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FROM THE BALTIC TO THE BLACK SEA. IN SEARCH OF THE ORIGIN OF OSTRIV CEMETERY MIGRANTS (UKRAINE)

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The Late Viking Age cemetery Ostriv was discovered by an Institute of Archaeology of the National Academy of Science of Ukraine (IA NASU) team in 2017, approximately 100 km from Kyiv in the Porossya region. To date, 82 inhumation graves have been excavated in an area of 1500 m². Most of the artefacts from Ostriv are uncommon in Ukraine, but are frequently found in the East Baltic region.

The pilot project “Baltic migrants in Kievan Rus’” is implemented by IA NASU and ZBSA together with CAU laboratories and anthropologists from Latvia and Lithuania in 2019-2020. The work started at the point of analysis of morphological features of Ostriv and East Baltic archaeological artefacts and burial rite. Complex AMS 14C-dating, stable isotopes, aDNA and non-destructive metal analysis was provided in frames of the pilot-study.

Ostriv cemetery combines the local Kievan Rus’ and East Baltic region funerary and typo-chronological features. According to the AMS 14C dating two phases can be distinguished: phase 1 (980-1020 AD) correspond to the first wave of migrants and associated with time of reign of Vladimir; phase 2 of (1010-1040 AD) correspond to the short time of Svyatopolk and Yaroslav the Wise rivalry and the long reign of Yaroslav. Skeletal remains anthropological research demonstrate the Ostriv population as rather young with a low adaptation level. The similarity of the AMS 14C dating results together with $\delta^{15}\text{N}$ and $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ isotopes ratios and the typo-chronological background of Ostriv and East Baltic individuals may indicate the synchronous origin of both two populations sites and their similar diets. The first results of the genetic analysis show the external origin of the Ostriv individuals, placing them closer to the Baltics and Scandinavia. At the preliminary level of research, the people of Ostriv are considered as East Baltic region incomers.

Keywords

the Balts, Ukraine, burial rite, AMS 14C dating, physical anthropology, aDNA

Note/comment