



### **D34 Batajnica: The Contribution of Anthropological Data to Identification of Mortal Remains of Kosovar Albanians**

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand the complexity of undertaking the excavation and recovery of hundreds of victims from a series of interrelated mass graves using archaeological techniques as well as some of the problems that these type of highly political sites can produce and will gain some knowledge of how a combination of teams from different disciplines can work together to effect a common goal i.e., identification and repatriation.

This presentation will impact the forensic community and/or humanity by providing a broader appreciation of the multi-disciplinary inter-political process required for the comprehensive investigation of crimes against humanity and genocide.

During the recent conflict in Kosovo 1999 many thousands of Kosovar Albanians were killed by various Para-military, military and police units. Following their deaths their remains were collected, often in specific groups, loaded into trucks and transported and interred within a series of large primary mass graves located within a military complex north west of the city of Belgrade. As part of a combined forensic operation between ICMP and the Belgrade Institute of Forensic Medicine, experts from the Laboratory for Anthropology and Institute of Forensic Medicine in Belgrade participated in the recovery and identification of 870 bodies of Kosovar Albanians interred in the mass graves at Batajnica, near Belgrade.

Of these bodies, 136 were legally identified by the end of 2003 providing an opportunity for the forensic experts to evaluate any post-mortem findings of classical markers of identity. This paper will attempt to outline the contribution of anthropological data in identification of this first group of identified individuals.

Sex and age at death of young to middle-aged adults were reliably determined but old adults were markedly under-aged. Stature was reconstructed reliably in 77% of cases. Dental status contributed little to identification efforts. In no case did classical markers of identity require rejection of the DNA-based identification. It is concluded that: sex determination from pelvic bones is very reliable, as are age at death estimates from pelvic and rib standards for young to middle-aged adults but that uncertainty intervals for age at death in older adults be broadened or refined by creation of local osteological standards. It is recommended that: a) more effort should be expended to obtain good dental records by using local dental expertise; b) local osteological standards for age estimation of older persons be created; and c) broader age intervals be chosen (+/-5 years in young adults and +/-10 years in adults older than 50 years).

#### **Kosovo, Anthropology, Sex and Age Assessment**