

# Unit 2

CS

## Geography, Climate, Initial Human Settlement

### How (and why) the genus Homo got to Britain

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2.1



Figure 1: On your left is *Pan troglodytes*, on your right *Homo sapiens*. The common ancestor of both species lived between 5 and 7 million years ago.

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## 1 Geography is the outcome of geological history

### 1.1 Review of the geological history of Britain and Ireland

#### Review of the geological history of Britain and Ireland

- Scotland on west, England on east of Iapetus Ocean (Cambrian)
- Movement from southern hemisphere northwards
- Scotland collided with England ca. 410 million years ago
- For 'Scotland' you can also read 'the northern part of Ireland' and for 'England' you can also read 'the southern part of Ireland'
- Altogether: a very *complicated* geological history!

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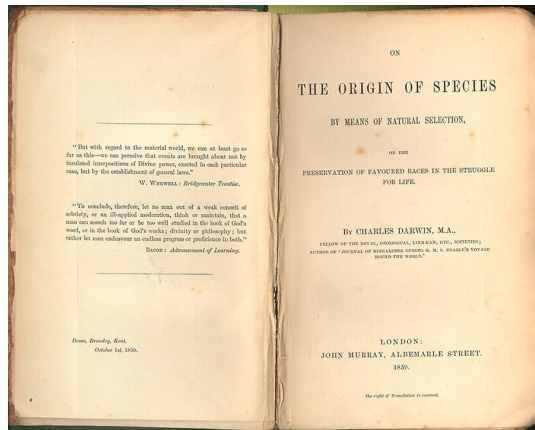


Figure 2: Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* was published on 24.11.1859

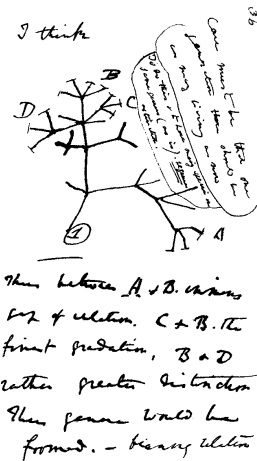


Figure 3: Page 36 of Charles Darwin's "B" notebook on *Transmutation of Species*, begun in mid-July 1837

## 1.2 Geographic regions of Britain and Ireland today

### Geographic regions of Britain and Ireland today

- Here are ten interesting things you should know about Scotland:
- <http://www.scottishgeology.com/geo/getting-started/>
- You can find similar information about England and Ireland on the internet — if you're interested :-)
- <http://tinyurl.com/2wku2ps>
- <http://tinyurl.com/6cvbcmj>
- <http://tinyurl.com/67mjsqj>
- Here is a topographic map of Britain (and N. Ireland): <http://tinyurl.com/659kp3>
- Here is a topographic map of Ireland: <http://tinyurl.com/6foh6sv>

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## 1.3 More detailed geography of Britain and Ireland

### More detailed geography of Britain and Ireland

- Search the internet for the answers to the questions on the worksheet for Unit 2.
- You should know at least the main features of the coastline, the main rivers, and the main mountain ranges.
- When learning the location of towns and cities, ask: 'Why is that town or city where it is, and not elsewhere?'
- Economic geography will not be dealt with systematically in this course ...
- ... but brief remarks will be made about some regions of Britain and Ireland in the course of examining the historical development of British and Irish society.

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## 2 Factors determinant of history

### Some factors determinant of history

- Evolution
- Geography
- Climate

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### 2.1 Evolution

#### Evolution

- From 'matter' to 'meaning':  
physical → biological → social → semiotic  
(matter)      (+ function)      (+ value)      (+ meaning)
- Nothing in biology makes sense except in the light of evolution. – palaeontologist/theologian Th. Dobzhansky
- (Evolution) is a general postulate to which all theories, all hypotheses, all systems must henceforward bow and which they must satisfy in order to be thinkable and true. Evolution is a light which illuminates all facts, a trajectory which all lines of thought must follow — this is what evolution is. – palaeontologist/theologian Teilhard de Chardin
- Evolution as *fact*: common descent with modification; Evolution as *theory*: cause of modification is natural selection; Evolution as *path*: the history and shape of the tree of life on this planet

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## Why is the study of evolution so disturbing?

- Differences between species are **gradual**, not **categori(c)al**.
- Evolution serves **no higher purpose**.
- Evolution has **no goal**.
- Evolution follows **no plan**.
- Evolution has **no predetermined direction**.
- Evolution is based on the interplay of **chance** and **necessity**.
- The human species is **contingent**, not **necessary** (!)
- ‘Human nature’ is a **product** of evolution.
- “What is man?” — all attempts to answer that question before 1859 are worthless and we will be better off if we ignore them completely. – palaeontologist George Gaylord Simpson
- The human species is **contingent**, not **necessary** (!)

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## 2.2 Geography and climate

### Geography and climate

*At the root of all history lie terrain and climate. In Britain, there is a considerable difference between the north and the south, and between the east and the west. In the south the average summer temperature is nearly ten degrees Fahrenheit warmer than the north. In the dry east, the average yearly rainfall is under 25 inches; in many places in the wet west, it exceeds 60, or even 80, inches. (...)*

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### Geography and climate

*(...) The south-east is relatively flat, the north-west is hilly. In the south, the harvest is usually reaped at the beginning of August, only a few weeks later than on the continent of Europe; in the north, it is sometimes not collected until October or even later. Throughout the whole of British history, the majority of the population has been concentrated in the south-east, which has always been in advance of the north in political and social, and usually in economic, development. (...)*

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### Geography and climate

*(...) Except for one strange interlude of 150 years between AD 450 and 600, the south has always been in close contact with Europe and has been politically and culturally a part of Europe. The north, for long periods, has been virtually isolated from all of Europe except Scandinavia. Jasper Ridley [1981: 10-11]*

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## 2.3 A thought experiment

### A thought experiment

- What would have been the consequences for the history of human settlement and population development in Great Britain if
  1. the entire island had been flat?
  2. the mountainous parts had been in the southeast rather than the northwest?

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## 3 Out of Africa

### 3.1 Previous species of humans

#### Previous species of humans

- The genus *Homo* evolved in Africa ca. 2.3 to 2.4 MYA: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homo>
- Previous species of human spread beyond Africa: <http://tinyurl.com/6f3eazt>
- For a thrilling account of the history of pre-sapiens humans in Britain, and how they were beaten back by climate change: Chris Stringer: *Homo britannicus*. London: Penguin, 2006. <http://tinyurl.com/69q8dyx>
- The last brief Ice Age (the Younger Dryas) occurred between about 12,800 and 11,500 years BP (BP = Before Present) ...  
... i.e.: *Homo sapiens* has only been in Britain since 9,500 B.C. (!)

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### 3.2 The genetic trail of *Homo sapiens*

#### The genetic trail of *Homo sapiens*

- YouTube user potholer 54: <http://tinyurl.com/potholer54video9> and check his “Errata 2” video as well
- Spencer Wells (National Geographic) <http://tinyurl.com/wellsted>
- See your handout.
- And remember that you are a direct descendant of Hammurabi, Confucius, and Julius Caesar.

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### 3.3 Jared Diamond

#### Jared Diamond

- Boston-born professor attempting to provide an answer to the question once put to him by a New Guinean:
  - Why you white men have so much cargo, and we New Guineans have so little?
- <http://tinyurl.com/jaredsearch>
- Eurasia: east-west spread of domesticated grains and livestock not a problem.
- Americas: north-south spread of such things frustrated by different climatic zones.
- “Herd immunity” to e.g. smallpox if living under same roof as livestock; no suitable animals for domestication in Americas, therefore no immunity.
- European colonialists therefore had an advantage everywhere ... except in central Africa.
- “Why do societies collapse?”

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## 4 Two untestable hypotheses

#### Two untestable hypotheses

What was life like “before history”? We can only speculate. Here are two perspectives that fall outside the realm of science. Remember that neolithic people lived in settled societies and had almost global trading networks; but we do not know what their subjective experience was like.

- **Julian Jaynes**  
Julian Jaynes: *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*  
<http://tinyurl.com/jaynessearch>



Figure 4: Stonehenge before reconstruction began

- **Kai Helge Wirth**

Kai Helge Wirth: *Der Ursprung der Sternzeichen. Eine prähistorische Karte des Nordatlantik am Sternenhimmel*

<http://tinyurl.com/wirthsearch>

and here are some illustrations from his book:

<http://tinyurl.com/5ub8o3e>