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T. rex's inner plumbing



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A cheap, portable MRI?

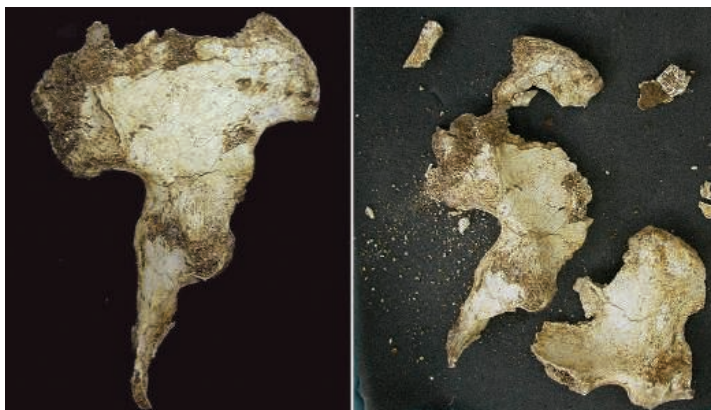
PALEOANTHROPOLOGY

Discoverers Charge Damage to 'Hobbit' Specimens

Yet another skirmish has erupted in the battle over the bones of the "hobbit," the diminutive hominid found in the Indonesian island of Flores and last year announced as a new species of human, *Homo floresiensis*. Late last month the 18,000-year-old bones were returned to their official home, the Center for Archaeology in Jakarta, after being borrowed by Indonesia's most prominent paleoanthropologist Teuku Jacob of Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta (*Science*, 4 March, p. 1386). Now archaeologist Michael Morwood of the University of New England (UNE) in Armidale, Australia, leader of the team that discovered the bones, charges that the specimens were seriously damaged in transit or while in the Yogyakarta lab. Jacob insists that the bones were intact when they left his lab, and that any damage must have occurred when they were no longer under his care.

Morwood says the left side of the pelvis—which he calls one of the hominid's most distinctive features—was "smashed," perhaps during transport. He and his UNE colleague, paleoanthropologist Peter Brown, also say that at least one Silastic mold was apparently taken of some of the delicate bones, which were described as the consistency of "wet blotting paper" when found. The molding process caused breakage and loss of anatomic detail in the cranial base of the skull and jawbone, they say. Morwood adds in an e-mail that a second, still-unpublished jawbone "broke in half during the molding process and was badly glued back together, misaligned, and with significant loss of bone."

Jacob strongly denies that the bones suffered any damage—"at least not in our lab. We have photographs, taken on the last day, and [the bones are] not damaged," he told *Science*. "They used a suitcase [to carry the bones back to Jakarta]," he adds. "I do not use this to transport fossils; we use special bags to carry bones."



Broken bones. The Flores hominid pelvis before transport, and after.

Jacob, who says his lab is the only one in Indonesia set up for paleoanthropological analysis, says researchers made a mold and one cast of the skeleton, but that it was "impossible" for the procedure to have dam-

aged the bones. He adds that his team reconstructed some of the remains, putting pieces together in order to study them, because this had not yet been done.

Paleopathologist Maciej Henneberg of the University of Adelaide in Australia says the bones, including the left side of the pelvis, were intact when he viewed them in Yogyakarta on 17 February. He adds that "Professor Jacob's laboratory has decades of experience caring for fossils, and I would be surprised to learn that if they made a mold it would damage the bones," an opinion echoed by paleoanthropologist Jean-Jacques Hublin of the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, Germany, who visited Jacob in January.

Wherever the damage to the pelvis occurred, says Brown, "the most important point is that it was too fragile to move in the first place. [It] should never have left Jakarta."

—ELIZABETH CULOTTA

ETHICS

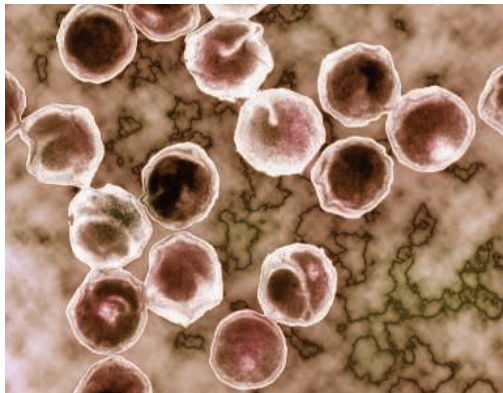
Doctors Pay a High Price for Priority

AMSTERDAM—The drive for priority may have gotten doctors at an academic hospital in the Netherlands in trouble with the law. Several were so intent on publishing the first report on the re-emergence of a rare sexually transmitted disease in 2003, a government agency says, that they did

not convey their findings to health authorities while an article was in press, squandering a chance to limit the international spread of the disease. According to a report from the Dutch Health Care Inspectorate last week, the authors violated a law requiring hospitals to report unusual outbreaks immediately.

The report describes the 2003 discovery of an outbreak of *Lymphogranuloma venereum* (LGV) in gay and bisexual men in the Netherlands, many of them infected with HIV. LGV, which can produce painful ulcers and swelling of the lymph nodes, is caused by certain types of the microbe *Chlamydia trachomatis*. When treated with the right antibiotics, LGV can be cured completely; it is prevalent in the tropics but almost never seen in the Western world.

That changed in December 2003, however, when a group led by Martino Neumann at Erasmus Medical



Unreported. Authorities did not hear about a rare *Chlamydia trachomatis* outbreak.