



12th International Conference of Archaeozoology
San Rafael, Argentina – September 22-27, 2014
International Council of Archaeozoology

Call for Communications

Thematic Session

“Accompanying deaths”: the role of some animals in the funerary practices

The tight link between animals and believes in large acceptance is very well known by all researchers in human sciences. These living beings have been attached to natural and supra natural phenomenon by almost all cultures through time and space. Associations of animals and rituals have therefore been experienced by many societies.

The presence of animal in funerary practices is one of them. The question of its function and role in this specific case has already been discussed in many occasions. Depending on their form and place in the burial, the faunal remains have received various interpretations: simple piece of meat, sacrifice, amulet, apotropaic or psychopomp animal, etc. In some cases, they are called “companion of the deceased”, suggesting that it was a pet with “its master” or at least, that there has been a closer relationship between the animal and the buried. This kind of interpretation concerns mostly entire animals placed in the graves next to the deceased.

The French anthropologist Alain Testart wrote ten years ago an essay about what he called “accompanying deaths” (*Les morts d’accompagnement*, 2004). According to him this peculiar rite symbolises a relationship, which has to be a bond of loyalty, fidelity, or submission to the deceased. In other words – and very simply resumed – the death has to bring with him its belongings, which characterises its power. The symbolic background can afterwards change from a culture to another.

Alain Testart also included the animals in the “accompanying deaths”. In this ritual one of the features is the conservation of the animal’s integrity, that conserves the relationship between the characters.

This session proposes to discuss the presence of animals in funerary practices through this concept of “accompanying deaths” or “animal companions” with the help of concrete cases or even theoretical reflexions. I believe that this subject can interest also archaeozoologists, archaeologists but also historians and other anthropologists or ethologists, and that examples can come from all over the world and from the very past until the present days.

*

Session organizer:

Ilona Bede

PhD Student (Paris, France)
Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne,
UMR 8167 Orient et Méditerranée

For submitting abstracts before March 1, 2014:

<http://www.ica2014argentina.com>

For any question please contact me:

ilonabede@yahoo.fr

ilona.bede@univ-paris1.fr