Yasmina Wicks. *Profiling Death. Neo-Elamite Mortuary Practices, Afterlife Beliefs, and Entanglements with Ancestors*

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REFERENCES

Yasmina Wicks. *Profiling Death. Neo-Elamite Mortuary Practices, Afterlife Beliefs, and Entanglements with Ancestors*. Leiden: Brill, 2019, xxiv- 373 p., One Appendix, p. 247-296; 85 Plates. (Culture and History of the Ancient Near East, 98). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004391772>

- 1 Comprehensively researched and illustrated, this book stems from research carried out during the author's doctoral dissertation "*Alas, Short Is the Joy of Life!*" *Elamite Funerary Practice in the First Half of the First Millennium BCE*, completed in 2017 at the University of Sydney, Australia. It is divided in four parts: Part 1 offers a background to the Elamite history and material culture of the first millennium BC; Part 2 focuses on the mortuary evidence systematically arranged along (i) geographical distribution, (ii) burial location, typology, orientation and body arrangement, (iii) and assemblages; Part 3 examines the social identities of the mortuary record; and Part 4 combines the Neo-Elamite archaeological and textual records to reconstruct the ideological and ceremonial dimensions of the burial ceremony. A concluding note examines the significance of Neo-Elamite funerary practices for the emerging Achaemenid-Persian empire. The book includes a catalogue of burials (Appendix 1, *Table of Neo-Elamite burials*, Pp.247-296) drawn from hard-to-find publications and archived sources making it a crucial practical reference. Lavish illustrations (85 plates), including

reconstructions of assemblages and their distribution, provide a visual support for the discussion of the burials.

- 2 This book fills a substantial gap on the history of Elamite culture and funerary practices. As the author notes, the irony of a previous lack of Elamite funerary studies becomes palpable when one realises that a large proportion of Elamite archaeological material admired today through sterile glass museum cases had once been buried with the Elamite dead; deliberately selected, with all its embodied meaning, for the funerary ritual. The book goes a long way towards “putting the grave goods on museum shelves back into the context of a vividly conceived world of the dead.” In so doing, the author brings forth fascinating clues as to the ritual practices, beliefs, social structures and individual identities of Elam’s lowland and highland inhabitants. Enmeshed with its neighbours, yet in many ways culturally distinct, Elam receives its due treatment as a core component of the ancient Near East. The book also highlights the culturally rich and dynamic landscape of southwest Iran during the first half of the first millennium BCE (the Neo-Elamite period) and its significance as the incubation ground for the Persian Empire, and serves as point of departure for a similar study from the perspective of the mortuary record.

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