



Neolithic Alepotrypa Cave in the Mani, Greece: in honor of George Papathanassopoulos

Papathanasiou, A., Parkinson, W.A., Pullen, D.J., Galaty, M.L., and Karkanis, P. (eds.), 2018, 1950 Lawrence Rd., Havertown, PA 19083, Oxbow Books, 464 p., 8.3 x 11.7 inches, Hardcover: ISBN 9781785706486, \$110.00, Digital: ISBN 9781785706493.

This book is written for archaeologists and includes detailed, scholarly descriptions of excavations made in Alepotrypa Cave, at Diros Bay, Lakonia, Greece. It commemorates work done there by George Papathanassopoulos from 1970 to 2006. The cave was used during the Neolithic c 6000 to 3200 BC after which the cave entrance collapsed sealing the cave until recent times. This significantly increased the importance of the Neolithic material in the cave by preserving biological material, large numbers of artifacts, undisturbed deposits and the large floor space used by past humans. It is the richest site of its kind in Greece and in fact in Europe. The cave has an outer and an inner section which ends in a lake and was used as living space and for burials.

There are 23 chapters by various authors beginning with an introduction to the area. Other chapters concentrate on specific topics such the sequence of absolute radiocarbon dates, the distribution of human bones often reburied in prominent piles, imported chipped obsidian tools, pottery, grinding tools and bone awls. The chapters include careful catalogs with photos of what was found along with interpretations. Examination of human bones showed people had chronic nutritional deficiency and led lives of strenuous physical activity living to an average age of about 29 years. From examination of biological remains, it was found they had domesticated animals and ate mainly sheep, goats and pigs. There is also strong evidence for dairy goods. Grains were ground but were not stored in the cave. The archeology shows that the Neolithic people repeatedly left artifacts as well as human bones in similar arrangements suggesting ritual and a continuous remembrance of the dead.

The book contains a great deal of information and interesting interpretations; however, because the book is very detailed, it would appeal most to those specializing in archaeology. It is not a regional interpretation, but specific to one cave. Reproduction of artifacts and drafting are excellent, and many graphs and tables are included to supplement the text.

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