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DIETARY AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN NEIGHBOURING COMMUNITIES: A CASE STUDY ON THE AVAR PERIOD CARPATHIAN BASIN

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Stable isotope ($\delta^{15}\text{N}$, $\delta^{13}\text{C}$) and ^{14}C results from two early medieval cemeteries are presented and evaluated in this study in order to draw conclusions about diet, social differentiation and chronology in the Carpathian Basin during the Avar period (7th–9th century CE). At Tiszafüred and Hortobágy, two contemporaneous but distinct groups buried their deceased. The results reflect basic diet deviations between the two communities, which originated in alternative subsistence strategies and/or social differences. The Tiszafüred samples fit well into the general dietary picture of the period. The members of the rustic population consumed mainly cereals and millet, while the proportion of animal protein was significant also. Because of the exceptionally high $\delta^{15}\text{N}$ levels of the Hortobágy-Árkus elite community, their diet was primarily based on animal protein, most probably of freshwater origin. Concerning the low number of our samples that were selected for radiocarbon dating, the present information is insufficient for an exhaustive reconstruction. For now, we intend to grant some new additions to the sporadic data available for dietary reconstruction from this region and period. Our dataset is thought-provoking not only for the two distinct clusters of the plot but also for the rarity of stable isotope results from Avar sites.

Keywords

Early Middle Ages, Avar period, Carpathian Basin, Dietary analysis, Isotope Analysis

Note/comment