

The Annual Meeting and Workshop of the SGA and the AGHAS, November 2019

This year, the Annual Workshop and Meeting of the Swiss Society for Anthropology (SGA/SSA) took place between the 15th and 16th November 2019 at the Natural History Museum in Basel. The workshop was inspired by the recent methodological and theoretical discussion about the archaeological and forensic value of modern (19th/20th century) skeletal assemblages. Accordingly, aim of the 2019 workshop was to discuss the "value of modern inhumations for anthropological and archaeological research". 18 participants, among them several students as well as experienced physical anthropologists, attended this event, which was subdivided in a theoretical and practical part. Geneviève Perréard Lopreno (University of Geneva) provided an introduction to the topic, by listing a series of topics common to the study of modern cemeteries from Western Switzerland (e.g. typology of cemeteries and link between burial location and social status of the deceased). This was accompanied by the presentation of various skeletal examples of medical interventions (both during life and postmortem), in conjunction with a reconstruction of their related practices (e.g. operation, autopsy, embalming, removal of organs). Later on, the participants had the opportunity to study several of these individuals on their own by the use of macroscopic methods, 3D-surface images and X-rays. The second part of the workshop was dedicated to the differentiation between peri- and postmortem trauma. This topic was discussed by David Roth (University of Basel) using as examples individuals from the cave of Els Trocs (Spain) and Spitalfriedhof (Basel). The workshop was concluded by a series of talks and poster presentations focused on analyses of modern skeletal series from Basel and Neuchâtel.

The Annual Meeting of the Swiss Society for Anthropology took place the 16th November, and, as for the workshop, its theme was the analysis and discussion of modern skeletal series. The morning session started with the general assembly of the SSA, during which the topic of the next meeting was defined (*diachronic trends in anthropological and paleopathological research*).

The first keynote lecture was provided by Francisca Alves Cardoso (University of Lisbon), who discussed the ethical issues related to the collection and study of contemporaneous osteological series. Fabian Kanz (Medical University of Vienna) presented the research opportunities and challenges of three collections managed by the Center of Forensic Medicine of Vienna. Thomas Reitmaier (Archaeological Service of the Canton of Graubünden) illustrated the challenges of defining specific funerary structures as cultural heritage to be archaeologically investigated. All three keynote speakers have agreed that physical anthropology and archaeology may give the voice to marginalized individuals – the poor, sick, disabled and condemned-, which otherwise would be neglected by “official” history. The fourth keynote speaker, Alicia Sanchez-Mazas (University of Geneva), reported from a conference on the peopling history of Africa, which was held in June 2019 and supported by the Swiss Society for Anthropology.

Several SGA members presented their research through talks focused on a large range of topics (e.g. methodological discussions, case studies). With 14 oral- and 4 poster presentations the program of this year’s Annual Meeting has been very dense, although quite constructive. The closing of the Meeting was celebrated by means of a pleasant reception at the Natural History Museum.