



# Humans: from the beginning: From the first apes to the first cities

*Christopher Seddon*

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## **Humans: from the beginning: From the first apes to the first cities** Christopher Seddon

Every few months a discovery about the human past is announced that makes national or even international news. Humans: from the beginning will appeal to anybody who reads about these discoveries, is intrigued by them, and would like to know more about prehistory. Humans: from the beginning is a single-volume guide to the human past. Drawing upon expert literature and the latest multi-disciplinary research, this rigorous but accessible book traces the whole of the human story from the first apes to the first cities. The end product of five years of research, it has been brought fully up to date for 2015 and is now available for the first time as a paperback as well as a Kindle eBook. Humans: from the beginning is written for the non-specialist, but it is sufficiently comprehensive in scope, rigorous in content, and well-referenced to serve as an ideal 'one-stop' text not only for undergraduate students of relevant disciplines, but also to postgraduates, researchers and other academics seeking to broaden their knowledge. This 32-chapter work presents an even-handed coverage of topics including: • How climate change has long played a pivotal role in our affairs and those of our ancestors. • How humans evolved from apes at a time when the apes were facing extinction. • Why the last common ancestor of humans and chimpanzees (our closest living relatives) might have been more like a human than a chimpanzee. • A possible Asian rather than African origin for the earliest humans. • Why the Neanderthals were not the dimwits of popular imagination. • How language and modern human behaviour evolved: an examination of theories including those of Robin Dunbar, Steven Mithen and Derek Bickerton. • How the small group of modern humans that eventually colonised the whole of the non-African world might have started from Arabia rather than Africa. • David Lewis-Williams' theory that the cave art of Ice Age Europe was linked to a shamanistic belief system that might be rooted in the very architecture of the human brain. • Why the Neolithic transition from hunter-gathering to agriculture was a lengthy process, with many down sides. • Colin Renfrew's still-controversial theory that the spread of farming communities in Neolithic times was responsible for the languages now spoken in many parts of the world. • How an 'Urban Revolution' replaced egalitarian farming communities with socially-stratified kingdoms and city-states in just a few millennia. • How the complex, technological societies of today have much in common with not only the earliest states but much earlier primate societies.

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