INTRODUCTION

Rescue excavations (1999-2001) at the site of Vyssi in Pontokomi (Kozani, Western Macedonia, Greece) have brought to light 101 burials (mostly single inhumations in pit graves) of a Roman times burial site dated from the 1st to the 4th c. AD (Karamitrou-Mentessidi, 2002). The area where the burial site was found is semi-mountainous and in Roman times belonged to the fourth administrative republic of Macedonii Provincia, an area according to the epigraphic record, populated by a more or less homogenous population (Sverkos, 2000). From mortuary data known from the Graeco-Roman world in general (Toynbee, 1971), we can infer that these burials were used by the lowest strata of the respective society.

RESULTS

- The majority of the adult human collagen values overlap showing only a few outliers; a young adult female, a young adult male, a middle-aged adult of indeterminate sex, and an adult of both indeterminate age and sex.
- There is also, a slightly greater horizontal scatter for females compared to males.
- However, no significant difference was found between the sexes ($t^{13}$C: Mann-Whitney $U = 300.5$, $p = 0.65$; $\delta^{15}$N: Mann-Whitney $U = 312$, $p = 0.81$).
- The adult sample values show a greater dispersal than the values of the adolescents, potentially suggesting a more varied diet with increasing age.

OBJECTIVES

This poster presents the preliminary results of stable isotopic analysis from the Pontokomi-Vyssi skeletal assemblage. The aim is:

- To provide insights on the dietary profile of the community with an emphasis on age and sex differences;
- To discuss these results in light of the mortuary data and previously published macroscopic data on dental pathologies from the same assemblage (Vergidou et al., 2021).

MATERIALS & METHODS

- 26 female; 25 male; 2 adult of indeterminate sex; and 7 adolescent human femoral samples were subjected to stable carbon (C) and nitrogen (N) isotope analysis. Thigh and proximal hand phalanges were used in cases of missing femoral elements.
- Chemical pretreatment and combustion were conducted at the Centre for Isotope Research (CIO) of the University of Groningen in the Netherlands.
- Animal C and N isotopic values were taken from those published by Bourbou et al. (2011) for the Byzantine but geographically proximate site of Sourtara (6th-7th c. AD) in Western Macedonia, Greece.

CONCLUSIONS

- Mortuary data speak of a low in status population practicing the same funerary customs for all members of its society.
- Previously published data on dental conditions showed an overall homogenous distribution of caries, calculus and other lesions between males and females, possibly pointing to similarities in the consumption profile for both sexes with their diet primarily based in the consumption of carbohydrates supplemented by proteins (Vergidou et al., 2021).
- The isotopic results agree with the aforementioned results of the adult oral health profile. The adult population shows an homogenous profile in their consumption preferences.
- Comparison in the isotopic composition between nonadults and adults showed no difference in their consumption patterns with the diet of the latter being perhaps slightly more variable.
- Overall mortuary, dental pathology, and isotopic analysis data show no particular differences between age and sex groups of the Pontokomi-Vyssi community.

Figures 1 & 2. Map of Greece showing the location of Vyssi (edited by R. Bronkhorst) and images from selected burials (after Karamitrou-Mentessidi, 2002)

Figures 3 & 4. Chemical pretreatment of bone for collagen extraction and collagen yield (photos by C. Vergidou).

Literature cited


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