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Twelfth International Conference on
Hunting and Gathering Societies (CHAGS XII)

The Material Correlates of Kinship Processes in Hunter-gatherer Societies

Conference Session at CHAGS XII Kuala Lumpur July 2018



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Conveners: Elizabeth Lawton-Matthews (RUG) & Dr. Andrew Needham (York)

Abstract: *This session considers hunter-gatherer kinship, its relationship to material culture, and its variation across different situations, times and places. The session focuses particularly on material culture in order to deepen knowledge of kinship in hunting and gathering societies, and as a way to bridge archaeology and anthropology.*

This session focuses on hunter-gatherer kinship – including marriage, descent, fosterage, alliance and other forms of social relations, and its material correlates. While kinship has benefited from years of anthropological study, less emphasis has been placed on the specific role of material culture in creating and maintaining kinship ties. Meanwhile archaeologists have been frustrated in their attempts to understand the nature of prehistoric kinship structures. Recent advances in DNA and isotope analyses have given the topic new momentum, but in their enthusiasm for these new techniques, archaeologists run the risk of neglecting the role of material culture. This session calls for engagement with material culture not only as a point of connection between anthropological and archaeological approaches, but also as a means of

deepening understandings of hunter-gatherer kinship practices and human relations with non-human agents.

This session asks two primary, and linked, questions:

1. Is there a distinctive mode of hunter-gatherer kinship; how does it vary across time and space?
2. How can focusing on material culture further understandings of kinship in hunter-gatherer groups?

We welcome presentations on any aspect of kinship in hunter-gatherer communities and will explore the following themes in particular:

- How is material culture used, directly (e.g. gifting) or indirectly (e.g. apprenticeship), to foster kinship ties, including those beyond the genetic?
- How does this vary between groups with different quantities and qualities of material culture?
- How does material culture reflect the lifeway and transitions related to kinship e.g. childhood, fosterage, becoming an adult, marriage, separation, death and inheritance?
- If hunter-gatherer conceptions of kinship extend to include non-human elements (e.g. ancestors, animals, natural phenomena), is this mediated, and therefore reflected, through material culture?
- How do changing contemporary political, economic, and environmental conditions affect hunter-gatherer kinship? Has changing material culture had an impact?

To submit an abstract please use the following link: <http://chags.usm.my/index.php/kinship>

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