

Ancient DNA from mysterious culture highlights North Africa's role as 'important crossroads'

About 15,000 years ago, in the oldest known cemetery in the world, people buried their dead in sitting positions with beads and animal horns, deep in a cave in what is now Morocco. These people were also found with small, sophisticated stone arrowheads and points, and 20th century archaeologists assumed they were part of an advanced European culture that had migrated across the Mediterranean Sea to North Africa. But now, their ancient DNA—the oldest ever obtained from Africans—shows that these people had no European ancestry. Instead, they were related to both Middle Easterners and sub-Saharan Africans, suggesting that more people were migrating in and out of North Africa than previously believed.

"The findings are really exciting," says evolutionary geneticist Sarah Tishkoff of the University of Pennsylvania, who was not part of the work. One big surprise from the DNA, she says, is that it shows that "North Africa has been an important crossroads ... for a lot longer than people thought."

...

"It's a thrill to look for the first time at ancient DNA from prehistoric peoples from North Africa, a place where repeated waves of migration have made reconstruction of the deep population history based on living populations almost impossible," says population geneticist David Reich of Harvard University, who was not part of the team.

Read full, original post: [Oldest DNA from Africa offers clues to mysterious ancient culture](#)