TEETH AS AN INDICATOR OF HEALTH
STATUS OF THE BYZANTINE PEOPLE OF SA’AD: A
SITE IN THE AL-MAFRAQ DISTRICT, JORDAN.

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Abstract

Two thousand two hundred and sixty five teeth were recovered from four sites (Necropolis I, Necropolis II, Necropolis III, and Necropolis IV) from Sa'ad: A Byzantine site in the AL-Mafraq district, Jordan. Dating around 572/3 A.D were used to trace differences in age, diet, childhood stress, subsistence patterns and racial affinity through analysis of dental pathology and morphology. The dental conditions analyzed are attrition, caries, antemortem tooth loss (AMTL) and dental hypoplasia.

The most important findings of the study are:

There are differences in age structure between Necropoli that are related to burial pattern and social class.

The archeological evidence shows that the site had agriculture based economy dependant on cereals and using grinding stones in preparing food. Therefore:

Differences in diet between Necropoli, as manifested by variation in degree and pattern of dental attrition and dental caries related to food preparation technique, kind of diet, and amount of sugar/ carbohydrates in the diet.
Differences in childhood stress between Necropoli may be due to stress variations between individuals and relate to differences in social status reflected in differing tomb types and locations.

The findings using dental crown and root morphology shows that the people at Sa'ad belong to the Caucasian racial stock.