

Rarely studied African genes fill in 'blank canvas' of early human history

Humankind's early history in Africa is coming into sharper focus with a new study of 180 genomes from a dozen ethnic groups on the continent — some of which have never before been analysed.

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Together with genetic analyses of ancient human remains from Africa published [\[in 2017\]](#) the latest data are starting to fill in the nearly blank canvas of early human history.

Although Homo sapiens originated in Africa roughly 250,000 to 315,000 years ago, geneticists have devoted their attention almost exclusively to the small subset of Africans that migrated north to Europe tens of thousands of years later. A handful of African genomics projects are now beginning to address this imbalance.

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Nearly one-fifth of the genetic variation that the team uncovered has never before been reported. Statistical models of the data indicate that the Hadza and the Sandawe people of Tanzania shared an ancestor in the past 30,000 years.

The findings also suggest that there was intermingling during that period between the Hadza, the San in southern Africa and the Baka in central Africa, all of whom were traditionally hunter-gatherers. "I think we are seeing an ancient common ancestry between the major hunter-gatherer groups in Africa," [geneticist Sarah] Tishkoff says.

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After conducting further analyses, Tishkoff plans to publish the results and share the anonymized genomes publicly, so that scientists can pool their data.

Read full, original post: [Rare genetic sequences illuminate early humans' history in Africa](#)