



THE AMERICAN RESEARCH INSTITUTE IN TURKEY

Şehit Ersan Cad. 24.9 06680 Çankaya, Ankara
Tel: (312) 427 2222; Fax: (312) 427 47979 (prefix outside Turkey: 90)
aritankara@gmail.com



Friends of ARIT Lecture Announcement

Child Burial in Prehistoric Anatolia



Illustration by Laurel D. Hackley

Burcu Yıldırım

Dept. of Settlement Archaeology, Middle East Technical University

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The practice of placing foundation deposits under walls, floors, or door thresholds is almost considered “standard practice” in some ancient cultures. Intramural burials are common on the Anatolian plateau, beginning in early prehistory. Neolithic examples indicate that the incorporation of human remains into domestic architecture was a regular part of the rhythm of family life, and perhaps the belief that their presence protected the living. By the Late Chalcolithic, adult burials have largely moved into the extramural cemeteries, although there are some exceptions. Infants and small children, however, continue to be buried within the house and are a common feature on the Anatolian plateau. The Late Chalcolithic levels (ca. 3700-3000 B.C.E.) at the north-central Anatolian site of Çadır Höyük have presented a slight twist on these more conventional foundation deposits and burials. Well over one dozen infant jar burials were placed into corners of existing rooms, in nondomestic spaces, or placed in walls at the time of construction. This talk will explore the meaning and function of foundation deposits in the ancient Middle East in general, and the relatively unique practices present at Çadır Höyük.