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A technique speeds up the identification of 2,000 missing in Kosovo during Yugoslavia war

October 21st, 2009

A research work carried out at the Laboratory of Forensic Anthropology of the University of Granada will speed up the identification of more than 2,000 missing persons in Kosovo during former Yugoslavia war, besides developing a new forensic technique based on the study of ribs and pubis, which will be very useful for the identification of persons in armed conflicts. This work, pioneer all over the world, has involved the study of one of the greatest forensic samples never before analysed.

The author of this research work is **Edixon Quiñones Reyes**, whose doctoral thesis has been supervised by the professors of the University of Granada **Inmaculada Alemán Aguilera and Miguel Botella López**. The new forensic identification technique developed at the UGR can not only be applied not only for the Kosovar-Albanian, but only for other ethnic groups who live in Kosovo (Roman, Serbian and other former Yugoslavian groups), and can also be applied to Albanians from Albania and other regions of the Balkans and Europe and to the Serbians both from Serbia and the rest of the Balkans.

Analysis of human rests

The new forensic identification system will not only be applied in the identification processes of those persons disappeared during an armed conflict like that of Kosovo, but also to other forensic cases involving the analysis of decomposed, saponified, corified, mummified, or skeletal human remains.

Edixon Quiñones emphasizes that, at present, in Kosovo still there are 2,000 missing persons. "Therefore, the results of this study are a contribution of immediate applicability, which has a positive effect to solve a big social problem such as that of the persons disappeared during the armed conflict".

Between 1998 and 1999, more than 850,000 Kosovar-Albanian and about 200,000 Kosovar-Serbian moved from their countries of origin; likewise, many people were killed and 5,238 persons disappeared. In the year 2002, the UN created the Office on Missing Persons and Forensics (OMPF), whose mission was to exhume, analyse, identify and give back to their relatives the remains of the victims of the conflict of Kosovo.

During the identification of the persons disappeared in Kosovo, the OMPF proved that the parameters used to determine the age in pubis and ribs did not match that of local population. That was the origin of this work of the UGR, whose objective was to propose new age ranges based on such methods but adapted to the specific characteristics of the Kosovar people.

To reach this goal, they used the data of the forensic anthropological analysis of 2,066 individuals, who were identified by DNA tests between 2002 and 2007. With the ages of the individuals and the anthropological information, they calculated new age ranges in pubis and ribs.

Part of the results of this research work has been published in the journal *Maguare*, of the Department of Anthropology of the National University of Colombia.

Source: University of Granada

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