AN UNUSUAL MAXILLARY MOLAR FROM PREHISTORIC NEW MEXICO

MARSHA D. OGILVIE

Department of Anthropology and Maxwell Museum of Anthropology, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM 87131, U.S.A.

The skeletal remains of a prehistoric Native American male were inadvertently discovered during land development in Albuquerque, New Mexico. An almost full compliment of the permanent dentition was recovered, including a loose maxillary molar with four distinct roots (Fig. 1). The isolated burial was situated above the floor of a jacal (sticks and brush) habitation structure containing post holes and hearth features. Abundant ceramics suggest a Pueblo IV occupation (about 1,300-1,500 AD).

This four-rooted molar is tentatively identified as an upper left maxillary first molar. It is larger than its antimer, which was present and in occlusion (Fig. 2). Metric comparisons with the maxillary right first molar are provided. The buccal-lingual measurement of the maxillary left first molar is 12.43 mm; the mesio-distal measurement is 12.20 mm. The maxillary right first molar buccal-lingual dimension is 12.27 mm, whereas the mesio-distal measurement is 10.28 mm.

The lingual aspect of this four-rooted molar is morphologically complex (Fig. 3). This complexity suggests an additional cusp intermediate between the protocone and hypocone. It is also possible that the extra cusp is linked to a “runaway” Carabelli’s trait and its associated root. Post-mortem breakage of the majority of the roots prevented morphological comparisons.

Comments from readers concerning the identification of this molar and its unusual morphology will be greatly appreciated.

DENTAL ANTHROPOLOGY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO

JOEL D. IRISH

Department of Anthropology, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM 87131-1086, U.S.A.

Dental anthropological research in the UNM Department of Anthropology is both pervasive and diverse. All Biological Anthropology faculty members, as well as a number of graduate and undergraduate students, are involved in studying some aspect of the field.

Jeffery Froehlich recently used fluctuating asymmetry in Suwawesi macaque dentitions to corroborate a hypothesis of hybrid dysgenesis with some success. One of Jeff’s students, Jared Bousliman, is studying all of the known specimens of New Mexico and Colorado Pelycodus, pursuant to defining a possible third species with small but morphologically complex third molars.