

## HUMAN SKELETAL REMAINS FROM A BURIAL CAVE IN THE QIDRON VALLEY

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Human skeletal remains dated to the Byzantine period were found in a cave in the Qidron Valley; they probably represent a non-Jewish population of that period (Cave II; see Adawi and Zissu, this volume). The bones largely varied in their state of preservation.

Burial Cave II contained five burial troughs and one burial niche. Several individuals were placed in each trough. In two troughs (L2, L3), the bones were found in anatomical articulation, indicating primary burial. However, as the work stopped prematurely, these bones were not examined. In the other three troughs (L1, L4, L6) the bones were found scattered, probably representing disturbed primary burial. These bones were examined on-site and left in the cave. No bones were found in the burial niche (L5) or in the passage (L0).

Childrens' age-at-death estimations were based upon tooth development and eruption stages (Hillson 1986:176–201) and measurements of the maximum length of intact long bones (Bass 1987:149, 217). Adults' age at death was primarily based upon attrition

rate (Hillson 1986:176–201). Sex estimations were based upon measurements of the vertical diameter of the femoral head and epicondylar width of the distal humerus (Bass 1987:151, 219). The bones were also visually checked for the presence of pathologies.

### RESULTS

The results show a minimum of 27 individuals (MNI) in the three examined troughs. These included 17 children (<15 years) and 10 adults (Table 1; sorted into 10-year age intervals). At least three males and five females were represented in the small sample of individuals aged >20 years old.

### DISCUSSION

About half the individuals found in the cave were estimated as children. This figure was compared with the number of individuals whose age at death was lower than fifteen years in four other contemporaneous burial

**Table 1. Age Distribution of the Dead in Qidron Valley Burial Cave II**

Locus	MNI	Age at Death (years)							Adults of Unknown Age
		NB–9	10–19	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	>60	
Trough 1	10	6	2						2
Trough 4	9	5	1	1		1			1
Trough 6	8	3	2	1	1				1
<i>Total N</i>	27	14	5	2	1	1			4
<i>Percentage</i>	100	52	18	7	4	4	-	-	15

**Table 2. Comparison of the Age-at-Death Distribution between Burial Sites in the Jerusalem Region**

Site	Period	Individuals Aged 2–15 Years	Individuals Aged >15 Years	Proportion of Children
Qidron Valley Cave II	Byzantine	14	10	58%
Ṣalah ed-Din Street	Byzantine	13	62	17%
The Ofel Road	Byzantine	14	54	21%
Robinson's Arch	Early Islamic	11	34	24%
Ramat Razi'el	Byzantine	2	7	22%

sites in the Jerusalem region (data available from the IAA anthropological databank). The relatively poor state of preservation of infant bones, the difficulty in finding infant tooth buds in a muddy burial cave without thorough sieving, and the potential of separate burial of infants complicate the comparison of infant burial statistics between historic burial sites. Therefore, infants aged less than two years were excluded from this comparison. The results, summarized in Table 2, indicate that the proportion of children and young individuals in the Qidron Valley cave is relatively high.

No pathologies were noticed in the visual examination of the relatively complete bones. Evidence for trauma or periostitis was not found in at least 13 children's tibiae available

for such examination. The major death or morbidity factors in this population could not be estimated.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Human skeletal remains were found in five troughs in the Qidron Valley burial cave. The bones from only three troughs were anthropologically examined; they represent at least 27 individuals. The skeletal sample included infants, children, and adults of both sexes. The number of children was double that expected, in comparison to other contemporary sites around Jerusalem. However, the sample size was too low to determine whether the results are statistically significant.

#### REFERENCES

- Bass W.M. 1987. *Human Osteology: A Laboratory and Field Manual*. Columbia, Mo.  
Hillson S. 1986. *Teeth*. Cambridge.  
Zissu B. and Adawi Z. This volume. Two Rock-Cut Burial Caves and Greek Inscriptions from the Qidron Valley, Jerusalem.