Socializing Violence: Interpersonal Violence Recidivism at Abu Fatima (Sudan)

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Ancient Kerma (Nubia)
The Ancient Nubian Kerma Culture thrived from the 3rd-2nd millennia BCE (Table 1). The cemetery at Abu Fatima, located ~5km south of the Kerma capital city, was in use throughout the Kerma Period. Pilot excavations and osteological analysis at Abu Fatima (2015) suggest a high frequency of interpersonal violence in this population. Six of the seven adults exhumed exhibited evidence of interpersonal violence; four individuals showed signs of recidivistic interpersonal violence. This poster presents data on this initial skeletal sample and examines these findings within a social framework.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ancient Kerma</th>
<th>2,600-2,050 BCE</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Middle Kerma</td>
<td>2,050-1,650 BCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classic Kerma</td>
<td>1,650-1,550 BCE</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Interpersonal Violence at Abu Fatima

Interpersonal violence (IPV) was considered present if sharp/blunt force trauma occurred (1) above the hairline, (2) on the face, or (3) at the distal ulna (perry fracture; Judd, 2008; Walker, 2001). Determination of IPV recidivism was based on differential stages of skeletal healing (Judd, 2002). Standard bioarchaeological techniques were used to determine sex and age (Buikstra and Ubelaker, 1994).

Table 2

<table>
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<th>#1</th>
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<th>#4</th>
<th>#5</th>
<th>#6</th>
<th>#7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Young Adult</td>
<td>Old Adult</td>
<td>Middle Adult</td>
<td>Middle Adult</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Young Adult</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is Violence Present?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is Recidivistic Violence Present?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Notes on Recidivism Determination</td>
<td>six healed cranial BFTs and more recent nasal fracture</td>
<td>nearly-healed perry fracture and more recent BFT</td>
<td>well-healed parietal SFT and more recent nasal fracture (Fig.2)</td>
<td>peri-mortem blade wound to several ribs; well-healed cranial BFT</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Osteological Analysis

Interpersonal violence (IPV) was considered present if sharp/blunt force trauma occurred (1) above the hairline, (2) on the face, or (3) at the distal ulna (perry fracture; Judd, 2008; Walker, 2001). Determination of IPV recidivism was based on differential stages of skeletal healing (Judd, 2002). Standard bioarchaeological techniques were used to determine sex and age (Buikstra and Ubelaker, 1994).

Socially-Sanctioned Violence?

- Females and males in each age cohort participated in IPV-related activities/events.
- Despite the small sample size, IPV was present and recidivistic at Abu Fatima; considering the ubiquity of IPV at Abu Fatima and other Kerma sites (see Judd, 2002), it is reasonable to infer a social context were IPV was sanctioned and/or encouraged (e.g., war, sport, intergroup conflict).
- IPV recidivism may be underreported in this study. Two individuals (1&5) had evidence of multiple IPV injuries; however, the advanced degree of skeletal healing made it impossible to differentiate traumatic events.
- Lastly, an old adult female from Abu Fatima exhibited numerous cranial BFTs, possibly accrued throughout her life; as methods for detecting recidivism in the skeletal record improve, the person years concept could inform the study of violence-related injuries by accounting for age and length of exposure (Glencross and Sawchuk, 2003).
- Upcoming excavation and analysis will increase the size of the Abu Fatima skeletal collection and further inform our understanding of violence in Ancient Kerma society.

Works Cited:

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