No long-term change found in caries prevalence in early South-East Asians

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While caries prevalence in the samples differed from site to site, there was no chronological relationship between them, the researchers reported, suggesting that agriculture and change in diet did not have a long-term impact on the oral health of South-East Asians as previously believed. However, caries prevalence in deciduous teeth was consistently found to be higher than in permanent teeth, which the researchers believe could be due to the more cariogenic food, such as fruit and root grubs, that children were given at a very early age before switching to less-cariogenic food like rice.

Children seemed to have increasingly relied on rice as the main source of food later in life, as caries levels in permanent teeth were found to be relatively low throughout all samples.

Among other sites, the researchers from universities in New Zealand and the US examined samples from Khok Phanom Di, Thailand. There, children were known to have been provided with food, including rice, at an early age, which the researchers said is another factor that could explain the observed differences.

The researchers concluded that the decrease in adhesive forces is a key factor of the cariostatic effect of fluoride. This could help improve dental fillings, dentures and implants in the future, they said.