



## Archaeological Review from Cambridge

Department of Archaeology, University of Cambridge, Downing Street, Cambridge CB2 3DZ, United Kingdom

### Volume 40.1, May 2025: Food, Gods & Ancestors

#### Call for papers

Theme Editors: Megan Rose Hinks & Ella McCafferty Wright

While the significance of the archaeology of food has long been recognized, interest in questions beyond subsistence and adaptation emerged primarily with the growth of post-processual theoretical perspectives. This shift brought a focus to the sociocultural and interpretive value of food, including the deeply intertwined connections between food, religious practice, identity & cosmology. More recent advances in scientific techniques, innovative theoretical approaches, and increased interdisciplinarity have opened new avenues of data resolution and interpretation. Until now, most studies have either prioritised examining the broader dynamics accessible through the social archaeology of food, approached the ceremonial role of food from one data type, or concentrated on individual case studies.

This volume brings these global perspectives into dialogue by comparing and contrasting the current status of research on the dynamics surrounding food, gods, and ancestors. By examining the role of food in ritual and religious contexts—specifically in the offering of food and commensality with gods and ancestors—this volume examines the complex interplay between nourishment and religious behaviour. This exploration encompasses not only food practices within specific contexts but also those driven by religion in everyday life. Through this lens, we examine the broader socioeconomic and political implications of specific food-ideology associations.

The preparation of food and the act of commensality are intensely immersive and emotionally powerful experiences – the act of eating itself stimulates all the senses simultaneously (Hastorf 2017; Twiss 2019). Through the consideration of food as a powerful semiotic instrument, this volume explores the social and emotional connections it holds within the realm of ritual and religion.

As the line between food and drink is often blurred; both are considered in contributions to this volume, including the roles of alcohol and psychoactive substances in ceremonial contexts.

Some approaches to this topic contributors might wish to consider are:

- How can textual, iconographic & ethnographic sources as well as material studies & scientific techniques be used to investigate the religious/ceremonial significance of food?
- How have practices regarding food and deity/ancestor veneration evolved?
- What is the role of social differentiation in the ways people have engaged in religious/ceremonial acts involving food?
- How does the ideological role of food in relation to deities and ancestors affect social relationships?
- What can we learn from artefacts involved in ceremonial food practices?
- What do the ways in which religious/ritual food is acquired, prepared, shared and/or offered tell us about the sociopolitical worldview of the individuals involved? (e.g. ideas of divinity, personhood and mortality).

Potential contributors are encouraged to register interest by submitting an abstract of up to 250 words to the email below or by contacting the editors directly to discuss their ideas before **August 31st 2024**. Papers of no more than 4000 words should be submitted to [foodgodsandancestors@gmail.com](mailto:foodgodsandancestors@gmail.com) before **15 November 2024** for publication in May 2025. More information about the Archaeological Review from Cambridge may be found online at <https://arc.soc.srcf.net/>.

Information about submission guidelines, notes for Contributors and Style Guide may be found online at <http://arc.soc.srcf.net/contribute.html>.

## References

Hastorf, C.A., 2017. *The social archaeology of food: thinking about eating from prehistory to the present*. Cambridge University Press

Twiss, K.C., 2019. *The archaeology of food: identity, politics, and ideology in the prehistoric and historic past*. Cambridge University Press