

DENTAL DISEASE IN ANCIENT EGYPT

by

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ABSTRACT

The study of dental disease in antiquity can provide information about an individual's way of life including their diet, dental care and environment. The focus of this thesis is the examination of dental disease from the Middle Kingdom period (2055-1650 BCE) necropolis site of Zone 9A in Dayr al-Barshā, Egypt. These data are compared to published data from other ancient Egyptian sites. The results provide information on the causes of dental disease, the characteristics of the individuals affected, such as age, sex and status, and what it reveals about their lives.

All social classes from Dayr al-Barshā appear to have been affected by dental disease and there are similar rates of affliction between males and females, which increase with age. The changes in frequencies of dental pathologies through time provide information on diet and dental care in ancient Egypt. The comparisons of the individuals from Dayr al-Barshā with remains from other sites throughout Egypt reveal that sand and other harsh debris found in food combined with poor dental hygiene caused wear, periodontal disease, dental caries, and abscesses. Abrasion of the dentition, which allowed the pulp to become infected, seems to have been a major cause of dental disease in Dayr al-Barshā and in many other sites in Egypt. In mostly later time periods, high levels of sugar in the diet may have also contributed to dental caries.