Oral Health and Dietary Transitions in the Early and Middle Bronze Age Populations of Georgia (South Caucasus)

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Abstract

This study explores oral health patterns in human skeletal remains from the Early and Middle Bronze Age populations of Georgia, South Caucasus, providing new insights into the relationship between subsistence strategies and dental health. The analysis focuses on macroscopic indicators of oral pathology, including dental caries, abscesses, antemortem tooth loss, tooth wear, and dental calculus accumulation. The sample derives from well documented archaeological contexts and includes individuals from both agricultural (Early Bronze Age) and pastoral–nomadic (Middle Bronze Age) communities.

The comparative approach aims to identify how shifts in diet and lifestyle affected oral health within these temporally and culturally distinct populations. Preliminary findings suggest notable differences in the prevalence and severity of caries and calculus between the two groups, likely reflecting changes in carbohydrate consumption, food processing techniques, and mobility patterns. Patterns of tooth wear and abscess formation further indicate variations in diet texture and overall health stress.

This research represents one of the first systematic attempts in Georgia to examine oral health as a proxy for reconstructing past subsistence transitions. By integrating paleopathological evidence with archaeological and environmental data, the study contributes to broader discussions on the biocultural consequences of economic and social transformations in prehistoric South Caucasus populations.

Keywords

Oral health, Paleopathology, Bronze Age, South Caucasus, Subsistence strategies, Dental pathology.

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