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DNA Samples Reveal That Aboriginals Have Been in Australia For About 50,000 Years Already

🕒 March 17, 2017 💬 2 Comments

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(Image credit: Steve Evans from Citizen of the World)

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The [first people](#) appeared in Australia about 50,000 years ago and Aboriginal people have been present in the same regions continuously since then. This was revealed by DNA in hair samples collected from Aboriginal people across Australia in the early to mid-1900s.

These findings are the first detailed genetic map of Aboriginal Australia before the arrival of Europeans and confirm the Aboriginal communities' strong connection to the country.

The [University of Adelaide's Australian Centre for Ancient DNA](#) (ACAD), in partnership with the [South Australian Museum](#), has recently launched the Aboriginal Heritage Project and these are the first results from that study.

In a series of remarkable anthropological expeditions across Australia from 1928 to the 1970s, 111 hair samples were collected and these are now part of the South Australian Museum's unparalleled collection of hair samples. Researchers analyzed mitochondrial DNA from these hair samples.

Mitochondrial DNA is used to trace maternal ancestry. Australia was still connected to New Guinea 50,000 years ago and the results of the analysis show that modern Aboriginal Australians are the descendants of a single founding population that arrived [in Australia](#) during that

time. Over the next 1500 to 2000 years, populations then spread rapidly around the west and east coasts of Australia, eventually meeting somewhere in South Australia.

Professor Alan Cooper, Director of ACAD at the University of Adelaide and project leader, finds it amazing that from around this time, the basic population patterns persisted for the next 50,000 years. This shows that communities have remained in discrete geographical regions.

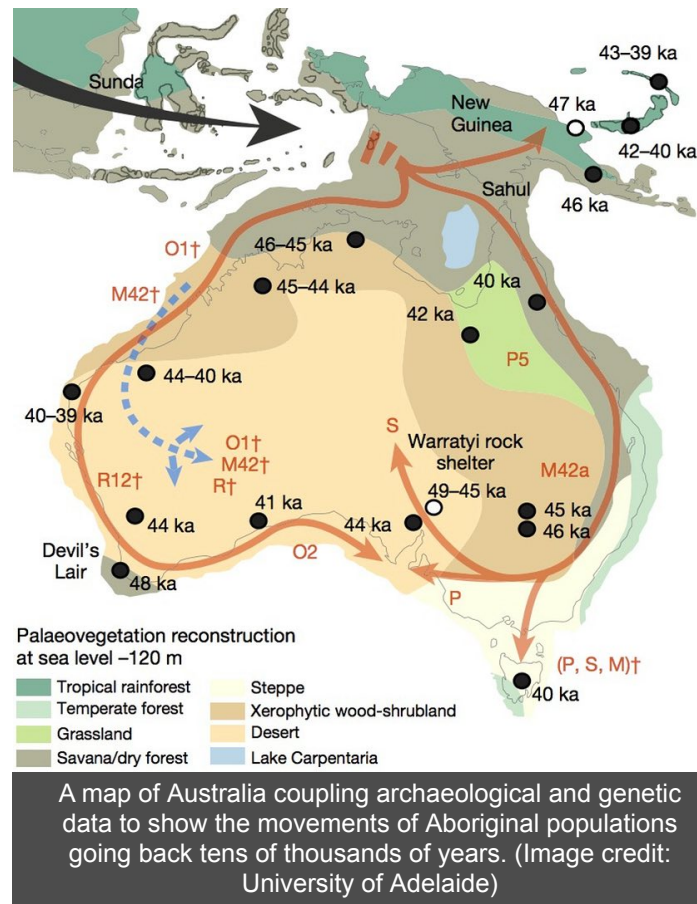
He explained that this is different from people anywhere else in the world and demonstrates the significant Aboriginal cultural connection to the country. Cooper and his team are hoping that this project will lead to a rewriting of Australia's history texts to include detailed Aboriginal history. He added that being on their land for 50,000 years is about 10 times as long as what is commonly taught in European history.



The advertisement features a dark blue background with a stylized graphic of a guitar neck and strings on the left. Text on the right states: "For the treatment of partial-onset seizures as monotherapy or adjunctive therapy". Below this is a "Learn More" button. The Aptiom logo is shown, including the text "ONCE DAILY", "Aptiom", "(eslicarbazepine acetate) tablets", and "200 mg • 400 mg • 600 mg • 800 mg". At the bottom, under the heading "Important Safety Information", the "Indications and Usage" are listed: "Aptiom® (eslicarbazepine acetate) is indicated for the treatment of partial-onset seizures as monotherapy or adjunctive therapy."

The fact that Aboriginal communities and families have been involved closely with the project from its inception is a central pillar of the Aboriginal Heritage Project. All analyses are only conducted with their consent and, before any scientific publication is done, results are discussed with the families to get an Aboriginal perspective. The research model was established under the

direction of Aboriginal elders, the Genographic Project and professional ethicists.



This is the first phase of a project that will last for at least a decade. It will assist with the repatriation of Aboriginal artifacts and allow people with Aboriginal heritage to trace their regional ancestry and recreate their family genealogical history.

Kaurna Elder, Mr. Lewis O'Brien, has been on the advisory group for the study and is one of the original hair donors. He explained that Aboriginal people have always known that they have been on their land since the start of our time. He added that it is important to have science show that to the rest of the world. He finds this an exciting project and hopes it will help people from the Stolen Generation and others to reunite with their families.

Dr Wolfgang Haak from the Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History in Germany and formerly at ACAD, noted that it is very complicated to reconstruct the genetic history of Aboriginal

Australia due to past government policies of child removal and enforced population relocation. These policies have expunged much of the physical connection between geography and groups in Australia.

The research will be expanded to investigate



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ral researcher

in ACAD and team member, has Aboriginal heritage on his father’s side. He was granted an Australian Research Council (ARC) Indigenous Discovery Fellowship to extend the AHP research. Tobler plans to study how the longevity of Aboriginal populations in different environments across Australia has shaped the amazing physical variety found across modern Aboriginal Australians.

Full study was [published](#) in the journal *Nature*, the findings fortify Aboriginal communities’ strong connection to country and show the first detailed genetic map of Aboriginal Australia prior to the arrival of Europeans.

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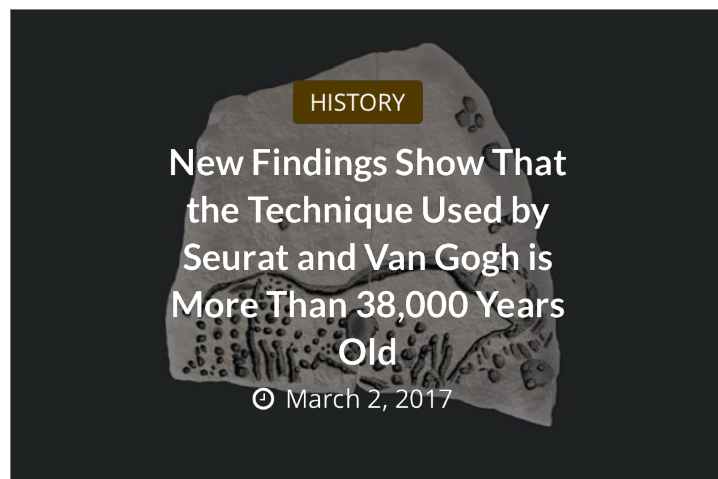
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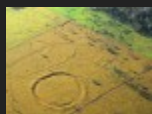
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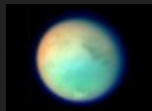
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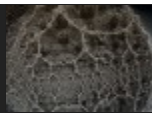
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