

Abstract PhD Project of Noah Steuri

Burial practices in the Western Alps 5000 – 3000 B.C. Sources on social change in the Neolithic.

The earliest certain indications that people became settled in present-day Switzerland are graves from the time around 5000 B.C. These are individual graves which were built from simple stone slabs or wooden planks and contained individuals buried in a crouched position. They are called cist graves of the "Chamblandes" type. In the course of the following two millennia a successive transformation of this burial form began. The graves became larger and several individuals were buried within them. At the end of this development, around 3000 BC, this led to the construction of megalithic collective graves, so-called "dolmen". This change of the grave architecture from individual to collective burials and from simple to monumental graves reflects a profound change of the Neolithic social structure and is the focus of my dissertation. The aim of the research project is to systematically analyse the phenomenon of the type Chamblandes cist graves with transdisciplinary methodology and to look at it in the context of the European Middle Neolithic. All sites in Switzerland, France and Italy will be recorded and evaluated. A larger series of new radiocarbon datings will enable the chronological clarification of the evolution of funeral practices. The generated data form the basis for the further development of sociocultural models regarding decisive processes of Neolithic social evolution.