WHAT ARE WE DOING?

We examine the population change and living conditions in Eastern Central Europe during the critical period between the dissolution of the Western Roman Empire and the emergence of medieval European states from the 5th to the 9th centuries. For the first time, all relevant disciplines are combined in one project: archaeology, history, anthropology and genetics.

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A UNIQUE PROJECT

- A new perspective at an important stage in European population history
- HistoGenes unites researchers in all the disciplines involved: archaeologists, historians, anthropologists, geneticists, bio-informaticians
- For the first time more than 6,000 graves from the time between AD 400 and 900 are being analysed, using the most advanced genomic, archaeological, historical and anthropological methods
- It is to date the largest project in the entire field of ancient DNA research

WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

Eastern Central Europe in the 5th century: The power of the Western Roman Empire is crumbling. For the following centuries written sources report more than a dozen major migrations. Different peoples and powers succeeded each other in the region: Huns, Goths, Avars, Slavs, Franks and others. That was the period known as the Migration Age. Very little is known about these communities: How were the people who lived in the Carpathian basin affected by all these changes? Did ruling groups come and go or did entire populations shift? The HistoGenes project addresses these questions.

WHO ARE WE?

Four institutions from Austria, Hungary, Germany and the US and more than 25 cooperation partners from Slovenia, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Poland and Serbia work together in this project.

- INSTITUTE FOR MEDIEVAL RESEARCH | Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna
  Coordination of the project | Our archaeological team collects data from cemeteries, interprets them and moves them into our project data base

- NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM (NHM) | Vienna
  The anthropological team at the Natural History Museum collects data on the skeletons and prepares them for the extraction of the sample.

- INSTITUTE OF AUSTRIAN HISTORICAL RESEARCH | University of Vienna
  Our team of historians at the University of Vienna works on narrative sources from the period.

- INSTITUTE FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL SCIENCES | Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest
  All the Institute of Archaeological Sciences’ curators collect and elaborate detailed information about almost 100 sites per year.

- INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOGENOMICS | Research Centre for the Humanities, Brussels
  Our team of scientists and bioinformaticians analyses the DNA sequence data of the samples.

- MAX-FRANK LABORATORY FOR EVOLUTIONARY ANTHROPOLOGY | University of Vienna
  Genetics specialists process the data, move through the prepared samples. In HistoGenes we analyse an unprecedented number of samples from more than 6,000 graves.

- VEERAMAH LABORATORY | Stony Brook University, New York
  In New York the Veeramah Laboratory at Stony Brook are helping to make sense of all the current DNA data on genetic variation.

OUR AIM

is not only a deeper understanding of migration and mobility in the early Middle Ages, but also an intimate view of the lives of the women and men who moved across or settled in this region. In doing so, we will learn more about their diet, their health, their local and regional customs, and how they structured their families, their communities and their world.

PROJECT DATABASE

For the joint interpretation of the data we also rely on the project database which assembles the information collected by HistoGenes: maps of archaeological sites, details about graves and the skeletons, images and descriptions of finds, and overviews of the genetic and isotopic data.