

Report of the SGA/ SSA Annual Meeting and Workshop 2022

The 2022 Annual Meeting of the Swiss Society for Anthropologie (SGA/SSA) took place at the Natural History Museum in Basel and was kindly organized by Dr. Sandra Pichler from the Integrative Prehistory and Archaeological Science at the University of Basel and Dr. Gerard Hotz from the aforementioned Natural History Museum. Starting with the scientific program on Friday 11 November, 13 talks and 1 poster presentation were held by experienced and young researchers from Switzerland and abroad. This was the highest number of contributions reached so far in the history of the assembly. The talks showed a great thematic variety ranging from virtual anthropology over taphonomy studies to specific site analyses, thus reflecting the diversity and multidisciplinary within the society. The keynote lecture in the evening on “One health” was given by Prof. Jane Buikstra from Arizona State University who is a world-renowned bioarcheologist specialized in paleopathology. She pledged for introducing a comprehensive concept of health within paleopathology by integrating animal and human health in the research. She argued, however, that even though many diseases were transmitted from animals to humans in the past and vice versa, the manifestation in bones must not be the same in both species. The evening concluded with a joint dinner.

Saturday 12 November started with the general assembly in the morning. Two members of the board, Amelie Alterauge and Negahnaz Moghaddam, gave their farewell and freed the positions of the chief-editor of the Bulletin and the webmaster. Claudine Abegg from the University Center of Legal Medicine, Lausanne – Geneva, was elected as new chief-editor of the Bulletin while the webmaster would be assigned by the board among the other candidates.

After the general assembly, Prof. Jane Buikstra gave a second keynote lecture on her current project on the Phaleron cemetery in Greece. Her talk focused on structural and physical violence among this ancient population by comparing demography and health parameters between the “normal” cemetery population and the mass graves. After lunch, this year’s workshop started by Dr. Gerhard Hotz and Dr. Thomas Böni giving an introduction to the Galler collection which is partly housed in the Natural History Museum. In the practical part, they showed the participants several specimens affected by diseases, such as osteogenesis imperfecta, myositis ossificans progressiva or cretinism (congenital iodine deficiency syndrome). Given the retirement of Thomas Böni, the society expressed its gratitude to him who has organized over 45 workshops on paleopathology for and within the scope of society. His medical perspective has always been much appreciated and offered important insights into past and current diseases.

All in all, after two years of conferences affected by the COVID situation, the assembly was very successful with two days of a full and interesting program and about 40 participants. The next SGA assembly is scheduled for October or November 2023 in Zurich with the topic of ancient DNA.

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