

Abstract

An increase in the diversity of Early Bronze Age (EBA) burial practices is well documented in central and southern Moravia between 2200–1500 BC. Apart from scarce cremations and *pithoi* burials, two more frequent parallel burial types appear. One is the standard burials in cemeteries, the other burials in settlement pits, the latter considered a deviation until recently. Thanks to recent excavations and new quantification procedures, however, abundance of settlement burials as well as uniformity and predictability of body deposition and grave equipment in pit burials has been shown.

My intention is to show the existence of two parallel burial rites on the basis of bioarchaeological and archaeological evidence. I focus on the reconstruction of health and social status of individuals buried in settlement pits and graves. I observe the amount of demographic variability, diseases and trauma within each group. I suppose the distribution of diseases according to age, sex and archaeological record will be similar within each of the groups. As a result, we may speak about two equivalent burial practices. If deviations are encountered within settlement pits, however, we should speak about deviations or burials determined for a minority and homogeneous segment of population.

Skeletons originate in two osteological samples (180 individuals in all) acquired in 28 sites (settlements and burial grounds). One sample originates in settlement pits (81 skeletons) marked as PB (*Pit Burials*), the other in graves marked as GB (*Grave Burials*). Within each sample, I observed markers of unspecific stress, diseases and trauma. Using the isotope analysis of trace elements ($^{88}\text{Sr}/^{44}\text{Ca}$ and $^{138}\text{Ba}/^{44}\text{Ca}$), I distinguish between plant or meat based diet. Statistical evaluation of non-specific markers of stress was accomplished using the two-factor dispersion analysis. Simply cross-tabulation was used for the identification of relations between single variables and amounts. Data were visualized using multidimensional correspondence analysis. Binary logistic regression was used for estimating the variability that predicts whether the individual be deposited in a grave or a pit.

The results show a discordance of the sample as regards age and sex. More females of lower age and children than males were buried in pits whereas more males of higher age than females and children were buried in graves. The results confirmed an increase of disease and trauma occurrence with higher age. More disease and trauma were observed on female skeletons in pits and male skeletons in graves. Non-adult individuals were subject to non-specific stress within both burial groups. As for archaeological evidence and results of binary logistic regression, burials in pits can be predicted by the adjustment of the burial place (tomb construction or panelling), presence of pottery vessels and, in the case of graves, river shells. Isotope analysis of bones and teeth showed prevalence of plant-based diet in Pit Burials. Although the both samples represent entire demographic spectrum of a population and both trauma and diseases correlate rather with age than with burial type, both burial types show differences on the horizontal level of social stratification. Sex relations are different in either of the burial types. Pit Burials show higher inequality between males and females than grave burials. Males show higher social heterogeneity in general. Male Pit Burials are less frequent than male graves, often contain younger individuals, fewer grave goods of low variability, and the deceased lie in more variable positions. Female burials are similar in both groups. Male part of the community seems to have been more heterogeneous. Pit Burials may reflect a social change within the community and a more significant stratification among male individuals, typical i. a. for patrilineal communities.