



## 4B-08 CRUMBEL: Cremations, Urns and Mobility – Ancient population dynamics in Belgium

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Cremation was one of the main funerary practices if not the major one in Belgium during the Late Neolithic through to the Roman Period. It remained also important during the following ‘Early-Medieval Period’ (up to 700 AD). Still, Belgian cremated bone collections have only been studied in a limited number of cases. However, almost twenty years ago, it has been shown that radiocarbon dates could be obtained from cremated bone. Several Belgian collections have since been dated providing much more in-depth information about the chronology, development, and disappearance of cremation as funerary practice in Belgium. Furthermore, thanks to the recent demonstration that calcined bone provides a reliable substrate for strontium isotopes, it is now possible to study population dynamics.

The CRUMBEL project takes advantage of these new developments and will apply them to Belgian cremated bone fragments from the Late Neolithic to the Early Medieval Period improving our current understanding of how people lived in Belgium between 3000 BC to 800 AD. Until now, the dominance of cremation as funeral practice from that period in Northwestern Europe led to limited information on migrations and living conditions.

As for most large scale archaeological research project, radiocarbon dating plays a central role in replacing the osteoarchaeological and isotope results in a chronological context. As such, more than 600 cremated bone fragments will be radiocarbon dated. Together with the radiocarbon dates already available for Belgian cremated bone fragments (ca. 400), it will represent one of the largest set of radiocarbon dates of cremated bone. Combining these results with information gathered on funerary rituals, particular attention will be given to the “old wood” effect as the importance of its impact on the dates is still often under evaluated.