

Reflections of Historical Processes on the Population Structure of the Eastern Adriatic



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The historical scholarship on the Eastern Adriatic and the Balkans has been predominantly concerned with processes of nation-building and nationalism, while the focus on the nation in most of research agendas has deflected attention from other significant levels of analysis, such as migration processes and the commingling of peoples, their genes and cultural traditions. Looking beyond the concept of national canons and their selective forgetting of mixed and hybrid pasts, the aim of the paper is to look at the Eastern Adriatic in an anthropological perspective as a historical space which has been shaped by the complexity of migratory processes and interactions between the components of the “eternal triangle” (heredity, environment and culture). We will present the comprehensive results of the holistic anthropological research conducted for several decades in the area, based on the belief that human evolution and variability can be understood only by the simultaneous study of biological and socio-cultural phenomena. A large scale of diverse sociocultural, linguistic, archeological, anthropo-genetic, and biological data collected were analyzed by an interdisciplinary approach using multiple quantitative and qualitative methods. Detailed characterization of historical events, population movements and migrations, demographic peculiarities, family structure, linguistic peculiarities, and various biological and genetic traits were investigated revealing possible routes of the peopling of this geographic area. The current findings of mitochondrial and DNA Y chromosome lineages of the population of Eastern Adriatic are interpreted with particular emphasis on population exchange, short-term and long-term migration movements, the form of selection of reproductive partners, the assessment of possible founder effects, as well as on cultural and linguistic convergence and divergence factors. The results reveal the high complexity of the population structure of the Eastern Adriatic resulting from historical processes, and challenge the preconceived ethnic/national categories and concepts taken for granted in order to stress the genetic and cultural hybridity, and do justice to the dynamic population processes.