

## How the search for mates across prehistoric Africa shaped human evolution

Ancient Africans in search of mates traded long-distance travels for regional connections starting about 20,000 years ago, an analysis of ancient and modern DNA suggests.

That shift occurred after treks across much of Africa to find breeding partners had been the norm starting at least 50,000 years ago, the same analysis shows. These new findings — helped by several examples of the oldest human DNA from Africa isolated to date — offer the first genetic support for a previously suspected change in mating patterns around that time.

Follow the latest news and policy debates on sustainable agriculture, biomedicine, and other ‘disruptive’ innovations. Subscribe to our newsletter.

[SIGN UP](#)

These [newly identified, long-distance movements of ancient human groups](#) help explain archaeological discoveries of common types of stone and bone toolmaking and other cultural behaviors that increasingly appeared across much of Africa beginning about 50,000 years ago, evolutionary geneticist Mark Lipson of Harvard Medical School and colleagues report February 23 in *Nature*.

Starting around that time, inherited sets of gene variants became increasingly similar in ancient individuals found in central, eastern and southern regions of sub-Saharan Africa, the researchers report. This suggests that this area was a genetic melting pot, in which hunter-gatherers migrated between the three regions, mating with each other along the way.

[\*\*This is an excerpt. Read the original post here.\*\*](#)