

Description

Mal'ta Boy, designated MA-1, refers to the 24,000-year-old remains of a young child discovered near Lake Baikal in Siberia, buried under a stone slab with a rich collection of Upper Paleolithic art. Among the items discovered with him were an ivory diadem, a bead necklace, and at the broader site, the famous "Venus figurines" that closely resemble those found thousands of miles away in Ice Age Europe. His genome, sequenced from these ancient remains, revealed the existence of a previously unknown human population that turned out to be a critical missing piece in the global human story.



Mal'ta Boy (MA-1) remains displayed with his tomb artifacts at the Hermitage Museum.

MA-1 represents a group researchers call Ancient North Eurasians (ANE). Genetically intermediate between Western Eurasians and the ancestors of Native Americans, this population explained one of ancient genetics' most puzzling observations: why some early Paleo-American remains seemed to exhibit physical traits reminiscent of Western populations. The answer was the ANE. Between 14% and 38% of modern Native American ancestry derives from this Siberian lineage, inherited through population mixing before the first humans reached the Americas.



Close-up of grave artifacts — Upper Paleolithic ivory diadem and bead necklace.

MA-1's genomic markers include a basal Y-haplogroup R* and mitochondrial haplogroup U — lineages widespread among the first modern humans in Europe. Phenotypic indicators suggest brown hair, brown eyes, and freckled skin. His people built semi-subterranean houses from mammoth bones and reindeer antlers, successfully occupying central Siberia during the extreme cold of the Last Glacial Maximum. The fact that the Venus figurines found at the site echo those carved in Ice Age Europe indicates a vast network of cultural and genetic connection across the Eurasian continent.

Modern population	Distance
Udmurt	17.046
Besermyan	17.534
Mari	18.273

Modern population	Distance
Sami	18.386
Chuvash	18.825
Bashkir (Karaidelsky)	19.008
Komi	19.065
Ror (Haryana)	19.144
Bashkir (Yanaulsky)	19.175
Bashkir (Ilishevsky)	19.212

Source

Date: 789–546 BCE

Y-DNA: R

mtDNA: U

Location: Russia

Research: Upper Palaeolithic Siberian genome reveals dual ancestry of Native Americans

Sample(s): MA1.SG