

Sites in the Lech Valley

- Corded Ware Complex (CWC)
- Bell Beaker Complex (BBC)
- Early Bronze Age (EBA)
- Middle Bronze Age (MBA)

Human Mobility and Social Transformation at the Onset of the Bronze Age in Southern Germany

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Bioarchaeological research – especially archaeogenetics – has often focused on supra-regional and long-term developments especially with regard to the 3rd and 2nd millennia BC in Eurasia. However, these current perspectives can neither explain the complexity of human mobility nor their impact on local communities.

In my lecture, I will present latest insights from the integration of a broad range of archaeological and scientific analyses within a micro-region, namely the valley of the river Lech south of present-day Augsburg in Southern Germany during the 3rd and early 2nd millennia BC. The archaeological evaluation of more than 400 burials, about 200 radiocarbon dates, about 150 isotopic (Sr, C, N) analyses and the genomic analysis of 104 individuals have generated a novel basis for writing an integrative prehistory on a local level.

We are not only able to decipher the complexity of local marital rules as well as sex- and age-based patterns of mobility and different modes of fostering, but we now finally understand the formation of burial groups on cemeteries, inheritance rules of hamlets and the relation between material objects in graves and the position of the deceased individual within the pedigree of the hamlet's inhabitants. Moreover, the co-presence of biologically related and unrelated individuals in every farmstead implies a socially stratified complex household in the Central European Bronze Age. To sum up: structured human mobility was a central constituent of Early Bronze Age societies at least in Southern Germany, whereby large-scale individual mobility shaped local communities.

