

## THEY DIDN'T SHOOT HORSES: FRACTURE MANAGEMENT IN A HORSE OF THE 5<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY BCE FROM SINDOS, CENTRAL MACEDONIA, GREECE

Theodore G. Antikas

*University of Washington History Department, Seattle, Washington*

**Summary.** Five horses and two dogs buried in a human cemetery of the 4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> c. BCE were unearthed in 2003-5, during a rescue archaeology project at Sindos, southwest of the city of Thessalonike. One of the five horses was juxtaposed to a human and a dog burial and was an adult mare dating to the 5<sup>th</sup> c. BCE. Extensive lower leg pathology suggested use as a pack or cart horse. The presence of an old, compound fracture of mc-3 in her left foot that had sufficiently healed, as shown by macroscopic and X-ray evaluation, indicates that management of fractures was practiced as early as, or earlier than the 5<sup>th</sup> c. BCE. The animal survived the compound fracture for more than 3-4 years, although the fractured metacarpal shows a considerable post-treatment angle coupled with osteomyelitis. It is postulated that the lame mare may have carried her loving owner's cart to the grave, then sacrificed in situ and laid next to him. This archaic burial habit first mentioned by Homer in the 8<sup>th</sup> c. BCE (*Iliad* 171-74) has been substantiated by several man-and-horse burials found in northern Greece. In one of such burials a young stallion was found in proximity to a young man at the archaic cemetery of Polykastro. The stallion's exceptional height, lower leg pathology and a dentition retaining 50% of its deciduous teeth is as rare as the case of fracture treatment of the Sindos mare. More analyses of human and horse remains are necessary in this cemetery including archaeo-DNA genetic profiles, so as to provide data on morbidity and dietary patterns of the *Dorian* people and horses in the Northern Greek region. We would also gain information on neonate, infant, sub-adult and adult mortality and the percentage of men to women burials in this cemetery. Such ratios would relate to the equine find and mark the importance of horse burials with humans in NW Macedonia during the Late Iron and Archaic Ages.

**Key words:** Horse, bone fracture, Greece.