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THE DIET SYSTEM OF THE BRONZE AGE EAST EUROPE POPULATION AND DIETARY RESOURCES: INTERPRETATION OF STABLE ISOTOPE DATA

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Reconstruction of Bronze Age food components by traditional archaeological methods has been successfully complemented by stable isotope analysis. Traditional archaeological materials and data of archaeozoological analysis suggest that the forest Volosovo population diet had many food components associated with hunting and fishing. Steppe Yamnaya inhabitants consumed meat and milk of domesticated animals, hunted games; the analysis of vessel residue and interdental teeth space revealed importance of the plant component. Determination of the nitrogen and carbon isotope ratios in the diet system components of the Volosovo populations inhabiting the forest belt and the Yamnaya population living in the steppe areas of eastern Europe in 4000–3000 has provided an opportunity to discuss the relationship between isotopic values of other diet components and specific isotopic composition of humans. Our study has demonstrated that the Volosovo population actively exploited forest resources and consumed mushrooms, probably, nuts and fish in smaller quantities as evidenced by a lack of the reservoir effect in the human bones. Elevated carbon and nitrogen isotope values of the Yamnaya population bone tissue were, probably, also caused by consumption of food products with an elevated nitrogen isotope value, most likely, mushrooms and nuts as well as water components. Differences in the isotopic composition of human bones can help clarify the areas of the exploited natural resources.

Keywords

diet system, Bronze Age, Eastern Europe, isotopes

Note/comment