

Peer Review

Review of: "Dietary Heritages at the Dawn of Humankind in Sub-Saharan Africa"

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This manuscript is a comprehensive narrative review exploring the co-evolution of diet, culture, and human biology in Sub-Saharan Africa. It integrates insights from archaeology, anthropology, evolutionary biology, and nutritional science, with a special emphasis on indigenous food systems. The article is timely and valuable, especially in an age of increasing interest in ancestral diets and sustainable food systems.

However, while the scope and ambition are commendable, substantial revisions are required to meet the standards expected for scientific publication. The article currently reads more like an encyclopedic compilation than a focused academic review. There is a need for coherence and methodological clarity.

Major Issues and Clarifications Needed

1. Clarify Objectives and Structure

Missing research questions or hypotheses: What is the main argument or purpose? The manuscript would benefit from a clearer articulation of its aims. Currently, it reads more as an extensive compilation of facts rather than a structured review with defined questions or arguments. Outlining specific objectives or themes at the beginning would help guide the reader and sharpen the focus.

2. Methodological Ambiguity

Being a review article, the method for literature selection (e.g., search strategy, inclusion criteria) is not described. The authors should describe how the literature was selected and synthesized. Even a brief explanation of the search process or selection criteria would enhance academic transparency and credibility.

3. Distinguish Evidence from Interpretation

At times, the manuscript blends speculative ideas with established findings without clear distinction. For example, broad claims about early diets or cultural meanings of food should be more carefully sourced and qualified. Clearer distinctions between archaeological evidence, oral traditions, and interpretive commentary would strengthen the work.

Another example: *Mushrooms, moss, mice, rats, reptiles and insects were widely consumed, before the introduction of fish and meat from domesticated animals*-----This is a sweeping generalization that lacks clear archaeological or bioarchaeological evidence.

4. Overgeneralizations and Lack of Regional Specificity

Sub-Saharan Africa is treated too homogeneously, despite being ecologically and culturally diverse. Greater attention should be paid to regional variations in diet, subsistence strategies, and archaeological evidence.

5. Language and Readability

The manuscript would greatly benefit from language editing. Some sections contain overly long sentences, which obscure the meaning (for example: *Since the beginning humans interacted with Nature according to one ultimate vital essence, survival, above all on their capacity to secure the challenge of eating or being eaten, on the beloved short passage in time on Earth*).

6. Ensure that all figures are clearly referenced and contextualized in the text.

7. Strengthen the conclusion by summarizing key findings and clearly outlining gaps in current knowledge and future research directions.

Major Revision: The manuscript has significant potential but requires a comprehensive revision to clarify its structure, substantiate its claims, improve academic tone, and align with disciplinary standards. I encourage the authors to address the issues raised, as the topic is compelling and worthy of scholarly attention.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.