**Introduction**

Young females tend to be over-represented in archaeological populations, ostensibly due to the high mortality rate associated with pregnancy and childbirth. Here, we describe and interpret the burial of an adult female interred with an infant at Middle Neolithic Huigou, China. This makes the burial the earliest and most completely documented case of death from dystocia in China’s archaeological record.

**Materials and Methods**

**Materials**

The two individuals were buried together (M70-1 and M70-2) at Huigou, a Middle Neolithic cemetery site (Yangshao Culture, 3900–2900 BCE) uncovered in Zhengzhou City, China (Fig.1).

**Methods**

M70-1:
- stature: Zhang (2009)
- pelvis measurement: Ke (1958)

M70-2:

**Results**

**M70-1**
- Femal, 25–30 years
- Stature: 151 ± 5 cm
- Body mass: 51.6 kg (Fig.3).

Most M70-1’s pelvic measurements fall close to the modern averages (Fig.4). The pubic symphysis length of M70-1 is 5.2 cm (Fig.5), which is unusually long compared with the modern average of 4.2 ± 0.36 cm especially given than M70-1’s estimated stature is well below the average stature of the modern reference group.

**M70-2**
- Age: 36–38 weeks. The estimation of M70-2's age was based on long bone measurements (Table 1).

![Image](image.jpg)

**Discussion**

**Interpreting burial position**

- The positioning of the infant remains, supine with the head to the north and the arms extended along the sides, echoes that of the adult female and others in the cemetery, suggesting careful and intentional placement rather than the effects of decay.

**Conclusions**

Relatively few archaeological case studies of possible obstetrical death have been published, especially in China. This partly reflects the history of under-attention given to subadults, especially foetuses, in bioarchaeological research. Our study of Huigou Burial M70 contributes to the bioarchaeological literature on delivery complications in ancient China, presenting the earliest proposed case of death from dystocia in China’s archaeological record. Such individual contributions are an essential first step in the investigation of the subject. They also hold value because human remains are the most direct evidence connecting us to lives once lived.