



D35 Batajnica: The DNA Analysis of Remains From a Series of Interrelated Sites Containing the 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 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 hundreds 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 the International Commission on Missing Persons work within the region to assist in the location, recovery, identification, and repatriation of remains related to this and other conflicts, a government initiated project was out into place enabling ICMP experts to attend and undertake the recovery and DNA led identification of these remains. In conjunction with the recovery anthropological and pathological analysis was undertaken by the Belgrade Institute of Forensic Medicine. DNA samples were taken during the autopsy procedure at site.

In total the remains of 870 individuals were recovered in a variety of decompositional states, the ICMP field staff undertook a controlled temperature based record of all remains recovered from the sites over a period of days, the results of which have been previously presented at AAFS.

This paper will attempt to briefly outline the relevance of the number of samples taken, type of sample, the statistics for percentage of success and the success of blood samples to bone matches. The success of the application of 'blind' coding bone and blood samples makes the ICMP system a non-political based impartial process. Sampling procedures at the ICMP International Coordination Division and ICMP DNA labs allows staff to work on any sample in complete anonymity.

The success of the blood collection campaign which was specifically designed to communicate the use of DNA together with the importance of giving a blood sample was designed to target the surviving families and together with DNA assisted identification allowed for 95% of the recovered remains to be positively identified and repatriated to families in Kosovo. The remaining remains are awaiting repatriation.

The entire process combining ICMP and Belgrade Institute of Forensic Medicine experts within the excavation, recovery, blood collection, DNA analysis, and final repatriation of these remains is one success that hopefully has led to a more stable region.

Mass Graves, DNA, Anthropology