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RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Genetic Atlas of Human Admixture History

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ABSTRACT

Modern genetic data combined with appropriate statistical methods have the potential to contribute substantially to our understanding of human history. We have developed an approach that exploits the genomic structure of admixed populations to date and characterize historical mixture events at fine scales. We used this to produce an atlas of worldwide human admixture history, constructed by using genetic data alone and encompassing over 100 events occurring over the past 4000 years. We identified events whose dates and participants suggest they describe genetic impacts of the Mongol empire, Arab slave trade, Bantu expansion, first millennium CE migrations in Eastern Europe, and European colonialism, as well as unrecorded events, revealing admixture to be an almost universal force shaping human populations.

SUMMARY

The in-Laws Through History

Admixture, the result of previously distant populations meeting and breeding, leaves a genetic signal within the descendants' genomes. However, over time the signal decays and can be hard to trace. **Hellenthal *et al.*** (p. 747) describe a method, using a technique called chromosome painting, to follow the genetic traces of admixture back to the nearest extant population. The approach revealed details of worldwide human admixture history over the past 4000 years.

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