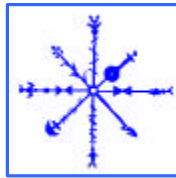


Report of Bones from Dadastaðir, Mývatn District, Northern Iceland

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NORSEC

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Background

On July 27th-28th & August 10th 2004 Adolf Friðriksson of the Archaeological Institute Iceland investigated a probable pagan burial near the farm of Dadastaðir. The grave had been plundered in antiquity (prior to the 1477 tephra fall). However, bone fragments identifiable as human, dog, and horse were recovered from the grave fill and the robbers' spoil heap. This report documents the zooarchaeological portion of this grave find.

Report

The bones included in this grave lot represent three species, human (*Homo sapiens L.*), domestic dog (*Canis familiaris L.*) and horse (*Equus caballus L.*). **Human** bone (identified by Hildur Gestsdóttir) is restricted to a fragment of pelvis, the right acetabular facet. Gender indeterminate but possibly female.

Horse bones

Horse fragments included were:

- 1 Axis vertebra, fused.
 - 2 Cervical (neck) Vertebrae, probably cervicals 3 and 5 (thus not in articulation). From fully adult (>4-5 yrs) animal with completely fused epiphyses.
 - 1 Thoracic vertebra, completely fused epiphyses.
 - 1 Rib, proximal end (possibly originally in articulation with Thoracic vertebra above).
 - 2 Sesamoids
 - 2 Carples
 - 2 Third phalanx (hoof) also from an adult animal of a smaller breed (such as Icelandic horse), showing some age-related pathology.
 - 1 Radius, proximal (small fragment)
 - 1 Fourth (accessory) metapodial complete
 - 1 Incisor, heavily worn, from mature-old adult
 - 1 Canine, heavily worn, also from a fully mature adult.
 - 1 Second phalanx, fully fused mature animal. Metrics (mm, Von den Dreisch 1976) Bd 40.05, GL 81.0, SD 30.49, Bp 51.5
- Total: 17 bones of horse.

Discussion: the partial horse skeleton is clearly disturbed, with fragments coming from many parts of the body. It would appear that a complete or nearly complete horse was interred, not just a head. The state of the teeth and fusion of the vertebrae indicate an animal that was probably a bit past its prime, though still apparently healthy adult. All the bones could have come from a single individual, and the consistent age indicators do argue in favor of a single animal, but this cannot be stated with certainty.

Dog Bones

Dog bones in the Dadastaðir KUML 1 deposit comprise the following elements

- 1 Femora, left, fully fused proximally & distally. Bd 31.6, GL 186.0, SD 13.4, Bp(1) 42.9, Bp(2) 17.3
- 1 Femora, right, fully fused proximally and distally. Bd 31.9, GL 187, SD 13.2, Bp(1) 42.4, Bp(2) 18.0
- 1 Humerus, right, fully fused proximally and distally, pathological lipping on both proximal and distal ends. Bd 33.3, GL 167.3, SD 10.3, Bp(1) 46.7, Bp (2) 30.0
- 1 Humerus, left, fully fused proximally and distally, also has pathological lipping on both articular ends. BD 34.8, GL 167.1, SD 10.34, Bp(1) 45.6, Bp(2) 30.3
- 1 Innominate, left, fully fused
- 1 Innominate, right, fully fused
- 1 astragalus
- 1 metatarsus, shaft
- 2 ribs, proximal
- 1 radius, whole, fused proximally SD 10.30, Bp 17.7
- 1 cervical vertebra, fully fused
- 7 thoracic vertebrae, fully fused
- 3 lumbar vertebrae, fully fused
- 1 upper M3 carnassial tooth, exceptionally worn, old adult.
- 11 small terrestrial dog sized rib fragments.

Total 23 definite dog bones, 11 additional probable dog bones.

Discussion: These elements very probably come from the same individual dog, as long bones and pelvis are paired halves, fusion states are uniform, and the measurements are very similar. This dog was evidently not only an adult but also a fairly aged animal. Tooth wear is extreme and the apparent osteoarthritis around the humerus (both joints) strongly suggest an animal at the end of a long life. The Dadastaðir dog is of medium size and build, not unlike the general range of modern traditional Icelandic breed. Humerus is very similar in size to the Hrísheimar dog find.

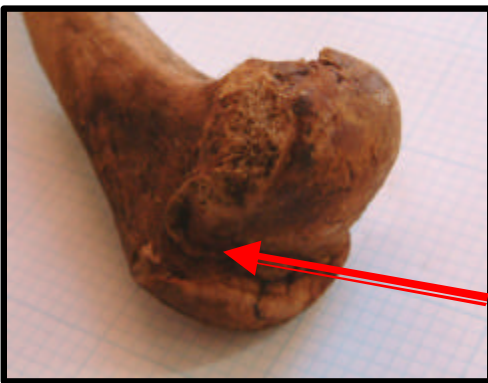


Figure 1) Probable arthritic lipping around the edge of the proximal articular facet of the dog humerus.

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