

Seminar at Stockholm University  
25 January 2023

Title:

Mummification in the Mesolithic. New Approaches to Old Photo Documentation Reveal Previously Unknown Mortuary Practices in the Sado Valley, Portugal

Abstract:

This study is based on newly surfaced documentation from older excavations of Mesolithic burials in Portugal. The documents have been analyzed using archaeoethanatology enriched by actualistic experimental research, and the study demonstrates the potential of revisiting old excavations and archives with new methods. The analysis has confirmed details in the burial program concerning treatment of the dead body, and the results even include evidence for mummification, a phenomenon possibly linked to curation and transportation of the body, highlighting the significance of the burial place in the landscape.

Short biography:

Rita Peyroteo Stjerna is a bioarchaeologist specialized in mortuary archaeology and trained in archaeoethanatology, ancient DNA, radiocarbon and isotopes, and archaeological research in museum collections.

She has worked with archaeological museum collections since 2011 in Europe, Africa, and Southeast Asia. Her PhD from Uppsala University considered the role of mortuary practices among Mesolithic hunter-gatherers and her research has been focused on Holocene hunter-gatherers in Iberia.

Currently, she is a researcher in two major projects in Sweden: the NEOSEA project at the University of Gothenburg investigating the maritime origins of Megalithism in Europe; and the Ethical Entanglements project, at the Linnaeus University, which investigates the caring for human remains in museums and research.