

Human family tree gets another “mysterious” branch: Neanderthal-type species once roamed Africa, DNA shows



The human family tree just got another — mysterious — branch, an African “sister species” to the heavy-browed Neanderthals that once roamed Europe. While no fossilized bones have been found from these enigmatic people, they did leave a calling card in present-day Africans: snippets of foreign DNA.

There’s only one way that genetic material could have made it into modern human populations. “Geneticists like euphemisms, but we’re talking about sex,” said Joshua Akey of the University of Washington in Seattle, whose lab identified the mystery DNA in three groups of modern Africans. These genetic leftovers do not resemble DNA from any modern-day humans. The foreign DNA also does not resemble Neanderthal DNA, which shows up in the DNA of some modern-day Europeans, Akey said. That means the newly identified DNA came from an unknown group.

Additional Resources:

- [The study of human origins remains unsettled](#), Evolution News and Views
- [Cousins of Neanderthals left DNA in Africa scientists report](#), The New York Times

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