

Peer Review

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

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1. Clarity and Readability

- The manuscript contains too many semantically unclear or structurally confused sentences.
- Example:

"However, dental morphology and wear analyses indicate the predominant dietary proxies rather than its diversity."

This is nearly nonsensical as it is currently written. It seems to suggest that dental wear can show dominant dietary types but not overall variety, which is correct but this must be stated plainly and supported with evidence.

2. Scholarly Tone and Style

- The manuscript adopts an uneven tone that wavers between poetic, vague philosophical generalisations, and pseudo-academic jargon. Examples:
 - "Beloved short passage in time on Earth" - unscientific.
 - "Sociological scaffolding of societies" - metaphorical but empty.
 - "Food delivery to Gods and deities with spiritual symbolism" -uncontextualized and unclear in relevance.
- The result is a text that sounds academic without providing meaningful academic content.

3. Logical Structure and Coherence

- The manuscript tries to cover too many disparate themes at once:
 - Biological evolution, gut microbiota, spiritual symbolism, fire, agriculture, non-communicable diseases.

- These topics are loosely linked and lack a clear organising logic. A sharper focus and scaffolded structure (e.g., a guiding research question and thematic subheadings) are needed.

4. Use of Evidence

- Key claims are asserted without citation, and critical omissions are present.
- For example:

“Over the last decades, SSA have become the core territory for researching the emergence of modern human behaviour.”

This is overly simplistic and outdated. While Sub-Saharan Africa has been a cornerstone of such research, North Africa, particularly Morocco’s Jebel Irhoud site, has become increasingly central to understanding early *Homo sapiens* origins and behaviour (Hublin et al., 2017). The framing must reflect this broader continental perspective to avoid scientific distortion.

5. Inconsistent Age Conventions

- The manuscript uses chronological terminology inconsistently.
 - For example: “thousands of years ago,” “kya,” “BP,” and “calendar years” appear without clarification or standardisation.
 - The author must choose a convention (e.g., cal BP, uncal BP, kya, BCE/CE) and apply it consistently throughout, explaining any conversions where necessary.
 - This is essential for academic rigor and cross-disciplinary readability.

6. Conceptual Vagueness

- Many terms are left undefined or used ambiguously:
 - “Spirituality,” “dietary proxies,” “value systems,” “sociological scaffolding” – these require conceptual clarification and references.
- The manuscript often blurs anthropological, biological, and philosophical ideas without defining their relationships.

7. Redundancy and Padding

- Sentences like:

“Food, water and air are the most vital essentials for the beloved short passage in time on Earth.”

offer no scholarly value and should be removed.

- Many passages restate the importance of food in different ways without advancing the argument.

8. Minor Language Issues

- Some word choices are stylistically problematic in formal academic writing.
 - Example: “understudied” is not a standard word in formal writing.
 - Recommended alternatives: “insufficiently researched,”

9. Contribution and Originality

- The manuscript lacks a clear articulation of its goal and what it contributes to the field.
 - Is it a theoretical synthesis? A historical review? A new analytical framework?
 - As it stands, it reads more like a general reflective essay than a focused paper.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.