Skeletal remains from the Stone Age graves at Nymölla
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Skeletal remains from the Stone Age graves at Nymölla

By Ove Persson

The material includes two nearly complete but badly crushed and weathered human skeletons, both from a double grave (Individuals I and II, Wyszomirski 1979, Fig. 5). There are also fragments of a third skeleton (Individual III), from a grave which was disturbed by road work before the excavation.

Some fragments of animal bones were associated with Individuals I and III.

The skulls of Individuals I and II are both crushed and laterally compressed. They were removed in blocks of soil, and in the course of preparation the entire blocks were made firm by a hardener in such way that the particular fragments of the skulls lie in the same position as when exposed. (Wyszomirski 1979, Figs. 7, 8.)

The postcranial part of both skeletons are so badly crushed that no measurements for estimation of the stature could be taken.

The identified remains of Individual III include limb bone fragments only.

Individual I

Sex determination. Since the individual was young (17—18 years; see below) and most of the sex indicating parts of the skeleton are crushed or deformed postmortally, the sex determination is not quite certain. For example, the pelvic bone is so fragmentary that none of the sex indicating parts of it could be reconstructed. The indications available are accounted for below.

Sex indications in the skull. — The tabula externa of the median and left part of the frontal bone is almost completely weathered. Accordingly the glabella is badly damaged, but so far as can be judged from its remaining parts it was the ♂ type. The right anterior part of the frontal bone is better preserved, although crushed and somewhat deformed. The arcus superciliaris is not very strongly developed, but in consideration of the fact that the individual is not adult, a ♂ indication seems more probably than a ♀.
one. The same can be said about the margo supraorbitalis, although it is thinner than should be the case in an adult ♀.

The major part of the left temporal bone is available for study. Its processus mastoides is badly damaged, but so far as can be seen from the remains it was large, which is a ♀ characteristic.

The canines, premolars and erupted molars of the left side are available for study (+8 and —8 are not erupted).

Since the skull fragments are fixed in situ (see above), no exact measurements of the teeth in question could be taken, but it is quite clear that they are comparatively large (a ♀ characteristic).

Sex indication in the postcranial skeleton. — Only one sex-indicating detail has been identified in the postcranial skeleton, i.e. the epiphysial part of the caput humeri sin. The sizes of the articular heads of humeri and femora are well documented as sex indicators (Dwight 1904; Maltby 1917—1918; Parsons 1913—1914; 1914—1915; Ubelaker 1974). The caput femoris is referred to more often than the caput humeri but, since both these articular heads usually are of about the same size in one and the same individual, their indicative value is practically equal. Diameters of 43 mm or smaller usually represent females and those of 46 mm or larger males. In the present case the diameter is 44 mm and hence falling within the overlap, but on the other hand we have the fact that the individual is not adult. In view of this, the size of the caput humeri indicates rather a ♀ than a ♀.

Thus, none of the sex-indicating details available, taken separately, give an unequivocal clue, but the sum of the indications are pointing to a rather clear ♀ predominance.

Determination of the death age. The age indications available in this skeleton are rendered in the following list:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
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<tr>
<td>Skullcap sutures without discernible synostosis</td>
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<tr>
<td>All permanent teeth with the exception of the 3rd molars erupted</td>
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</tbody>
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An associated animal bone. Near the bones of Individual I, a distal phalanx ("claw-bone") of a seal was found. The bone is rather large,
its supposed original length being about 25 mm. A comparison with recent skeletal material has shown that the only seal species in the Baltic that would have toes of this size is *Halichoerus gryphus* Fabr. (grey seal).

The presence of a seal phalanx can be explained by assuming that the corpse was wrapped in a seal-skin.

**Individual II**

**Sex determination.** In the present skeleton the sex-indicating details available are restricted to the skull and mandible, the postcranial parts being even more crushed and weathered than in the case of Individual I.

Certain parts of the frontal bone are comparatively well preserved. Thus, the glabella and the entire left supraorbital part can be studied; both these elements are clearly of the ♀ type. — The angulus mandibulae dx. is exposed, though somewhat incomplete. There is, however, no doubt that it is a ♀ type.

**Determination of the death age.** All the permanent teeth extant are erupted and abraded, and the fragments of the long bones show distinctly that the epiphyseal parts were fused with the shafts. Thus, it is quite clear that we are dealing with an adult here. — The major portion of the sutura sagittalis can be observed, and also about 5 cm of the left branch of the sutura lambdoidea. In the latter there is no discernible synostosis, at least not in the tabula externa, and the same is true of the sagittal suture in a section starting from the lambda and extending 5—6 cm forward. However, in the midmost and anterior part of the suture last mentioned there is advanced synostosis, the sutural pattern in the vertex region being nearly obliterated.

So far as can be concluded from the synostosis in those suture parts that are observable, the death age must be somewhere between 30 and 40 years.

The observable teeth are rather worn, the occlusal faces of the molars being nearly flat. However, as is well known, the food habits during the Stone Age caused very strong tooth abrasion and hence the condition of the teeth does not contradict the age indication of the skull cap sutures.

It should be mentioned that yellow ochre was found on the fragments of the sacrum, the pelvis and the proximal parts of both femora, and also in the soil around the fragments of Individual II.

**Individual III**

The grave of Individual III, situated about 7 m from the double grave of Individual I and II, has been disturbed through road work, leaving the major part of the skeleton destroyed. The identified parts are: tibia sin. pars prox. et med.; fibula (sin?) pars med.; some tarsal and metatarsal bones (more or less fragmentary) from both feet; some phalanges from the fingers of the right? hand.

The proximal epiphysis of the tibia is completely fused with the shaft, hence the individual is an adult. — There are no factual sex indications. The preserved part of the tibia is rather slender, and the finger phalanges are comparatively small. These characteristics can be tentatively interpreted as a ♀ indication, though with reservation.

The following animal remains were found associated with Individual III:

1) *Gadus* sp. (cod) — An incomplete vertebra.
2) *Halichoerus gryphus* Fabr. (grey seal) — A fragment of os temporale sin.
3) *Equus caballus* L. (horse) — A fragment of a tooth, probably a deciduous molar.
4) *Sus scrofa* L. (pig or wild boar) —
   a) Os metacarpi III dx. pars prox.
   b) A fragment of a phalanx 2 of a juvenile
   The Sus fragment apparently represent two different individuals, one adult and one juvenile.
5) *Cervus elaphus* L. (red deer) — A fragment of epistropheus pars ant., with facies articularis lateralis sin.

**Referenser**


Fornvänn 74 (1979)


Skelett från stenåldersgravarna i Nymölla

I uppsatsen behandlas två nästan fullständiga men söndertryckta och delvis starkt vittrade skelett (individ I och II), båda från en dubbelgrav, samt ett fragmentariskt skelett (individ III) från en närliggande grav. Djurben tillhörande den senare tas också upp till behandling.


**Individ II** är en kvinna (♀). Dödsålder 30—40 år. Järnockra på höftparti och lårben tyder på att den döda delvis täckts med detta ämne.

**Individ III.** Fragmenten uppvisar inga könsindicier (♂♀). Vuxen individ. I anslutning till skelettet påträffades ett antal fragmentariska djurben. Följande arter är represeuterade:

- *Gadus* sp. (torsk)
- *Halichoerus gryphus* Fabr. (gråsäl)
- *Equus caballus* L. (Häst)
- *Sus scrofa* L. (svin)
- *Cervus elaphus* L. (kronhjort)

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