**Food Consumption Patterns among Medieval Urban and Nomadic Populations along the Silk Road: analysis of carbon and nitrogen isotopes**

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The ancient ‘Silk Roads’ formed a vast network of trade and exchange that facilitated the movement of commodities and agricultural products across medieval Central Asia via settled urban communities and mobile pastoralists. Considering food consumption patterns as an expression of socio-economic interaction, we analyse human remains for carbon and nitrogen isotopes in order to establish dietary intake, then model isotopic niches to characterize dietary diversity and infer connectivity among communities of urbanites and nomadic pastoralists. The combination of low isotopic variation visible within urban groups with isotopic distinction between urban communities irrespective of local environmental conditions strongly suggests localized food production systems provided primary subsistence rather than agricultural goods exchanged along trade routes. Nomadic communities, in contrast, experienced higher dietary diversity reflecting engagements with a wide assortment of foodstuffs typical for mobile communities. These data indicate tightly bound social connectivity in urban centres pointedly funnelled local food products and homogenized dietary intake within settled communities, whereas open and opportunistic systems of food production and circulation were possible through more mobile lifeways.