

# Special issue: Forensic anthropology and archaeology in Northern Europe (FAANE) – Historical, current and future perspectives

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This special issue is based on the "Forensic anthropology and archaeology in Northern Europe" -seminar (FAANE) which was organized online by the Archaeology unit at the University of Oulu, Finland, on May 28th 2021. The purpose of the seminar was to unite researchers and practitioners focusing on forensic anthropology and/or forensic archaeology in the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden), Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), and Russia, and share country specific knowledge of the fields. One or two representatives from each country were contacted and invited to give a talk, and eventually 12 presentations from five countries were given in the seminar. Altogether over 200 people registered for the seminar and the maximum number of attendees online was about 110 at one time. We can say that the seminar was a success and showed the importance for forensic anthropological and archaeological work and co-operation in Northern Europe.

The status of both forensic anthropology and forensic archaeology in Europe have been previously studied through surveys [1-3]. The reported numbers of practicing forensic anthropologists and forensic archaeologists are quite low (ranging from 1 to 4) in all of the countries included in the seminar. However, these fields are quickly developing and getting more recognition. We wanted to update the literature, and illustrate this development in northern Europe with this special issue including papers from Denmark, Finland, Lithuania and Sweden. These papers demonstrate how forensic anthropology and forensic archaeology are used in these countries and the extent of their application and ongoing research. Originally, a paper from Russia was to be included in the issue, but in the aftermath of the Russian attack on Ukraine, the paper had to be withdrawn from the final publication as the research co-operation with the Russian organizations was forced to a standstill.

First four articles concentrate on the status of forensic anthropology and forensic archaeology in Denmark, Finland, Lithuania, and Sweden. In all of these countries, forensic anthropology has been advancing further under medicine or osteoarchaeology than forensic archaeology which seems to be a new addition to the forensic tool kit.

Villa et al. summarize the situation in Denmark, and highlight how the continuous research and development, especially in forensic anthropology, has taken the field clearly further in Denmark than in any other countries showcased in this issue.

Mäkinen et al. introduce the history and current status of forensic anthropology and forensic archaeology in Finland. Neither of these are separate entities within the Finnish university or legal systems, but the paper indicates increasing numbers of published research and general interest in the disciplines.

Jankauskas and Kisielius report how osteology and archaeology and their methods have been widely utilized in several mass grave investigations taking place in Lithuania, even if they have not necessarily been recognized as forensic anthropology or forensic archaeology. This paper accentuates the collaboration between multiple disciplines in these investigations.

Alfsdotter et al. demonstrate that in Sweden the skills obtained from osteological and archaeological education are already contributing to the police work by several individuals. The authors recommend an even bigger push to professionalize the role of forensic anthropologists within the forensic medicine in Sweden.

The last two articles are case studies from Lithuania and they underline the importance of forensic anthropology and forensic archaeology in the study of past conflicts. Kozakaitė's case report on the Forest brothers, the participants of anti-Soviet resistance, highlights the role of anthropological analysis and archaeological methods in the search, excavation and identification of these individuals and their gravesites.

Čičiurkaite and Kraniauskas present a case study on World War II mass grave investigations in Lithuania. The paper exhibits the magnitude of these investigations and how they have contributed to the forensic field.

All in all, this special issue is documenting the current state of forensic anthropology and forensic archaeology in Northern Europe. It shares the advancements in developing and expanding these fields and outlines the plans for making them more recognized at a professional level but also among the general public. In the years to come we can evaluate how the practitioners of forensic anthropology and archaeology have succeeded in these tasks in different countries.

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