

Session Proposal

European Association of Archaeologists (EAA) 12th Annual Meeting
Krakow, Poland
19th to 24th September 2006

Organizer: Michelle Bonogofsky

Theme:

Archaeology in the Modern World: Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives

Session Title:

Skull Collection, Modification, and Decoration

Abstract:

Nature and Structure

This proposal is for an all-day session to compare the practice of skull collection, modification, and decoration among different cultures in Europe and further abroad.

Substantive Focus

Mortuary practices involving the collection and modification of skulls are a topic of growing interest to archaeologists, anthropologists, art historians, and students of religion. The proposed session places emphasis on the methodology and theory of skull collection, modification, and decoration from areas as diverse as prehistoric Europe to ethnographic Melanesia. Discussions of the archaeological contexts, visual descriptions, osteological analyses, technological studies, and genetic sexing results of such skulls are encouraged. The intent is to shed light on practices within past societies, addressing whose skulls were collected and why.

The diverse tools employed to answer these questions may include DNA and isotope analysis, taphonomy, iconography, and a primary study of the skulls themselves, to determine—for example—whether the skulls belonged to ancestors or enemies, as local or non-local residents. Researchers in various world regions may thus benefit from shared insights derived from scientific analyses coupled with personal interaction and challenging questions.

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