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

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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

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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 (AD 1000-1300). Collectively, these women suffered partially and completely healed depression fractures that were hypothesized by Martin et al. (2004) to be the result of either abduction, hard physical labor or forced poverty and abject living conditions.

OBJECTIVES: 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. Women were studied at several sites that included representations of roadway contact for various periods of time, the co-occurrence with other pathologies and trauma. Recordings and recurrence of fractures and trauma were compared with necropsy reports regarding behavioral consequences of past trauma.

RESULTS: Individuals with healed head wounds were buried in abandoned pit structures without grave goods. Crania and post-cranial pathology and trauma tended to co-occur. These women also carried a morbidity burden greater than women without head wounds. Women without grave goods. Cranial and post cranial trauma, recidivism, targeted subgroups, use of non-lethal trauma and pathology Comparison with other reported cases

CONCLUSIONS: Signatures of forced captivity and slavery may include patterned cranial and post cranial trauma, recidivism, targeted subgroups, use of non-lethal trauma and pathology. Comparison with other reported cases.

METHODS: Using a multi-methodological 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 used to document and corroborate healed fractures. Experimental violence was simulated to model cranial and post cranial trauma. Demographic targets: women and children.

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