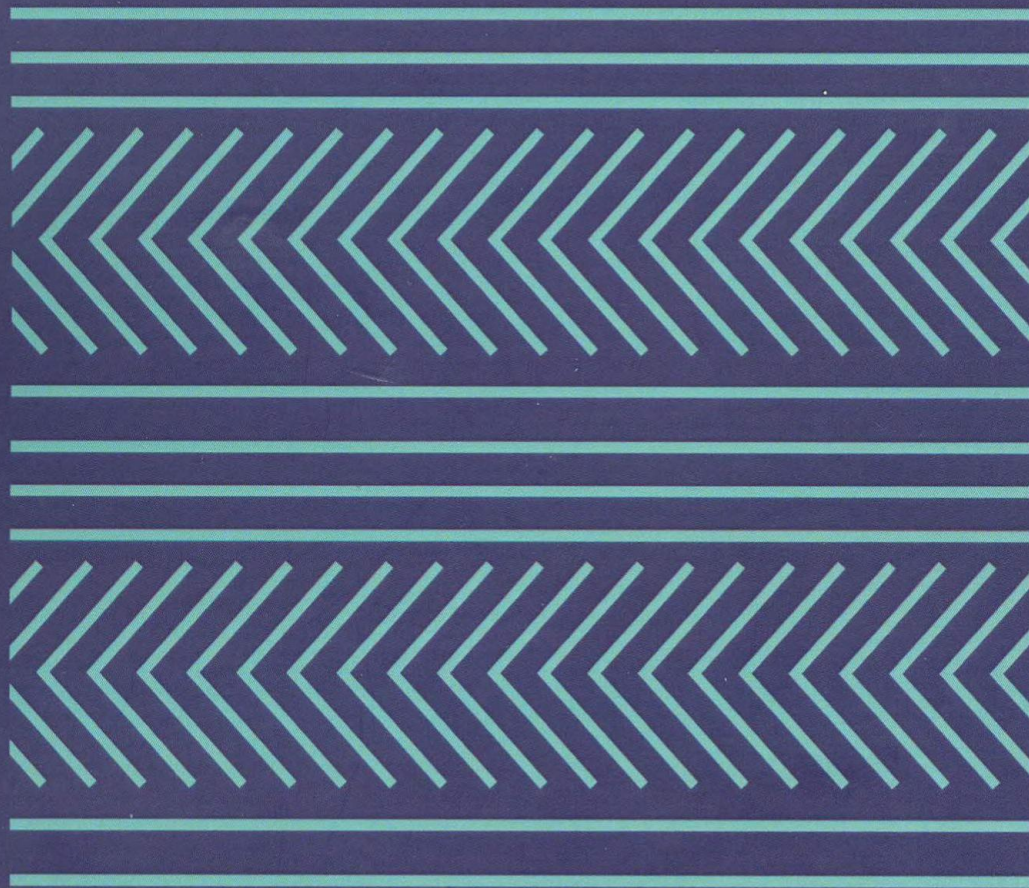


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Dental buccal microwear and dietary strategies in the Early Neolithic of Southeast Europe

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One of the most significant changes in human history occurred during the period of the Mesolithic-Neolithic transition, when people switched from the hunter-gatherer to the sedentary way of life and farming. This process is called Neolithic Demographic Transition, and it had a substantial impact on human biology and dietary habits. The territory of the central Balkan and southern part of Great Pannonian Plane represents one of the key areas for studying the process of Neolithisation since is located at the crossroad between the Near East and central Europe. The rhythm and spread of Neolithisation in this region and how descendants of last hunter gatherers living in river environments accepted this new way of life and novel food resources is a hotly debated topic. Dental microwear analyses provide insights into the food abrasiveness as novel approach for understanding and delineate dietary changes among human populations. Different food types contain specific abrasive particles ingested with food. For example, plants contain phytoliths; fish skin contains other silica-based particulates, and ground flourstone gritty contaminants, which all can leave microscopic traces on non-occlusal enamel surfaces during food chewing. The rich osteological collections from Early Neolithic sites (6200-5200 cal. BC) located across the Central Balkans and southern part of Great Pannonian Plain provides the opportunity to better understand the mechanisms of population's adaptation to major ecological and socio-cultural changes, and to reconstruct regional subsistence variability by using dental microwear analysis. In this study, we present for the first time

results of buccal microwear analysis of 50 individuals recovered from 11 Early Neolithic sites. The results shed light on the physical and mechanical aspects of foods providing also new data about the spread and dynamics of Neolithisation process in this part of Europe.

ORAL PRESENTATION 8

A Culinary perspective on the transition to farming in Europe

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The motivations for the beginning of food production is hard to assess, no less so in coastal, lake and riverine ecosystems that supported large populations of complex, surplus producing hunter-gatherers. Traditional models for the transition to agriculture see farming as transforming either the subsistence or prestige economies. We argue that these broad models are not reverent to contingent social circumstances, where different foods have various perceptions within the communities that decided to adopt or reject them. Determining the use of pottery and other culinary practices, provides a way of understanding how specific foodstuffs were treated and valued by these communities. Thousands of pottery vessels from the Early Neolithic Europe have now been analysed by organic residue analysis providing large datasets to examine spatial variability in food choices. These data offer new insight into the motivations that underpin much larger scale transitional processes in prehistory. Here, I will illustrate this approach to cuisine through case studies in Northern and Southern Europe.