

ABSTRACT

Keywords: *childbirth events, mothering, material culture, prehistory, archaeology, contemporary notions.*

The present thesis aims to identify and acknowledge the birthing event a topic relatively neglected in archaeological research. The hypothesis is that the, birthing event did matter during prehistory and that it presumably was surrounded by a material culture. The subject is broadly approached, searching for cross-cultural and multi-temporal generalities. The approach is furthermore synchronous as it deals with current notions and prejudices concerning birthing events in prehistory. The essence and complexities of birthing, as elucidated in different disciplines, are discussed in order to materialize the event in various archaeological contexts and geographical and temporal settings. Theoretical and empirical accounts of birthing make it possible to suggest a number of archaeological material remains with potential for being related to actual birthing events in prehistory. These remains in turn show fundamental similarities with artefacts, structures and objects that are normally interpreted as belonging to the sphere of formal material religious expressions, an outcome worth further investigation elsewhere. Mothering is discussed as an implication of particular birth-related archaeological remains, using a particular skeleton with signs of parturition scars. Apart from archaeological accounts of the matter, mothering is also explored by using a variety of other disciplines. The term “mothering” is defined as a contextual norm and practice, rather than a biological self-evident destiny, which opens up for a range of potential care-givers other than the birthing woman. The absolute and biological tie between the birthing woman and her offspring is argued to be a rather short historical norm with little inference to actual cross-cultural and multi-temporal caring practices.