

Tammy R. Greene

Diet and Dental Health in Predynastic Egypt: A Comparison of Dental Pathology, Macrowear, and Microwear at Hierakonpolis and Naqada

Abstract: The archaeological record in Egypt provides evidence of changing lifeways throughout the Predynastic period (c. 4400 – 3200 BC). These changes are evident in the treatment of burials and number of grave goods. The sites of Hierakonpolis and Naqada provide rare opportunities to examine burials of different social status. While the cemeteries at smaller sites in Egypt tend to be undifferentiated, those at large towns, (i.e., Hierakonpolis and Naqada), exhibit social stratification in geographically separate burial locations.

Hierakonpolis is located on the West Bank of the Nile in southern Upper Egypt, 100km south of Luxor. There is evidence of occupation at the site from Paleolithic through Roman times, with continual occupation from the beginning of the Predynastic to the end of the Old Kingdom.

Naqada is located on the West Bank of the Nile in Upper Egypt approximately 28km northwest of Luxor. There is evidence of continual occupation at the site throughout the Predynastic period.

Naqada and Hierakonpolis were two of the first large cities in Upper Egypt.

The current study will investigate the diet and dental health of the working class at Predynastic Hierakonpolis and Naqada. The study will attempt to show whether the overall diet during the time of change was beneficial, how individual groups (i.e., sex and age classes) were affected, and whether these effects are analogous between two similarly developing sites. In order to achieve this an array of indicators of dietary and dental health indicators will be examined. These indicators include caries, abscess, periodontal disease, hypoplastic enamel defects, calculus, macrowear, and microwear. The relationship of these indicators to diet is known.