# Crimes in the Past: Archaeological and Anthropological Evidence

edited by

Tatyana Shvedchikova, Negahnaz Moghaddam and Pier Matteo Barone









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#### Introduction

The idea to create this publication was born after organizing Session #169 'Crimes in the Past: Archaeological and Anthropological evidences' during the 25th Annual Meeting of the European Association of Archaeologists in Bern (Switzerland) (EAA 2019). After the huge success of this event, we saw the need of a publication based on the topic and thus this book includes relevant subjects discussed during the meeting and additional contributions of invited authors.

For as long as there have been groups of humans living together, various forms of crime have been committed. But what constitutes a crime? Records of crime and punishment are all around the ancient world, and the contribution of archaeology, history, and forensic science to the identification of crimes, victims, and perpetrators as well as forms of punishment is essential. For earlier periods, archaeology must be our main source of information, while historical documents help illuminate the more recent events. And how can we detect the crime scene? While modern crime scenes are more or less evident, the crimes of the past are rarely detected. It is problematic that archaeological violent deaths and possible attempts to hide murder evidence often disappear in conclusions related to past human ritualistic behavior.

In this book, readers will find cases of historic and prehistoric 'crimes scenes' known from various contexts, including the findings of (pre)historic (mass) graves and lethal violent acts related to warfare, ritual killings, or possible murder cases. In order to get to the bottom of the possible archaeological crime scenes, contemporary interdisciplinary approaches are used, which allow us to extend the frames of classical archaeological study. Archaeologists bring a number of particular skills to the table, from identifying ground disturbance based on surface indications and geophysics to meticulous excavation, detailed recording and recovery of small objects, and identifying decayed and fragmentary finds, particularly animal and human bones. Just as important is the archaeological awareness of context and sequence.

New archaeological, anthropological, and biochemical analyses, such as elemental and isotopic analysis of the human bone, together with innovations in imaging techniques, such as 3D surface acquisition, computed tomography, X-ray of the skeletal remains for trauma investigations, and survey techniques such as GPR modelling of the burial site increase the initial information value. These new technologies allow anthropologists and archaeologists to obtain more information on past killings and possible murder practices and provide a better understanding of archaeological 'crime scenes.' For instance, modern scientific methods aided the development of new archaeological disciplines such as forensic archaeology, which uses, among other things, the application of archaeological theory and methodology to search and excavate the burials of human remains or objects in legal investigations.

The book aims to discuss the possible examples of crimes in the archaeological past, their detection and interpretation with the help of modern scientific methods, and how interdisciplinary approaches can be conducted in further research concerning 'crimes of the past.'

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