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JURASSIC BULLY: PICK ON SOMEONE YOUR OWN SIZE...

... AND YOU MIGHT HAVE THOUGHT THE T.REX WOULD. BUT SCIENTISTS NOW THINK IT PREFERRED TO PREY ON BABY DINOSAURS

IT WAS THE BIGGEST-EVER CARNIVORE TO STALK THE LAND AND WITH BANANA-SIZED TEETH AND A SET OF JAWBONES THAT COULD SWALLOW A KITCHEN TABLE, TYRANNOSAURUS REX TRULY EARNED ITS NAME AS KING OF THE DINOSAURS. BUT NOW SCIENTISTS MAY HAVE UNCOVERED T.REX'S DIRTY SECRET – IT WAS A PROLIFIC BABY KILLER.

A STUDY INTO THE PREDATORY HABITS AND DIET OF THE BIGGEST AND MOST FEROCIOUS OF THE DINOSAURS HAS CONCLUDED THAT T.REX AND THE OTHER MEMBERS OF ITS CARNIVOROUS THEROPOD FAMILY PREFERRED TO DINE ON JUVENILE PREY, PREFERABLY SMALL ENOUGH TO EAT WHOLE.

THE HOLLYWOOD IMAGE OF T.REX – EPITOMISED IN STEVEN SPIELBERG'S 1993 HIT MOVIE JURASSIC PARK – IS OF AN AGGRESSIVELY AGILE GIANT THAT STALKED AND KILLED HERBIVOROUS ANIMALS OF A SIMILAR OR EVEN LARGER SIZE, SUCH AS THE THREE-HORNED TRICERATOPS OR THE LONG-NECKED DIPLODOCUS.

THESE BLOODY ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN LUMBERING GIANTS MAY HAVE MADE FOR DRAMATIC IMAGERY BUT THE REALITY WAS PROBABLY FAR DIFFERENT, ACCORDING TO TWO PALAEONTOLOGISTS WHO BELIEVE THAT T.REX AND THE OTHER MASSIVE MEAT-EATING DINOSAURS THAT HUNTED ON TWO LEGS PREFERRED TO PICK ON ANIMALS FAR SMALLER THAN THEMSELVES.

TITANTIC STRUGGLES BETWEEN CONSENTING ADULTS MAY WELL HAVE HAPPENED ON SOME OCCASIONS BUT A FAR MORE LIKELY SCENARIO IS THAT THE TYRANNOSAURS PREFERRED TO TUCK INTO SMALL AND UNWARY JUVENILES RATHER THAN THEIR FULLY-GROWN AND DANGEROUSLY ARMOURED PARENTS, EXPLAINS DAVID HONE, A BRITISH-BORN PALAEONTOLOGIST WORKING IN CHINA.

"MODERN PREDATORS MAINLY ATTACK VULNERABLE, YOUNG ANIMALS AS THEY ARE INEXPERIENCED IN EVADING PREDATORS, AND THIS WAS PROBABLY THE SAME IN DINOSAURS," SAID DR HONE, WHO WORKS AT THE INSTITUTE OF VERTEBRATE PALAEONTOLOGY AND PALAEOANTHROPOLOGY IN BEIJING.

"YOUNG PREY ARE EASIER TO BRING DOWN AND THE RISK OF INJURY TO THE PREDATOR IS MUCH LOWER," HE SAID.

WORKING WITH OLIVER RAUHUT OF THE BAVARIAN STATE COLLECTION FOR PALAEONTOLOGY AND GEOLOGY IN MUNICH, DR HONE HAS REVIEWED THE EVIDENCE SUGGESTING THAT T.REX AND ITS FAMILY WENT IN FOR BABY-EATING IN A BIG WAY. THE TWO SCIENTISTS ALSO SUGGEST THAT BABY-EATING WAS SUCH A COMMON BEHAVIOUR AMONG THE LARGE PREDATORY DINOSAURS THAT IT COULD EXPLAIN WHY THE REMAINS OF SO FEW JUVENILE DINOSAURS HAVE BEEN FOUND IN THE FOSSIL RECORD.

"WE CONCLUDE THAT, LIKE MODERN PREDATORS, THEROPODS PREFERENTIALLY HUNTED AND ATE JUVENILE ANIMALS LEADING TO THE ABSENCE OF SMALL, AND ESPECIALLY YOUNG, DINOSAURS IN THE FOSSIL RECORD," THE SCIENTISTS CONCLUDE IN THEIR STUDY PUBLISHED IN THE JOURNAL LETHAIA.

"THE TRADITIONAL VIEW OF LARGE THEROPODS HUNTING THE ADULTS OF LARGE OR GIANT DINOSAUR SPECIES IS THEREFORE CONSIDERED UNLIKELY AND SUCH EVENTS RARE," THEY ADD.

IT IS KNOWN FROM PRESERVED DINOSAUR NESTS THAT THEY PRODUCED MANY OFFSPRING AND IT IS HIGHLY LIKELY THAT MOST OF THEM DID NOT REACH ADULTHOOD, WITH MANY OF THEM FALLING PREY TO PREDATORS IN THEIR FIRST FEW YEARS OF LIFE

"FINDS OF DINOSAUR NESTING SITES INDICATE THAT DINOSAURS LAID LARGE NUMBER OF EGGS AND THUS HAD VERY HIGH NUMBERS OF OFFSPRING BUT LITTLE OF THIS IS REFLECTED IN THE NUMBERS OF YOUNG IN THE FOSSIL RECORD," SAID DR RAUHUT.

BUT THE TWO SCIENTISTS ALSO BELIEVE THAT EATING BABY DINOSAURS WHOLE OR IN LARGE PIECES BY DIGESTING THEM WITH THE HELP OF THEIR STOMACH ACIDS GAVE T.REX THE ADDED ADVANTAGE OF BEING ABLE TO UTILISE THE MINERALS AND NUTRIENTS STORED IN THE BONES OF THEIR SMALL PREY.

THIS COULD ALSO EXPLAIN WHY SCIENTISTS HAVE FOUND SO FEW BITE MARKS ON FOSSILISED DINOSAUR BONES, IF IT WAS INDEED THE CASE THAT T.REX AND ITS ILK PREFERRED TO EAT THE BODIES OF JUVENILES WHOLE OR IN LARGE PIECES –JUST LIKE MODERN CROCODILES AND BIRDS OF PREY SUCH AS EAGLES.

WHAT LITTLE EVIDENCE THERE IS FROM THE FOSSIL RECORD SUPPORTS THIS, SAID DR HONE. "ALTHOUGH THERE ARE FEW RECORDS, WHERE WE DO HAVE THE BONES OF PREY SPECIES PRESERVED IN THE STOMACHS OF CARNIVOROUS DINOSAURS THEY ARE FROM JUVENILES," HE SAID.

STUDIES OF DINOSAUR STOMACH CONTENTS AND COPROLITES – FOSSIL FAECES – ALSO SUGGEST THAT PREY WAS INDEED SWALLOWED WHOLE, DR HONE SAID. "JUVENILE ANIMALS MAY HAVE BEEN SYSTEMATICALLY THE PRIMARY PREY OF CHOICE FOR THE MAJORITY OF THEROPODS," HE SAID.

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THE SCIENCE SEGMENT

MOST INFECTIOUS MALARIA STRAIN CAME FROM CHIMPS?

THE MOST MALIGNANT KNOWN FORM OF MALARIA MAY HAVE JUMPED FROM CHIMPANZEES TO HUMANS, ACCORDING TO A NEW STUDY OF ONE OF THE MOST DEADLY DISEASES IN THE WORLD.

MALARIA, A MOSQUITO-BORNE ILLNESS, CAN BE CAUSED IN HUMANS BY ONE OF FOUR STRAINS OF THE PLASMODIUM PARASITE. MORE THAN A MILLION PEOPLE DIE FROM MALARIA EACH YEAR.

P. FALCIPARUM IS THE MOST VIRULENT OF THESE STRAINS AND ACCOUNTS FOR NEARLY 85 PERCENT OF ALL MALARIA INFECTIONS.

THREE OF THE FOUR HUMAN STRAINS ARE KNOWN TO HAVE ORIGINALLY COME FROM OLD WORLD MONKEYS. THE EXACT ORIGINS OF P. FALCIPARUM HAVE BEEN A MYSTERY.

RESEARCHERS HAD THOUGHT THAT P. FALCIPARUM AND P. REICHENOWI—THE MALARIA STRAIN FOUND IN CHIMPANZEES—EVOLVED INDEPENDENTLY FROM A COMMON ANCESTOR ABOUT FIVE TO SEVEN MILLION YEARS AGO.

BUT THE NEW STUDY HAS FOUND THAT THE HUMAN STRAIN IS ACTUALLY A MUTATED FORM OF THE CHIMP STRAIN.

"CURRENT WISDOM THAT P. FALCIPARUM HAS BEEN IN HUMANS FOR MILLIONS AND MILLIONS OF YEARS IS WRONG," SAID STUDY CO-AUTHOR NATHAN WOLFE, DIRECTOR OF THE GLOBAL VIRAL FORECASTING INITIATIVE BASED IN SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA, AND A NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC EMERGING EXPLORER.

"WE NOW KNOW THAT THERE WAS A POINT IN TIME WHEN THIS WAS PRIMARILY A DISEASE IN CHIMPANZEES THAT JUMPED AND TOOK HOLD IN HUMANS."

JUST ONE JUMP

WOLFE AND HIS COLLEAGUES ANALYZED TISSUES SAMPLES FROM 94 LIVE WILD AND WILD-BORN CAPTIVE CHIMPANZEES IN CAMEROON AND CÔTE D'IVOIRE (IVORY COAST). EIGHT OF THE ANIMALS WERE FOUND TO HAVE MALARIA.

THE TEAM DISCOVERED THAT THE HUMAN AND CHIMPANZEE STRAINS HAVE CERTAIN GENETIC SIMILARITIES, BUT THAT THE CHIMP STRAIN IS MORE GENETICALLY DIVERSE.

FURTHER ANALYSIS PLACED ALL 133 VARIANTS OF P. FALCIPARUM FOUND AROUND THE WORLD UNDER A SINGLE BRANCH OF THE P. REICHENOWI FAMILY TREE.

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ABROAD

NAIROBI, KENYA

U.N. WORKER MIGHT FACE FLOGGING

A SUDANESE WOMAN WHO WORKS FOR A U.N. PEACEKEEPING MISSION IN SUDAN'S CAPITAL, KHARTOUM, IS BRACING TO BE FLOGGED 40 TIMES WEDNESDAY AS PUNISHMENT UNDER ISLAMIC LAW FOR WEARING "CLOTHING CAUSING HARASSMENT TO THE PUBLIC SENTIMENTS."

IN AN E-MAIL, LUBNA AHMED HUSSEIN SAID SHE IS BEING CHARGED FOR VIOLATING ARTICLE 152 OF SUDAN'S CRIMINAL CODE, BASICALLY BY WEARING PANTS. SHE HAS INVITED LOCAL AND FOREIGN JOURNALISTS TO VIEW HER FLOGGING IF SHE IS CONVICTED.

REACHED ON HER CELLPHONE TUESDAY AS SHE WAS DRIVING HOME IN TRAFFIC, HUSSEIN SOUNDED CALM.

"MAYBE I'LL BE PUNISHED -- THE JUDGE WILL DECIDE," SHE SAID. "I'M NOT AFRAID."

ISLAMIC LAW GOVERNS MOST OF THE VAST EAST AFRICAN NATION, ALTHOUGH SOUTHERN SUDAN, WHERE MANY PEOPLE PRACTICE CHRISTIANITY AND INDIGENOUS RELIGIONS, IS EXEMPT UNDER THE TERMS OF A 2005 PEACE DEAL THAT ENDED A LONG NORTH-SOUTH CIVIL WAR.

HUSSEIN AND 13 OTHER WOMEN, INCLUDING SOME SOUTHERNERS, WERE AT A KHARTOUM CAFE JULY 3 WHEN POLICE ORDERED THEM TO A POLICE STATION, ACCORDING TO AGENCE-FRANCE PRESSE NEWS AGENCY. THE WOMEN WERE ALL WEARING PANTS. TWO DAYS LATER, 10 OF THE WOMEN WERE CALLED BACK TO THE STATION AND LASHED 10 TIMES EACH, THE AGENCY SAID.

WOMEN ARE OCCASIONALLY PUNISHED FOR OFFENSES TO ISLAMIC LAW IN THE CAPITAL, ALTHOUGH POLICE JUST AS OFTEN LOOK THE OTHER WAY AT INCREASING NUMBERS OF YOUNG WOMEN WEARING WESTERN CLOTHES AT TRENDY OUTDOOR CAFES SUCH AS O-ZONE, WHERE AID WORKERS AND THE CHILDREN OF THE RULING ELITE SIP CAPPUCCINOS UNDER A FINE MIST SPRAY.

"GENERALLY IT DEPENDS ON THE POLICE ON DUTY," SAID ALFRED TABAN, EDITOR OF THE KHARTOUM MONITOR NEWSPAPER. "MANY OF THEM ARE REALLY TOLERANT. BUT THERE ARE SOME FUNDAMENTALISTS AMONG THEM."

TABAN NOTED THAT PRESIDENT OMAR HASSAN AL-BASHIR'S POLITICAL COALITION INCLUDES CONSERVATIVES WHO PREFER STRICT ADHERENCE TO ISLAMIC LAW.

ALMOST TWO YEARS AGO, BASHIR'S GOVERNMENT SENTENCED A BRITISH TEACHER TO 15 DAYS IN JAIL FOR LETTING HER 7-YEAR-OLD STUDENTS NAME A TEDDY BEAR MUHAMMAD, THE NAME OF ISLAM'S PROPHET BUT ALSO ONE OF THE MOST COMMON NAMES IN THE MUSLIM WORLD. ANGRY MOBS CALLED FOR THE TEACHER TO BE SENTENCED TO DEATH, BUT SHE WAS EVENTUALLY PARDONED AFTER AN OUTPOURING OF INTERNATIONAL OUTRAGE.

ON TUESDAY, A SPOKESMAN FOR BASHIR'S RULING NATIONAL CONGRESS PARTY SAID THE JUDGE IN HUSSEIN'S CASE HAS SOME DISCRETION.

"IF SHE IS CONVICTED, YES, FLOGGING IS A POSSIBLE PUNISHMENT," SAID THE SPOKESMAN, RABIE ATTI. "LUBNA WILL BE SUBJECT TO WHATEVER THE COURT FINDS."

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RELIGION

DALE NEUMANN FOUND GUILTY

A MAN WHO PRAYED FOR HIS DYING DAUGHTER TO RECOVER FROM A TREATABLE ILLNESS WAS FOUND GUILTY THIS AFTERNOON AFTER MORE THAN 15 HOURS OF DELIBERATION.

DALE R. NEUMANN, 47, OF THE TOWN OF WESTON WAS CHARGED WITH SECOND-DEGREE RECKLESS HOMICIDE IN CONNECTION WITH THE MARCH 23, 2008 DEATH OF HIS 11-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER, MADELINE KARA NEUMANN.

PROSECUTORS SAY THAT NEUMANN FAILED IN HIS DUTY TO PROTECT HIS DAUGHTER WHEN HE CHOSE NOT TO TAKE HER TO A DOCTOR AFTER SEEING SHE WAS SERIOUSLY ILL. KARA, AS THE GIRL WAS KNOWN, DIED FROM COMPLICATIONS OF UNDIAGNOSED DIABETES. DOCTORS TESTIFIED THIS WEEK THAT SHE COULD HAVE BEEN SAVED UP UNTIL HER DEATH IF SHE HAD RECEIVED FLUIDS AND INSULIN.

DALE’S WIFE, LEILANI NEUMANN, 41, WAS CONVICTED OF THE SAME CHARGE ON MAY 22. THE CHARGE CARRIES A MAXIMUM 25-YEAR PRISON SENTENCE.

THE CASE HAS DRAWN NATION-WIDE MEDIA ATTENTION.

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FAMOUS QUOTES

PIERRE-JULES RENARD OR JULES RENARD (1864-1910) 46 YEARS.

HE WAS A FRENCH AUTHOR AND MEMBER OF THE ACADÉMIE GONCOURT, MOST FAMOUS FOR THE WORKS POIL DE CAROTTE (CARROT HAIR) (1894) AND LES HISTOIRES NATURELLES (NATURAL HISTORIES) (1896). AMONG HIS OTHER WORKS ARE LE PLAISIR DE ROMPRE (THE PLEASURE OF BREAKING) (1898) AND HUIT JOURS À LA CAMPAGNE (EIGHT DAYS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE) (1906).

HE WAS ELECTED MAYOR ("MAIRE") OF CHITRY ON MAY 15, 1904 AS THE SOCIALIST CANDIDATE AND BECAME MEMBER OF THE ACADÉMIE GONCOURT IN 1907, THANKS TO OCTAVE MIRBEAU.

HE DIED OF ARTERIOSCLEROSIS IN PARIS.

"I DON'T KNOW IF GOD EXISTS,

BUT IT WOULD BE BETTER FOR HIS REPUTATION

IF HE DIDN'T."