

CASE REPORT

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A rare case of evisceration

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Abstract A case of homicide is described where the body of a young woman was found in the countryside in a state of advanced decomposition. The autopsy revealed that almost all the internal organs were missing, but not due to putrefaction. The thoracic cavity was opened in the professional manner normally used during an autopsy. The remains of the small intestine were tied with strands of hair braided into a thin cord.

Key words Professional manner of opening the body · Evisceration · Homicide

Introduction

Homicides with evisceration are not frequent. The presented case of homicide is unusual in that the body was opened in the manner used in a professional autopsy, almost all organs were eviscerated and a hair cord was tied around the small intestine. We have not found a similar case in the literature available to us.

Case report

In June 1992 the body of an unknown young woman was found in a remote part of a forest. Several days later the victim was identified as a 21-year-old high school graduate who had disappeared 13 days

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earlier. The corpse was found lying in an abdominal position and was in an advanced state of putrefaction.

The body was dressed in an unbuttoned shirt (the two lower buttons were intact, the upper ones were torn off) and in a lady's under-shirt with straps which has rolled up to the armpits. In addition to this the corpse was clothed with elastic pants ("leggings") with panties underneath. A woman's right shoe was discovered between the leggings and the pants and the left shoe was found in a nearby field. The thorax and the upper limbs were practically skeletalised and the soft tissues were missing due to the putrefaction. Only the decomposed skin and soft tissues of the back, buttocks and lower limbs were preserved. A depressed comminuted fracture of the skull was found in the right temporo-parietal area. The head was completely separated from the neck and the skeleton of the chest collapsed due to the decomposition (Fig. 1). The organs of the throat including the tongue, as well as those of the thorax, abdomen and



Fig. 1 Ventral view of the victim after being turned over on her back – the chest cage collapsed

pelvis were all missing. No remnants of human organs were found in the vicinity of the dead body. Insect and numerous other larvae were found on the body and in the body cavities.

Autopsy findings

An autopsy was performed the next day. It was found that the depressed fracture in the right temporo-parietal area had an irregular oval shape (approximately 7.5×5.5 cm) (Fig. 2). Fracture lines ra-



Fig. 2 Depressed fracture of the skull in the right temporo-parietal area, irregular oval shape 7.5×5.5 cm

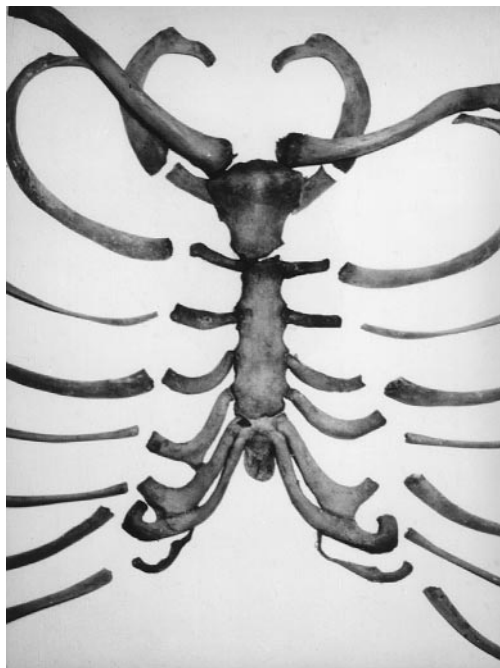


Fig. 3 “Autopsy way” cut of the rib cage

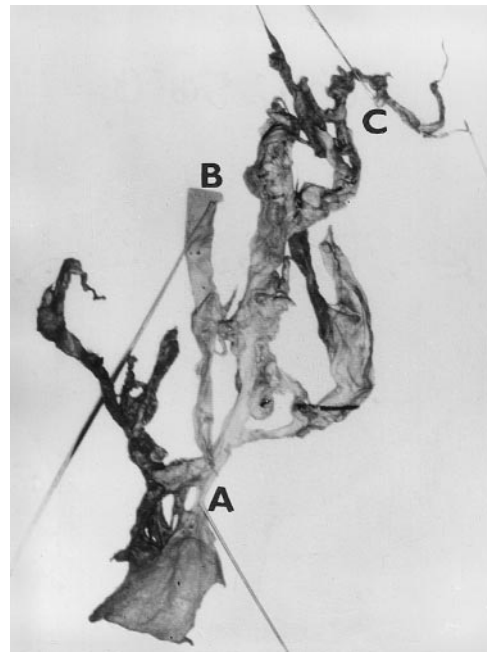


Fig. 4 Remnants of bowels and the abdominal aorta showing. **A** Sharply separated caecum with appendix and attached portion of the ileum. **B** Sharply cut abdominal aorta. **C** Part of the small intestine tied up by a cord of human hair

diated from the margins of the depressed fracture and extended downwards into the base of the skull. A small amount of decomposed brain tissue and bone fragments from the fracture were present in the cranial cavity.

The reconstruction of the thorax revealed that the first ribs on both sides were cut sharply in their inner third but the clavicles were not damaged. In addition, the rib cage had been symmetrically opened by a cut through lateral to the costochondral junctions from a point on the costal margin to the sternoclavicular joints (Fig. 3).

Pulpy grey – whitish substances were found in the pelvic area and, after having been rinsed, the sharply severed caecum with preserved appendix and attached portion of the small intestine with a part of the abdominal aorta were recognised (Fig. 4). This preserved portion of the aorta, from the superior mesenteric artery origin to the bifurcation of the abdominal aorta, measured 14.5 cm. The upper end of the abdominal aorta was sharply cut as was the lower end just below the bifurcation.

The small intestine was tied at the loose end by human hair of grey colour at least 20 cm long and plaited into a thin cord. The hair did not belong to the deceased. Several loops of the small intestine with a part of the large intestine (separated by a sharp cut) were found with the aorta.

A fracture of the right scapular acromion was found, and subcutaneous haemorrhages on the anterior and inner site of the left shin bone were recognised.

Discussion

The case, most likely a murder of the 21-year-old woman, is unusual from several points of view:

1. professionally performed opening of the body
2. removal of almost all organs
3. comminuted depressed fracture of the skull
4. tying of the portion of the small intestine by the cord of human hair belonging to another person.

Because of the missing chest and abdominal organs it was necessary to consider even the least likely possibility: removal of the organs for commercial purposes, e.g. for organ transplantation. The deceased was supposed to leave the Czech Republic at the end of May to work as an au pair. An unidentified foreigner asked her to undergo quite uncommon laboratory tests including a HIV test and a blood group test.

Based on finding the comminuted depressed fracture of the skull, we can suppose that this injury was probably fatal, and death occurred quite a short time after it happened. The injury was caused by the action of a blunt instrument applied with great force that could have been used repeatedly.

The cited case can most likely be classified as an offensive mutilation (Rajs et al. 1998). Damage to sexual organs with a sharp instrument is more typical of a sadistic-sexual motive than a head injury caused with a blunt object (Knobloch 1974; Prokop et al. 1987; Simonsen 1989). During the autopsy we did not find any cut or stab wounds in the decomposed but still preserved genital area. No conclusion could be reached regarding whether the breasts were cut or severed from the body because of the skeletalisation of the thorax. No semen test could have been conducted due to the missing vagina and uterus.

Necrophilia or cannibalism cannot be excluded as well (Dubasi et al. 1995).

The offender still has not been found. Owing to the disarticulation of clavicles, the manner of the opening of the body and removal of organs, it was considered that the offender was someone working in health or veterinary services or a person with basic anatomical knowledge and experience (Rajs et al. 1998). We cannot exclude the possibility of an instructed layman who may have had experience with farm animals.

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