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INSIGHTS INTO ADMIXTURE HISTORY AND SOCIAL PRACTICES IN THE PREHISTORIC AEGEAN FROM ANCIENT DNA

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European genetic history went through major transformations during the Neolithic and Bronze Age. Despite the significance of the Aegean for European prehistory, preservation challenges have hindered a comprehensive understanding of human mobility and population dynamics in this region through time. In this paper, we present insights from ancient DNA (genome-wide) analyses on Early Neolithic and Bronze Age individuals from Mainland Greece, Crete and the Aegean islands. Our results indicate multi-phased genetic shifts in the Aegean populations since the early Neolithic that can be traced to populations related to Anatolia and then, during the Late Bronze Age, to Central-Eastern Europe. Besides the long-lasting biological connections with these adjacent regions, we also found that Bronze Age Aegeans exhibited endogamy in high frequencies so far unobserved in the rest of the ancient West Eurasia. These close-kin marital practices, likely equivalent to first-cousins unions, were substantially higher in Crete and other Aegean islands than in Mainland Greece. Our study highlights the potential of novel biomolecular methods to unravel the interplay of genetic admixture and cultural entanglements in the Aegean and beyond.

Keywords

ancient DNA, Aegean prehistory, marital practices, human mobility

Note/comment

The following people contributed or treated in a dedicated ancient-DNA lab the archaeological material mentioned in the presentation: Anagnostis Agelarakis, Philip Betancourt, Birgitta Hallager, Olivia A. Jones, Olga Kakavogianni, Athanasia Kanta, Robert Koehl, Joseph Maran, Tina McGeorge, Anastasia Papathanasiou, Lena Papazoglou-Manioudaki, Kostas Paschalidis, Eleanna Prevedorou, Gypsy Price, Eftychia Protopapadaki, Michael Schultz, Naya Sgouritsa-Polychronakou, Kim Shelton, Maria Vlazaki, Raffaella Bianco, Marta Burri, Căcilia Freund, Anja Futwängler, Florian Knolle, Nuno Felipe Gomes Martins, Gunnar Neumann, Anthi Tiliakou.