

# The Newsletter of the International Academy of Legal Medicine



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## Forensic Anthropology Society of Europe

A section of the International Academy of Legal Medicine

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Dear Colleague,

As you probably know by now, FASE will organize its 1st meeting in October 22nd and 23rd, 2004 in Frankfurt, Germany.

Please note:

- Concerning the “Call for Papers”: deadline extension to September 30th 2004
- To download the call for papers and registration form on the net, type “Labanof” in Google.

### Report

AAFS 2004—February 16–21, Dallas, Texas

This year the meeting of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences was held in the Adams Mark hotel, in downtown Dallas, the capital of Texas.

It started on Monday with 21 workshops (23 proposed and 2 cancelled) being presented during the next 2 days: these workshops which usually lasted 6–8 h and need an additional fee payment of over 200 US\$, were sold out for many of them 1 month before the beginning of the meeting: 2 short workshops (2 h long) were also given.

It must be underlined that the persons presenting these workshops did not receive any payment and they even had to pay the regular registration fee without any rebate. It seems that the AAFS meeting is so attractive (2,000 attendees and over 300 papers presented on average) that the “prestige” resulting from a workshop presentation is sufficient compensation for the efforts made.

Among the workshops, only two were specifically about forensic anthropological subjects:

- N°22 “Recovery examination and evidence of decomposed and skeletonized bodies: an anthropological and entomological approach” with, among others Lee Goff from Hawaii and William C. Rodriguez III from the Armed Forces Institute.
- N°13 “Facial imaging from human remains using re/face:reality enhancement/facial approximation by computational estimation” organized by FBI Academy members and computer scientists from the GE Global Research company.

Workshop N°3 was about forensic human mitochondrial DNA analysis and of course also addressed forensic anthropology subjects such as DNA analysis on mixtures and charred remains; here also the FBI Academy was largely represented.

The plenary session on Wednesday morning was mainly made up of general considerations about the facts that in many forensic fields, especially in remote areas of the country, some experts (among them probably some forensic anthropology experts) lack the basic scientific prerequisites and background. It has been recommended

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that peer review and contradictory expertise should be used more often in court in order to avoid condemning innocent people.

At the exhibition which opened after the plenary session, among roughly 80 companies, there was 1 called "Bone Clones" which is specialized in osteological reproduction of high quality; it can be joined at [info@boneclones.com](mailto:info@boneclones.com).

At the Elsevier stand there was also a book on "Identification of pathological disorders in human skeleton remains" by Ortner.

At the poster session on Wednesday, I selected the following:

- The possibility to determine race from DNA profiles with the interest of helping the police in searching for suspects (in one case it was possible to make the difference between a black American, a white American and an Indian American).
- Histomorphometry techniques applied to small bones such as metacarpals and metatarsals for age determination.
- Trying to determine the number of parturitions using either the preauricular sulcus or the dorsal pitting of the pubis is not statistically sound for both variables.
- Ancestry could be determined by 3-dimensional morphometric analysis of the zygomatic process and it was confirmed that non-metric traits of the cranium could be used for the determination of ancestry (nasal sill, prognathism, form of the orbit, form of the cranium) as they provided acceptable results, still being "more user friendly" than the anthropometric methods.
- It is possible to determine sex from the distal extremity of the humerus, and the clavicle appears to be useful for sex determination of infant and juvenile especially by measuring the diameter of the mid-shaft.
- There was a case report about the medico-legal implications of "osteogenesis imperfecta" in a possible child abuse.

From Wednesday until Saturday, oral papers and posters were presented in roughly eight different rooms.

The Forensic Anthropology section was even more active than ever before: 106 papers including posters were presented mainly by PhD students, slightly more than for the Pathology/Biology sections (92) which have more members but less PhD students.

Unfortunately, there was only one paper presented by a FASE board member (Dr Schuliar Yves) in the field of facial reconstruction using computer-assisted methods.

Of course one of the most famous FASE members, Douglas Ubelaker was very active and gave a paper about

the need and interest of international collaboration in research.

I selected a few trends among this huge scientific output.

The University of Tennessee at Knoxville, is still the super power of anthropology especially since they have collaborated with the Baraybar Forensic Skeletal Collection from the Balkans (William Bass, a famous retired professor of anthropology also gave his name to the William Bass Donated collection).

It was recalled that DNA is not the only tool for identification and that the "good old methods" are still efficient (and cheaper).

Age determination in the elderly is a problem: it has been proposed to create a seventh phase to the Suchey Brooks in order to help.

Bayesian statistics applied to the Lamendin method also seem to give an improvement in age determination accuracy for people around 60; the Lamendin method, by the way, keeps on spreading over the world as it has been demonstrated to be efficient for aging a former Yugoslavia population of victims.

A whole session was dedicated to the question of the interest of race determination; there were several papers dealing with this problem on various bones among which the non-metric traits were applied to the cranium.

Experimental macroscopical studies to differentiate perimortem and postmortem fractures also showed that one must be cautious when answering these difficult questions, especially if postmortem bone is maintained humid by the taphonomic conditions (maceration).

Another bone trauma study also showed that when impacted on one side of the cranium the fracture does not initiate on the area of out-bending (sometimes on the opposite side) as described in 1945 by Gurdjian, but instead radiated from the point of impact.

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## Conclusion

The Europeans, especially the FASE members should be more present (in number and in presentations) next year in New Orleans as AAFS is (so far) the meeting to attend when one is interested in forensic anthropology.

Do not hesitate to contact us if you need any further information.

Looking forward to welcoming you as a FASE member if you have not joined us yet.

Best regards

Professor Eric Baccino

President of FASE