

ABOUT US ALL.

AN INFORMATION PACK

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This is a mind-blowing summary of the people of Africa, those who stayed, those who left, and those who came back again. Before you start, please be aware, and accept that the history of us humans and our habitation in Africa spans millions of years and includes a varied range of hominin species and modern human cultures. It is nearly impossible to provide a conclusive "order" because of overlapping timelines, but this summary uses information which is for the most part the most widely and acceptable records of facts. One thing is for certain, is gosh we liked to move around a lot!

The beginning! (Information Pack prelude)

Let's bullet point this.

1. The Early Hominins

- The Australopithecus (*around 4 to 2 million years ago*): One of the earliest known hominin genera. Famous specimens like "Lucy" (Australopithecus afarensis) were discovered in East Africa. Evidence of them at least!
- The Paranthropus (*around 2.7 to 1.2 million years ago*): Robust hominins that coexisted with early Homo species.
- The Homo habilis (*around 2.4 to 1.4 million years ago*): An early member of the genus Homo, known for using simple stone tools.

2. Then the Early Homo Species

- Homo erectus (*around 1.9 million to 110,000 years ago*): they are known for more advanced tools and control of fire, with fossils found across Africa and Eurasia.
- Homo heidelbergensis (*around 600,000 to 200,000 years ago*): They are considered a common ancestor of both Neanderthals and modern humans, with remains found in various African sites.

(FYI: the word "homo" means "same")

3. Next are the Anatomically (Starting to look a little like us) Modern Humans

- Homo sapiens (*around 300,000 years ago to present*): Modern humans first appeared in Africa. The early Homo sapiens fossils have been found in sites like Jebel Irhoud (in Morocco) and Omo Kibish (in Ethiopia).

- Finally, someone we know! The San and Khoikhoi (Khoisan peoples) (*one of the oldest continuous populations still alive today*): The genetic evidence suggests that they are among the earliest diverging lineages of modern humans.

4. The Ancient African Civilizations

Civilizations can be easily identified by language and therefore our voice and words are wonderful tools in literally telling our story. We are the only species on earth who record our stories with art and writing.

- The Nilo-Saharan and Afro-Asiatic speakers: These language groups spread and settled in various parts of Africa, contributing to the development of early civilizations.
- The Ancient Egyptian Civilization (*around 3100 BCE to 30 BCE*): They were located along the Nile River, it is one of the world's earliest and most influential civilizations.
- The Nok Culture (*around 1000 BCE to 300 CE*): They were known for their advanced terracotta sculptures in West Africa (the modern-day Nigeria).

5. Our Bantu Expansion

- The Bantu-speaking peoples (*around 3000 BCE to 1000 CE*): Originating from the region of modern-day Cameroon and Nigeria, Bantu-speaking groups spread across large parts of sub-Saharan Africa, bringing with them agriculture, ironworking, and many new social structures.

6. Later African Kingdoms and Empires

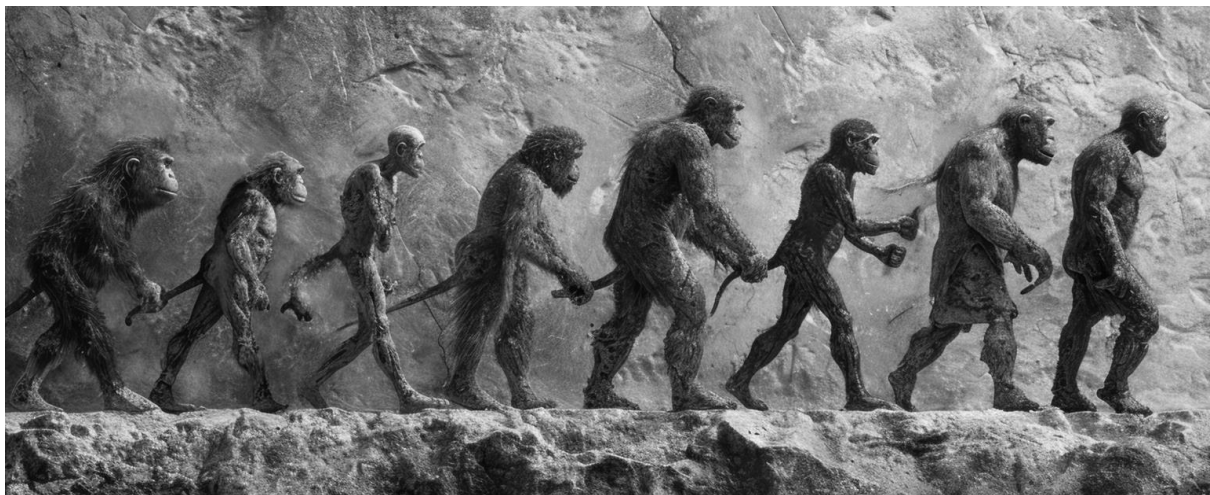
- The Kingdom of Nubia (including Kerma, Napata, and Meroë) (*around 2300 BCE to 350 CE*): was well known for its culture and interactions with Ancient Egypt.
- The Ghana Empire (*around 300 to 1200 CE*): They were a powerful West African kingdom known for its wealth and trade networks.
- The Mali Empire (*around 1235 to 1600 CE*): They were famous for its powerful rulers like Mansa Musa. It is also where the city of Timbuktu came from!
- Great Zimbabwe (*around 1100 to 1450 CE*): It use to be known for its impressive stone structures and role in trade networks. (It makes me sad to see the status of this once great nation is today)

7. Finally we are at the Colonial and Modern Periods

- The Colonial Era (*late 19th century to mid-20th century*): Following the Berlin Conference (1884-1885), European powers colonized and controlled much of Africa.
- Post-Colonial Period (*mid-20th century to present*): Period marked by the struggle for independence and the formation of modern African nations.

Questions to the Reader:

It would appear that there is something in common in all 'tribes' throughout our full history: we like to move about, expand and whenever possible dominate extra territory. As time progressed, weaponry improved but not at an equal pace per 'tribe'. As one 'tribe' became stronger, was colonisation not eventually inevitable by one tribe or another? Could history have played out another way with other victors and other victims?



Who arrived in South Africa First, Europeans or Zulus?

This is a loaded question and of much debate today. The history of human settlement in South Africa is extremely complex and involves various groups arriving at different times. It's a very emotional topic. I also need to point out that South Africa is not really the cradle of mankind, in spite of a certain 'tourism' spot we have. The earliest humans (Homo sapiens) are believed to have come from East Africa, predominantly along the East African Rift Valley.

Let's get on with the answer.

I will bullet point some facts and then offer a conclusion.

Bantu Expansion and the Arrival of the Zulus

2. The Bantu-speaking Peoples:

- Starting around 2,000 years ago, Bantu-speaking peoples began migrating into southern Africa from the north. These groups brought with them agricultural practices and ironworking skills. They gradually moved southward, displacing or assimilating Khoisan groups.
- By the 16th and 17th centuries, many Bantu-speaking communities had established themselves in various parts of South Africa, including the area that would become the Zulu Kingdom as we know today.

3. The Zulu People:

- The Zulu are part of the larger Nguni ethnic group and are Bantu-speaking people. The Zulu nation as a distinct entity was formed in the early 19th century under the leadership of King Shaka Zulu. By this time, various Nguni groups, including the ancestors of the Zulu, had been in the region for several centuries.

Now, onto the arrival of Europeans (Europeans as we know them today).

4. The European Arrival:

- The Portuguese Explorers: The first Europeans to reach the southern tip of Africa were Portuguese explorers in the late 15th century. Mr Bartholomeu Dias rounded the Cape of Good Hope in 1488, and Vasco da Gama later reached the Indian Ocean in 1497.
- Dutch Colonization: The first significant European settlement in South Africa was established by the Dutch in 1652 when the famous Jan van Riebeeck set up a refreshment station at the Cape of Good Hope, which later grew into Cape Town. (This was before the 'Zulus' arrived in the Cape, but not before the Khoikhoi.
- The British Arrival: The British took control of the Cape Colony in the early 19th century, leading to increased European settlement and conflicts with indigenous groups, including the Zulus.

My conclusion and the answer:

The San and Khoikhoi (Khoesan) peoples were the earliest inhabitants of South Africa. They are also the oldest 'humans' as we know 'humans' to be today. Bantu-speaking peoples began migrating into the region around 2,000 years ago, with the Zulu people emerging as a significant group in the 19th century. Then the Europeans began arriving on their boats and settling in South Africa in the late 15th century, with the first significant settlement in 1652. The Bantu-speaking groups, including the ancestors of the Zulu, were present in South Africa long before significant European settlement occurred. There we have it!



What was the early migrations within and out of Africa, and then of course back again?

You have read this far? I am very impressed! What an inquisitive human you are! Let's continue with some more information on how we moved about this huge planet we all call home.

1. Initial Dispersal:

- Timeframe: Up to 200,000 to 300,000 years ago
- Movement: Early Homo sapiens dispersed across Africa, occupying vast and diverse habitats from savannas to forests. There is fossil evidence that shows a broad presence in East, South, and North Africa.

2. A major Migration Out of Africa:

- Timeframe: Approximately 60,000 to 70,000 years ago
- Regions:
 - Arabian Peninsula: Early modern humans first migrated across the Red Sea into the Arabian Peninsula.
 - South Asia: Humans from Africa spread into South Asia, reaching the Indian subcontinent relatively quickly.
 - Southeast Asia and Australasia: Migrations extended to Southeast Asia and into present-day Australia and Papua New Guinea.
 - Europe: Early modern humans reached Europe through the Middle East around 40,000 to 45,000 years ago.
 - East Asia: Populations continued moving eastward, reaching China and eventually Japan.
 - The Americas: Us humans are believed to have crossed the Bering land bridge from Siberia into North America around 15,000 to 20,000 years ago, spreading through the continent and then finally into South America.

Some subsequent Migrations and Adaptations

3. Adaptation and Expansion:

- Regional Adaptations: As humans settled in different regions, they adapted to local environments, which led to variations in physical traits and cultural practices.

- Interbreeding: Throughout these migrations, we must of got a little lonely, and early modern humans interbred with other hominin species, such as the Neanderthals in Europe and the Denisovans in Asia.

Detailed Timeline Summary of all Migrations

1. Migrations within Africa:
 - 200,000 to 100,000 years ago: Early Homo sapiens migrated across the continent, occupying various ecological niches.
2. The Migration to the Arabian Peninsula and Beyond:
 - 70,000 years ago: Small groups left Africa via the northeast route across the Red Sea into the Arabian Peninsula, this I already mentioned above.
3. The Spread to South Asia and Australasia:
 - 65,000 to 50,000 years ago: Migrations to South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Australia took place.
4. Migration to Europe:
 - 45,000 to 40,000 years ago: Early modern humans arrived in Europe, where they encountered and interbred with the Neanderthals.
5. Spread to East Asia:
 - 40,000 to 30,000 years ago: Populations reached East Asia, including China and Japan.
6. The Migration to the Americas:
 - 20,000 to 15,000 years ago: Humans crossed the Bering land bridge and spread across North and South America. This means Americans are really the newest Africans on the planet.

A side note from Jean-Pierre Murray Kline: "as you can see from the summary, humans like to move about. The migration of ancient humans out of Africa was a gradual process that unfolded over tens of thousands of years. These movements were influenced by climate change, innovations, and the search for new resources. We were of course curious and wanted to see if we could expand our domains. As humans migrated, they adapted to different environments, leading to the rich diversity we can see in human populations today including all our beautiful races. We must never forget, that all of us, are all still from Africa!"

Who was in South Africa first, the Zulus or Xhosas?

This is also an emotional topic for many in South Africa. Both the Zulu and Xhosa people are part of the larger Bantu-speaking group that migrated into southern Africa from Central and East Africa. The Bantu-speaking group and the tribes of people that are summarised in this phrase are extensive. Regardless, let me proceed to answer the title question.

The Xhosa People

- The arrival in South Africa: The Xhosa are part of the Nguni-speaking subgroup of the Bantu. Historical and linguistic evidence suggests that the Xhosa people settled in the region that is now the Eastern Cape province of South Africa by at least the 7th or 8th century.
- Culture and Society: The Xhosa people established themselves along the southeastern coast and practiced agriculture, livestock farming, and metallurgy. They formed small chiefdoms that later evolved into larger political entities.
- The Xhosa people were likely settled in present-day South Africa several centuries before the ancestors of the Zulu formed a distinct group in the region now known as KwaZulu-Natal.
- While both groups are part of the broader Bantu migration, the historical evidence suggests that the Xhosa people established themselves in South Africa long before the Zulus.



Important.

The history of human settlement in South Africa is complex and involves many various groups arriving at different times. Before the 'arrival' and 'establishment' of either the Europeans, Zulus, or Xhosa, there were indigenous groups already living in South Africa. This is a fact the majority of South African citizens today forget, or worse choose to ignore.

The original inhabitants of the oldest parts of South Africa are the San (Bushman) / Khoikhoi. These hunter-gatherers with a deep knowledge of the land have lived in the region (oldest parts of the South Africa we know today) for thousands of years. They are South Africans.

I believe, the land where you are born, and the name of the nation that land has, is what you can name yourself after. All humans alive today, using the ancestry information shared in this information pack, can also call themselves Africans.

The End.

