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Taphonomic and Skeletal Indicators of Captivity and Violence in the Southwest (AD 1000-1300)

Abstract

Violence against women especially as a result from raiding and abduction of women was a common and world-wide phenomenon that has been part of human history for a very long time. Its persistence into today's globalized commodity market, where women are used as sex and domestic slaves against their will, demonstrates how institutionalized this form of violence is. Gendered violence is found in many different contexts, but it is most sustained in groups that practice raiding and abduction of women (and often children). Raiding, as part of endemic warfare strategies, is cyclical and part of a long-term strategy with economic and political implications for both males and females. How can these kinds of practices be empirically supported by the bioarchaeological record and what are the effects of these practices? The taphonomic and mortuary component of human remains is crucial in answering these questions. The bioarchaeological signature of forced captivity includes healed head wounds, healed broken bones, and a variety of trauma-related musculo-skeletal changes. Women in unusual mortuary configurations with healed fractures, inflamed muscles, infections, and other signs of abuse reveal the biological costs of this form violence.

Keywords

Captivity, Cranial Depression Fractures, Bioarchaeology

Taphonomic and Skeletal Indicators of Captivity and Violence in the Southwest (AD 1000-1300)

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OVERVIEW

TOPIC: Skeletal Signatures of Forced Captivity, Slavery and Indentured Servitude

BACKGROUND: Violence against women in the form of head wounds was discovered for the La Plata Valley Ancestral Pueblo (Anasazi) (AD 1000-1300). Collectively, these non-lethal partially and completely healed depression fractures were hypothesized by Martin et al. (2001) to be the result of either witchcraft execution, warfare, domestic violence or raiding and abduction.

OBJECTIVE: To test these alternative hypotheses further, skeletal remains of individuals with depression fractures were analyzed to more fully correlate head wounds with other indicators of stress on the body. Analyses were clustered around several areas that included

- Documentation of mortuary context
- Co-occurrence with other pathologies and fractures
- Recidivism and recurrence of fractures and trauma
- Consultation with neuropathologist regarding behavioral consequences of blunt force trauma
- Contextualization of women with and without trauma and pathology
- Comparison with other reported cases

METHODS: Using a multiple-methodology approach, systematic demographic, paleopathological and metric analyses of all individuals from the La Plata site were collected and analyzed using modern forensic techniques and equipment. Radiographic images were made of all fractures. Research was also conducted into known cases of raiding and abduction, forced captivity and forced labor in historic and contemporary times in order to cull biological implications.

RESULTS: Individuals with healed head wounds were buried in abandoned pit structures without grave goods. Cranial and post-cranial pathology and trauma tended to co-occur. These women also carried a morbidity burden greater than women without head wounds. These women also had patterned lesions along muscle areas suggesting hard physical work.

CONCLUSIONS: Signatures of forced captivity and slavery may include patterned cranial and post-cranial trauma, recidivism, targeted subgroups, use of non-lethal force, work related bone lesions and a higher morbidity load (non-specific infections, osteoarthritis and porotic hyperostosis).

Biological Indicators of Slavery And Captivity: Recidivism and Accumulating Pathology

If Captives Die = More Raiding and Abduction

Raiding and Abduction: Head Wounds

Differential Treatment and Early Death: Harder work, Poorer nutrition, Lack of health care, Chronic health problems, Infections, No ritual burial

Captives Attempt Escape, Additional Battering and Fractures

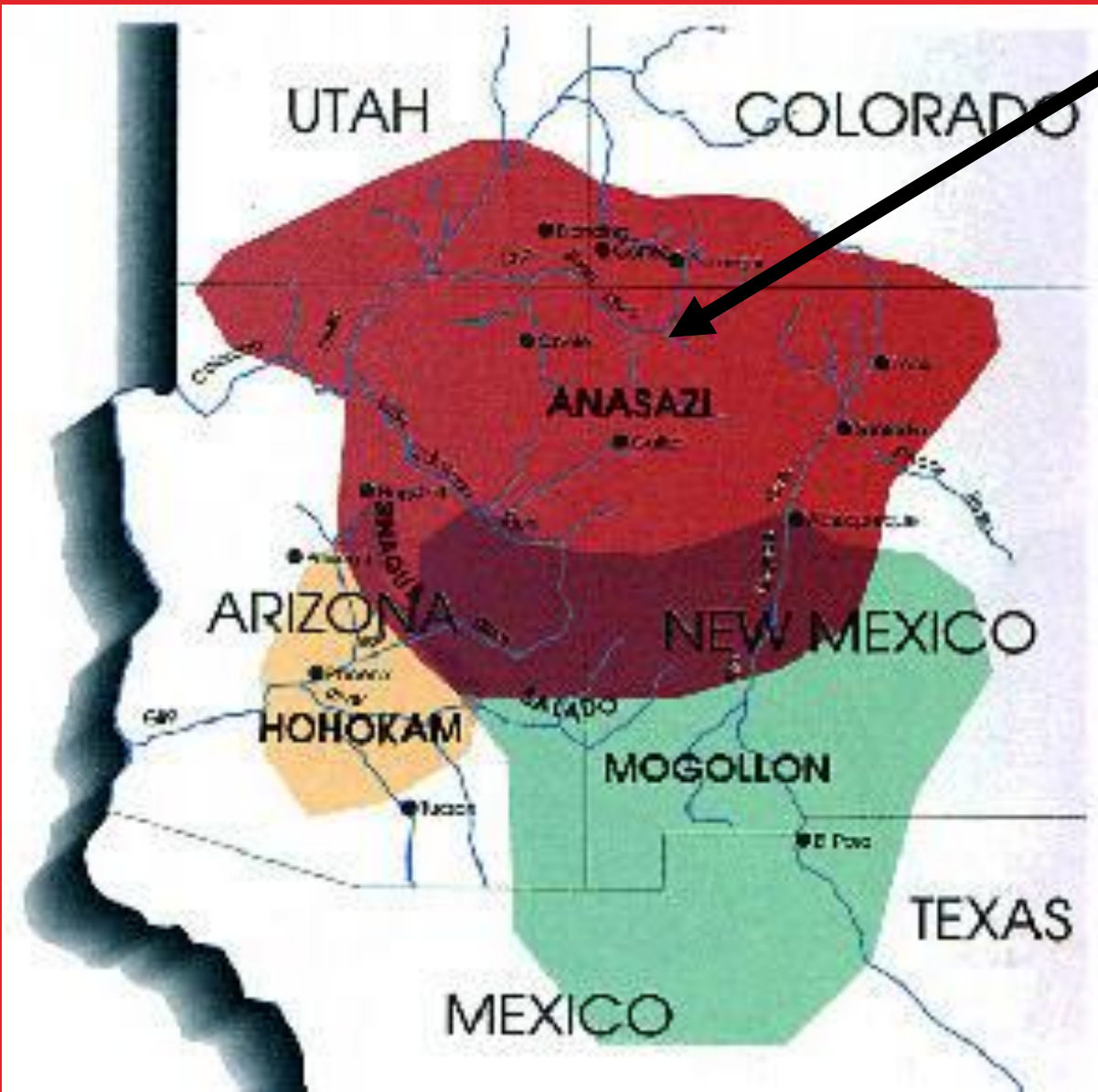
Recidivism: Repeated injury Over time Plus Accumulating Stress and pathology

Forced Captivity and Slavery: Additional fractures (cranial and post cranial)

Hard Physical Labor: Enthesopathies, Asymmetric osteophytes, Hypertrophy of muscle attachments, Increased bone density

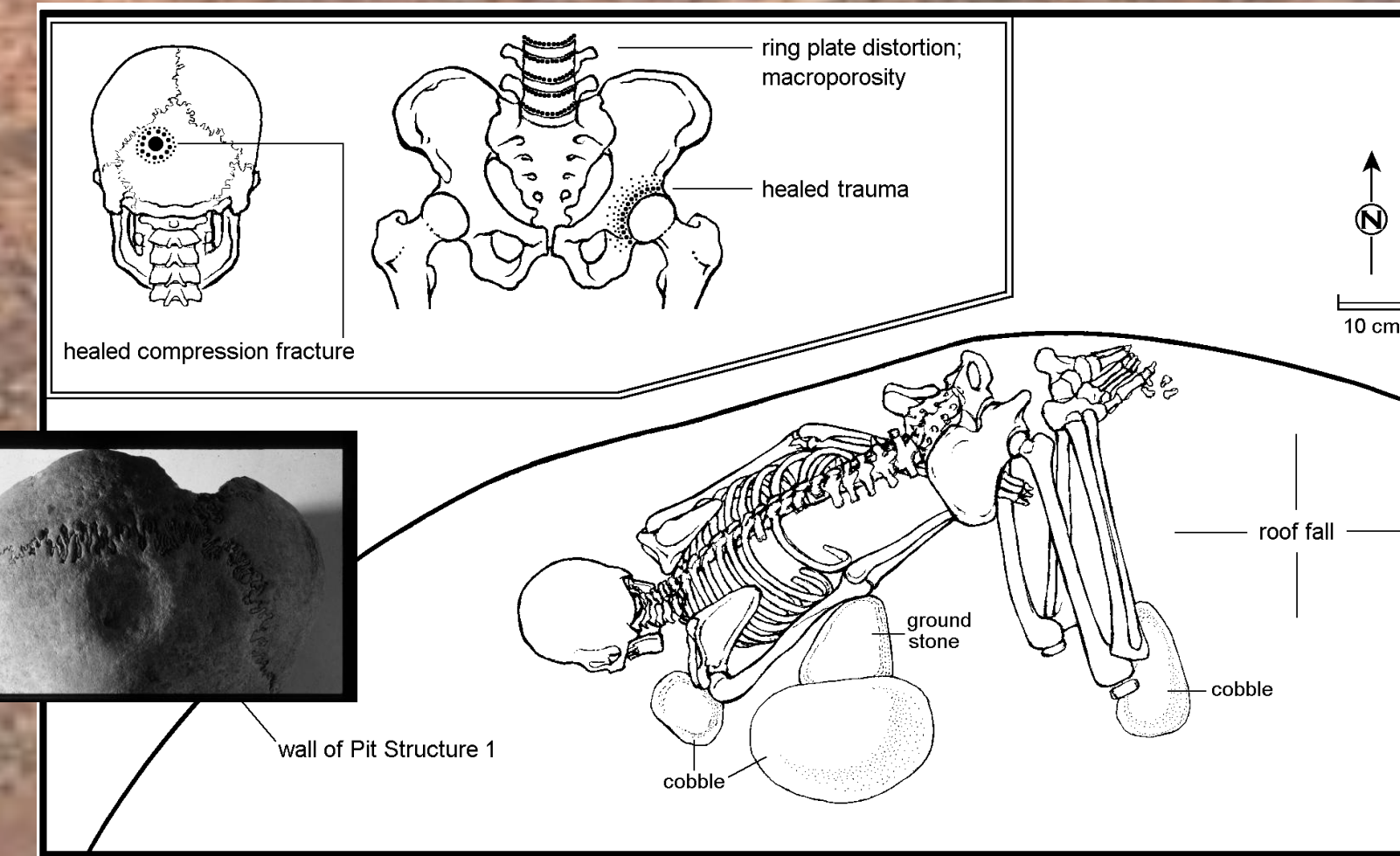
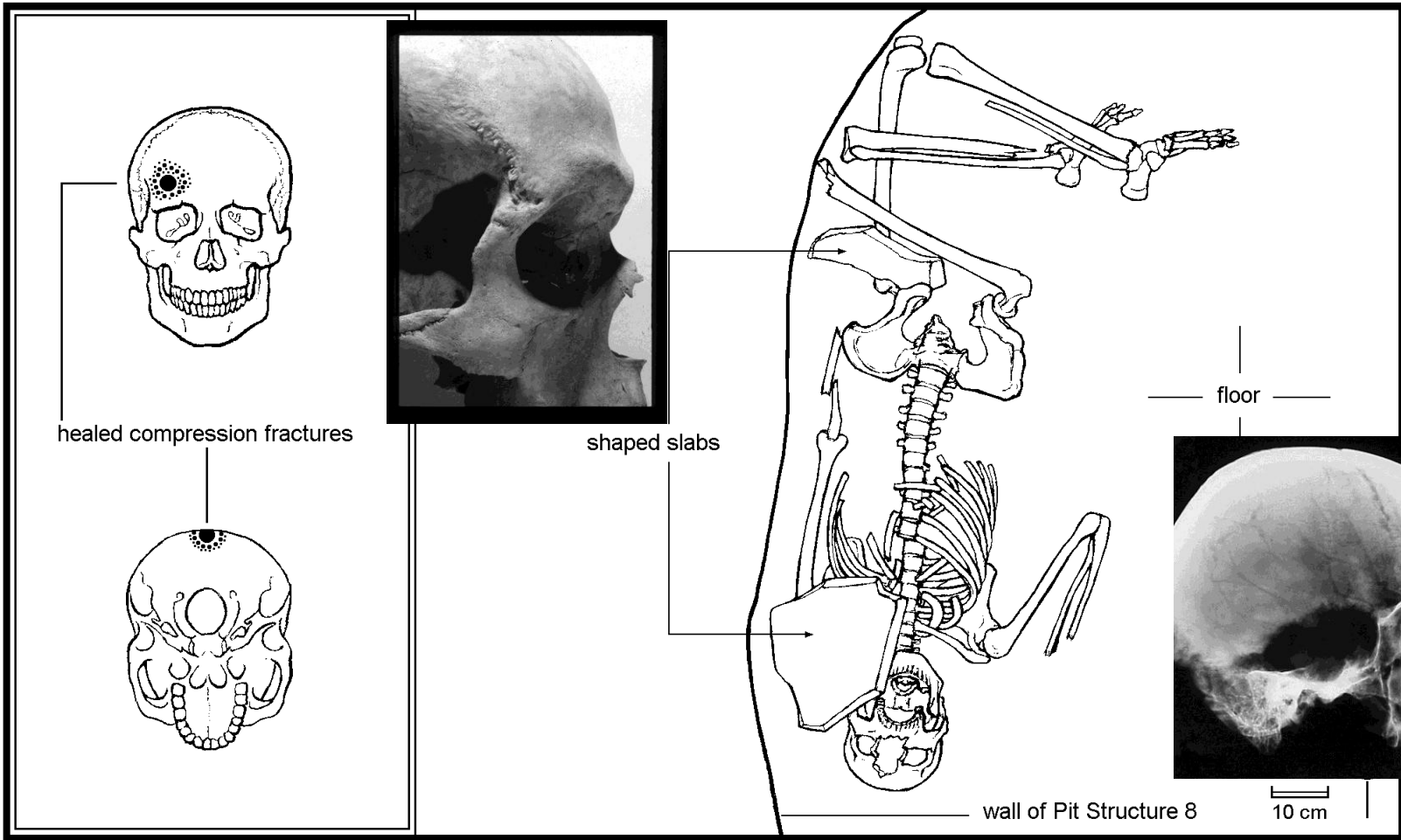
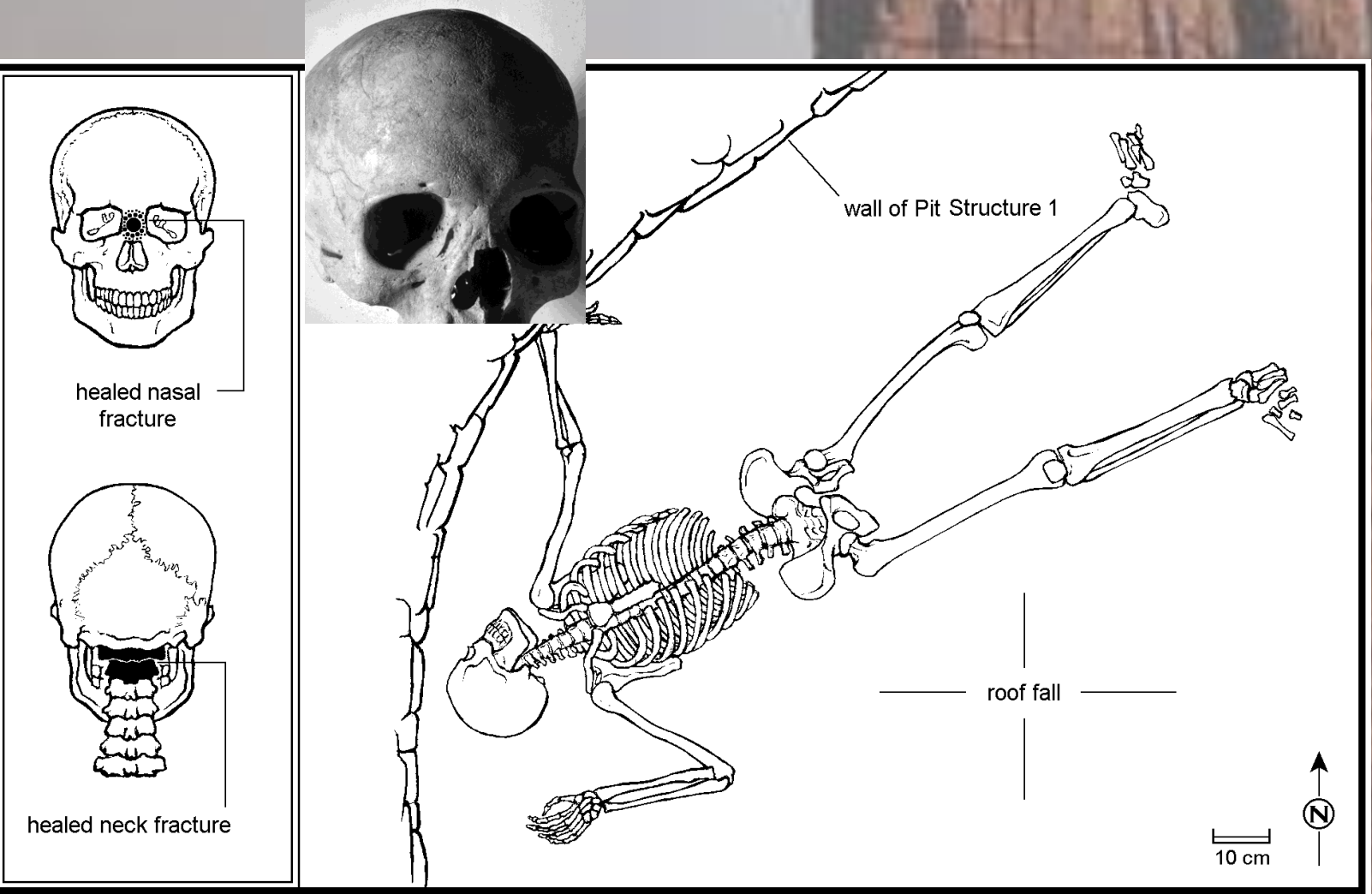
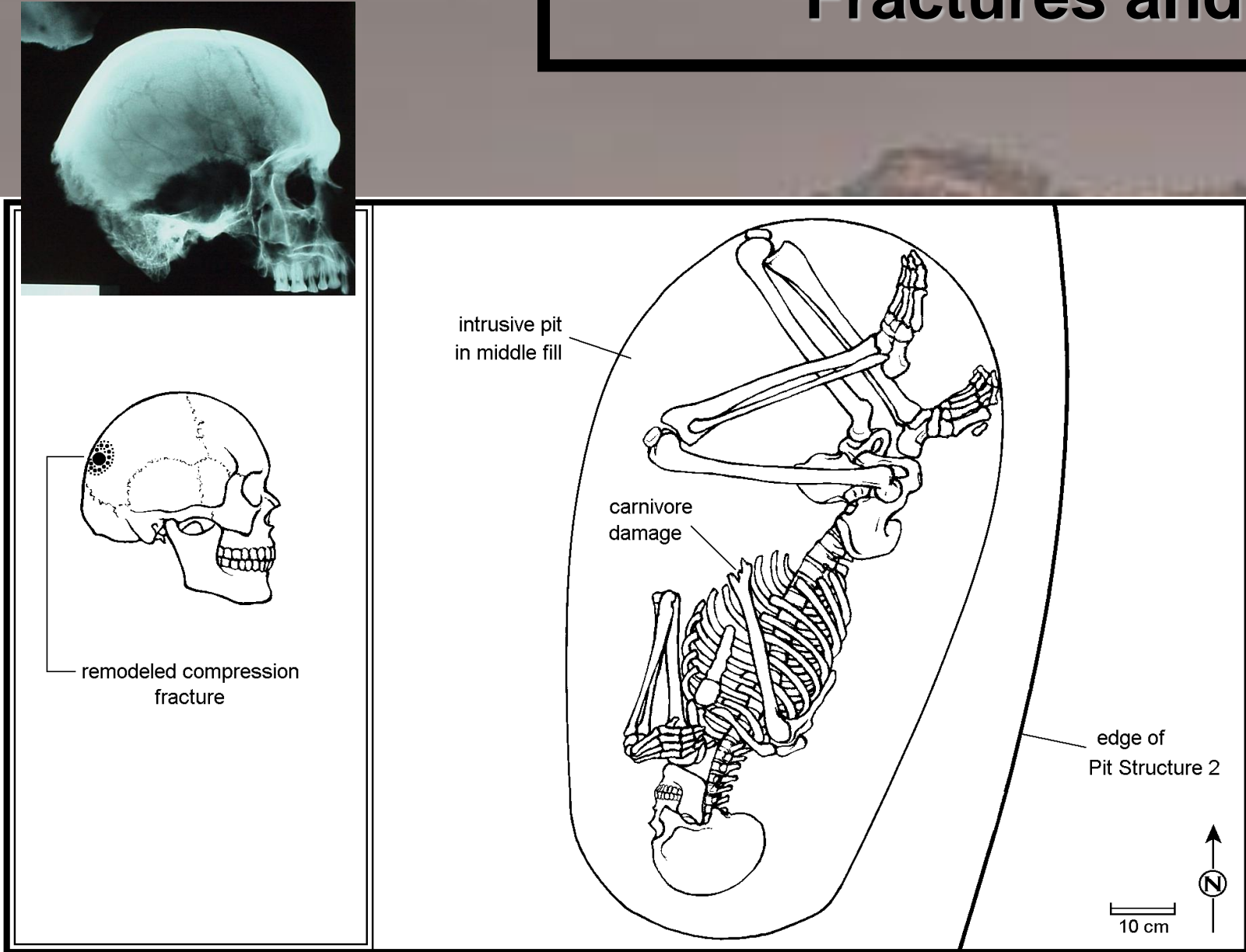
Women and Children Most Frequent Captives Used as Servants, Laborers

MAP OF REGION



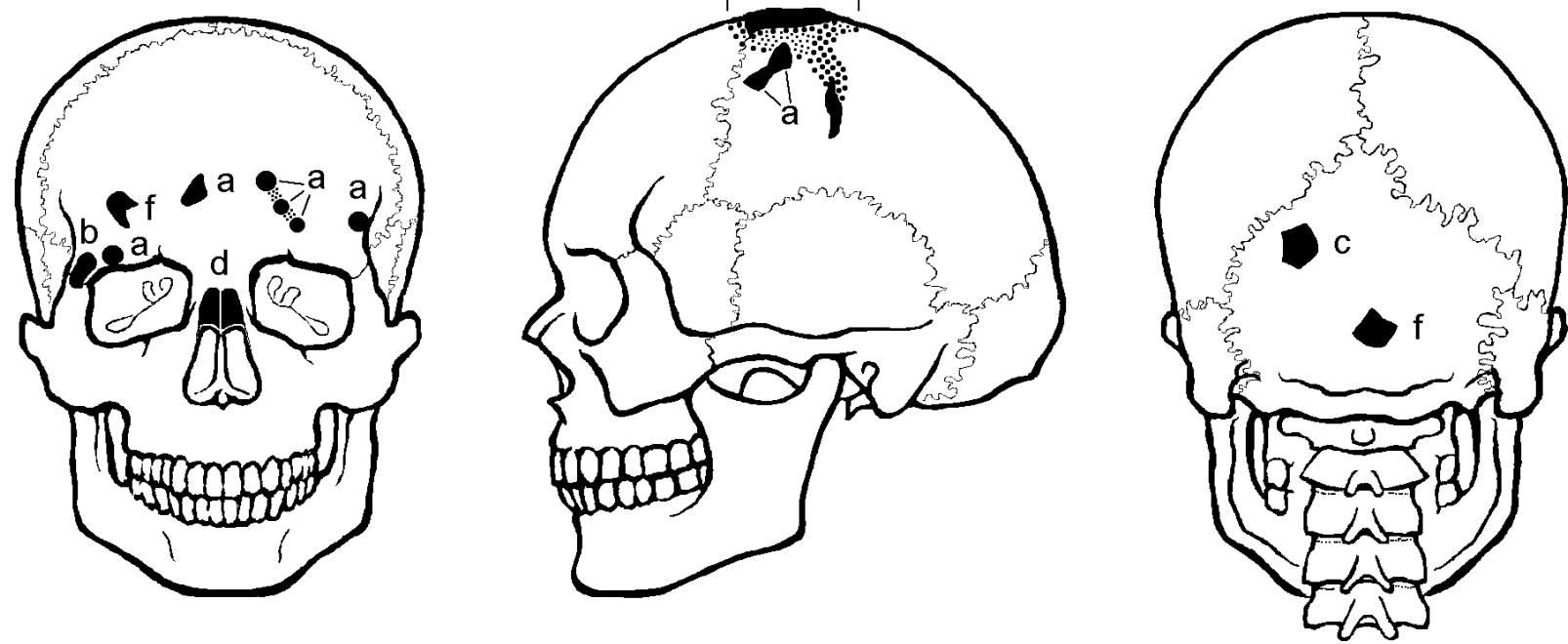
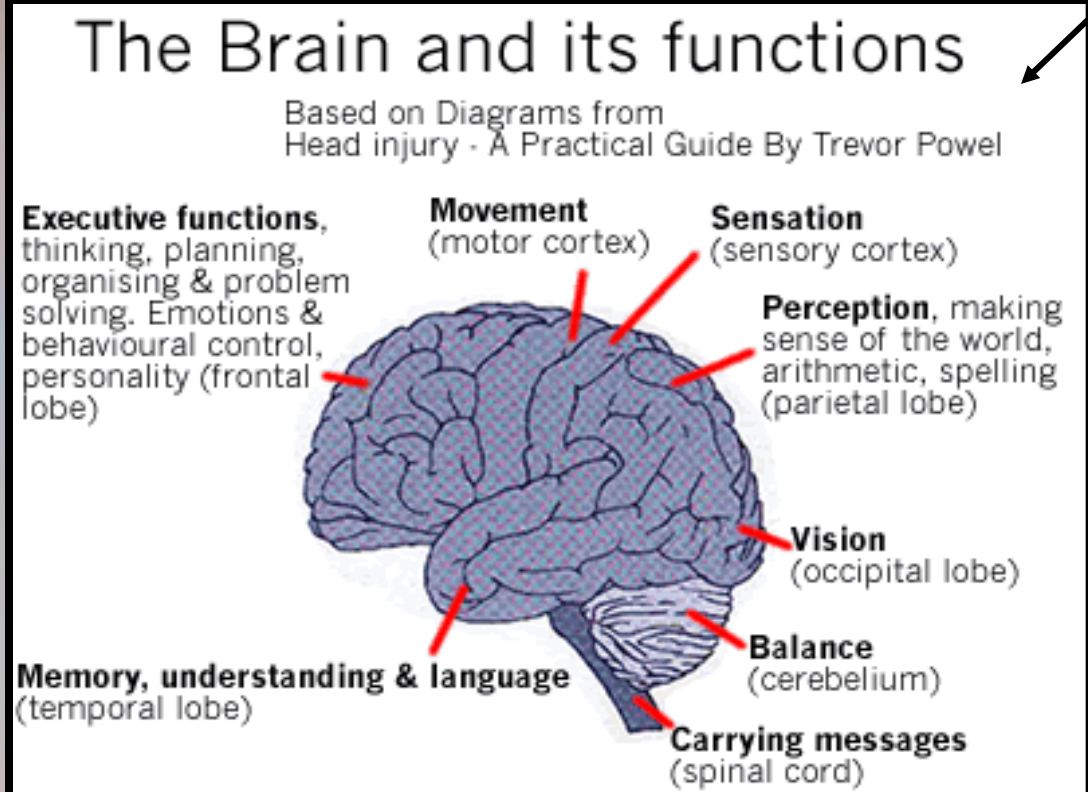
La Plata Valley (1000-1300)

Females with Cranial and Post-Cranial Fractures and Pathologies



Composite head wounds: Well-healed (older) injuries = Violence used during abduction

Mapping Brain Injury and Possible Changes in Behavior as a Result of Cranial Trauma



Action	Skeletal Correlate
Capture and forced abduction (Combined with ambush, warfare, or raiding)	Non lethal blows to head Healed cranial depression fractures Broken ribs, Colle's and parry fractures Demographic targets: women and children
Desire for prestige, trade, and/or concubines	Young, strong, reproductive-aged women
Subordination, beatings	Cranial and post-cranial fractures Recidivism Co-occurrence of trauma and pathology in various stages of healing Colle's and parry fractures Broken hand, foot, rib, arm, leg bones
Indentured service Hard physical labor Domestic, field, or market tasks Childrearing Subsistence activities	Musculo-skeletal markers of stress Enthesopathies Ossified ligaments Asymmetries Work related osteoarthritis Dental pathology related to occupations Increased bone density
Punishment	Amputation of fingers, hands Non-specific infectious disease responses Early death
Not recognized member of community	No cradle-boarding No proper burial No grave goods
Food restriction, forced poverty	Iron deficiency anemia Non-specific infections Children with short stature Increased hypoplasias (in children)
Poor sanitation and living conditions	Non-specific infections (staph and strep) Tuberculosis, trepanematoses

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