
Chronology and subsistence strategies of inhabitants of the Late Neolithic Aora settlement, Latvia

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Résumé

The Late Neolithic *Aora* settlement is an inland site, located in South-eastern Latvia at the Lake *Lubāns* wetland approximately 200 km from the Baltic Sea. The wetland with its 27 Mesolithic and Neolithic sites is an important Stone Age inhabitation complex not only in Latvian, but also in a wider North European context. So far, archaeological excavations have been conducted in 18 sites.

Aora settlement, amongst others, is distinguishable by a few dozen burial finds within the inhabitation layers. Archaeological research and excavations at the site started at the last century with several excavation seasons during the 60s and 70s. As radiocarbon dating were already available for Latvian archaeologists at the time, several organic samples were dated during 70s and 80s. In 2008 research at the *Aora* settlement was renewed with excavations and new radiocarbon datings of organic samples.

This study, as a part of a larger research of the Lake *Lubāns* Stone Age, focuses on the chronology of the buried individuals and their paleodiets that would indicate the general subsistence strategies at the time. Carbon and nitrogen stable isotope analysis of 13 individuals show no indication of farming as a general occupation. All of the human results, when put into context with the local animal stable isotope dataset, indicate fishing, hunting and gathering as the main subsistence strategy. The radiocarbon dates, however, clearly shows the settlement with the burials to be a Late Neolithic site. Besides, the six dated individuals indicate a local dietary shift from a mixed to a more freshwater diet during the occupancy of the site, therefore raising some questions about previous archaeological interpretations.

Mots-Clés: Late Neolithic, radiocarbon, stable isotopes, paleodiets

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