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# The human remains

Bérénice CHAMEL, Françoise LE MORT

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**Abstract.** *The few human remains found at Klimonas (N = 13) come from various archaeological contexts and from several structures. The majority of them were found in first and second phases of the Communal building (Structure 10; Minimum Number of individuals (MNI) = 2); another one came from Sector B (MNI = 1). These are the oldest known in Cyprus. Only cranial remains are present. We cannot exclude that the human skull had a special significance at Klimonas but the data are too scarce to demonstrate this. All the human remains could also have come from disturbed burials and been brought into the buildings with the soil used for their construction or for that of the interior structures. These few observations raise questions about the burial practices of the first inhabitants of Cyprus and need to be completed by other discoveries.*

## Les restes humains

**Résumé.** *Les quelques restes humains découverts à Klimonas proviennent de contextes archéologiques variés et de plusieurs structures. La majorité d'entre eux a été mise au jour dans la structure 10. Cinq fragments de voûte crânienne, une portion gauche de corps mandibulaire et une canine supérieure droite se trouvaient dans les banquettes intérieures du bâtiment 1. La phase 2 de ce même Bâtiment communautaire (St 10) a livré un fragment de maxillaire gauche et un fragment de pariétal, et la colluvion située au-dessus de la structure 10, une incisive centrale supérieure gauche. Dans le Secteur B, un fragment de pariétal droit et une incisive latérale supérieure droite proviennent du bâtiment B09, un autre fragment de pariétal droit de la zone centrale de ce secteur. Aucun remontage entre les différents éléments osseux n'est possible. Les vestiges découverts dans le bâtiment 1 peuvent appartenir à un même individu mais la différence entre le degré d'usure observé sur les dents en place dans le fragment de maxillaire et celui observé sur les dents isolées suggère la présence d'au moins 2 individus. Pour le Secteur B, le nombre minimum d'individus est estimé à un.*

*Il s'agit des plus anciens restes humains connus à Chypre, ceux de Shillourokambos, Kissonerga-Mylothkia et Akanthou-Arkosykos datant du 8<sup>e</sup> millénaire av. J.-C. Malgré le caractère très incomplet de ces vestiges et bien qu'aucune trace de pratique funéraire n'ait été observée à Klimonas, certaines observations peuvent être faites. Seuls des restes crâniens sont présents et la plupart d'entre eux ont été mis au jour dans des bâtiments, à l'intérieur de banquettes ou de murs; quatre proviennent de la même banquette située dans la phase 1 du Bâtiment communautaire, près de l'entrée. Nous ne pouvons pas exclure que le crâne humain ait eu une signification particulière à Klimonas mais les données sont trop ténues pour le démontrer. Tous les restes humains pourraient également provenir de sépultures perturbées et avoir été apportés dans les bâtiments avec la terre utilisée pour leur construction ou pour celle des structures intérieures. Par ailleurs, le fait que certains os soient brûlés pourrait être dû à une exposition accidentelle au feu. Ces quelques observations interrogent sur les pratiques funéraires des premiers habitants de Chypre et demandent à être complétées par d'autres découvertes.*

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A small number of human remains were discovered at Klimonas between the 2011 and the 2016 campaigns; they came from various archaeological contexts and from several structures. Thirteen pieces of bones were found without any visible funerary context, and no formal burials have been discovered up to the present time. The remains consist of three teeth, eight fragments of skull vault, one piece of mandible and one piece of maxilla. All the bones are from adult individuals.

All the bones came from two areas: Structure 10, a community building which yielded ten human bone fragments and Sector B, the south extension of the Cypro-PPNA village.

## METHODOLOGY

Due to there being just scattered remains, the environmental and climate context of Cyprus and the chemical processes at work in the ground, the bones were covered with calcareous encrustations (Lyman 1994), which were removed, without damaging the bones, using acetic acid (Ortiz and Chamel 2012).

Given that none of the bones was complete, and all belong to the skull, the age at death could not be estimated and sex diagnosis was impossible.

However, despite the very fragmented nature of the skeletal remains, it has been possible to make observations regarding the stage of wear (Molnar 1971) and stress indicators, such as linear enamel hypoplasia, on the teeth (Hillson 2005). In order to attempt to characterize the individuals from Klimonas, epige-

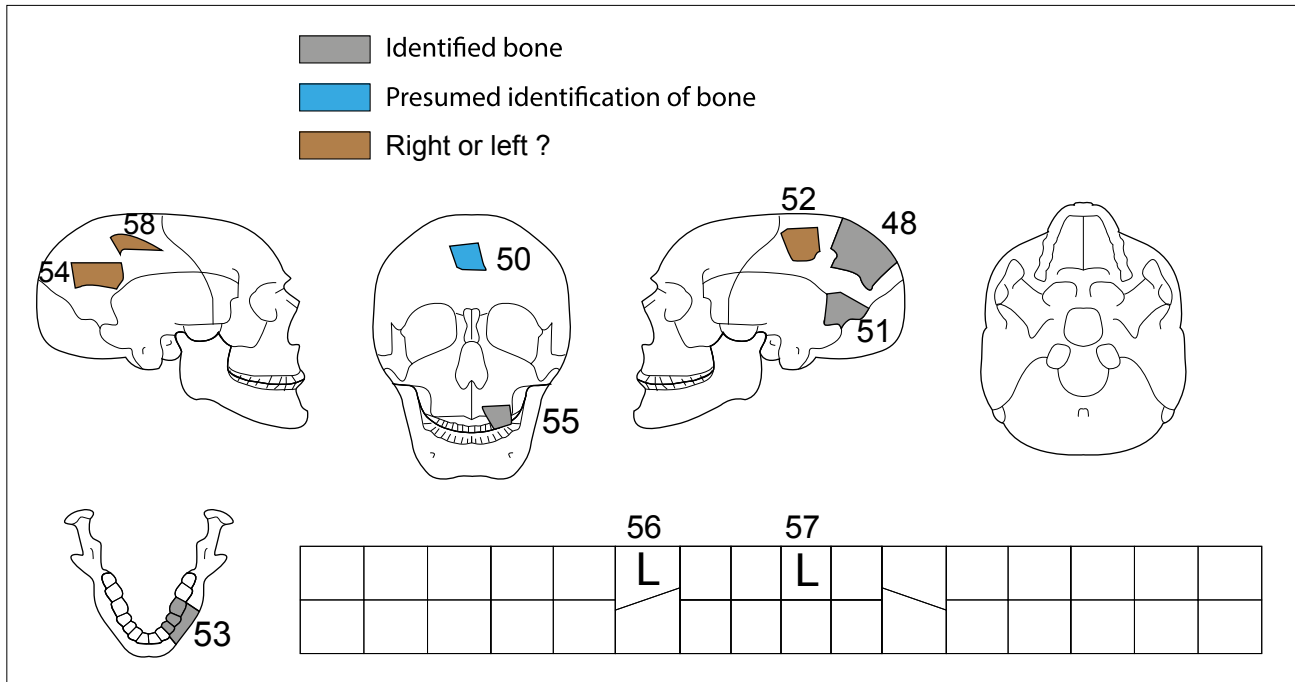


Fig. 32-1 – Human remains recording sheet from Structure 10. • Fiche de conservation des restes humains de la Structure 10.

netic variants of the teeth (Desideri 2007) were also observed on the remains.

As some of the bone pieces were burnt, the temperatures to which they were exposed were estimated using the colour chart implemented by Robin and Grevin (2008).

## DESCRIPTION OF THE HUMAN REMAINS FROM STRUCTURE 10

Ten of the 13 pieces of human remains came from Structure 10<sup>1</sup>: seven from the first phase (building 1), two from the second phase (building 2) and one from a colluvium above the third phase (tab. 32-1).

In the first building, the human remains were found in the interior benches:

- Bone n°48 came from a small pit (15 x 15 x 3 cm) dug into the north bench. It is a posterior fragment of a left parietal bone, rectangular in shape (5 x 6 cm), and includes part of the sagittal suture (fig. 32-1).

- Bones n°50, 51 and 52 (fig. 32-1) were found together in the same bench (US 10.38, fig. 32-2). Bone n°50 is a small fragment of skull vault, square in shape (2.5 x 2.5 cm). Piece n°51 is an infero-posterior fragment of a left parietal bone, located near the suture between the occipital and the left temporal bone. The last bone found in the bench was n°52. This small piece is a fragment of parietal bone and is burnt on both sides. The colour of the bone (dark brown and black) indicates a temperature of at least 300°C.

1. Cf. p. ...

N° of bone	Type of bone	US	Str	Location in St 10
48	Fragment of left parietal bone		185	in a pit in a bench in building 1
50	Skull vault fragment	10.3		in a bench in building 1
51	Fragment of left parietal bone	10.38		in a bench in building 1
52	Fragment of parietal bone	10.38		in a bench in building 1
53	Mandible fragment	10.11		filling of bench in building 1b
56	Right upper canine	10.3		filling of bench in building 1b
54	Fragment of parietal bone	10.10		building 1a
55	Fragment of left maxilla	10.6		intermediate building
58	Fragment of parietal bone		172	into a wall, intermediate building
57	Left upper central incisor	10.1		colluvium above St 10

Tab. 32-1 – List of the human remains from Structure 10. • Liste des restes humains de la Structure 10.

*Image issue de Word, puis-je avoir le fichier texte ?*

- Pieces n°53 and n°56 (fig. 32-1) were found in the fill of the east bench in building 1b (fig. 32-2): piece n°53 is the left part of an adult mandible body, next to the left mental foramen. The cavities for the first molar and the first and second premolars are present but support no teeth. This piece of bone was also burnt at 300°C. N°56 is a right upper canine, with very damaged enamel (taphonomical pitting) and a little wear.

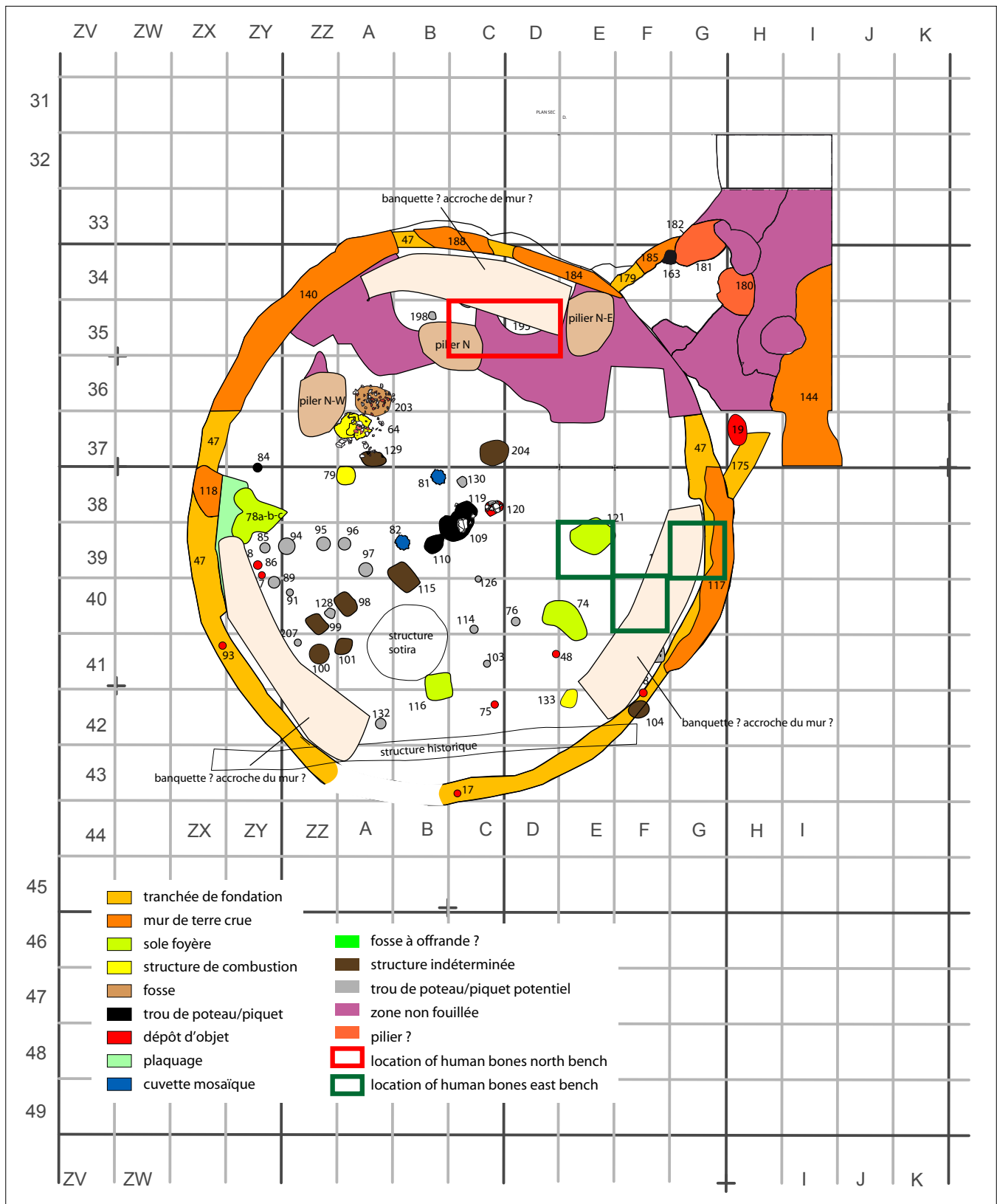


Fig. 32-2 – Location of the human remains in building 1 (Structure 10). CAD Y. Franel, Inrap. • Emplacement des restes humains dans le bâtiment 1 (Structure 10). DAO Y. Franel, Inrap.

· Bone n°54 (fig. 32-1) was uncovered in the early phase of the Communal building. It is a fragment of parietal bone with small perforations on the endocranial surface, possibly from post-depositional processes.

Two pieces of very damaged human bone came from the intermediate building, whose purpose can be either domestic or community oriented<sup>2</sup>:

· N°55 (fig. 32-1): small fragment of a left maxilla, with two embedded teeth: the upper left first and second molars. The initial shape of the teeth was difficult to identify, due to heavy wear.

· N°58 (fig. 32-1): small piece of badly burnt parietal bone, grey/light blue colour indicating a temperature of 550°C, found in a wall relating to the intermediate building (St 172).

The colluvium above Structure 10 also yielded a tooth:

· N°57 (fig. 32-1): upper left first incisor, damaged enamel, with no wear, but with a line of hypoplasia. The distance between the line and the collar indicates a period of stress between three and a half and four years.

Given that there is no duplication of bones, the Minimal Number of Individuals (MNI) should be one. But observation of the teeth indicates that piece n°55 (maxilla with two teeth) and teeth n°56 and n°57, from Structure 10, probably do not belong to the same individual, given the very different stages of wear. For this structure, therefore, the MNI may be two adults.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE HUMAN REMAINS IN SECTOR B

Sector B, the south extension of the Cypro-PPNA village, yielded three pieces of human bone.

Pieces 45 and 46 were uncovered in the same building (B09). N°45 is an upper right lateral incisor, very damaged; the root is broken and the enamel shows pitting. This adult tooth shows no

2. Cf. p. ●●●

wear on the occlusal surface. It is slightly shovel-shaped. N°46 is an infero-posterior fragment of the right parietal bone of an adult, located near the occipito-temporal suture. The two pieces may belong to the same adult individual.

Bone N°47 came from the central zone: it is a posterior fragment of a right parietal bone, located along the sagittal suture. The piece is damaged and presents taphonomical alterations (pitting) on the exocranial surface.

The MNI in this sector is one adult.

## CONCLUSION

The few human remains uncovered at Klimonas are the oldest ever found in Cyprus. Until their discovery, the skeletal remains from Shillourokambos and Kissonerga-Mylothkia dating back to the 8th millennium cal BC (Guilaine *et al.* 2002, 2003; Crubézy *et al.* 2003; Fox *et al.* 2003; Peltenburg 2003; Le Mort *et al.* 2011) were the oldest. Fragments of human bones dating to around 10,000 years ago have also been discovered at Akanthou-Arkosykos (Şevketoğlu 2008).

Despite the incomplete nature of the remains and although no evidence of funerary practice has been observed at Klimonas – the funerary customs of the early Neolithic period in Cyprus remain unknown – some observations can be made. Only cranial remains were uncovered and most of them were found in buildings, benches or walls; four of them were found in the same bench in building 1 (Structure 10) near the entrance (fig. 32-2). Although the clues are scarce, we cannot exclude that the human skull had a specific meaning at Klimonas. However, the human remains might also have come from disturbed burials and been brought into the buildings with the soil used for their construction or for that of the interior structures.

The fact that some bones are burnt may be due to accidental exposure to fire.

These few observations must be enhanced by further discoveries regarding the first inhabitants of Cyprus at the date of writing.