

Accidents of nature? Climate change is helping us understand how humans came to rule the world

How did *Homo sapiens* come to rule the planet?

It's a question that many archaeologists have struggled to precisely answer, but [new research](#) offers fresh support to a longstanding theory: Ancient climate shifts may have played a pivotal role in shaping [human evolution](#). The findings were published [April 13] in the journal *Nature*.

"The study shows an intimate relationship between climate, environments, and human evolution," [Michael Petraglia](#), director of the Australian Research Center for Human Evolution, tells *Inverse*. Petraglia also wrote a [related article](#) on the new study.

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There are competing theories of human evolution, but the new research offers significant support for the variability selection hypothesis, which proposes that early hominin evolution and speciation were influenced by significant shifts in temperature and precipitation levels.

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The recent study "does not set up new evolutionary theories, per se," explains Petraglia.

Rather, Petraglia says the research provides hypothetical models about where humans and their predecessors — such as *Homo erectus* and *Homo heidelbergensis* — may have settled and how environments impacted species transition, including the evolution of *Homo sapiens*.

The research provides clues about the kinds of adaptations humans would have needed to develop in order to cope with climate shifts, such as fire or sophisticated weaponry.

[**This is an excerpt. Read the original post here**](#)