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## AN UNUSUAL MAXILLARY MOLAR FROM PREHISTORIC NEW MEXICO

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The skeletal remains of a prehistoric Native American male were inadvertently discovered during land development in Albuquerque, New Mexico. An almost full compliment of the permanent dentition was recovered, including a loose maxillary molar with four distinct roots (Fig. 1). The isolated burial was situated above the floor of a jacal (sticks and brush) habitation structure containing post holes and hearth features. Abundant ceramics suggest a Pueblo IV occupation (about 1,300-1,500 AD).

This four-rooted molar is tentatively identified as an upper left maxillary first molar. It is larger than its antimere, which was present and in occlusion (Fig. 2). Metric comparisons with the maxillary right first molar are provided. The bucco-lingual measurement of the maxillary left first molar is 12.43 mm; the mesio-distal measurement is 12.20 mm. The maxillary right first molar bucco-lingual dimension is 12.27 mm, whereas the mesio-distal measurement is 10.28 mm.

The lingual aspect of this four-rooted molar is morphologically complex (Fig. 3). This complexity suggests an additional cusp intermediate between the protocone and hypocone. It is also possible that the extra cusp is linked to a "runaway" Carabelli's trait and its associated root. Post-mortem breakage of the majority of the roots prevented morphological comparisons.

Comments from readers concerning the identification of this molar and its unusual morphology will be greatly appreciated.

## DENTAL ANTHROPOLOGY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO

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Dental anthropological research in the UNM Department of Anthropology is both pervasive and diverse. All Biological Anthropology faculty members, as well as a number of graduate and undergraduate students, are involved in studying some aspect of the field.

Jeffery Froehlich recently used fluctuating asymmetry in Sulawesi macaque dentitions to corroborate a hypothesis of hybrid dysgenesis with some success. One of Jeff's students, Jared Bousliman, is studying all of the known specimens of New Mexico and Colorado *Pelycodus*, pursuant to defining a possible third species with small but morphologically complex third molars.



Fig. 1. Apical view of maxillary left four-rooted first molar on the left and its antimere on the right. The buccal roots are on the left sides of each tooth and the lingual roots are on the right. On the four-rooted molar, mesial is at the top and distal is at the bottom. On the three-rooted molar, distal is at the top and mesial at the bottom.

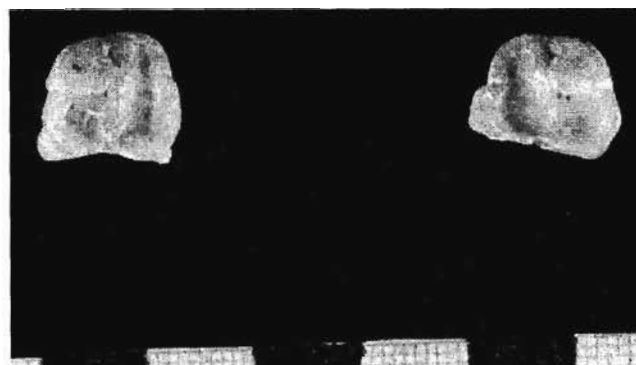


Fig. 2: Occlusal view of the left and right maxillary first molars showing size differences. Teeth are pictured left to right and oriented as follows: buccal is to the outside and lingual, to the inside; distal is at the top and mesial, at the bottom.

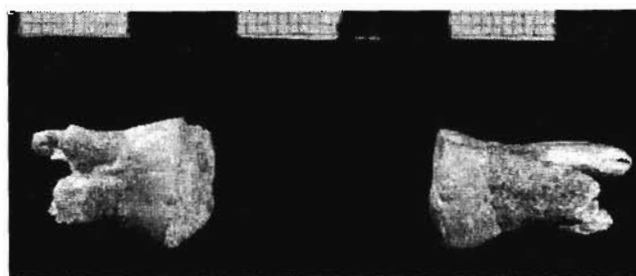


Fig. 3. Lingual aspect of maxillary left first molar, shown on the left, demonstrating complexity. In this view, mesial is at the top and distal at the bottom.