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Exploration of Potential Treatments of Bronze Disease Through SEM/EDX Analysis

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Nicole Bishop, Brian Pauley

Bronze Disease
- Corrosion of bronze artifacts
- Disease begins with chloride containing compounds.
- Unsure what exactly the chemical composition of the disease is.

Artifact Remediation
- Need cleaning method to preserve these artifacts
- Previous methods were tested using visual cues
- Sodium sesquicarbonate was used to neutralize the chlorinated compounds.

SEM/EDX Methodology
- A beam of electrons is created using a filament and is focused through the use of magnetic lenses
- As the electrons strike the surface they can be scattered many ways
- Sources of the Elemental Constituents
  - Copper (Cu) – Part of the Bronze Alloy
  - Aluminum (Al), Silicon (Si), and Zinc (Zn) – Part of the Bronze Alloy
  - Potassium – Possibly from the Salts used in the tanning of the leather (KCl)
  - Chlorine – Makes up the bulk of the diseased portions Cl- possibly originated from the use of salts in the tanning process (KCl)
  - Sulfur – Could also be a remnant from the leather tanning process

References

Post-Treatment EDX Mapping

The sodium sesquicarbonate was shown to remove the diseased patina and chlorides from the sample this removal uncovered micro fractures left from the bronze disease. This treatment is both cost effective and safe for curation staff. Further testing of this treatment on other materials, such as leather, that the artifact might be made of would be required before applying them to the museum artifacts.

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