

Balangoda man: reconstructed from fossils of Bellan-bandi Palassa, a Mesolithic heritage site in Sri Lanka

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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 1953 – 1963 and had been given a thermo luminescence 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 was 22 based on left and right side of humeral lower ends. Calculated mean stature from fragmented long bones was 140.05 cm ± 4.21. This value was less than the mean stature of present population (164.19 cm) living in Sri Lanka. Thirteen mandibular fragments were identified. These were of medium size but were distinctive for its broad and elevated rami and thick corpora. 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 and they belonged to adults > 35 years of age. The determination of the age was done by considering the eruption pattern of teeth and the position of mental foramen in the mandible. 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 dolichocephalic skull in both Balangoda man and as documented in Vaddas suggests a positive genetic affinity between them.

Key words: Bellan-bandi Palassa, Skeletal remains, Stature, Dolichocephalic skull, Anthropology

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