Abstract and Keywords

A critical review of the corpus of Upper Palaeolithic (UP) burials shows clearly that there is no such thing as a ‘typical’ UP burial. While children were less likely to be buried in the Late than in the Early UP, this and the fact that gender ratios change over time are difficult to interpret. Likewise, while interments tend to be associated with more lavish grave goods in the Early than in the Late UP, the meaning of these differences remains elusive. It is the extreme spatio-temporal patchiness of UP burials that makes it difficult to draw meaningful inferences about what they meant to their communities. Analysing the local contextual variables (social pressures, ecological dynamics, etc.) of given burials or burial sites is more likely to provide interesting insights about life (and death) in the UP than does approaching UP burials as a coherent and univocal class of archaeological evidence.

Keywords: burials, Upper Palaeolithic, mortuary practices, grave goods, ornaments, Gravettian, Epigravettian

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