



Schweizerische Gesellschaft
für Anthropologie
Société Suisse
d'Anthropologie



**Sessions at the 25th annual assembly of the European Association of Archaeologists (EAA)
2019 in Bern organized by SGA members:**

Session No #169

Title:

CRIMES IN THE PAST: ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Organizers:

Tatiana Shvedchikova (Institute of Archaeology Russian Academy of Sciences)

Negahnaz Moghaddam (Center of Legal Medicine, University Hospitals Lausanne – Geneva)

Pier Matteo Barone (American University of Rome)

Abstract:

Cases of historic and prehistoric “crimes scenes” are known from various context including findings of (pre)historic (mass) graves and lethal violent acts related to warfare, ritual killings, or possible murder cases. In order to get to the bottom of the possible archaeological crime scenes, contemporary interdisciplinary approaches allow us to extend the frames of the classical archaeological study. New archaeological and anthropological biochemical analyses, for example elemental and isotopic analysis of the human bone, together with innovations in imaging techniques, such as 3D surface acquisition, computed tomography and X-ray of the skeletal remains for trauma investigations, and survey techniques, such as GPR modelling of the burial site, increase the initial information value. New technologies allow anthropologists and archaeologists to get more information on past killings and possible murder practices and offer a better understanding of archaeological “crime scenes”. For example, modern scientific methods also aided the development of new archaeological disciplines such as ‘forensic archaeology’, which uses, among other things, the application of archaeological theory and methodology to search and excavate burials of human remains or objects in legal investigations. While modern crime scenes are more or less evident, the crimes of the past are hardly detected. Problematic is that archaeological violent deaths and possible attempts to hide the murder evidence often disappear in conclusions related to past human ritualistic behavior. The aims of the session are to discuss the possible examples of crimes in the archaeological past, their detection and interpretation with the help of modern scientific methods, and to discuss how interdisciplinary approaches could be conducted in further research concerning “crimes of the past”.

Session No #243

Title:

TIMES OF CHANGE: LATE NEOLITHIC LIFESTYLE AND POPULATION DYNAMICS IN CENTRAL EUROPE

Organizers:

Inga Siebke (Department of Physical Anthropology, Institute of Forensic Medicine, University of Bern, Switzerland)

Johannes Krause (Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History, Jena, Germany)

Sandra Lösch (Department of Physical Anthropology, Institute of Forensic Medicine, University of Bern, Switzerland)

Noah Steuri (Department of Prehistory, Institute of Archaeological Sciences, University of Bern, Switzerland)

Abstract:

Despite the large amount of interdisciplinary projects on the Neolithic to Bronze Age transition involving bioarchaeological research, it seems difficult to reconstruct the processes that lead to major cultural and demographic changes in Central Europe in the 3rd millennium BCE. With continuous improvements of analytical methods, the amount of data is constantly growing and by combining results from different disciplines, a more comprehensive synthesis can be acquired.

Our session aims to bring together specialists from different disciplines working on Late Neolithic and early Bronze Age material to increase our understanding of the transformative processes that shaped this period. We want to provide a platform for discussions to obtain a bigger picture and state-of-the-art knowledge about lifestyle and population dynamics of the Late Neolithic and early Bronze Age in Central Europe.

We welcome contributors who work on Late Neolithic material from Central Europe and focus on one or more of the following aspects with regard to osteological remains, isotope analysis, aDNA, population dynamics, radiocarbon dating, land use, paleopathology, palaeobotany, zooarchaeology, grave goods, case studies, and new bioarchaeology methods.

Session No #353

Title:

LET'S TALK ABOUT SEX

Organizers:

Laura Rindlisbacher (Integrative Prehistory and Archeological Science, University of Basel)

Nicole Nicklisch (Center Nature and Cultural Human History, Danube Private University, Austria)

Abstract:

The socio-theoretical as well as the bio-medical research of recent years has revealed the complexity of the categories «sex» and «gender». Biological sex is not only shaped on different levels (chromosomal, gonadal, hormonal, epigenetical) but the manifestation of sex characteristics can – because of their polygenic regulation and the variety of influencing factors – be highly variable. The binary model of the sexes, which is prevalent in many countries of the Western world, represents only one possible way in which a society may translate the different manifestations of sex characteristics into the cultural sphere of gender. The category «gender», in the sense of a description of observations about the handling of the dead, mortuary rites as well as any accompanying artefacts in relation to bio (archaeo-)logical sex indicators – is a central topic of modern archaeological interpretation. The focus of this session lies on the interdisciplinary examination of the implications of these new findings for established concepts of «sex» and «gender» especially when reflecting those concepts against the backdrop of the social structures of past societies.

Session No #375

Title:

EUROPEAN CRYPT BURIALS – A HERITAGE AT RISK BETWEEN SCIENCE AND PUBLIC DISPLAY

Organizers:

Magdalena Majorek (University of Lodz)

Amelie Alterauge (University of Bern, University of Heidelberg)

Tiina Väre (University of Oulu)

Karina Grömer (Natural History Museum, Vienna)

Abstract:

Church vaults were used as burial places for the local nobility, the bourgeoisie and the clergy between the 16th and 19th century AD in Europe. Due to environmental conditions, the inventory of a crypt is often preserved, including coffins, fabrics, botanical and human remains. These crypts represent the unique opportunity to investigate the funeral customs of this period in great detail: While the coffins are prone to typo-chronological comparisons with their rich decoration and inscriptions, the clothing might be examined regarding style, functionality, material, and chronological era. Archival records provide us with the name, origin, status, and circumstances of death of the buried individuals and allow therefore conclusions on their social and religious background. The mummified and skeletonized human remains reveal not only living conditions and diseases of the early modern elite, but also the post mortem treatment of the corpses. However, crypts are often at risk due to changes to the built environment, cutting off the required ventilation to preserve organic materials. In this regard, conservational interventions are important to the preservation and eventually public display of crypt burials.

During this session, we would like to gather colleagues from Europe to discuss the following aspects of crypt burials and of crypt archaeology:

- social history: development and origin of crypt burial, transformation of funeral rituals, social privilege, distinction and/or cohesion;
- theology: history and context of church burial, funeral liturgy, grave goods, symbols/objects of faith;
- methodology: documentation techniques, methods for identification (church records, DNA), infestation risks;
- ethics: professionalism in crypt archaeology, handling of human remains, accessibility and current use of crypts.