



ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Diet, deficiencies and health status of a Neolithic island population (Khirokitia, Cyprus, 7th-6th mill. cal. BC)

LE MORT F.^{1*}, *BALTER V.*², *CHAMEL B.*³, *COQUEUGNIOT H.*⁴, *DAVIS S.*⁵, *DODAT P.*⁶, *DUTOIR O.*⁷, *GUISERIX D.*², *HERRSCHER E.*⁸, *ROUSOU M.*⁹

¹ Archorient (UMR 5133 CNRS/UniversitLyon 2), Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée Jean Pouilloux, Lyon, France

² LGL-TPE, UMR 5276, CNRS, Ecole Normale supérieure de Lyon, Lyon, France

³ Institut Français du Proche-Orient (French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs), Beyrouth, Lebanon

⁴ UMR 6034 Archsciences Bordeaux (CNRS-Université Bordeaux Montaigne) and Observatoire des Hautes Alpes, PSL University, Pessac and Paris, France

⁵ Zooarqueologia, Laboratório de Arqueociências, DGPC, Lisbon, Portugal

⁶ Quaternary Environments and Humans, OD Earth and History of Life, Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, Brussels, Belgium

⁷ Observatoire des Hautes Alpes, PSL University and UMR 6034 Archsciences Bordeaux (CNRS-Université Bordeaux Montaigne), Paris and Pessac, France

⁸ Aix-Marseille University, CNRS, Ministère Culture, LAMPEA, Aix-en-Provence, France

⁹ Archaeological Research Unit (University of Cyprus) and UMR 7209 AASPE (MNHN-CNRS), Paris, Nicosia (and Paris), Cyprus

*Corresponding author

Abstract

There are many aspects to our understanding of food and its history and many disciplines contribute to our understanding of the diet of ancient societies. We present here an integrated study undertaken on the Aceramic Neolithic site of Khirokitia (Cyprus, 7th-6th millennia BC), which has yielded one of the largest burial series in the Near Eastern Pre-Pottery Neolithic with at least 243 individuals including a high proportion of infants less than one year old. The site offers an exceptional opportunity to analyse the effects of insularity on a Neolithic population. By combining zooarchaeological and archaeo-botanical findings with nutritional approaches (carbon, nitrogen and calcium isotope analyses, palaeoparasitology), macroscopic palaeopathological analyses and micro-computed tomography imaging, it was possible to identify the dietary habits of the villagers. Despite the proximity of the sea, their diet was mainly based upon terrestrial resources. The study revealed that the inhabitants of the village suffered from deficiency diseases such as neonatal scurvy; previously unknown in the Near Eastern Pre-Pottery Neolithic, as well as anaemia. These observations raise the question of the origin of such deficiencies, which can rapidly become fatal as suggested by mortality profiles.

Keywords

Diet, isotope analyses, health status, Neolithic, Cyprus

Session

6. Life and death: Human behaviour and practices

Type of paper

Oral presentation