

Osteobiographical Report for a human skeleton recovered from the farm Noup, in the DeBeers mining area, Namaqualand.

August 2003

The DeBeers Namaqualand mine company discovered a human burial in May 2003. The 22 \pm 2 year old probable male had been exposed when sub-contractors were mining for diamonds at the coastal farm of Noup, Northern Cape, South Africa. Unfortunately, the burial was discovered using heavy earth moving machinery and so the context of the burial was lost. Upon receiving the skeletal remains, an unsuccessful attempt was made to recover either information on the context of the burial and or the retrieval of the missing elements. The analysis is therefore based on approximately a quarter of the skeletal remains and follows the usual methods found in Buikstra and Ubelaker (1994) and Bass (1995). The bone is well preserved and sustained minimal damage due to excavation.

Inventory

As only a quarter of the skeleton was recovered there is a paucity of skeletal elements (Figure 1). The skull is represented by the vault including the parietals, temporals, occipital, and the inferior portion of the sphenoid. Also present are: a left humerus, both clavicles, both scapulae, the sacrum, the left ilium, four left ribs, eleven left ribs, cervicles three through six, thoracics one through three and five through twelve, and all five lumbar vertebrae. There are also five teeth: both mandibular third molars, the left maxillary first molar, and the roots from a premolar and canine.

Sex

The sex of the individual is a probable male. The inability to be more precise in determining the sex is due to the lack of the more specific indicators of sexual morphology, namely the face and pubis. The sciatic notch is quite narrow and the auricular surface is flat. There is also no evidence of a pre-auricular sulcus. The maximum (vertical) humeral head diameter of 35.1 mm (Table 1) is in the intermediate zone for determining the sex of Khoisan individuals (Susan Pfeiffer, personal communication).

Age

The estimated age of death is approximately 22 \pm 2 yrs based on the lack of fusion of the medial clavicles (<25yrs), the sternal end of the right fourth rib (phase II 20.8-23.1 yrs), the auricular surface (phase I, 20-24 yrs), the lack of wear on the third molars, and the fusion of all other epiphyses.

Traits of Note

The left humerus exhibits a septal aperture, which is a common trait amongst the Khoisan population. Also of note, the clavicles do not exhibit coronoid tubercles. The left innominate exhibits multiple parallel cut marks above the sciatic notch, evidence of being damaged by the machinery during excavation, which is supported by corresponding damage to the inferior aspect of the right clavicle.

The spinous processes of the sacrum and vertebrae are oriented to the left side of the body, suggesting a shorter left leg however, as the left femur is missing it is difficult to

determine the exact cause of asymmetry in the vertebral morphology. In addition, the right clavicle (129.1mm) is longer than the left one (123.6mm).

The overall nature of the skeleton is consistent with Khoisan traits in that the individual is quite gracile and small.

Tests

A small fragment of rib was removed for stable isotope analysis as well 6 ribs (45.1) for radiocarbon dating.

References

Bass, W.M

1995 Human Osteology: A Laboratory and Field Manual. 3rd ed. Missouri Archaeological Society, Columbia, Missouri.

Buikstra, J.E, Ubelaker, D.H (ed)

1994 Standards: For Data Collection From Human Skeletal Remains. Arkansas Archaeological Survey Research Series No.44. Fayetteville, Arkansas.

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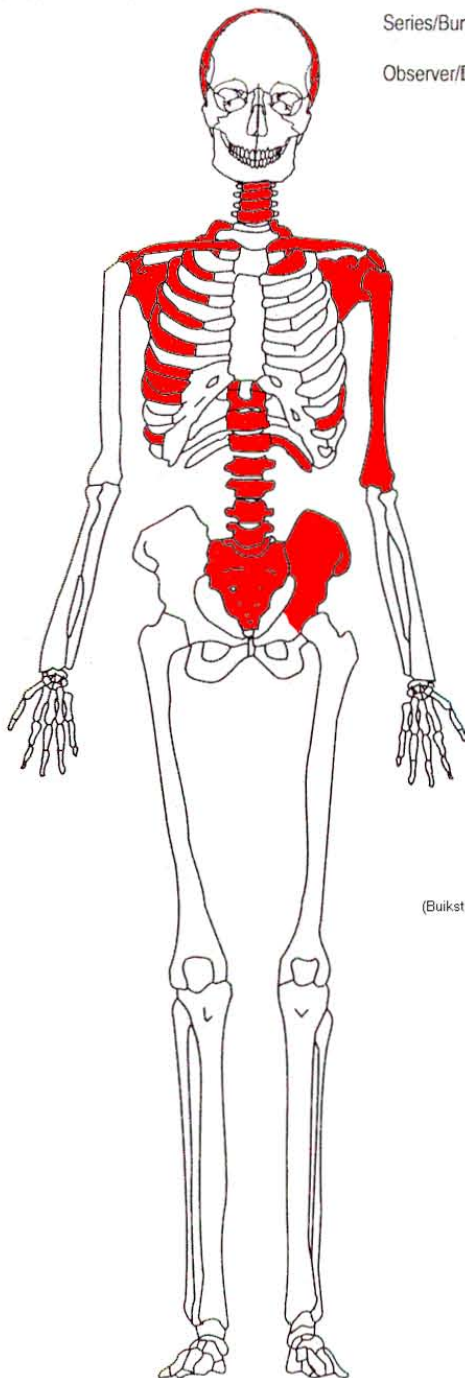
Table 1. Measurements of available Skeletal Elements

Element	mm
<i>Humerus</i>	
Maximum length	268.5
Epicondylar breadth	53.6
Vertical head diam.	35.1
Transverse head diam.	33.3
Circ. Midpoint	47.5
<i>Scapula</i>	
Height	120.7
Breadth	89.3
<i>Clavicle</i>	
Length	123.6
Sagittal diameter at midshaft	10.1
Vertical diameter at midshaft	7.4
<i>Ilium</i>	
Iliac breadth	144.2
<i>Sacrum</i>	
Alae breadth	115.3
Transverse circ. of first sacral body	43.9

ADULT SKELETON RECORDING FORM: ANTERIOR VIEW

Series/Burial/Skeleton DeBeers skeleton

Observer/Date Genevieve Dewar/ 02.06.2003



(Buikstra & Ubelaker, 1994)

Figure 1. Inventory of Skeletal Remains