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HUMAN-ANIMAL RELATIONSHIPS IN ARCHAEOLOGY
Worldviews of hunter-gatherers in Northern Europe

Introductory Report

HARA Newsletter 1, December 2016

701636-HARA-H2020-MSCA-IF-2015
Introduction
The project Human-Animal Relationships in Archaeology: Worldviews of hunter gatherers in Northern Europe (HARA) is a newly commenced postdoctoral research project at the School of Archaeology UCD. Dr Maja Pasarić who has been awarded a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowship for her project started at UCD in September 2016. The project is based in School of Archaeology and its Centre for Experimental Archaeology and Material Culture and is mentored by Dr Graeme Warren, UCD School of Archaeology. HARA project focuses on how animal remains, especially artefacts made of animal remains, and animal iconography, reflect and construct human-animal relations.

Human-animal relationships
The project aims to develop new perspectives of human-animal relationships among hunter-gatherers in Northern Europe and proposes an interdisciplinary approach incorporating ethnographical research, contextual archaeological analyses and experimental archaeological approach. The transition from hunters and gatherers to farming communities (from Mesolithic to Neolithic), is one of the central questions archaeologists address. Cultural processes of domestication are often considered to be associated with significant changes to human-animal relationships, sometimes as a fundamental break from perceiving animals as a different kind of person to seeing them as property. This project will provide new insights on

Objectives of the research project
The HARA project proposes a multidisciplinary approach that will involve fulfilling the following objectives:

- Developing an ethnographical perspective through the study of Russian language ethnographic literature about contemporary hunter-gatherer societies that has previously not been introduced to English speaking academic audiences and the study of ethnographical material culture collections and applying it to the re-examination and interpretation of the archaeological record through the development of comparative frameworks.

- Developing an experimental archaeological perspective about modes of production and use of modified animal remains, tooth pendants and zoomorphic objects.

- Contextually analysing the finds from the archaeological record by focusing on grave goods of animal origin: animal bones, antler and ornaments (tooth pendants), together with animal iconography.
human relations with animals in hunter-gatherer communities by recognizing continuity or change brought by domestication. Faunal remains and animal representations are the kind of data that allow us to examine how animals were placed in prehistoric worldviews and how members of prehistoric societies related to animals.

Training in new methodologies
As a part of the training in new methodologies which will be important for the implementation of the project Maja participated in zooarchaeology courses Understanding Zooarchaeology I and Human and Animal Remains: A Comparative Approach held at the University of Sheffield, UK. She also took part in the Experimental Archaeology and Ancient Technologies Module at UCD School of Archaeology and audited lectures at the Adoption of Agriculture and Investigating Materials and Objects: Assessing the use of objects Modules.

Forthcoming
Together with her mentor, Dr Graeme Warren, Maja is currently working on a paper about animals and humans in Mesolithic/Neolithic research. She is planning to visit Saint Petersburg and the
Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera), Russian Academy of Sciences in January 2017. More information about the analyses of the animal ornaments and iconography from the Siberian ethnographical collection will follow in the next newsletter we will be posting.

Fragment of a bear’s figure with anthropomorphic, zoomorphic, and ornitomorphic figures and a bear’s figure decorated with animal heads from West Siberia (Baulo, 2016).

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www.ucd.ie/research/people/archaeology/drmajapasaric/

Further reading:


Illustration sources:

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