
Mesolithic Jewelry at Skateholm: Local and Long-distance

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Abstract

The excavations in a former lagoon at Skateholm, southernmost part of Sweden resulted in the find of two cemeteries dated to about 5000 BCE. In order to reach a better understanding of the movement of the inhabitants and their prey, analysis of strontium isotopes have been undertaken. A number of human teeth both from Skateholm I and Skateholm II have been analysed. They show a low variation among the interred. Most or all of them have had the same adolescent residence. The population shows no marked differences from the strontium isotope values of small animals from the Skateholm area. This indicates a generally stable settlement for several centuries in and around the lagoon. The analysis has now been extended to measure strontium isotopes in teeth from different animals - both the teeth from animals found in the refuse as well as teeth used as pendants or jewelry have been sampled. Most have a value similar to the humans. However, among the tooth pendant samples from red deer and elk significant differences in the strontium isotope values were found. On the contrary tooth pendants from the aurochs, that is not represented in the hunted remains of the settlements, provide local values. The society of hunter-gatherers in relation to game hunting as well as the existence of exchange networks will be discussed.

Keywords: social relation between humans and the prey, Late Mesolithic, Southern Scandinavia, animal tooth beads, strontium analyses

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