



Chapter 1

Overview: the ancient world



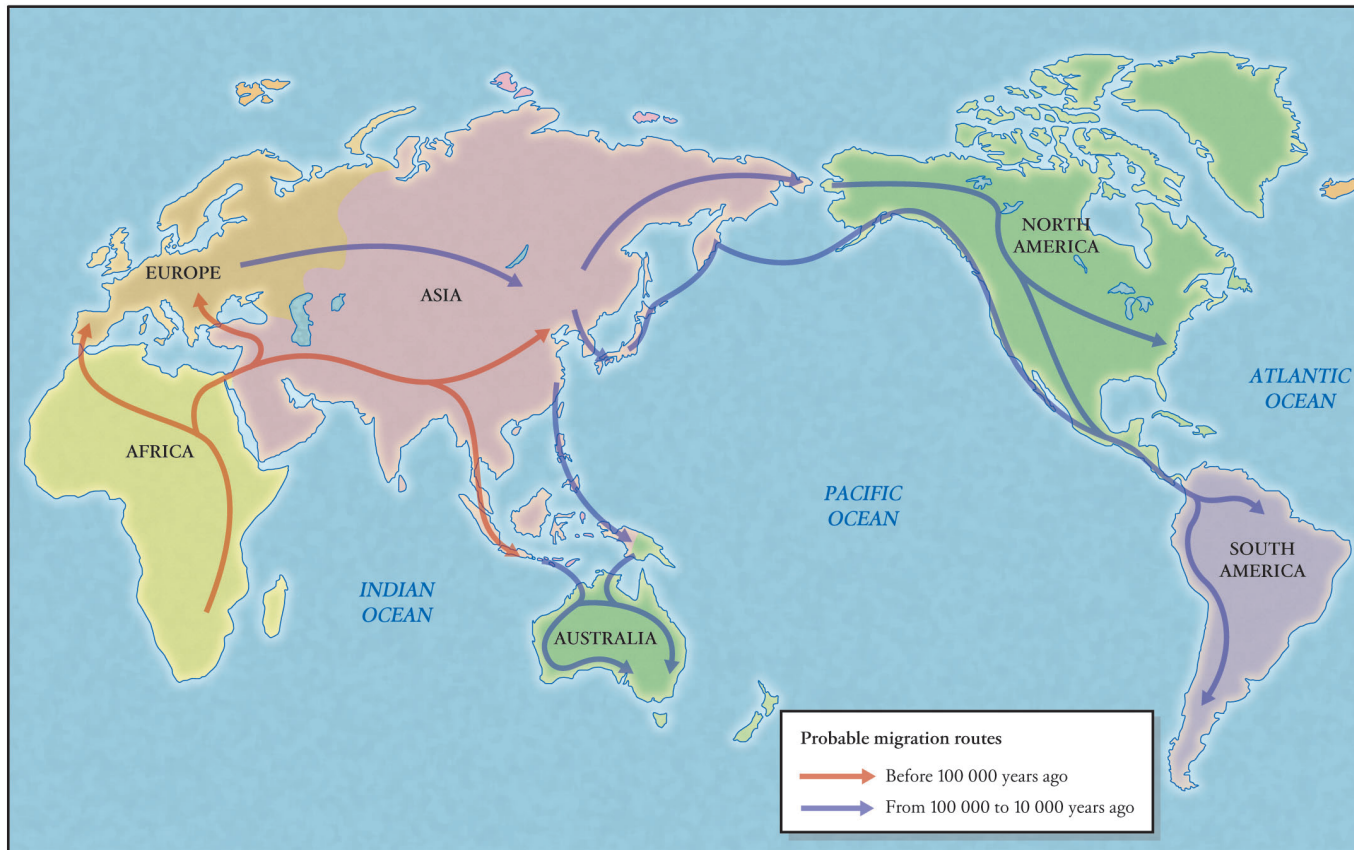
The evolution of early humans

- The early ancestors of modern humans evolved in Africa approximately 4 million years ago.
- *Homo sapiens* evolved between 400,000 BCE and 130,000 BCE.
- Like modern humans, these early humans were migratory.





Global migration pattern of the early humans





Early hominid development

- The ancestors of modern humans learnt to master their environment and developed the capacity for creativity and invention.
- The earliest stone tools were dated to 2.5 million BCE.
- The use of fire for cooking was developed around 500,000 BCE.
- Archaeologists have dated existing evidence of cave art to around 70,000 BCE.



Important figures in human evolution

- The archaeologists Louis and Mary Leakey discovered hominid fossils in Africa in the 1950s and 1960s that provided evidence of Darwin's theory of human evolution.
- The naturalist Charles Darwin's theory of evolution implied that humans had evolved from an earlier primate species.



Lucy

- Discovered in Ethiopia in 1974 and nicknamed 'Lucy', this hominid of the genus *Australopithecus* was one of the most complete skeletons found up to that point in time.





Lucy (cont.)

- The importance of her discovery lay in the fact that she had the brain capacity of an ape, but walked upright like a human.
- Radiometric technology dates Lucy to around 3.2 million years ago.



Palaeolithic

- This period began about 2.5 million years BCE and lasted until the beginning of the Neolithic Age.
- People lived in small groups or clans. These had an egalitarian social structure in which females and males contributed equally to the collection of food.
- They were nomadic hunter-gatherers who used very basic tools made of stone, wood and bone.



Neolithic

- This period began about 10,000 BCE and ended with the development of the Bronze Age between 3000 and 4000 BCE.
- Characterised by the revolutionary development of systematic agriculture and domestication of animals.
- Humans began to develop large, permanent settlements such as the one at Çatalhöyük in modern Turkey.



The development of ancient civilisations

- Some of the earliest civilisations formed in the fertile river valleys and flood plains of the Tigris, Euphrates and Nile Rivers – known as the Fertile Crescent.
- Sites of Neolithic settlement have been discovered in China along the Yellow and Yangtze Rivers.
- The Indus River valley in Pakistan was also another significant area of early human civilisation.



The key features of ancient civilisations

- The development of agriculture and the increased reliability of food supplies allowed for population growth and the rise of cities.
- The surplus of food and the wealth from it fostered the growth of trade.





The key features of ancient civilisations (cont.)

- Social relations increasingly became divided by gender, which gave rise to patriarchal societies where males had greater power.
- There was increased stratification of society, based on rank, occupation, wealth and power.
- Early religions grew from a belief in the afterlife and the idea that a supernatural influence was behind animal fertility and crop production.



The key features of ancient civilisations (cont.)

- A growing civil society required greater development of the rule of law, such as the code of Hammurabi, which contained 282 laws.
- Specialist occupations such as priest, scribe and artist were created as societies diversified.
- Writing was developed – the earliest form was the cuneiform script from ancient Sumer.