

Why hunter-gatherer civilizations did not destroy themselves through inbreeding

Much like hunter-gatherers today, ancient Eurasians married outside their home groups and formed webs of friends and in-laws vital for eventually building cities and civilizations, a new study suggests.

Long-gone hunter-gatherers lived in groups with few close relatives, thus limiting opportunities for inbreeding, say evolutionary geneticist Martin Sikora of the Natural History Museum of Denmark in Copenhagen and his colleagues. It's likely that adolescents of both sexes [found mates in communities other than their own](#), fostering social ties among groups that might otherwise avoid or fight each other, the scientists conclude online October 5 in Science. [Modern hunter-gatherers likewise find partners among nearby groups](#).

Sikora's findings support a proposal that hunter-gatherer bands composed mainly of in-laws and unrelated individuals appeared by the late Stone Age and probably much earlier than that, says anthropologist Kim Hill of Arizona State University in Tempe, who did not participate in the new study. The emergence of in-laws boosted communication and social learning across groups, a prerequisite for creating civilizations.

...

Sikora's study "shows that modern humans already lived in socially fluid societies well before the origins of agriculture," says anthropologist Andrea Migliano of University College London.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: [Ancient humans avoided inbreeding by networking](#)