



## ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

# Iron Age and Pre-Islamic mortuary practices in Northwest Arabia: A case study from AlUla

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## Abstract

The archaeological landscape of northwest Saudi Arabia is a testament to a diverse array of mortuary practices. Tens of thousands of monumental tombs, dating to the 3rd-2nd millennia BCE, populate the landscape, with many of these structures being reused for burials in the Iron Age/Pre-Islamic periods. Unfortunately, a significant number of these burials have been disturbed in antiquity, thus irrevocably compromising their archaeological context. However, as a part of ongoing work undertaken by the Bioarchaeology in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (BAKSAU) and Prehistoric AlUla and Khaybar Excavation (PAKEP) projects, an undisturbed funerary cairn reused in the 1st Century CE was excavated, containing a single child inhumation. This discovery of an intact skeleton of a child is rare in the region and affords opportunity for novel insight into childhood life and mortality in ancient northwest Arabia.

This paper will present the archaeological context of the burial and thereafter reconstruct the life history and health status of this individual, including paleopathological observations. Furthermore, multi-isotope analyses of tooth enamel and dentin facilitate interpretation of dietary behaviour. This undisturbed burial provides new insights into the mortuary practices of Iron Age Arabia and acts as vital evidence in reconstructing other, heavily disturbed tombs.

## Keywords

Funerary cairn, northwest Saudi Arabia, Child burial, Isotopic profiling, bioarchaeology

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