

CHANGES OF TRANSVERSAL FORAMEN IN THREE CERVICAL VERTEBRAE FROM SKELETONS DATED IN MIDDLE AGES (BULGARIA)

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Three findings of cervical vertebrae from Bulgarian medieval necropolises (skeletons from grave N 16, Pliska, N 258 and N 273, “St. 40 Martyrs”, Veliko Tarnovo) show specific changes of the transversal foramen. One vertebra (grave N 16 Pliska) expresses the most pronounced case, with highly widened right transversal foramen, with irregular form and visible thickened bone, enclosing the foramen. The 6th cervical vertebra from grave N 258, “St. 40 Martyrs” similarly shows widened left transversal foramen, with the bone limiting the foramen appearing thinner than normal and the form preserving a more accurate round shape. The 7th cervical vertebra from grave N 273, “40 Martyrs”, Veliko Tarnovo, has a bipartite form of left transversal foramen, with the posterior opening totally closed by an accumulation of a porous bone formation, and the anterior opening intact. The three studied vertebrae show no aneurysmal erosion or signs of trauma. We suggest that the observed changes in transversal foramina are the results of circulatory disturbances of the vertebral artery.

Key words: Middle Ages, transversal vertebral foramen, circulatory disturbances.

Among the skeletal material from archaeological sites the vertebrae often appear highly fragmented and, in many cases, sections of the vertebral column are not fully represented and don't allow reconstruction. Meanwhile, characteristics of these bones can provide vast information about activity, health status and life conditions in past populations.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The investigated material comes from two sites, dated in the Middle Ages: one from Pliska, necropolis to the North Wall, 11th century AD (Георгиев и съавт. 2008, 2008, 2009), cervical vertebra of skeleton from grave N 16 and second, from the necropolis around the church “St. 40 Martyrs”, in Veliko Tarnovo, dated in the

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