



D57 Complete and Partial Decapitations in Suicidal Hangings: Two New Cases

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand that suicidal hanging is one of the most common methods used in masculine suicides and the second one for women. In a few rare cases, hanging leads to a beheading. Two new cases are presented to illustrate this rare eventuality.

This presentation will impact the forensic community and/or humanity by reviewing literature, which demonstrates that hanging / beheading is exceptional. The promoting factors would be falls from high points, complete hangings, use of thin stretchable links and heavier bodies. These circumstances are rare, and in the authors' opinion an autopsy should be systematically performed to assess the forensic context.

First case (Clermont-Ferrand): the body of a 57-years-old man was found near a railroad, beheaded after a precipitation from a high bridge owned by the French railway society. The height was estimated from 8.80 meters to 10 meters; the weight of the body was about 80 kg. The subject is suspected to have jumped off the bridge with a twined nylon rope tied up around his neck. This rope was 5 meters long and 1.6 cm large. The head and his body were separated from a distance of about 1 m. They were both found under the bridge surrounded by multiple tracks of blood on both ground and walls.

The autopsy showed two different edges of section (head and neck) separated by a left circular abrasion in relation to the rope stretch. The position of the knot and its progression towards the head were clarified by investigations. Nylon fibers found on both sides of sections were strictly identical to those belonging to the link.

Second case (Montpellier): the body of a 35-years-old man with a thin corpulence was found hanged to a beam situated 3 meters from the ground; the feet were hardly touching the ground. In the surroundings, no suspect evidences were found to assess a criminal hanging. After having taking the body down, it turned out that the cephalic extremity was quite close to being removed from the body. It was shown that the head was still connected to the body by some posterior muscles of the neck. The examination found no traces of violence. The autopsy revealed signs of gaseous embolism, signing the vital origin of the beheading. The section of the cervical wound found very fine lines corresponding exactly to the distance between the different strands of the rope, confirming its action during hanging.

Beheading, Hanging, Suicide