

2007 ANGLO-GEORGIAN NOKALAKEVI EXPEDITION. Osteological Assessment for Trench A

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SUMMARY

The Excavation of eight human burials from trench 'A' is reported. In total, nineteen individuals have been excavated in this area since the 2002 season. In this 2007 season, seven skeletons were aligned east-west; three with the head in the west, four with the head in the east.

All skeletons suffered a high degree of fragmentation thus some restoration was undertaken in order to extrapolate useful metric and non-metric data. The study of the human skeletal remains from Trench 'A' indicates one female mature adult, two possible neonates (birth up to one month old) two infants and three in early childhood (one to six years old).

*With the author's professional direction involving both human and animal skeletal remains, an effort to start a zoological reference collection was initiated; the first to be processed in its entirety was *Canis Familiaris*.*

The following assessment is divided into two sections, the first being a description of the grave cuts, with the second detailing each inhumation within the grave.

DESCRIPTION OF THE GRAVES

The following description will detail the shape, size, depth, orientation and truncation of the 8 graves excavated in this 2007 season.

- [191] Amphora inhumation aligned East West with the amphora neck in the East. Cut is sub-rectangular with rounded corners. Aligned East-West with a sharp break of slope. Dimensions: 0.68m x 0.35m. Contains skeleton (190).
- [194] A sub-rectangular cut with rounded corners. Aligned East-West with a gradual break of slope. Dimensions: 1.15m x 0.40m Contains skeleton (193).
- [197] An imprecise, sub-circular, shallow cut with a flat base. Approximate dimensions delineated by skeletal spread: 0.20m x 0.30m Contains skeleton (196).
- [200] An imprecise, sub-circular cut with rounded corners, partially delineated by limestone rocks approximately 0.20m x 0.10m diameter and slag. Aligned East-West with a gradual break of slope and flat base. Approximate dimensions: 0.95m x 0.60m. Contains skeleton (199).
- [207] Amphora inhumation aligned East West with the amphora neck in the East. Approximate amphora dimensions: 0.65m x 0.35m Contains skeleton (206).
- [210] An imprecise, sub-rectangular cut delineated by limestone rocks approximately 0.07m x 0.07m diameter. Aligned East-West with a gradual break of slope and flat base. Contains skeleton (209).
- [222] Amphora inhumation aligned East West with the amphora neck in the East. Approximate amphora dimensions: 0.67m x 0.30m Contains skeleton (221).

[228] A sub-rectangular cut with rounded corners, partially delineated by limestone rocks approximately 0.20m x 0.20m. Aligned East-West with a sharp break of slope and flat base. Dimensions: 1.95m x 0.85m. Contains skeleton (227).

GRAVE CATALOGUE

Aging, sexing and stature estimation was accomplished using standard osteological techniques based, where applicable on the degree of epiphyseal and cranial suture closure, changes of the pubic symphysis, dental eruption and attrition and the metrically morphological differences of the Os coxae and skull. Categories of age follow the guidelines set out by The Biological Anthropology Research Centre (BARC) at Bradford University. The following is a description of each inhumation within the grave, detailing:

1. The context number
2. The orientation
3. The skeleton with comments on its sex, age, stature, position, preservation and pathology
4. Any associated artefacts.

Plans and Plates can be referred to in Appendix A and Appendix B and C respectively.

AREA A: 2007

Skeleton I. (190) Infant, (up to one year old) (skeletal weight: 54g)

An east-west aligned skeleton with the head in the west. In partial articulation and moderate preservation, the skeletal elements are highly fragmented. It lies on its left side facing north, flexed and the pelvis and knee within an amphora coffin. Reduced level: -3.55m

Pathology: Submeningeal bone formation markedly occurs on the intracranial parietal bone, Porotic hyperostosis on the supra-orbital ridges of the frontal bone, pars basilaris, sphenoid and ilium; subperiosteal bone formation occurs to a lesser degree yet with symmetry and linear deposition on the humeri, femurs and tibias, which also have enlarged nutrient foramina. Ridges occur inferior to the intertubercular sulcus of humeri.

Associated artefacts: **None**

Skeleton II. (193) Early Childhood, (c. five years old) (skeletal weight: 328g)

An east west aligned skeleton with the head in the west. In complete random disarticulation and poor preservation, the skeletal elements are highly fragmented. From its position, it can be seen to be lying on its left side facing north, possibly flexed at the pelvis and knee. Reduced levels: skull: -3.69m, sacrum: -3.63m, feet: -3.65

Pathology: Lytic lesions occur on the right mastoid process and possibly on the dorsal plane of the scapula just medial of the glenoid fossa and superior to the lateral border. Possible indications of mild hyperostosis on some cranial fragments, taking a dripping wax appearance.

Associated artefacts: None

Skeleton III. (196) Neonate? (skeletal weight: 29g)

A disorderly, disarticulated deposit of predominantly cranial fragments plus some fragments of rib, scapula, humerus and clavicle; in poor, friable preservation, a large proportion of the skeletal elements are missing. Reduced level: -3.67m

Pathology: A sub-circular hole occurs in a cranial fragment (undiagnosed) and an atypical midline foramen occurring mid shaft on the posterior humerus.

Associated artefacts: /31\ blue glass bead

Skeleton IV. (199) Early Childhood? (1-6 years old) (skeletal weight: 587g)

An east west aligned cremation with the head in the east. In complete disarticulation and a high degree of fragmentation; a slag deposit occurs on the south east periphery of the cut and a ceramic vessel sits in the east of the grave. A copper alloy 'snake' bracelet was intimately associated with the skeleton, possibly around the lower arm. Reduced levels: skull: -3.66m, feet: -3.67m

Pathology: The bone is predominantly white with occasional shielded areas and tan/black trabecular blocks. Some unanalysed carbonised material survives. Surface texture consists of longitudinal splits, longitudinal and transverse checking and curved cracks.

Associated artefacts: /5\ bronze bracelet /6\ striped paste bead /29\ ceramic vessel /30\ necklace

Skeleton V. (206) Infant, (up to one year old) (skeletal weight: 35g)

An east west aligned skeleton with the head in the east. In disordered disarticulation and poor preservation, the surviving skeletal elements are highly fragmented within an amphora coffin. Reduced levels: highest: -3.71m, lowest: -3.83m

Pathology: Indications of subperiosteal bone formation on the right clavicle, scapulas, ischium, Ulnas and most notably on an unidentified shaft fragment.

Associated artefacts: None

Skeleton VI. (209) Early Childhood, (up to two years old)

An east west aligned skeleton with the head in the west. In disordered disarticulation and moderate preservation, the bone is fragmented. Reduced levels: skull -3.66m, feet: -3.67m

Pathology: Porotic hyperostosis occurs on the pars basilaris, pars lateralis and the anterior surfaces of the humeri. Possible lytic lesions on the gluteal surface of the right ilium; a fine striated, woven appearance to the cortical bone appears across the gluteal surface of the left ilium.

Associated artefacts: None

Skeleton VII. (221) Neonate?

An east west aligned skeleton with the head in the east. In disarticulation and poor preservation, the surviving skeletal elements are fragmented within an amphora coffin. Reduced levels: skull -3.27m, sacrum: -3.29m, feet: -3.31m

Pathology: Additional foramen on posterior surface of the (right?) tibia, located towards the mid-shaft, inferior to the nutrient foramen. There appears to be some asymmetry between the proximal tibial epiphyses. There are indications of cortical hyperostosis on the radius, ulna and tibia, indicating Caffey's disease.

Skeleton VIII. (227) Female, mature adult (45 to 49 years old), height: 168.69cm +/- 4.24cm

An east west aligned skeleton with the head in the east, facing north. In moderate preservation and full articulation it lies towards its right side. The arms are flexed at the elbow; the right hand rests over the chest, the left hand over the abdomen. The legs are flexed at the pelvis and knee. The skeleton is richly furnished with ceramic vessels, beaded glass/paste/stone necklaces and copper alloy earrings and bracelets.

Pathology: Full dental eruption, no dental pathology, some minor calculus. Possible cortical remodelling on left clavicle (marker of occupational stress or fracture?)

Robust skeletal architecture with conflicting sexual dimorphic traits

Associated artefacts: /9\ to /12\ /16\ to /28