

VALDOMBRA CENTER FOR HUMAN GENETICS AND ANCESTRAL RESEARCH

PRESS RELEASE

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Twelve-Year Genetic Study Identifies Previously Unknown “Ghost Ancestor” in Modern Human DNA

Researchers say the ancestral population existed approximately 50,000 years ago—but its genetic characteristics do not fit comfortably within current models of human development

Valdombra, Italy — October 2026 — Researchers at the Valdombra Center for Human Genetics and Ancestral Research have announced the results of a twelve-year study identifying genetic material inherited from a previously unknown ancestral human population.

The Center says the existence of the population is no longer seriously in question.

What researchers cannot explain is **who these people were**.

The unidentified population, temporarily designated **Ancestral Population V-50**, appears to have contributed genetic material to a limited number of human populations approximately **45,000 to 55,000 years ago**.

Traces of that contribution remain detectable in some modern human genomes.

Dr. Alessandro Venturi, director of the Center's Human Origins Project and leader of the study, said the team initially assumed the finding resulted from errors in its dating models.

“We spent years trying to make this disappear,” Venturi said.

“We changed the models. We eliminated samples. We added new samples. We sent portions of the data to outside laboratories. We asked researchers who knew nothing about our hypothesis to examine the results independently.”

“The dates moved slightly. The conclusion did not.”

According to Venturi, the Center is now prepared to state with confidence that an unidentified ancestral population contributed genetic material to humans living approximately 50,000 years ago.

What the Center is **not** prepared to state with the same confidence is what that population was.

THE GENETIC SIGNATURE

Researchers identified a distinctive cluster of inherited genetic variations associated with several biological systems, including neurological development, immune response, cellular repair and metabolic regulation.

No single component of the cluster is considered inexplicable.

It is their **combination and apparent age** that researchers say is unusual.

The Center has provisionally designated the genetic signature **V50-HG17**.

Venturi emphasized that V50-HG17 should not be described as a single “advanced gene.”

“It isn't one gene that suddenly appears,” he said. “It is a pattern. That distinction is important.”

Researchers compared the signature against known Neanderthal, Denisovan and early Homo sapiens genetic material.

None satisfactorily accounted for the entire pattern.

Population modeling consistently suggested the same explanation: an unidentified group contributed the genetic material through interbreeding with an ancestral human population.

That in itself would not be extraordinary.

Human genetic history contains evidence of populations for which little or no archaeological record has yet been discovered. Geneticists commonly refer to such unidentified ancestral groups as **ghost populations**.

But Venturi says V-50 presents a different problem.

“The population our models predict appears to have possessed a combination of genetic characteristics that we did not expect to encounter together at that time.”

“I AM PREPARED TO STAKE MY REPUTATION ON THE EVIDENCE”

Venturi acknowledged that the Center's interpretation of the findings has caused considerable disagreement, including within his own research team.

Several researchers urged the Center to publish the genetic findings without attempting to characterize the unidentified population.

Venturi ultimately disagreed.

“I am prepared to stake my professional reputation on the genetic evidence,” he said.

“This ancestral population existed. Its contribution survives in modern humans.”

“Where I expect disagreement—and where I welcome it—is my interpretation of what that population was.”

Venturi said the evidence does **not** demonstrate the existence of an unknown civilization.

It does not establish where Population V-50 lived.

It does not reveal its language, culture or technological capabilities.

And it does not establish why its genetic contribution appears in the human record when it does.

Genetics, Venturi emphasized, can reveal ancestry.

It cannot reconstruct an entire society.

Nevertheless, Venturi believes the characteristics of V50-HG17 require scientists to consider an uncomfortable possibility.

THE “LEAST IMPOSSIBLE” EXPLANATION

“The least impossible explanation I can offer is that we are looking at an advanced population of Homo sapiens that existed where, according to our present understanding of human history, no such population should have existed.”

Venturi paused when asked what he meant by “advanced.”

“Not cities. Not machines. Genetics cannot tell me those things.”

“What I mean is biological development. The population predicted by these models possesses a genetic profile that appears unexpectedly sophisticated for the period in which we are finding its contribution.”

Venturi said there are several possible explanations.

The dating could still require revision.

The genetic characteristics may have developed independently.

Researchers may be dealing with an isolated Homo sapiens population whose evolutionary history remains completely unknown.

Or scientists may be misunderstanding what the genetic signature represents.

But after twelve years of research, Venturi believes simply dismissing the finding is no longer reasonable.

“Science occasionally produces an answer that creates a larger problem than the question it solved,” he said.

“I believe this is one of those occasions.”

A POPULATION WITHOUT A HOME

Another problem remains.

Researchers have been unable to identify an archaeological population that convincingly corresponds to V-50.

There is no known settlement, burial population or collection of human remains that researchers can presently identify as belonging to the ghost population.

Nor does V50-HG17 appear uniformly throughout modern humanity.

It occurs in limited genetic lines and at varying concentrations.

That could indicate that Population V-50 was relatively small.

It could also indicate that much of its genetic lineage disappeared over subsequent millennia.

The Center is now working with researchers in several countries to determine the geographic distribution of V50-HG17 and whether its modern distribution can reveal where the unidentified population first encountered other humans.

Venturi cautioned that this portion of the research is still preliminary.

“We know approximately **when** they entered our genetic history.”

“We do not yet know **where**.”

SOMEONE ELSE IS IN THE HUMAN STORY

The Valdombra Center says the complete technical findings will be submitted for additional independent review, and genetic researchers outside the project will be encouraged to challenge both the methodology and conclusions.

Venturi expects that process to be contentious.

He also believes it is necessary.

“If another laboratory demonstrates that we are wrong, then we will have learned something important.”

“But after twelve years, I no longer believe the responsible scientific position is to pretend the evidence isn't there.”

Asked what he believes researchers will eventually discover, Venturi declined to speculate further.

Instead, he returned to what the genetic evidence itself establishes.

“There was another population in the human story.”

“We can see their descendants.”

“We can identify part of what they left inside us.”

“But we cannot find them.”

Venturi then added:

“Someone existed approximately 50,000 years ago who should not have existed—at least not according to the history we currently understand.”

“And now we have to find out who they were.”

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