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SKELETAL BIOLOGY OF THE PEOPLE OF
SA’AD:
A BYZANTINE SITE IN MAFRAQ,
NORTHERN JORDAN

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Abstract:

Twelve thousand one hundred and eighty one fragmented and complete bones were analyzed for the purpose of reconstructing the biology of the past people of Sa'ad. The site is a late Roman to early Byzantine period site. The bones studied came from Necropolis 1. It consists of four graves located around the church. 2925 bones came from tomb 4 grave 1, 6458 bones from tomb 4 grave 3 (commonly called Unknown Feature), 1095 bones from tomb 4 grave (1+2) and 1703 bones from cave 1 grave 1. This sample was used in attempt to estimate age, sex, (MNI) (Minimum Number of Individuals) and stature within the four groups. Pathological changes that were observed were recorded. The author used all these results to answer the main question (purpose) of this thesis. Are the people of this Necropolis the same? If not, what are the differences between them?

The pathological cases that have been found in this skeletal material includes: fractures, inflammations, enthesopathies, compressed body of the vertebral carpus, anomalie, Schmoral's node and the eight types of degenerative arthritis: osteophytosis, lipping, porosity, ankylosis, exostosis, resorptive, proliferative and fusion were examined.
The most important findings of the study are:

1- It is not possible to make a very reliable age and sex distribution because of the severe fragmentary condition of the bone, but the statures of some individuals were estimated.

2- The materials from the four groups, lacking any evidence (except for some inflammatory changes) of any of the known disease conditions, which leave their marks on the bony skeleton such as leprosy, syphilis, anemia and rickets suggest that these people were generally very healthy.

3- These people seem to have had good nutrition and the absence of the marks of diseases that are related to malnutrition such as platymeria, platycnemia, platybrachia, anemia, rickets and tuberculosis support this suggestion.

4- The archeological evidence shows that the site had an agricultural based economy.

5- Differences in pathology rates were found between the four groups, especially in the degenerative diseases which are good indicators of hard work done by some of these people.

6- According to the differences in the pathological changes, the people of tomb 4 grave 3 seem to have had a harder life style and harder work, which supports the hypothesis that these people may have lived in different times or differed in their kinds of work.