

**Session title: AROUND THE BODY: FUNERARY PRACTICES IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE**

**Organiser:** Valérie Delattre, Inrap, France.

**Time:** Friday morning

**Room:**

**Session abstract:**

Funerary archaeology and biological anthropology are the mainstays of a multidisciplinary investigation into the foundations of the human body, in both its biological and cultural dimensions. The various manipulations, deposits and treatments surrounding bodily remains are characteristic of all human communities, ancient and recent, and result in a range of practices and rites that need to be identified and interpreted.

Indeed treatments of the human body can convey a wide range of insights: physically interred or symbolically represented, they evidence various behaviours and conceptions which seek to enhance or on the contrary debase it. Human bodies, their integrity as human beings reified or ritualized, can be represented, magnified, mishandled, wounded, damaged, recovered in burial grounds or on the contrary excluded, marginalized and disembodied. From the supposed cannibalism of prehistoric times to medieval embalming, from the worshiped Bronze age warriors to demeaned outcasts, human remains cultural indicators revelatory of the nature and identity of given societies. Moreover, behaviours towards individual bodies are also related to more complex social attitudes across history: bearers of contagious diseases confined behind walls or Jewish communities held apart in the medieval city can attest to these collective measures of confinement directed at certain groups within what can rightly be called the social body.

This session will draw on a wide range of chronological and geographic examples to explore some of these issues. Among the specific themes foreseen (for some speakers have already been identified) are: figurations of the human body, heroic and immortal bodies (iconography, embalming), purity and impurity, saints and relics, difference and handicap, sick and wounded bodies, tattoos, mutilations, cannibalism etc.

**Paper abstracts:**

**HANDICAP FROM AN ARCHAEO-ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE:  
"THE DIFFERENT BODY"**

Valérie Delattre, Inrap, France

Anthropology is a discipline closely related to funerary archaeology, which aims to study what is most intimate about the human being, using biological aspects, imprinted on the bone itself and cultural phenomena, recreated thanks to the actions and intentions that precondition a burial. The human being, honoured or insulted by its contemporaries, leaves many cultural indicators making it possible to determine the nature of a social group. Funerary practice allows a population to confront the problems created by

death and the deceased, but also maintains the bonds between the living. We are thus able to focalize on the status of the “different body”, whose unique anatomical characteristics have until recently been only studied from a pathological angle. But beyond the simple census of the body’s lesions, is it possible by archaeo-anthropological investigation to determine status, social role, inclusion or exclusion of “handicap” within a community.

## **BODIES IN TRANSIT: DEALING WITH THE DEAD IN IRON AGE SCOTLAND**

Ian Armit, University of Bradford, UK  
Fiona Tucker, University of Bradford, UK

During the ‘long Iron Age’ of Atlantic Scotland (c. 700 BC - AD 800), treatments of the dead underwent a dramatic change. In the earlier part of the period, as in much of Iron Age Britain, ‘normative’ burial appears to be virtually absent, although human body-parts occasionally seem to have been used by the living, and purposefully deposited in domestic contexts. In the Later Iron Age, however, formal inhumation cemeteries do start to appear. One might expect this to reflect the local adoption of Christianity, but the current evidence suggests this not to be the case. Instead this transformation in attitudes to dead bodies might be linked to wider changes in material culture and identity associated with the bodies of the living. This paper considers what such variations in mortuary practice might tell us about changing attitudes to the body and personhood during the Iron Age.

## **BABIES INCOMPLETE: ON THE SYMBOLISM OF PREHISTORIC JAR BURIAL TRADITION**

Krum Bacvarov, National Institute of Archaeology and Museum, Bulgaria

Jar burial appeared in the early phases of southeast European neolithization and climaxed in the Early Bronze Age. Some of the dead babies and children seem to have been deemed somewhat ‘not finished’ and therefore needed more time to become ‘complete’; this is why they had to be buried under the house floor or near the house, in pottery containers that transformed the raw into the cooked, similarly to the wombs of the living mothers as well as to the hypothetical womb of the ‘Goddess’, and thus the babies could be born again, in the same place and maybe of the same mother. But why these and not other babies? Why both in the Neolithic and in the Early Bronze Age, there were those who had been buried in pots or in simple pits, at the same sites and more or less simultaneously? What made the difference that defined some as ‘complete’ and other as ‘not yet finished’? Was it the sex? Or was it some circumstances of the pregnancy or birth? One way or the other, jar burials claimed special social identity for the baby, which was certainly different than that of the ‘simple’ pit burials.

## **FROM SOCIAL MARGINALISATION TO ARCHITECTURAL EXCLUSION: THE EXAMPLE OF THE MEDIEVAL JUDAISM IN CHRISTIAN OCCIDENT THROUGH RECENT DISCOVERIES.**

Claude de Mecquenem, Inrap, France

The discovery in the Lagny-on-Marne (Seine-et-Marne) of a monumental complex evoking a synagogal group dating from the 13<sup>th</sup> century AD refers to the early disappearance, as of the 14<sup>th</sup> century AD, of Jewish communitarian monuments, a consequence of the expulsions ordered by the Christian Church and by royal decree. This case brings to light the problem of actually identifying such a brutal exclusion by breaking away from traditional historical bonds that usually define the interventions of specialists in Medieval Archaeology.

Archaeological analysis seems to be the only process that can, as a last resort, bring to the surface the collective screening that aimed to reduce to nothing the evidence of a real cultural genocide. This example also underlines using available documentation the methods used in obliterating medieval synagogues from urban contexts, present almost everywhere before the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

## **THE USE OF “OCHRE” IN MEGALITHIC BURIALS: A SYMBOLIC RITUAL OR A CONSERVATIONIST AND PROPHYLACTIC TREATMENT?**

Teresa Fernández Crespo, University of the Basque Country, Spain

A review of the use of “ochre” in the megalithic burials of South-western Europe is carried out. To introduce the subject, the evolution of this practice is studied, from the Upper Palaeolithic first evidences to the Neolithic/Copper Age more known ones. Then, the most acceptable interpretations around its role are set out: on the one hand, the purely symbolist theory which relates “ochre” with a life and everlasting blood symbol; on the other hand, the one that raises an use related with the preservative qualities that have been conferred on it. Finally, since the reddish coloration of human remains is an issue never adequately discussed, a simple differential diagnosis between ritual and other non cultural factors that can look similar, like some pathological and taphonomic agents, is presented.

## **SEGREGATION IN DIJON (14<sup>TH</sup>-17<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY AD.): CATEGORIES, PLACES OF RELEGATION, CEMETERIES, MARKS AND SIGNS OF INFAMY.**

Patrick Chopelain, Inrap, France.

History shows that the majority of societies, not to say all, marginalized a certain number of groups or individuals considered as deviating or different. Our first work thus consists in identifying these groups: religious minorities (Jews, Protestants, etc...), victims of offensive or very contagious diseases (lepers or plague stricken), those with sexual practices considered as deviating (homosexuals), members of defamatory or discredited professions (torturers, prostitutes, actors), desperate people (suicide cases), those not integrated in the community (unbaptized), etc... All have undergone a particular and often insulting treatment: isolation, the wearing of a particular sign or mark, residential segregation, persecution, etc... These “deviant” populations can be studied by highlighting the “normal” and embracing

societies (municipalities, provincial and royal power, ecclesiastical institutions) in order to analyse their conscious (or unconscious) strategies of isolation and revealing their fears and obsessions and thus, the essential of their constituting values.

## **THE IMMORTAL HUMAN BODY: THE PREPARATION OF THE BODY AND EMBALMING TECHNIQUES DURING THE MIDDLE AGES AND MODERN TIMES: NEW REFLEXIONS**

Patrice Georges, Inrap, France

Embalming was one of the paramount elements of funerary ceremonial during the Middle Ages. The study of preparation techniques and embalming has recently seen new developments by including discussion of archaeological contexts, essential for all analysis. Also more written sources are now available via research on surgical encyclopaedia, that bring to light the extensive knowledge of anthropology, substances and product analyses. The study of old cases and recent discoveries integrates the principles of trace recognition on bones (cranium and/or post-cranial skeleton), usually a rare element in historical periods. Modifications of the bone surface due to human action are at the heart of current reflexions on the gestures and the intentions of medieval embalming.

## **CARING FOR LEPERS IN THE MIDDLE AGES**

Mark Guillon, Inrap, France

If the caring of the sick was dependant on charity in the past, today it is dependant on human rights. For a long time lepers were excluded from society and they often still are and it is interesting to study the manner by which the valid cared for the leper community, the border between who is deemed as sick and who is healthy not always being very clear. In the Middle Ages, these communities were well identified and lived apart from the rest of society and historical research has largely contributed to understanding the organization of these groups. Funerary archaeology provides a different approach to the function of leper-houses that includes varied aspects such as the general layout of the buildings, how the corpses were buried and also the readable signs of the disease on the skeletons.

Do these sources make it possible to apprehend how these communities were organized? Is it possible to understand the relations between members of the community through the establishments organization, how the burials were organized and through anthropological study?

Using examples, we propose to illustrate this joint source approach by developing in particular the funerary and biological aspects and their specific contributions in the understanding the concept of exclusion of leprous communities.

## **THE BADEN AGE MAN. ANTHROPOLOGICAL FEATURES AND HABITUDE IN THE CULTURE**

Tünde Horváth, Academy of Sciences, Archaeological Institute, Hungary  
Zsuzsanna K. Zoffmann, Academy of Sciences, Archaeological Institute, Hungary  
Kitti Köhler, Academy of Sciences, Archaeological Institute, Hungary  
Ágnes Kustár, Academy of Sciences, Archaeological Institute, Hungary  
Zsolt Réti, Academy of Sciences, Archaeological Institute, Hungary

The 100.000m<sup>2</sup> settlement of the Late Copper Age Baden Culture was excavated in Transdanubia, Hungary, along the southern shore of the Balaton Lake at Balatonószöd-Temetői dűlő that had been habited approximately five hundred and seventy years according to radiocarbon data.

Sixty-nine human remains were discovered during the excavation, among them settlement burials as well as victims of bloody rituals were identified. Based on physical anthropological information and also involving various disciplines such as <sup>14</sup>C, 3D, Studio Max modelling program, face-reconstruction the paper attempts at the reconstruction of the general physical and cultural traits of the Baden Age man, and outlines the milieu of this period.

## **ARCHAEOLOGY OF BODY AND THE BELL BEAKER PERIOD**

Lucía Moragon, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain

This paper will try to highlight the body's value as a potential methodological tool for analysis, inside contexts of cultural dynamics of change. The Bell Beaker period offers the first examples of the future hierarchies of Bronze and Iron ages in Europe. This is easily recognizable in the differentiated funerary remains: from this moment onwards, some specific people will be buried isolated (and not communally), surrounded by luxury grave goods, not accessible to all members of the community. Anthropological studies on the significance and symbolic meaning of body in oral societies will be used to present an introductory approach to the use that Beaker people could have made of body to express new cultural meanings. Starting from Post-structuralism it is possible to elaborate an approximation that assumes that culture expresses its internal logic in all its manifestations. Therefore the body, due to its abundance, seems an optimal entrance to that logic in Archaeology. In this particular case, Beaker burials break with the characteristic communal one running from previous Neolithic, expressing initial features of individualization. In this paper both theoretical and empirical information will be addressed trying to show the connection between body treatment and deep cognitive structures in that moment of cultural change.

## **HUMAN FIGURES IN THE SOUTHWESTERN STELAE**

S. Celestino, Instituto de Arqueología de Mérida, Spain  
R. Cazorla, Instituto de Arqueología de Mérida, Spain  
J.A. Salgado, Instituto de Arqueología de Mérida, Spain

The illustration of the human male and female figures on the engraved *stelae* of the Bronze Age from south-western Iberian Peninsula presents a stylistic evolution that does not affect its basic meaning. Therefore, the feminine *stelae* or “*diademada*”*stelae* evolves since the “pebble *stelae*” of small size to the *stela* itself, but always keeping its main identity hallmark: the “*diadema*” or tiara, an associated symbol to the femininity. On the other hand, the presence of the warrior figure is subsequent, being depicted in the beginnings only the more characteristic weapons as the shield, the sword or the spear engraved on big stones that symbolizes his own body. Nevertheless, after the first contacts with the Eastern Mediterranean cultures, these supports became real *stelae* where the warrior is depicted surrounded by his weapons and other objects of social prestige. In conclusion, we discuss the possibility of divine representation through these human figures and the assimilation of foreign objects in both masculine and feminine *stelae*.

### **PERIMORTEM DISMEMBERMENT, DEFLESHING, AND BREAKAGE OF HUMAN REMAINS ON THE ÅLAND ISLANDS 5000 YEARS AGO – ELABORATE MORTUARY RITUAL OR CANNIBALISM?**

M. Nuñez, History and Archaeology Department, University of Oulu, Finland

A. García-Rubio, Biology Department, University Autónoma in Madrid, Spain

J. Storå, Archaeosteological Research Laboratory, University of Stockholm, Sweden

K. Lidén, Archaeosteological Research Laboratory, University of Stockholm, Sweden

G. Ericsson, Archaeosteological Research Laboratory, University of Stockholm, Sweden

The larger islands of the Åland Archipelago, situated halfway between Finland and Sweden at the Bothnian Gulf mouth, were occupied by bearers of the so-called Pitted ware culture of the Swedish Middle Neolithic in the late 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC. Åland Pitted ware sites show thick cultural layers rich in lithic, ceramic, and bone materials. Many Åland Pitted ware sites have yielded a few isolated human bone fragments, but the site of Jettböle produced a considerable amount of human remains. Recent analyses of these human bones from Jettböle revealed a minimum of 18 individuals, including children and adults of both sexes. An interesting feature from is that, with the exception of two articulated individuals found in clear inhumation graves, the rest of the human remains occur disarticulated and usually mixed with animal bones in refuse middens. Moreover, like the animal bones they occur with, these human bones show clear indications of perimortem manipulation. These are characterized by cuts near joints, scraping marks, marks of blows with blunt objects, fresh fractures, peel fractures, signs of exposure to heat/fire. The purpose of this presentation is to describe the disarticulated human remains from Jettböle and to discuss the question of whether their perimortem manipulation and unusual mode of occurrence may have been due to ritual, cannibalism or both.