# Did the Khoisans' ancestors once rule the earth?

It is common for strong results from population genetics to be confused when it is translated for public consumption. The best example is that of "mtDNA Eve." Despite the big warning label that mtDNA Eve is one of **many** female ancestors, the public has gained the impression that she is *the* female ancestor.

A similar problem is cropping up with the Khoisan paper which reports that they went through a relatively mild bottleneck in comparison to other modern human populations. There's a reason I titled the post *The Least Bottlenecked Humans of All*. It's a defensible reduction of the results. In contrast many popular treatments are translating the results into the conclusion that "the Khoisan had the largest population of all human groups at some point in the past."

The reason I avoided this formulation is that plainly stated I doubt that at any time the Khoisan as we understand them, a genetically-culturally coherent group in southern Africa, had the largest population of all. Humans of various sorts have been common across Afro-Eurasia for over a million years. Is it plausible that ancestors of the Khoisan had the largest populations of all? Anne Gibbon's somewhat cautiously stated piece in *Science*, Dwindling African tribe may have been most populous group on planet, relays the sentiment which I share:

"Other researchers agree that it's likely that the Khoisan descend from a large population. But because sampling of African genomes is still so spotty, not everyone is yet convinced that the Khoisan 'was the largest population on Earth at some point,' says evolutionary geneticist Pontus Skoglund of Harvard University. 'Many African populations are not included for comparison,' he says, so it is possible that some of the diversity seen in the Khoisan was inherited from recent interbreeding that cannot yet be detected."

**Read full, original article:** I Doubt the Ancestors of the Khoisan Were Ever the Most Numerous Human Population on This Planet