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THE TESHIK-TASH CHILD: EVOLUTIONARY MONTAGE DURING THE MIDDLE PALEOLITHIC

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Background

Discovered in 1938 in the Bajsun district of southern Uzbekistan, Teshik-Tash 1 represents a juvenile male hominin, aged between nine and eleven years old. He was classified as *Homo neanderthalensis*. Two pertinent characteristics of the find's in situ context provided the backdrop for this classification. Firstly, the Teshik-Tash child was buried with associated grave goods surrounded by a Middle Paleolithic assemblage which has been described as "Mousterian-like" (Glantz et al, 2009: 45). Secondly, the very location of this find was the furthest eastern extent of hominin discoveries outside of the Levant. Recent research, however, challenges this boundary by questioning whether Teshik-Tash 1 is truly a Neanderthal specimen (Glantz, 2008). The Teshik-Tash juvenile is thus an important fossil to understand the dynamics and possible cultural links between the hominins of the Near East and those of Central Asia.

The Site

- Single, deliberate burial
- Three cultural layers¹
- Middle Paleolithic assemblage
- Mousterian-like lithics
- Ritual artefacts: grave goods?
- Neanderthal burial?

The Cranium

- Severely crushed; possible animal attack
- Original reconstruction flawed
- Mosaic morphology (Glantz, 2009)
- Not wholly Neanderthal
- Neanderthal, early modern human or transitional?

Methods

- Thirty-three craniofacial measurements: Buikstra and Ubelaker (2004)
- Comparison to
 - Qafzeh 11 juvenile early modern human
 - Juvenile modern human
 - Adult modern human
 - La Chapelle Neanderthal
 - La Ferrassie Neanderthal



Qafzeh 11 ea



La Chapelle-aux-Neanderthal



Results

- Mosaic craniofacial anatomy
- Close similarity to Qafzeh 11, La Chapelle-aux-Saints I
- Larger than modern human sub-adult
- Close similarity to adult modern human
- Dental eruption = same as modern human

Conclusions

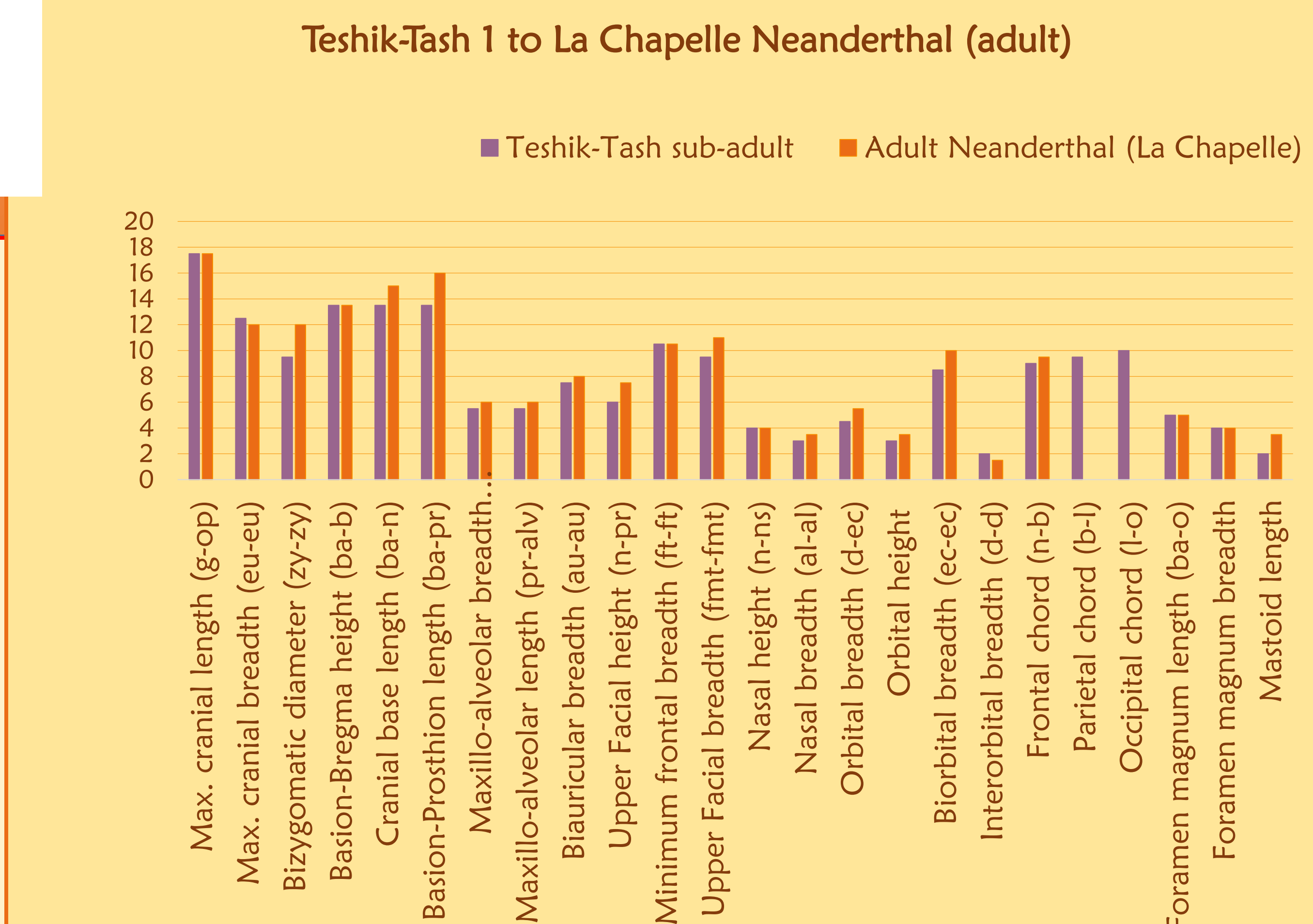
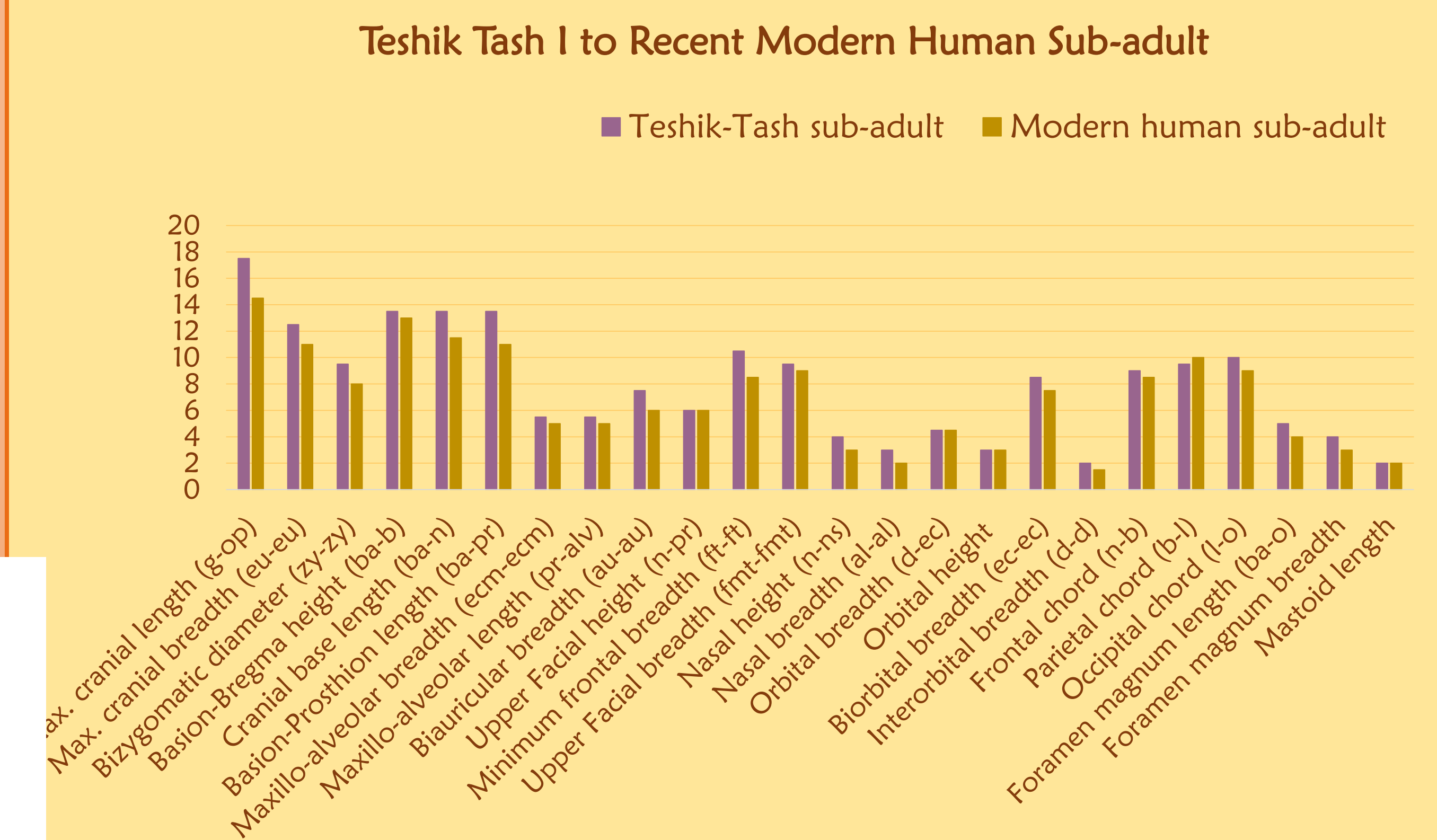
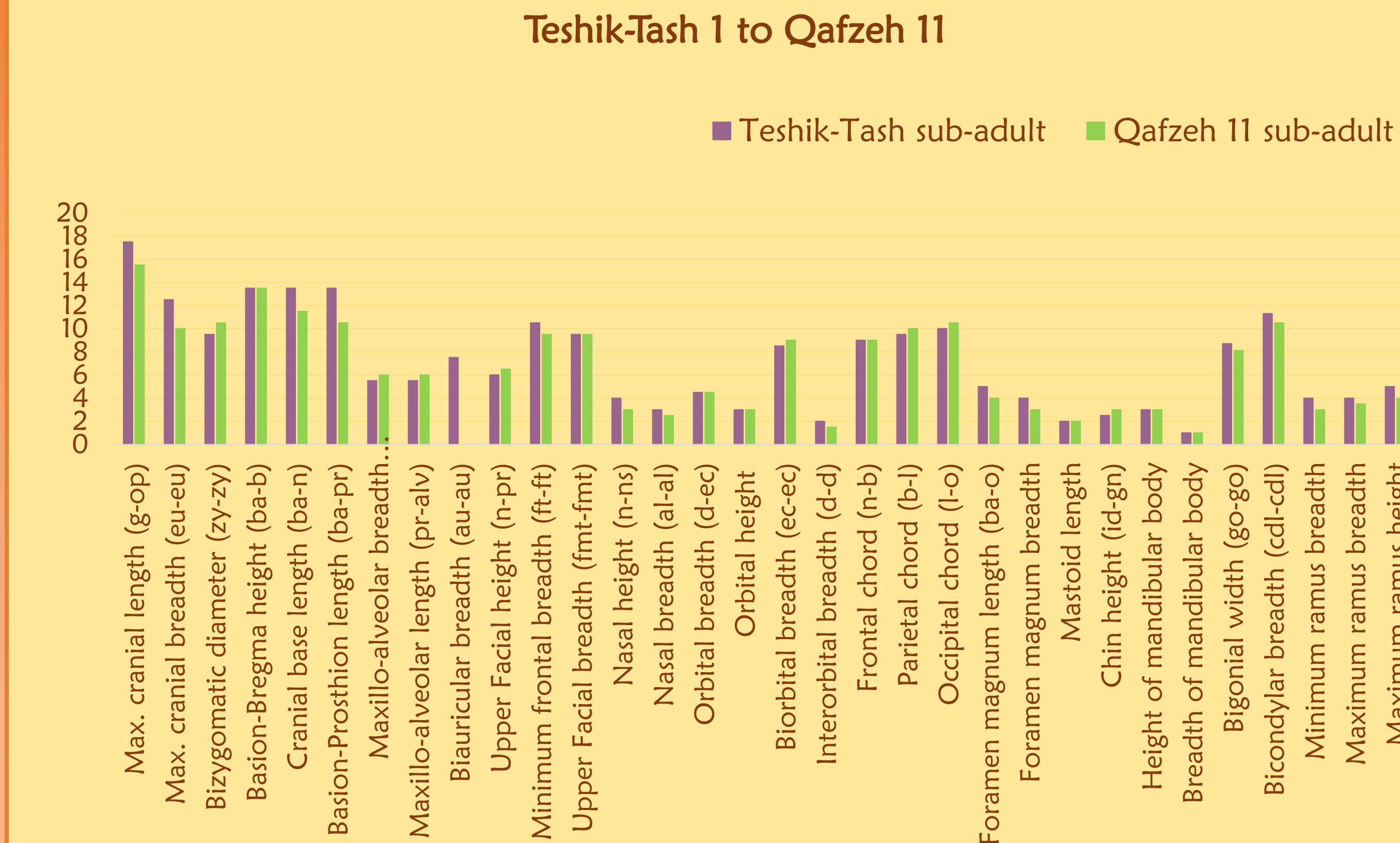
- Clear example of mixed traits
- Illustrates variability in Late Pleistocene hominin record
- Cannot be termed wholly Neanderthal or wholly modern human

Implications

- Challenging for comparison: scarcity of Central Asian finds
- More research necessary to draw further conclusions
- Valuable study for phylogenetic tree

Further References

- Glantz, M., Athreya, S., & Ritzman, T. (2009). Is Central Asia the Eastern Outpost of the Neanderthal Range? A Reassessment of the Teshik-Tash Child. *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, 138(1), 45-6.
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¹Okladnikov AP. 1939. Nakhodka Neandertal'tsa v Uzbekistane. *Vestnik Drevnei Istorii* 1:256-257.