subgroup of the Niger-Congo language family

spoken over a very large area

southern Cameroon, eastward to Kenya, and southward to the southernmost tip of the continent

60 million people speak the more than 200 distinct Bantu languages

nine main Bantu language groups of Zulu, Xhosa, Tswana, Pedi, Sotho, Tsonga, Swazi, Venda, and Ndebele.

linguistic connection has made it possible to reconstruct the common area of origin of the Bantu peoples and trace the route of their migration.

11th century, a particularly large group settled on the territory between the Drakensberg Mountains and the Indian Ocean: Tswana and Sotho

*kraal,* a patriarchal and polygamous colony consisting of a man, his wives, their children, and in many cases, dependent relatives

generally accepted that the tribe of [Khoikhoi](http://ancienthistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/601467?terms=Bantu) was dominant among ancient Bantu groups.

head of the *kraal,* the *abanumzana,* enjoyed unlimited power over his people. Traditionally, Bantu family life was based on the custom of bride barter *(lobola*), religion, and belief in the ancestral spirits (*glozy*).

cattle owners from the highlands of East Africa.believed 2 b descendants of the Nguni: include about 8 million Zulu-speakers and 6 million Xhosa

1. transient hunters from the north established themselves in present-day Zaire. nucleus of both Bantu languages and identity
2. reaching the coasts of the Atlantic and Indian Oceans
3. migration probably coincided with the spread of the [Iron Age](http://ancienthistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/601467?terms=Bantu)
4. arrived in southern Africa in the fifth century after a long, slow migration that passed through modern Zambia, crossed the Limpopo River, and fanned down via the coastal plain of Mozambique to present-day Natal.

MIGRATION

1000 [B.C.](http://ancienthistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/601457?terms=Bantu) to [A.D.](http://ancienthistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/601457?terms=Bantu) 500

introduced [Iron Age](http://ancienthistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/601457?terms=Bantu) [technology](http://ancienthistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/601457?terms=Bantu) and agricultural techniques 2 southern Africa.

linguistic impact: 60 million people who speak Bantu languages. Swahili is the most widespread of those languages today.

Migration reason unknown: speculated that it might have been spurred by population pressures in the Bantu homeland or by invasions from northern invaders

Bantus did not leave written records for most of their history: reconstruct the migration from linguistic and [archaeological](http://ancienthistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/601457?terms=Bantu) evidence, much still unknown

credited with the spread of a number of high-yield crops, including bananas, millet, plantains, sorghum, and yams. The combination of iron technology and high-yield agriculture fostered the growth of villages in sparsely settled territory that had previously been populated by [hunter-gatherers](http://ancienthistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/601457?terms=Bantu).

basis for a number of the great societies of sub-Saharan Africa; the first of those societies was the Mwenumatapa, or Great Zimbabwe, society.