

Cooperation in a time of chaos: Ancient Kenyan burial ground shows evidence of 'social unity'

For millions of years, the [Turkana Basin](#) in northern Kenya has been a cradle of humanity.

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Around 5,000 years ago, the climate there changed dramatically. The weather became hot and harsh. The lake at the basin's center shrank to half its former size. Hunting opportunities declined, and people had to turn to herding to survive.

With their food sources dwindling and their environment in upheaval, the communities there might have collapsed into chaos. Instead, archaeological evidence suggests, people came together and cooperated.

In a [study](#) published [August 20] in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, researchers report the discovery of a prehistoric burial ground containing the graves of at least 580 people of all ages and both sexes. There doesn't seem to be any hierarchy in how they are arranged. Rather, nearly every one was buried with care alongside personalized ornaments: headpieces made of gerbil teeth, chains of brightly colored beads. One infant bore a bracelet made of delicate pieces of ostrich egg shells.

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"Given everything these people were dealing with — a new economic life, a shrinking lake — it's really impressive that their response was to ... invest a substantial effort in time and energy to create a lasting monument that will draw people together and create social unity," said Elisabeth Hildebrand, an archaeologist at Stony Brook University and a lead author of the report.

Read full, original post: [This ancient burial ground tells a story of unity in a time of climate chaos](#)