Preliminary results of comprehensive studies of medieval Christian necropolises of Ilibalyk and Suleiman-tepa

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Abstract

The Usharal-Ilibalyk site, dated to the 12th-14th centuries AD, is the focus of a project that uncovers Christian burial practices and elite women's roles through meticulous archaeological excavations of 103 graves. DNA and forensic analysis are employed to reconstruct pathologies, age, ethnicity, and origins of the individuals buried there. Ongoing research investigates genetic ancestry and kinship patterns, while anthropological analysis enhances understanding of physical characteristics and cultural practices.

Similarly, the Suleiman-tepa site, dated to the 9th-13th centuries AD, is the subject of a project that explores a medieval Christian monastery and examines burial customs and social dynamics. Ongoing research expands the boundaries of the necropolis and conducts anthropological analysis of skeletal remains, shedding light on the cultural practices and social structures within the monastic community. Genetic analysis is also being conducted to investigate the genetic origins of the inhabitants of Suleiman-tepa.

Both sites actively examine the impact of diseases on ancient populations. Anthropological analysis helps identify disease evidence in skeletal remains, providing insights into the prevalence of diseases and their implications for society. Genetic analysis aims to identify ancient strains of pathogens, offering valuable information about disease prevalence, genetic diversity, and their societal implications.

Collaboration among archaeologists, geneticists, and anthropologists enriches our understanding of ancient societies. By integrating multiple lines of evidence, researchers gain nuanced insights into genetic ancestry, physical characteristics, cultural practices, social structures, and health conditions. This multidisciplinary approach contributes to our understanding of ancient populations, their interactions, and the impact of diseases.