Abstract

We review the case of an adult male from the Nasca culture who lived in southern Perú about 900 A.D. (Code 67466, National Museum in Lima). Four diagnostic levels support its diagnosis of pleuro-pulmonary and osseous tuberculosis: anatomo-radiological, bacteriological, molecular, and paleoepidemiological. To the present, the most definite cases of pre-Columbian tuberculosis in the Americas proceed from coastal southern Perú and northern Chile, where five out of approximately 1000 mummies studied by different authors have been clearly diagnosed with Pott’s disease. Today, this disease reflects ± 1% of all tuberculosis cases. Appropriate calculations permit us to estimate a high prevalence of tuberculosis in this area during pre-Columbian times. We postulate that tuberculosis has existed in this area since the Early Intermediate period, and had pandemic levels around 900 A.D.

Keywords

Mummies, tuberculosis, DNA, paleoepidemiology.