exemplified in Stella Katsarou's study of the pottery from Ossuaries I and II (Chapter 5), respectively in Chamber A and D (or so I presume, since it is somewhat difficult to relate the different systems of location used in this volume). Katsarou gives much more weight to the fabric, techniques and shapes, leaving decoration as a secondary criterion. Comparisons with Kastipanou-Margeli's typology are thus difficult to establish, all the more so since the pottery from Ossuary I is not illustrated. However, Katsarou states clearly that her aim was not to describe or classify the pottery in detail, but rather to understand its meaning for the living who deposited the sherds in the ossuaries and its relation to the commingled dead. It is impossible to summarize her long and well-informed discussion, where she draws parallels between the deliberate fragmentation of pottery, selection of 'orphan sherds', and the dismembering of human bodies and selection of specific bones to be deposited in the ossuaries. She insists on the overlapping of the domains of the living and the dead as 'an essential and intrinsic element of the Neolithic story' (p. 118). In conclusion, she considers the two ossuaries, despite slight differences, not as true cemeteries, but as monuments where social synergy and memory where regularly re-enacted by a community that ritually reinforced its claims of territorial ownership.

Katherina Psimogiannou, presenting the pottery from Chamber Z (Chapter 135), is interested in similar questions but the very peculiar character of her material allows for more straightforward answers. Chamber Z in general, and the three niches that were excavated in particular, are characterised by a massive accumulation of burnt dung, an enormous quantity of vessels, mostly decorated, and the presence of scattered human bones as well animal bones, obsidian, ornaments, etc. According to a radiocarbon date of ca 6,000 BC on burnt dung, the use of Chamber Z started as early as the anterior part of the cave, but only a few EN sherds were recovered. It was also used during the late MN/ early LN, but more intensely during the LN and FN. Mixed with the burnt dung, in niches too low to stand up in and eventually almost filled up, the remains of over 400 LN Matt-painted vessels, 57 Polychrome and many FN coarse Red-Slipped wares were uncovered. Besides the sheer quantity of pots in this remote part of the cave, several points are noteworthy: in almost all periods, closed shapes, in particular collared jars, overwhelmingly predominate, when open shapes of the same wares predominate in Chamber B. Second, most of the painted wares come from Chamber Z. Third, the stratigraphy within each niche reveals that sherds and parts of vessels were packed down continuously, in chronological order. Fourth, the sherds are in good condition (contrary to those from Chamber B and from the ossuaries) and show a marked stylistic variability, although most appear to have been locally made (Pentedeka, *infra*). Finally, many sherds join, but the sherds from a single vessel had been distributed in various sectors Chamber Z. Thus, Chamber Z supports very clearly the model of deliberate fragmentation, dispersion and structured deposition suggested by Katsarou. The cave, and Chamber Z in particular, would thus be a place for intermittent social gatherings and the performing of rituals that included the 'killing' of pottery, possibly after it had been used to collect water in the lake.

The last contribution pertaining to the pottery assemblages is petrographic. Areti Pentedeka analysed 68 LN and FN sherds from various wares, mostly from Chambers B and Z, as well as two clay samples from the cave itself (Chapter 8). After petrographic analyses and re-firing tests, she distinguishes seven fabric groups and two loners. Six of these groups as well as one loner are compatible with local sources, and represent altogether more than 90% of the sherds analysed. Group 1 corresponds to a 'recipe' that was used from the EN to the FN. It includes wares of all types and remains strikingly homogenous through time. Most other petrographic groups appear time and ware specific.

One Grey-Burnished fruitstand is the only definite import, but importation of Black-Burnished wares is also alluded to. The small number of petrographic groups thus contrasts with the stylistic variability we mentioned above, but the sample is small and should be enlarged before definite conclusions can be reached. A similar continuity through time is noticeable in the construction and firing techniques, although the study of more of the earlier material may well alter this picture.

In contrast with the ceramic assemblages, all the tool assemblages can be considered surprisingly small, given the time span and extension of the excavations. All also correspond exactly to the equivalent material found in nearby open-air settlements. The bone and antler artefacts are conspicuously scarce (n = 116), as underlined by Georgia Stratouli (Chapter 12). The range of types is limited, with pointed tools predominating, followed by needles and edged implements. All fit perfectly a domestic toolkit of the LN and FN periods, and most were used. Their distribution in the cave is not specified.

The flaked stone assemblage comprises 868 artefacts studied by G. Kourtessi-Philippakis (Chapter 9), but most came from disturbed or uncertain contexts. Establishing distinctions between the LN and FN chipped stones was therefore almost impossible. Some grey flints were locally knapped, while other flint implements, imported as finished blanks, were mostly utilised to cut plants. However, obsidian is overwhelmingly predominant (> 90%), in a proportion that would be expected at a Peloponnesian coastal site for the period. Danielle R. Riebe's preliminary analyses (Chapter 11) confirm that the obsidian is Melian, with a potential shift from the early LN through the FN, from an equal exploitation of Demenegaki and Sta Nichia sources to a predominant use of Sta Nichia. As usual also, the first and last steps of the *chaîne opératoire* are missing, and the blades were locally pressure flaked from already shaped or already exploited cores. The proportion of retouched tools is average for the period (ca 25%) and the types are classical. In other words, the flaked stone assemblage from Alepotrypa shows none of the outstanding pieces sometimes found in Late or Final Neolithic caves. This holds true for the small ensemble found in Chamber Z, which, as stated by Kourtessi-Philippakis, is totally comparable to that of Chamber B, although the tools are seemingly unused, although they were not analysed for wear traces.

Except on this last point, Anna Stroulia's thorough analysis of the 'macrolithics' (Chapter 10) leads her to similar observations: the grinding tools, pounders, grooved tools, cutting tools, *a posteriori* tools, etc. would not depart from a purely domestic context and make up 'what could be broadly called a domestic toolkit' (p. 235). Here again, the assemblage is small (289 items). They are made from regional schist and metavolcanic rocks that can be found up to 25 km from Alepotrypa, and from rolled pebbles of limestone/marble that could be found locally. The selection of raw materials for specific categories of tools remains stable throughout the sequence, and, again, testifies to a marked continuity in traditions. All the tools were used, often reused and recycled, and many are broken. However, if the majority was found in the potentially domestic context of the anterior Chambers A and B, a quarter was found in non-utilitarian contexts, in particular in the Ossuaries I and II, with a few in Chambers Z and L. Instead of considering that the tools were first used in the front Chambers for domestic purposes, then deposited in non-utilitarian contexts, Stroulia doubts that any of the tools would have been used in this dark, very humid and cool cave. She boldly questions the use of the cave for storage and the possibility that any mundane activity ever took place in it. According to her hypothesis, the cave had a purely ceremonial use, and all the artefacts recovered, all the vegetal and animal foodstuff, constitute offerings, deposited in the cave and ceremonially sacrificed, as were the vessels in Chamber Z.

This conclusion is completely at odds with the interpretation of the macrofaunal assemblage offered by Angelos Hadjikoumis in a long, detailed and very complete chapter (Chapter 14) addressing taxonomic composition, herd management, biometry, pathology and butchering. The range of species is classical, with a predominance of domestic species, in particular sheep and goats, and a very low representation of wild animals. The taxonomic composition is fairly stable through time and between the different Chambers. An intriguing feature of the assemblage is the importance of neo-natal (or possibly foetal) individuals among the sheep/ goat, pig and cattle remains. The presence of cut-marks shows we are not dealing with natural death. Together with the predominance of females, this suggests that sheep, goats and cattle were milked. This pattern differs from the pattern observed in open-air settlements, and would be linked to the characteristics of the cave. Indeed, Hadjikoumis considers the cave as a perfect place for the production, maturation and preservation of cheese. The ages at death and the presence of pigs also indicate some exploitation of meat, and entire carcasses would have been processed and consumed

at the site. He also suggests that the cave was appropriate to keep live animals (at least dogs and pigs), and considers it as permanent base for some herders, with seasonal congregation of more people when pastoral activities were most intense, during the spring and summer.

The microfauna, studied by Katerina Papayianni and Thomas Cucchi (Chapter 20), comprises mice, voles, toads, frogs, snakes and a few bird bones. Only two bones of bats were recovered, which would confirm continuous occupation of the cave during its use by prehistoric groups. None of the microfaunal species can shown to have been consumed by humans, and many are considered as post-depositional intrusions, or remains of predators' meals. The limited environmental conclusions that can be derived from these small samples, exclusively recovered in the last two campaigns, hint at a rocky, steppe environment.

Alepotrypa being a coastal site, the question of the exploitation of marine resources is obviously central, and Tatiana Theodoropoulou (Chapter 17) devotes a long and interesting discussion to the question of shellfish collection, fishing techniques and seasonality of exploitation. She studied both the invertebrate remains and fish bones, the latter probably under-represented due to the absence of water-sieving until the very last years of excavation. The invertebrates include a variety of edible species, mainly limpets and topshells, but also ornamental species such as dove-shells, cones, and tusk shells. There is no marked difference in the exploitation of marine molluscs between the Late and Final Neolithic. The fish bone assemblage is dominated by Scombrids – various kinds of tuna fish and mackerel – followed by groupers. Contrary to shellfish, the number of specimens and the spectrum increase from the Late to the Final Neolithic. The fish were brought whole in the cave, but tuna were chopped-up and Theodoropoulou suggests that the caudal portions may have been stored in salt within the cave. The contrast between Chamber B and the back of the cave is confirmed by the distribution of the remains. The majority of the sea shells were found in Chamber B and very fragmented, whereas in Chamber Z they are mostly intact. The distribution of fish bones differs, with a majority from Chamber B, a good representation in Chamber Z, and almost none in Chamber D and L. Interestingly, most of the grouper remains were found in Chamber Z, and the single eel remain was found associated with the ossuary of Chamber D where she finds evidence suggesting the deposition of selected fillets of the best fish found in the cave. It should nevertheless be noted that no effort was made to dispose of the fish remains, whose leftovers were found all over the cave, including the remote Chamber of the Lake.

The ornament assemblages mostly comprises a necklace of lozenge-shaped, biperforated spondylus beads found in Chamber Z, dove shells sawn at both extremities[6] and tusk shells. Unfinished, failed specimens suggest that the shells were worked in the cave. Several spondylus annuli, intact and broken, were also recovered, as well as the spectacular spondylus hook and a few shell tools. Although Theodoropoulou concludes that 'marine animal resources seem to have played a central role in the everyday life and beliefs of the visitors to Alepotrypa', the number of fish remains, shellfish and ornamental species is very low compared to Franchthi for instance, in a similar setting. It is obviously difficult to estimate the bias introduced by recovery techniques, but the results of the isotopic analyses (see Chap. 13) do not show an important consumption of marine resources. Without denying their importance, it might be interesting to underline, on the contrary, that all coastal sites are not necessarily primarily oriented towards the exploitation of marine resource, and that, despite the very abundant human remains, personal ornaments are scarce.

According to the results of the isotopic analyses, terrestrial plants constituted the most important component of the diet. Nevertheless, the remains of plant food are not abundant. Eva Margaritis studied two small archaeobotanical samples, one, of FN date, from Trench B1A in Chamber B, the second from Chamber D in the centre of the cave, dated to the Late-Final Neolithic (Chapter 16). All the plant species recovered are well represented in all Greek Neolithic sites. In Chamber B, cereals predominate, barley being the most frequent. They are accompanied by pulses, a few nuts, fruits and wild/weedy species. By contrast in Chamber D, where the seeds are much better preserved, einkorn, free-threshing wheats, grass peas and cereal chaff are absent. In both cases, most of the processing would have taken place outside the cave. Given the low quantities, the variety of seeds, and the high humidity in the cave, Margaritis precludes long-term storage. The grain and chaff may have been lost and burnt after the plants were prepared for consumption, but Margaritis also considers the possibility of intentional charring, to preserve

[6] Interestingly this pattern differs from Franchthi where only *Conus mediterraneus* was worked this way, while *Columbella rustica* was perforated (pers. obs.).

rather than to destroy the plant food that would have been ritually deposited. Here again, the notion of 'sacrifice' is put forward.

What can be concluded for such a wealth of information, sometimes congruent, sometimes less so? Anastasia's Papathanasiou provides an exemplary synthesis (Chapter 23), and there is not much to be added to her conclusions. Undoubtedly, distinct areas of the cave were used differently. It cannot be doubted that the ossuaries or the deposition and breakage of painted vases amid smouldering dung exemplify ritual activities. In addition, the term 'ritual' is here especially apt: a ritual is, by definition, an enactment that is repeated, and we have here evidence of continuity in practices from the end of the Early Neolithic to the Final Neolithic. Even the fact that Middle Neolithic occupation appears to have been restricted to the very end of the period, did not disrupt this continuity. Furthermore, the continuity of traditions does not only hold true for ritual acts, but also in large part for the manufacturing and use of pottery and tools.

The problem arises with the anterior parts of the Cave (Chambers A and B). These areas are characterized by clay floors, pits, storage jars, coarse pottery, abundant food remains and a wealth of artefacts of 'domestic' character. Several authors indeed consider this area as domestic, used either permanently or seasonally according to their evidence. At least for the LN and FN, all the faunal data, coupled with the absence of bats, do suggest year-round occupation. However, in line with several other authors, Papathanasiou does not consider this as sufficient to envision a permanent domestic occupation: the hearths indicate short-term episodes of use, the number of tools, whether made of stone or bone, is very low – and not only when compared with open-air sites, but also with a cave such as Franchthi. Similarly, the labour-intensive construction and maintenance of clay platforms would be better understood in the framework of a ritual occupation. I would add to this the fact that the cave was used already in the Early Neolithic, which is rare in Greece, and that it was immediately used as a formal burial ground. While it is true that burials are found within villages, mostly as infant burials, formal burial grounds in Central and Southern Greece are normally found besides the settlement, not a few metres away from the domestic quarters. Papathanasiou thus concludes in favour of a place for social gatherings and ritual performances, drawing on populations from the local and broader region. However, she also acknowledges a form of 'domestic' use of the anterior part of the cave, in relation both with the maintenance and management of the site and with social gatherings. It is indeed necessary to postulate that people did live, eat and probably sleep in the cave, since no evidence for any Early, Middle or Late Neolithic occupation was found during the survey of the Diros bay. The systematic and intensive survey of the Diros Bay (Chapter 22, by Pullen, Galaty, Parkinson, Lee and Seifried) revealed two Final Neolithic sites, but no indication of an earlier occupation. One of the FN sites, Ksagounaki, is directly adjacent to the cave, the second one on the plateau west of the site, some 1,5 km away. Ksagounaki can be considered an open-air extension of the Alepotrypa Cave, during a period of florescence of its use.

Given the absence of local settlement before the FN, I do not think that all the artefacts, pottery and tools, can be considered ritually 'deposited' as were the human bodies and human bones. Some must also have been used. But, as stated by Papathanasiou, their use – and ultimate deposition – in a non-mundane context may transform the domestic/mundane item into a symbolic one. And I wish to cite Papathanasiou, since I could not have worded the conclusion better: 'The cave thus probably constitutes a lasting focal point in a ritual and social landscape, a mortuary monument for the locality or a broader area, exercised through a remarkably monumental program of worship and by repeated acts of deposition. The site most probably performs, in varying and complex ways, an important role in the Neolithic of southern Greece, as a place of congregation of different social groups, reaching the highest point sometime in the summer, where the memory of the past was revived and was invested with ritual and ancestral importance for the living, a place of remembrance and enchainment both across current space and through deep time' (p. 433). One nuance may be added, though: if Alepotrypa can be conceived of as a 'mortuary monument for the locality', and even more if it concerned a broader area, the number of individuals represented by primary burials, secondary burials or scattered bones, is much too small to correspond to the deceased of a community over some two millennia. The individuals that ultimately rested in Alepotrypa, and that were the object of continuous ritual actions of deposition, breakage, construction, transportation and burning, must have been highly selected. Both this selection of individuals, or of lineages as suggested by the metopism, and the unusual long-term emphasis on rituals possibly related to the dead lead me to favour the hypothesis of a regional or supra-regional (rather than local) recruitment. The pottery was undoubtedly locally

made, but does this imply it was made by the rather evanescent local people, who left no EN, MN or LN trace anywhere else in the Mani? If the pottery was intended to be used briefly, or to be immediately broken when deposited as obtains in Chamber Z, a rapid local manufacture by exogenous groups may make more sense than the transportation of large quantities of pots over long distances. If the potters came from different communities this would also explain the marked stylistic variability noted by K. Psimogiannou. To go back to Papathanasiou's quotation, I suspect that Alepotrypa 'played an important role in southern Greece', much more than a local role.

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Bergsvik, K.A. and R. Skeates (eds) 2012. *Caves in Context: The Cultural Significance of Caves and Rockshelters in Europe.* Oxford: Oxbow Books.

Demoule, J.-P. and C. Perlès 1993. The Greek Neolithic: a new review. *Journal of World Prehistory* 7(4): 335–415.

Mavridis, F. and J. Tae Jensen (eds) 2013. *Stable Places and Changing Perceptions: Cave Archaeology in Greece* (British Archaeological reports International series 2558). Oxford: Archaeopress.

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Renfrew, C. 1972. *The Emergence of Civilization: the Cyclades and the Aegean in the Third Millennium B.C.* London: Methuen.

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Søren Dietz, Fanis Mavridis, Žarko Tankosić and Turan Takaoğlu (eds). *Communities in transition. The circum-Aegean area during the 5th and 4th millennia BC.* pp. xxi+633, 374 illustrations (many colour), including maps, also tables in many papers. (Monographs of the Danish Institute at Athens 20). 2018. Oxford and Philadelphia: Oxbow Books. ISBN 978–1–78570–720–9 hardback £70.

This is a massive book, deriving from a multi-paper conference held in Athens, and really there is too much material for a single hardback volume, which seems to have affected the quality of the binding (on the reviewer's copy the front cover split from the spine at the top quite quickly). The conference was intended to focus on the social changes that occurred during the development from Neolithic to Early Bronze Age in the later 5th and 4th millennia BC, the period widely defined as Final Neolithic in Aegean terminology, in the 'circum-Aegean area'. After an explanatory preface by the editors, an Introduction contains the editors' summary presentation of their view of the content and value of the papers, arranged first by significant themes, then by survey and site reports within the regions between which the papers have been distributed. The reviewer recommends reading this as a very useful guide to the mass of material, allowing the perception of shared features and the making of cross-connections that may not be immediately apparent. The papers are arranged in six sections, the first containing six papers that consider general, often wide-ranging themes; these begin with Renfrew's exposition of how his identification of a 'Final Neolithic' period in the Aegean, stretching from the later fifth through most of the fourth millennium, led to the recognition that it could be related to comparable periods in the sequences of neighbouring regions. A further 51 papers are set out in five geographically arranged sections: the Balkans (principally Bulgaria); northern Greece, meaning the mainland and including Thessaly; west, central and southern Greece, again meaning subdivisions of the mainland; the Aegean islands, Crete, and Cyprus; and western Anatolia (which includes papers relating to Lycia and Phrygia).

The considerable length of the period under discussion makes the reviewer uneasy about the use of the term 'transition' to define this. One would normally expect this to characterise a relatively short episode, and where sites are occupied for long periods, to detect several transitions between phases