

Session Proposal

European Association of Archaeologists (EAA) 12th Annual Meeting

Krakow, Poland

19th to 24th September 2006

Organizers: Leszek Słupecki, Ladislav Smejda

Theme:

Archaeology and Material Culture: Interpreting the Archaeological Record

Session Title:

Large burial mounds and the emerging of social power

Abstract:

The session is intended as a continuation of the discussion aimed at burial contexts and particularly burial mounds held within the EAA Annual Meetings. The aim of the present session is to discuss the problem how far it is possible to use burial monuments (especially large burial mounds) as material sources indicating historical processes of the emerging, establishing and reinforcing of social power during prehistory, Middle Ages and even in Modern Times. This question requires an interdisciplinary approach involving contributions of archaeologists, anthropologists and historians, pre-historians and medievalists, as well as different regional traditions of research. We wish to suggest the following questions as the main foci of the session:

1. Is the building of large burial mounds and other comparable monuments (seen in the archeological context) a sign of the emerging of social power, hierarchy, rulership and dynastic kingship?
2. If so, how much can a sole archeological research say about it?
3. Is the use of written sources able to explain the symbolic, social and religious dimensions of large burial mounds, related to either their builders or later populations?
4. Have archaeologists and historians shared the same ideas about the building, function, use and reuse of burial mounds?
5. Is the modern-time custom of building burial mounds (or similar structures) to commemorate great battles and great leaders a kind of continuation of the old tradition?

The session will be organized in two parts: a half-day morning lecture part complemented by an afternoon bus excursion around the monumental Cracovian burial mounds (Krakus', Wanda's and Kościuszko's mounds).

Contact details:

Leszek Słupecki

Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology, Polish Academy of Sciences, Krakow, Poland

E-mail: leszek_slupecki@yahoo.co.uk

Ladislav Smejda

University of West Bohemia, Plzen, Czech Republic