

ANCIENT DNA REVEALS THE SETTLEMENT OF AVAR COMMUNITY IN LOWER AUSTRIA DURING EARLY MEDIEVAL PERIOD

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The archaeogenetic evidence of the Avar period in Europe records a group of people coming from the East Eurasian steppe. So far, the study of Avar-period individuals in Europe has been around the Carpathian Basin, where most of the rich archaeological material associated with the Avars has been found. That is also in concordance with historical records that designate this area as the core of the Avar Empire, waging wars against Byzantium. While eastern Austria is located in the periphery of the presumed Avar territory, there are also numerous finds associated with the Avar period, including a considerable amount of human skeletal remains buried during and after the Avar period. Within the HistoGenes project, we study the genetic architecture of several hundreds of samples from Austrian cemeteries dated to between the 4th and the 8th century A.D. One such cemetery, studied in detail by several disciplines involved in the project, is the cemetery of Leobersdorf. Located south of Vienna, it has been dated from the first half of the 7th until the beginning of the 9th century A.D. This is a particularly good example for studying Avar communities in Austria through a thorough archaeological, anthropological and genetic analysis of this necropolis. Within the ERC HistoGenes project, we show that the application of archaeogenetic approaches will allow us to uncover the past of population movements and admixture even in recent times. Ancient DNA studied in its archaeological, anthropological and historical context, and for an entire cemetery, enables us to jointly reconstruct the genetic origin, family relationships, social structure and demography of the inhabitants of Leobersdorf and gives us an insight into their genetic connections to the wider region.

Keywords

Leobersdorf, aDNA, Austria, Avars, Early Medieval

Note/comment