ARTICLES*

A NON-METRIC TRAIT ON UPPER MOLARS: THE LINGUAL PIT

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During 1982 and 1983 excavations were conducted on a Narragansett Indian cemetery located in North Kingstown, Rhode Island (RI-1000). Fifty six individuals were retrieved, 41 of whom contained permanent teeth suitable for this study. Based on grave good associations, this cemetery can be dated between A.D. 1650 and the 1670's. Relatively few reports exist for native Northeastern groups and no reports have been published on the Narragansett Indians of Southern New England. This report describes a non-metric trait which seems to have gone unreported in the literature.

The trait under examination is a small pit, similar to the buccal pit of lower molars, except located on the lingual surface of the upper molars (Figure 1). Our impression is that it is unrelated to a Carabelli's pit or cusp since it may appear simultaneously with the latter. This pit, herein referred to as a lingual pit, tends to be placed centrally on the lingual surface (unlike the lingual-mesial placement of Carabelli's trait). Frequencies are listed below for several Northeastern Indian samples in addition to the Narragansett material. These pits may have important implications as genetic markers and sites of carious lesions.

Frequencies for Three 17th Century Northeast Indian Samples

	Ml	M2	МЗ
RI-1000	6/28 (21.4%)	4/31 (12.9%)	1/19 (5.3%)
Ripley, NY	4/13 (30.8%)	1/13 (7.7%)	3/12 (25.0%)
Silverhill, NY	4/20 (20.0%)	5/20 (25.0%)	2/12 (16.7%)

^{*} This is the first of what the Editor hopes are many short articles to be publised in the Dental Anthropology Newsletter.

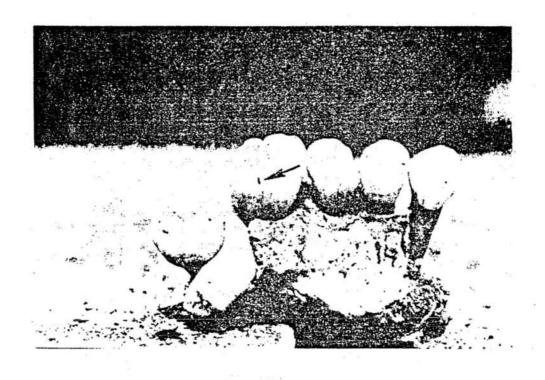


Figure 1

Lingual Pit on Left Maxillary First Molar

Editor's Note: Kelley and Gillerin state that the lingual pit seems to have gone unreported in the literature. Such is not the case, although I can find no record of its use in dental anthropology. G.V. Black (1897) describes the lingual groove as "deeply sulcate" (p. 60). Kraus et al. (1967, p.90) state: "a lingual pit not infrequently occurs at the point of termination of the lingual groove. These pits are of particular significance clinically, since they predispose the area to decay."

Kraus, BS, Jordan, RE and Abrams, L (1967) Dental Anatomy and Occlusion: A Study of the Masticatory System. Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins.

Black, GV (1897) Descriptive Anatomy of the Human Teeth. Philadelphia: S.S. White