

SNAPSHOT INTO KINSHIP STRUCTURE AND POPULATION HISTORY OF A LATE AVAR-PERIOD COMMUNITY FROM GENOME-WIDE ANALYSES OF THE WHOLE RÁKÓCZIFALVA CEMETERY.

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Recent ancient DNA studies revealed the Avar period in the Carpathian Basin was characterized by the appearance of a population with an East Asian ancestry traceable to the ancient Mongolian steppe. This eastern profile is tightly associated but not exclusive to the early elite burials found in the core of the Avar empire. This finding opens many new questions about the population history of the Avar period. How did these eastern migrants interact with the “western” populations already living in the region? Did they admix with the local population? What happened to them after the fall of the Avar dominion in the Carpathian Basin? Only a multidisciplinary approach combining the co-analyses of complete cemeteries from an archeological and genomic perspective could allow to gain new insights into these complex societal phenomena. The site of Rákóczifalva 8 dated between the end of the 7th beginning of the 9th century located at the border of the core Avar region, represents a unique opportunity to this end. The cemetery spans the second half and end of the Avar rule in the Carpathian Basin and the archaeological record, as well as the spatial situation shows connections with other middle and late Avar period sites. At the same time, it reveals several elements of discontinuity with earlier cemeteries of the Transtisza region. We sampled the entire cemetery and produced genome-wide data for all the individuals, which were integrated together with archaeological, anthropological, isotopic analyses in the framework of the ERC funded project ‘HistoGenes’. Our results reveal unprecedented insights into the kinship structure of this late Avar-period community and provide a glimpse into the dynamics of populations transformations occurring in this period.

Keywords

Ancient DNA, Archaeogenetics, Early Medieval, Carpathian Basin, Migration Period, Avars

Note/comment