Pathological conditions of the Islamic individuals exhumed from the interior of the Museu de Évora, Portugal

Historical background

Évora is the capital of Alto Alentejo province, in the South of Portugal. The medieval Évora is linked with the history of Portugal.

The foundation of the country took place in the year of 1128, in Guimarães, and from the Battle of S. Mamede started the war of the Conquest, a process of expansion, namely to the South.

Évora was under Muslim government since 714, being conquered in 1165 by the Christian troops commanded by Geraldo Sem Pavor (Gerald the Fearless).

In 1176 the castle was founded and inside its walls, according to some authors, the Arab mosque was adapted to a cathedral. This museum-city is a UNESCO world heritage centre since 1986.

The excavations

The archaeological work in the interior of the Évora Museum - located near the cathedral - resulted from the requirement of the construction of a new basement.

The two field seasons, performed by the authors, between 1996 and 1997, revealed three phases of Medieval occupation:

- Late Medieval (after the Christian conquest) - 2 adult individuals and a fetus found under a tile;
- Christian - 13 adult individuals ascribed to Medieval knights, and 3 juveniles;
- Islamic - 2 adults and a child.

Pathological evidences

The three individuals subject of this presentation were all inhumed:

- in oval shape graves, built on the Roman opus (forum) and covered by flagstones and bricks;
- lying on their right side with their heads to Southwest and the feet to Northeast.

Individual N-387
Young adult female

Schmor’s nodes from T6 to T12

Cribra orbitalia: active and porotic lesions on both orbital roofs

Individual O-386
Child: 2.5 to 4.5 years old, based on dental development (Ubelaker, 1989)

Calculi in the lingual surface of the anterior mandibular teeth

Enamel hypoplasias on both maxillary and mandibular teeth

Dental attrition grade 4, after Smith (1984)

Scoring system

Right femur

No visible changes are found on the acetabulum or on the foot bones. The right tibia presents a prominent patellar ligament insertion surface (this area is not preserved on the left tibia).

Although the state of preservation does not allow the measurement of the angle of femoral torsion, it is clear that the individual displays femoral antetorsion. This condition results in an internally deviated thigh.

According to Resnick and Kransdorf (2005) it is very difficult to determine the precise cause of torsional deformities.

Individual V-924
Adult, probably a female

Bibliography

