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AN ANATOMICAL STUDY OF HUMAN SKELETAL REMAINS FROM THE
EXCAVATION SITE IN BELLAN-BANDI PALASSA IN SABARAGAMUWA
PROVINCE, SRI LANKA



BY

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W. S. P. Y. N. Kanthilatha

ABSTRACT

Bellan-bandi Palassa is a Mesolithic heritage site in Sri Lanka. This open-air camp site in the dry zone was excavated by P. E. P. Deraniyagala in 1956 – 1963 and had been given a thermoluminescence date of 6500 ± 700 BP. *Homo sapiens balangodensis* had only been known from rock shelters and caves, and this is the first open air habitation site. The fossils of Bellan-bandi Palassa man presently stored at National Museum, Colombo was studied with the objective of identifying the skeletal remains and reconstructing the Bellan-bandi Palassa prehistoric man.

According to the present study minimum number of individuals in the collection were 15 based on complete/ partially complete mandibles. Calculated mean stature of Bellan-bandi Palassa man was $140.05 \text{ cm} \pm 15.44$ by using bone fragments. This value was less than the mean stature of present population (164.19 cm) living in Sri Lanka. Mandibles were of medium size but were distinctive for its broad and elevated rami and thick corpora. The

percentage of crown base area reduction of first, second and third molars were 0.13, 0.24 and 0.58 per 100 years. Cusp and groove patterns of the teeth were not observable for most of the teeth due to the high incidence of attrition which indicated a high sand content in the diet. Size, weight and thickness of the mandibles and form and projection of the chin revealed that the remains belonged to both sexes. Eight males and five females were identified. Considering the eruption pattern of the teeth, teeth attrition, position of the mental foramen and the alveolar margin in the mandible, two of them were below 18 years of age and others were adults more than 35 years of age. The well developed enlarged supra orbital ridges, wide face relative to head breadth, large palate and mental foramen is suggestive of dolichocephalic skull type. The presence of similar morphological traits in both Balangoda man and as documented in Vaddas suggests a positive genetic affinity between them.

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