

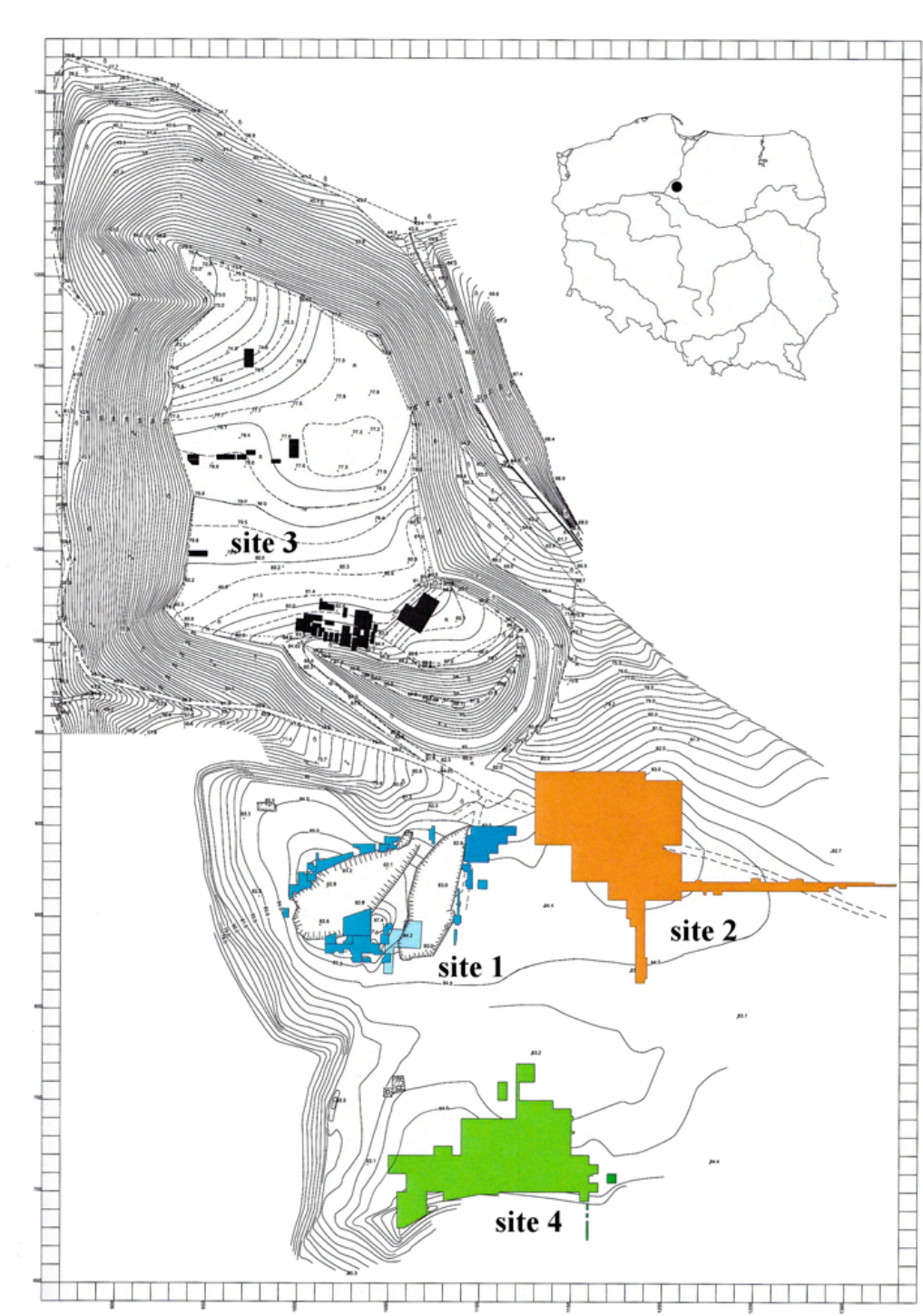
INTRODUCTION

Vampires are an essential part of collective memory, identity, tradition, folklore and culture of Central and Southeast Europe. There is a long tradition of belief in vampires in European culture: it originated in ancient times in Greece (Petoia 1991) spreading throughout Europe. People believed that after death, some people became vampires causing harm or death to the living. Consequently, people became afraid of vampires and tried to render them harmless using elaborate burial and anti-vampire practices. As recently as the first half of the 20th century, people still practiced anti-vampire burials in the villages of Central and Southeast Europe (Łęga 1961).

The question of which people and why were perceived as vampires has provoked many impassioned discussions. Some researchers (Sledzik, Bellantoni 1994; Molleson 1999; Stanaszek 2007) proposed that those were diseased and disabled individuals who were perceived as vampires. There might be three reasons for that. First, some of the diseases (especially tuberculosis, anemia, and scurvy) can result in symptoms such as paleness and bloody effusions that are similar to some of the characteristic features of the appearance associated with vampires. Second, sick individuals could have contaminated family members with their disease. After the death of the sick individual, when symptoms of family member's disease became visible, people could have linked the disease of the living with vampirical behaviour of the dead. Third, people could have feared of physical otherness of the diseased and disabled.

OBJECTIVES

We investigated if people with disabilities and diseases could have been perceived as vampires and buried in anti-vampire graves in early medieval Culmen, Poland. In this way we also analysed perception of diseased and disabled people to see if they were perceived in a negative way in their society.



Map 1. Location and height plan of Culmen settlement complex with trenches (exploration in the years 1957, 1996-2009) (by J. Bojarski).

MATERIALS & METHODS

Materials were excavated in Kałdus, Poland by archaeologists under the supervision of Wojciech Chudziak from Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń. Kałdus was a place of the first location of Chełmno, in Latin – Culmen. Culmen consisted of a strong hold (site 3), extensive settlements (site 2) and one of the biggest cemeteries in this part of Europe (sites 1, 2, and 4) in the early medieval period (the 9th-13th c.). At first, Culmen was beyond borders of the Piast state, then it became one of many capitals of Poland, and in the 12th and 13th c. it served as a castellany. At the beginning of the 13th c., the stronghold in Culmen belonged to prince Konrad I of Masovia, who gave it to Teutonic Knights, who then burned the stronghold and changed location of Culmen (Chudziak 2006, 2010).

We analyzed 568 graves, including 14 anti-vampire ones and 574 skeletons from Culmen. Anti-vampire practices from Culmen include decapitation, face down burial, disarticulated bones and placing stones on the body.

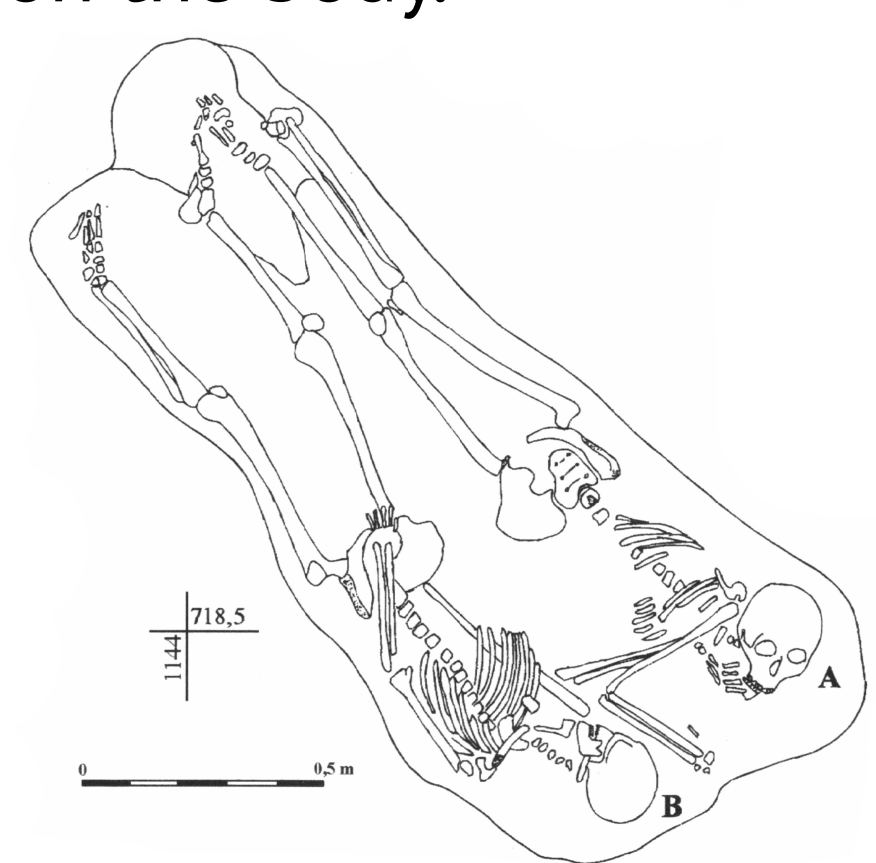


Figure 1. A: a woman, B: a man who were decapitated and buried on their sides in the grave 256/01 (Chudziak 2010).

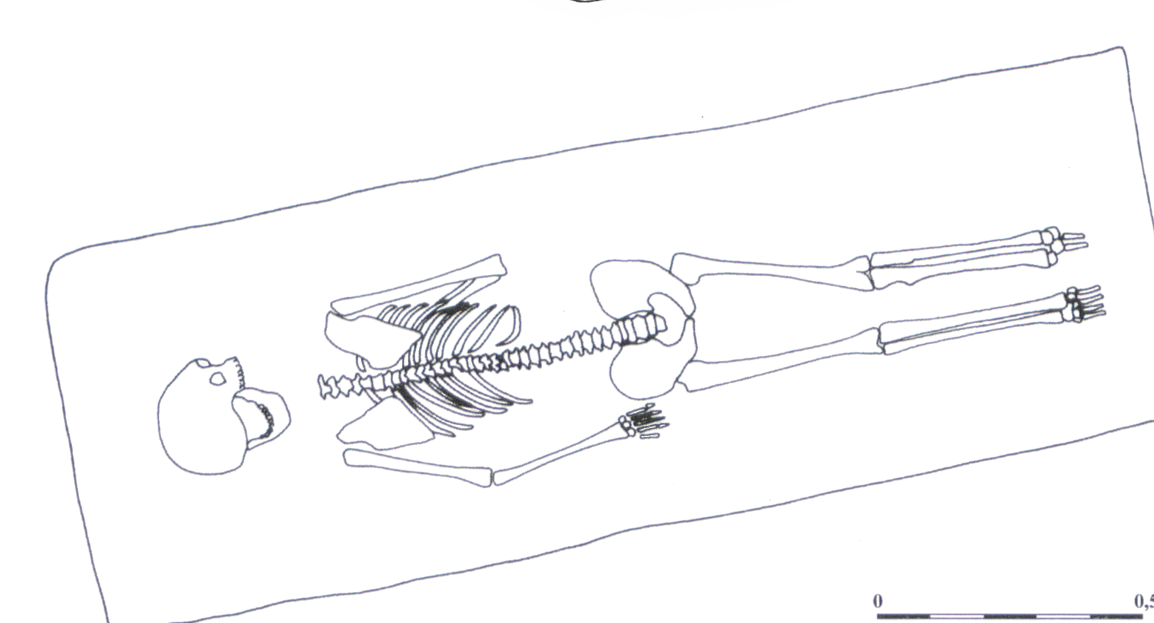


Figure 2. A man buried in a prone position in the grave 24/57 (Chudziak 2006).

Our methods of research included the quantitative (statistical) and the qualitative analyses of pathological lesions and mortuary evidence. Paleopathological analysis was done using *Data Collection Codebook* (2006).

RESULTS

The research showed that 238 skeletons have pathological lesions associated with diseases. Research using χ^2 test showed that there is a statistical tendency to the dependence between pathological lesions and anti-vampire burials: $8.141(1), p=0.004$. Most of the skeletons from anti-vampire burials (N=11) have changes associated with scurvy, osteoperiostitis, degenerative lesions and fractures. However, those were very common afflictions and most of the people who suffered from them were given typical burials.

RESULTS cont.

People who had diseases that were associated with the appearance of vampires (anemia, scurvy, tuberculosis) were not buried in anti-vampire graves with the exception to one individual with scurvy. People with peculiar diseases such as hyperostosis frontalis interna, meningitis and with trepanations were buried in normal graves.

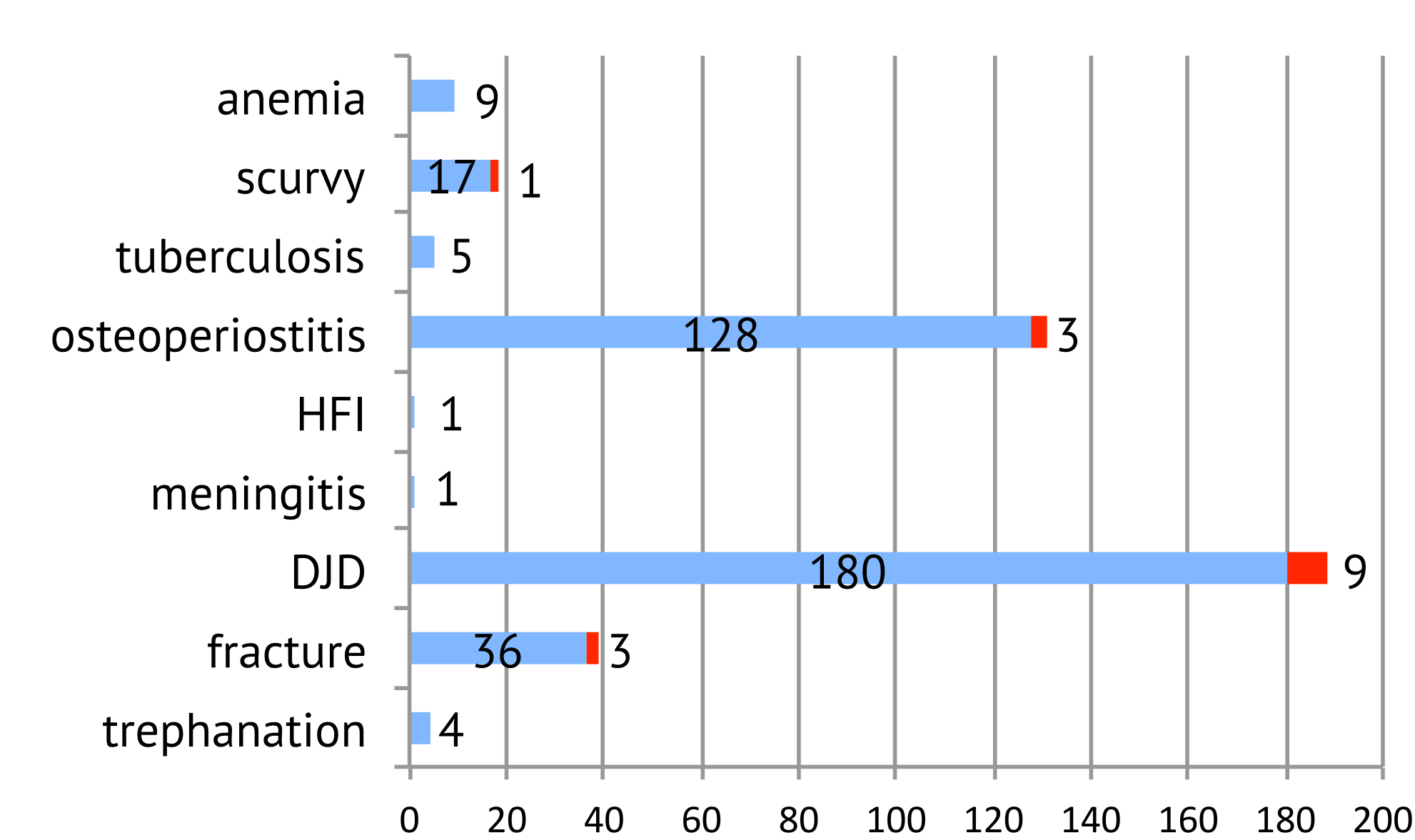


Figure 3. Diseases and pathological lesions that were identified on the skeletons from anti-vampire graves (marked on red) and normal graves (marked on blue). DJD - degenerative joint diseases; HFI - hyperostosis frontalis interna.

37 skeletons display pathological lesions that might be associated with disability. Only 2 out of the 37 supposedly disabled were buried in anti-vampire graves. Most of the disabled with paralysis, amputation, hip dysplasia, hernia, multiple myeloma, rickets, osteomyelitis, leprosy and advanced degenerative lesions of joints that cause pain and lack of mobility were buried in typical graves.

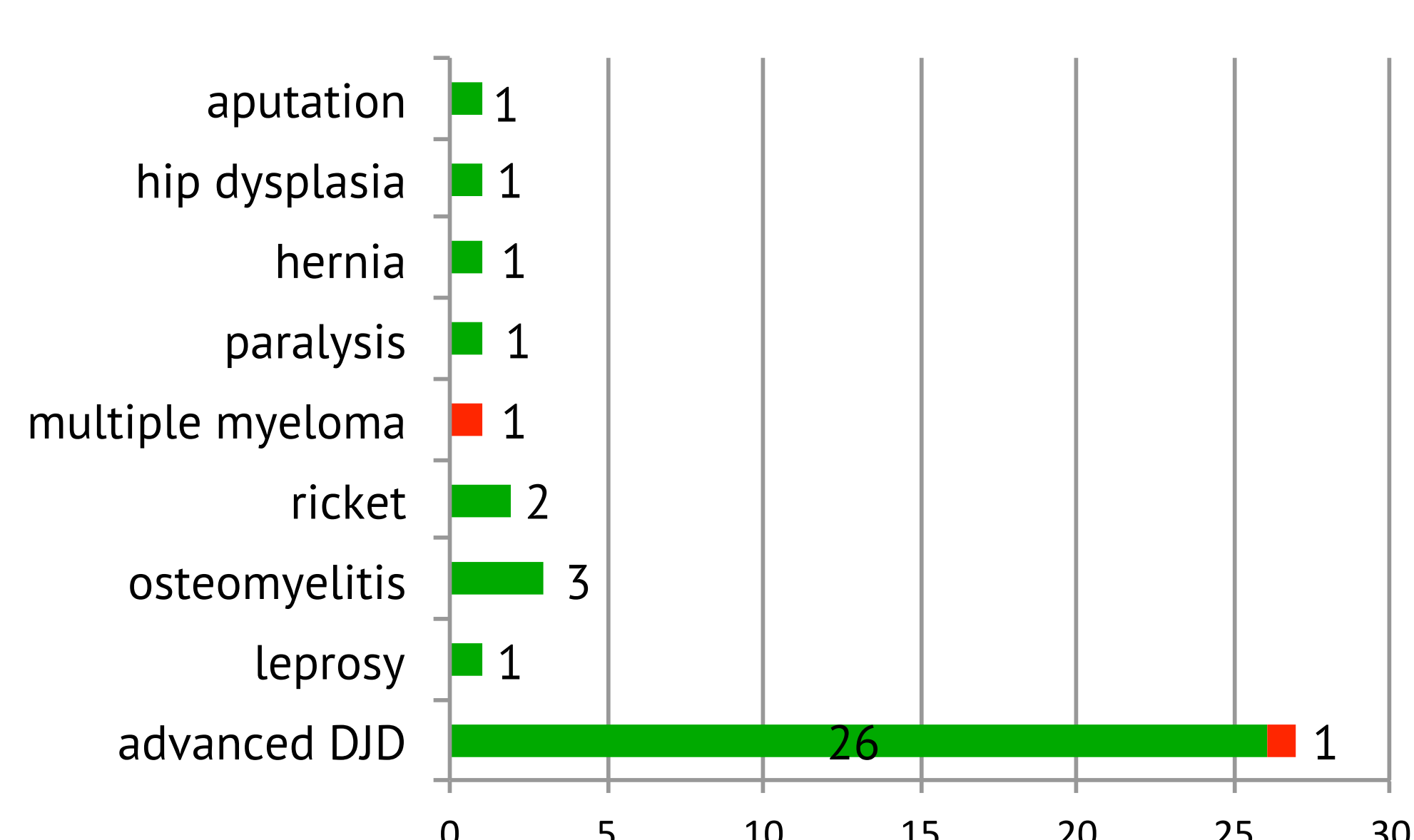


Figure 4. Afflictions that might be connected with disability that were identified on the skeletons from anti-vampire graves (marked on red) and normal graves (marked on green). Advanced DJD - advanced degenerative joint diseases: extensive osteophyte formation on at least one vertebral body or complete or near complete (more than about 80%) destruction of articular surface (margin and face) including ankylosis.

CONCLUSIONS

Although quantitative analysis has shown that there is a dependency between anti-vampire burials and pathological lesions, qualitative research has shown that most people suffering from diseases and the disabled were not given anti-vampire burials in Culmen. Contrary to previous research (see Sledzik and Bellantoni, 1994; Stanaszek, 2007), our analysis showed that people with tuberculosis, anemia and scurvy were not given anti-vampire burials. The diseases, which left traces on the bones, developed for so long that the people of Culmen were probably used to the different appearance and the functioning of the diseased and disabled. There could be relatively many people like that, compared to the total number of the living population, which resulted in treating such phenotypes as "natural". Therefore, diseases and disability would not have raised anxiety, fear and negative perception of diseased people as vampires.

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