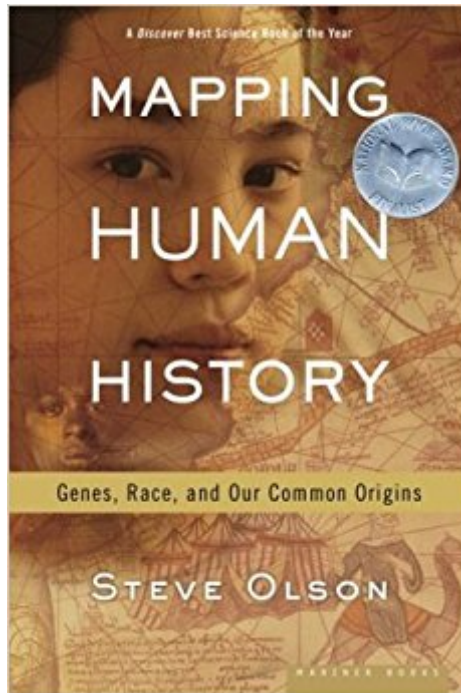




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# **Mapping Human History: Genes, Race, And Our Common Origins**



## Synopsis

In a journey across four continents, acclaimed science writer Steve Olson traces the origins of modern humans and the migrations of our ancestors throughout the world over the past 150,000 years. Like Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs and Steel*, *Mapping Human History* is a groundbreaking synthesis of science and history. Drawing on a wide range of sources, including the latest genetic research, linguistic evidence, and archaeological findings, Olson reveals the surprising unity among modern humans and "demonstrates just how naive some of our ideas about our human ancestry have been" (Discover). Olson offers a genealogy of all humanity, explaining, for instance, why everyone can claim Julius Caesar and Confucius as forebears. Olson also provides startling new perspectives on the invention of agriculture, the peopling of the Americas, the origins of language, the history of the Jews, and more. An engaging and lucid account, *Mapping Human History* will forever change how we think about ourselves and our relations with others.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Olson raises the level of discourse to a new high, assembling powerful evidence to support the no-races hypothesis." *Kirkus Reviews* "An engaging and fast-paced look at a subject that has profound implications for our everyday lives." *Publishers Weekly* "An instructive overview of human history." *Boston Herald*

Steve Olson's *Mapping Human History* was a National Book Award finalist and won the Science-in-Society Award from the National Association of Science Writers. Olson has also written

for the Atlantic Monthly, Scientific American, and Science. He lives in Bethesda, Maryland, where he coaches the math team at a public middle school.

It was already a bit old when I got my hands on it... How old? Well, the author was discussing Neanderthal heritage in current populations, and I already know that I'm ~2.6% Neanderthal thanks to 23andMe. Still, a lot of the ideas presented are very valid, if you have it around go ahead and read it, but there might be updated material somewhere else, and that's perfectly acceptable, that's science working for us!

I found the book very difficult to read. The author goes to great efforts to cover his tracks for using politically in-correct terms only to use the "bad" terms at a later time in the book. He has problems with the concept of ethnicity but forgets as the book drones on. There are many passages that start saying one thing and finish saying the opposite. Despite the presence of the term Genes in the title he gives little real attention to the topic. I tried skipping parts of pages only making it half way through. I did not finish the book/

This excellent book written by renowned science writer represents contemporary knowledge in one of most thrilling sphere of science - history of migration humans from Central Africa across four continents. I consider this book as a sort of proper sequel of Richard Dawkins's book "The greatest show on Earth". I love both books. Tolaola

Challenges your assumptions about genetics, racial identity and diversity. It's a great read for anyone who's open to new ideas about who we are as humans, or even for those who aren't.

Very interesting. Not a page turner and had to re-read some sections. Other parts much easier to follow. I would call it human natural history.

Not finished yet, but very informative and equally as interesting!

Mapping Human History discusses how the use of mitochondrial DNA and Y chromosomal DNA can be used to trace the common origins of humans. Steve builds a case for how humans appeared as a distinct group about 150,000 to 200,000 years ago based on genetic variation we see in people today. By using genetics and the study of haplotypes and haplogroups, it believed that one can

trace our ancestry back to a common "Mitochondrial Eve" or an "Adam" neither of which may have lived at the same time. He covers the encounters with other species such as Neanderthal, emergence of agriculture and the development of ethnicity. Steve covers most of the globe in this quest for common origins: Africa, Middle East, Asia, Australia, and Europe and finally the Americas. The evidence tends to support an African origin. I found the discussion of the settlement of the Americas interesting. The ultimate conclusion of all of this is the commonality of the human species. A case is made for the irrelevance of race; this seems to be a prominent theme throughout the book. One thing that I found interesting was the fact that written language goes back only to about 3400 BCE. This tends to support the Bible chronology of humans being created only about 6000 years ago (you can't have written history that predates humans), but then this would be in conflict with the genetic findings. I also read the book *The Journey of Man* by Spencer Wells which also discusses the genetic history of man. Neither book really discussed, to my satisfaction, exactly how one gets from the genetic variations to the time periods for the existence of humans being promulgated. It would be of value to have more input in this regard.

Thank you.

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