

24th EAA Annual Meeting

BARCELONA,
5-8 SEPTEMBER 2018

REFLECTING FUTURES

Abstract Book VOLUME II



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Edicions

use of microfossil materials to infer diet is problematic due to the tiny amounts of unquantifiable remains, as is the inference that cooking can be identified from these. In order for meaningful information on diet to be obtained, a much greater understanding of the way dental calculus builds up and how and why some materials become embedded is needed in order to obtain useful data that can lead to a better understanding of features of past lives.

02 NEW INSIGHTS INTO SUBSISTENCE PRACTICES AT THE MESOLITHIC-NEOLITHIC TRANSITION IN THE CENTRAL BALKANS: DATA FROM DENTAL CALCULUS ANALYSIS

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Presentation Format: Oral

One of the major debates in European prehistory concerns the nature of the Neolithic Transition. The Neolithic way of life, where a sedentary farming spreading from the Near East to the Central Europe replaced forager lifestyles, changed human biology, dietary choices and subsistence strategies. The Balkans represents one of the key areas for studying the process of Neolithisation, as it is located at the crossroad between the Near East and Central Europe. Results of previous dietary studies in the Central Balkan area, based on stable isotope data (C, N, S) indicate that many Neolithic humans remained reliant on aquatic resources. The speed of the Neolithisation process and the extent that the rich resources of some of the river environments within Central Balkans delayed uptake of domestic cultigens is unclear. The identification of microbotanical remains in human dental calculus is a powerful tool to access direct evidence of ancient diets. Dietary reconstructions based on plant microfossils, such as starch grains and phytoliths entrapped in calculus, have been useful in increasing our knowledge of plant consumption in ancient populations. The rich skeletal collection record from sites in the Central Balkans with its long Mesolithic-Neolithic sequence (9500-5200 cal. BC), provides the opportunity to reconstruct plant use and local subsistence practices by using dental calculus analysis. The resulting data sheds light on the nature of the Mesolithic-Neolithic transformation and provide better understanding of the dynamics of the Neolithisation process across the continent.

03 LIFE STORIES HIDDEN IN DENTAL PLAQUE: DIETARY AND NON-DIETARY USE OF TEETH IN THE MESOLITHIC CENTRAL BALKANS

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Presentation Format: Oral

Recent methodological developments in analysing micro-fossils found trapped in human dental calculus have enabled new ways of assessing neglected aspects of hunter-gatherer-fisher subsistence along with non-dietary information on human interaction with varied environments. The potential of this method has mainly been recognised for reconstructing the relative proportion of plant foods in human diets. In addition, the recovery in dental calculus of micro-particles of material deliberately or accidentally ingested during the performance of various activities has also proven the potential of the study of dental calculus in providing insights into aspects of individual life histories other than nutrition.

Among different forager populations of Mesolithic Europe, isotope studies have indicated that forager diets were largely based on terrestrial, marine or riverine protein-rich resources while scanty and fragmentary is the evidence for the consumption of plant foods. In the Mesolithic of the central Balkans, the dearth of information on the role of plant foods is due to recovery hindrances (e.g. absence of extensive flotation during excavation) as well as methodological biases related to the predominance of approaches sensitive to the animal protein contribution to diet (e.g. isotope and zooarchaeological studies).

With the aim of understanding nuances of Mesolithic dietary regimes in the central Balkans, we present the results of the analysis of micro-fossils entrapped in dental calculus on 46 individuals from four different sites in the Danube Gorges area in Serbia: Vlasac, Haudučka Vodenica, Padina and Lepenski Vir. The data obtained from dental calculus are discussed against the results of stable isotope study as well as functional evidence obtained through the use-wear and residue analysis of material culture, in particular macro-lithic tools. These different lines of evidence allow us to understand the role of plants and plant-related activities in the region.

04 HIGH RESOLUTION APPROACHES TO DENTAL CALCULUS RECONSTRUCTION OF DIET IN CHALCOLITHIC IBERIA

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Presentation Format: Oral

Human dental calculus is an increasingly common material to reconstruct diet in the human past. Most applications of dental calculus dietary research have used microscopic food remains, mostly starch and phytoliths, to qualitatively infer plant food use. Although