

THE HUMAN FOSSIL RECORD:
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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INTRODUCTION

The first section of this contribution reviews the fossil evidence for human evolution in the form of summaries of each of the taxa recognized in a relatively speciose taxonomy. The second section considers some of the challenges faced by those whose task it is to interpret the taxonomy and systematics of the human fossil record. The first challenge is how to identify primitive taxa in the human fossil record. How do you tell a primitive human taxon from a fossil ape? The second challenge is how many species should be recognized within the human fossil record. The third challenge is how to generate reliable hypotheses about the relationships among those taxa. The next section reviews how many lineages should be recognized within the human fossil record, what a genus is, and how might genera be recognized within the human fossil record. The final section suggests what types of data that might help researchers overcome the challenges set out above.

THE HUMAN FOSSIL RECORD

The human fossil record consists of the extinct taxa more closely related to modern humans than to any other living taxon. It is these taxa plus modern humans that make up the hominin clade. Hominin is the vernacular for the tribe Hominini, which is the Linnaean term most researchers are now using for the twig, or clade, of the Tree of Life (TOL) that contains modern humans, but no other living taxon. A clade comprises all of the taxa descended from a recent common ancestor, thus taxa in the same clade are more closely related to each other than to taxa that belong to a different clade. The overwhelming majority of the evidence from classical morphology, from molecules other than DNA, and from the genome itself suggests that modern humans are more closely related to the African apes than to the

orangutan. Furthermore, among the African apes they are more closely related to chimpanzees and bonobos than they are to gorillas (Bradley, 2008). The clade containing modern chimpanzees and bonobos (hereafter called chimps/bonobos) is called the panin clade, and all the living and extinct creatures that are more closely related to chimps/bonobos than to any other living taxon are called panins.

Table 1: Hominin species in a speciose taxonomy sorted into six grade groupings.

Grade	Species included in a splitting taxonomy
Possible and probable primitive hominins	<i>S. tchadensis</i> <i>O. tugenensis</i> <i>Ar. ramidus</i> <i>Ar. kadabba</i>
Archaic hominins	<i>Au. anamensis</i> <i>Au. afarensis</i> <i>K. platyops</i> <i>Au. bahrelgazali</i> <i>Au. africanus</i> <i>Au. garhi</i>
Megadont archaic hominins	<i>P. aethiopicus</i> <i>P. boisei</i> <i>P. robustus</i>
Transitional hominins	<i>H. habilis</i> <i>H. rudolfensis</i>

Pre-modern <i>Homo</i>	<i>H. ergaster</i> <i>H. erectus</i> <i>H. floresiensis</i> <i>H. antecessor</i> <i>H. heidelbergensis</i> <i>H. neanderthalensis</i>
Anatomically modern <i>Homo</i>	<i>H. sapiens</i>

CLASSIFYING HOMININS

Unlike a clade (see above), which reflects the process of evolutionary history, a grade is based on the outcome of evolutionary history. Taxa in the same grade, adaptive zone or adaptive plateau eat the same sorts of foods and share the same posture and mode(s) of locomotion; no store is set by how they came by those behaviors. A clade is analogous to a make of car (all Rolls-Royce cars share a recent common ancestor not shared with any other make of car), whereas a grade is analogous to a type of car (luxury cars made by Mercedes, Jaguar, and Lexus are functionally similar, yet they have different evolutionary histories and therefore have no uniquely-shared recent common ancestor). The term grade was introduced by Julian Huxley (Huxley, 1958), but the concept is similar to what Sewall Wright (1932) referred to as an 'adaptive plateau'. Grades are as difficult, if not more difficult, to define as species. For example, in the hominin clade just how different do two diets, or two locomotor strategies, have to be before the taxa concerned are considered to belong to different grades? What constitutes the boundaries of a grade is inevitably a subjective judgment, but even subjectivity about grades has utility. So, until we can generate reliable hypotheses about the relationships

among taxa (see below), the grade concept helps to sort hominin taxa into broad functional categories, albeit sometimes frustratingly ‘fuzzy’ ones. The grades we use in this review (Figure 1) are ‘Possible and probable hominins’; ‘Transitional hominins’ ‘Archaic hominins’; ‘Megadont archaic hominins’; ‘Pre-modern Homo’, and ‘Anatomically modern Homo.’ The format for each taxon entry is the same and more details about the taxa can be found in the references cited. We use a relatively speciose taxonomic hypothesis (Table 2), and present the species within each grade in temporal order, starting with the oldest taxon.

Table 2: Species recognized in typical ‘splitters’ (speciose) and ‘lumpers’ (less speciose) lists of hominin taxa.

Speciose taxonomy	Less speciose taxonomy
<i>S. tchadensis</i> <i>O. tugenensis</i> <i>Ar. ramidus s. s.</i> <i>Ar. kadabba</i>	<i>Ar. ramidus s. l.</i>
<i>Au. anamensis</i> <i>Au. afarensis s. s.</i> <i>K. platyops</i> <i>Au. bahrelgazali</i> <i>Au. africanus</i> <i>Au. garhi</i>	<i>Au. afarensis s. l.</i> <i>Au. africanus</i>
<i>P. aethiopicus</i> <i>P. boisei s. s.</i> <i>P. robustus</i>	<i>P. boisei s. l.</i> <i>P. robustus</i>

<i>H. habilis s. s.</i> <i>H. rudolfensis</i> <i>H. ergaster</i> <i>H. erectus s. s.</i> <i>H. floresiensis</i> <i>H. antecessor</i> <i>H. heidelbergensis</i> <i>H. neanderthalensis</i>	 <i>H. habilis s. l.</i> <i>H. erectus s. l.</i>
<i>H. sapiens s. s.</i>	<i>H. sapiens s. l.</i>

Splitting (Speciose) Hominin Taxonomy

Possible and probable hominins

This group includes one taxon, *Ardipithecus ramidus s. s.*, which is almost certainly a member of the hominin clade, and three taxa, *Orrorin tugenensis*, *Sahelanthropus tchadensis*, and *Ardipithecus kadabba*, which may belong to the hominin clade: –

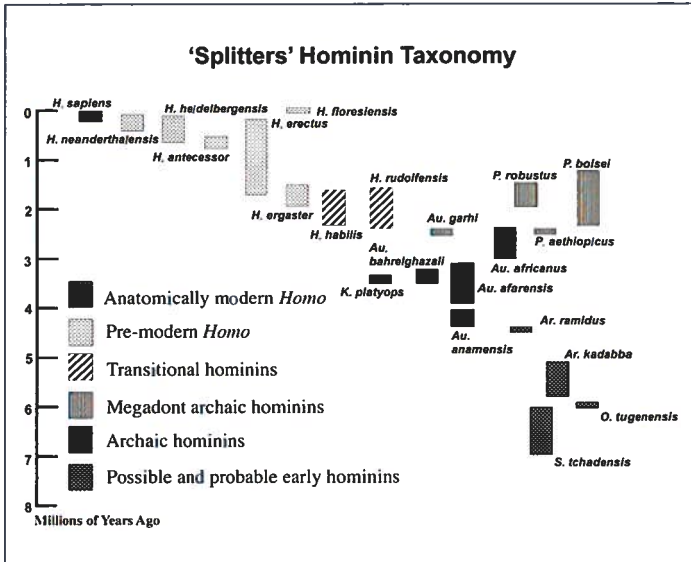


Figure 1: Taxa recognized in a typical speciose hominin taxonomy. Note that the height of the columns reflects current ideas about the earliest (called the first appearance datum, or FAD) and the most recent (called the last appearance datum, or LAD) fossil evidence of any particular hominin taxon. However, the time between the FAD and the LAD is likely to represent the minimum time span of a taxon, for it is highly unlikely that the fossil record of a taxon, and particularly the relatively sparse fossil records of early hominin taxa, include the earliest and most recent fossil evidence of a taxon.

Taxon name: *Sahelanthropus tchadensis* Brunet *et al.* 2002

Temporal range: ca. 7-6 Ma.

How dated?: Biochronological dating by matching fossil evidence found in the same layers as the hominins with absolutely dated fossil sites in East Africa (Vignaud *et al.*, 2002).

Initial discovery: TM266-01-060-1 – an adult cranium, Anth-

rocotheriid Unit, Toros-Menalla, Chad, 2001 (Brunet *et al.*, 2002).

Type specimen: See above.

Source(s) of the evidence: Known from localities in Toros-Menalla, Chad, Central Africa.

Nature of the evidence: A plastically deformed cranium, mandibles and some teeth; no postcranial evidence.

Characteristics and inferred behavior: A chimp/bonobo-sized animal displaying a novel combination of primitive and derived features. Much about the base and vault of the cranium is chimp/bonobo-like, but the relatively anterior placement of the foramen magnum is hominin-like. The supraorbital torus, lack of a muzzle, small, apically-worn, canines, low, rounded, molar cusps, relatively thick tooth enamel and relatively thick mandibular corpus (Brunet *et al.*, 2002) suggest that *S. tchadensis* does not belong in the *Pan* clade. It is either a primitive hominin, or it belongs to a separate clade of hominin-like apes.

Taxon name: *Orrorin tugenensis* Senut *et al.* 2001

Temporal range: ca. 6 Ma.

How dated?: Fossils found in sediments that lie between a 6.6 Ma volcanic trachyte below, and an absolutely dated 5.7 Ma volcanic sill above.

Initial discovery: KNM LU 335 – left mandibular molar tooth crown, “thick, pink sandy and gritty horizon”, middle Member A, Lukeino Formation, Tugen Hills, Baringo, Kenya, 1974 (Pickford, 1975).

Type specimen: BAR 1000'00 – fragmentary mandible, Kap-somin, Lukeino Formation, Tugen Hills, Baringo, Kenya, 2000 (Senut *et al.*, 2001).

Source(s) of the evidence: The relevant remains come from four localities in the Lukeino Formation, Tugen Hills, Kenya.

Nature of the evidence: The thirteen specimens include three femoral fragments.

Characteristics and inferred behavior: The femoral morphol-

ogy has been interpreted (Pickford *et al.*, 2002; Richmond and Jungers, 2008) as suggesting that *O. tugenensis* is an obligate biped, but other researchers interpret the radiographs and CT scans of the femoral neck as indicating a mix of bipedal and non-bipedal locomotion (Galik *et al.* 2004; Ohman *et al.* 2005). Otherwise, the discoverers admit that much of the critical dental morphology is “ape-like” (Senut *et al.*, 2001, p. 6). *O. tugenensis* may prove to be a hominin, but it is equally and perhaps more likely that it belongs to another part of the adaptive radiation that included the common ancestor of panins and hominins.

Taxon name: *Ardipithecus kadabba* Haile-Selassie, Suwa, and White 2004

Temporal range: 5.2->5.8 Ma.

How dated?: Fossils bracketed by dated tuff horizons, with the fossil evidence younger than the Ladina Basaltic Tuff (LABT) and older than the Kuseralee Member of the Sagantole Formation of the Central Awash Complex.

Initial discovery: ALA-VP-2/10./

Type specimen: As above.

Source(s) of the evidence: Central Awash Complex and the Western Margin, Middle Awash, Ethiopia.

Nature of the evidence: Eleven specimens, six postcranial and five dental, recovered in 1997, plus six more teeth, including an upper canine and a P₃, recovered in 2002.

Characteristics and inferred behavior: The main differences between *Ar. kadabba* and *Ar. ramidus s. s.* are that the apical crests of the upper canine crown of the former are longer, and that the P₃ crown outline of *Ar. kadabba* is more asymmetrical than that of *Ar. ramidus s. s.* The morphology of the postcranial evidence is generally ape-like. Haile-Selassie *et al.* (2004) suggest that there is a morphocline in upper canine morphology, with *Ar. kadabba* exhibiting the most ape-like morphology, and *Ar. ramidus s. s.* and *Au. afarensis* interpreted as becoming progressively more like the lower and more asymmetric crowns of later hominins (see Fig.

1 D in Haile-Selassie *et al.*, 2004). The proximal foot phalanx (AME-VP-1/71) combines an ape-like curvature with a proximal joint surface that is like that of *Au. afarensis* (Haile-Selassie, 2001). The ape-like dental morphology suggest that the case for *Ar. kadabba* being a primitive hominin is substantially weaker than the case that can be made for *Ar. ramidus s. s.* (see below).

Taxon name: *Ardipithecus ramidus sensu stricto* (White, Suwa and Asfaw, 1994) White, Suwa and Asfaw 1995

Temporal range: ca. 4.5-4.3* (NB * The As Duma localities are in three blocks of sediment [GWM-3, -5 and -10] belonging to the Sagantole Formation. The age of this site complex is estimated from laser fusion $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ ages and from paleomagnetic data to be 4.51 to 4.32 Ma, but GWM-5 could be as young as 3.7 Ma.)
How dated?: Absolutely dated layers of volcanic ash above and below the fossil-bearing sediments.

Initial discovery: ARA-VP-1/1 – right M3, Aramis, Middle Awash, Ethiopia, 1993 (White *et al.*, 1994) (N.B. If a mandible, KNM-LT 329, from Lothagam, Kenya proves to belong to the hypodigm then it would be the initial discovery).

Type specimen: ARA-VP-6/1 – associated upper and lower dentition, Aramis, Middle Awash, Ethiopia, 1993 (White *et al.*, 1994).

Source(s) of the evidence: The initial evidence for this taxon was a collection of ca. 4.5 Ma fossils recovered from a site called Aramis in the Middle Awash region of Ethiopia.

Nature of the evidence: The published evidence consists of isolated teeth, a piece of the base of the cranium and fragments of mandibles and long bones.

Characteristics and inferred behavior: The remains attributed to *Ar. ramidus s. s.* share some features in common with living species of *Pan*, others that are shared with the African apes in general, and, crucially, several dental and cranial features that are shared only with later hominins such as *Au. afarensis*. Thus, the discoverers have suggested that the material belongs to a hominin spe-

cies. They initially allocated the new species to *Australopithecus* (White *et al.*, , 1994), but they subsequently assigned it to a new genus, *Ardipithecus* (White *et al.*, 1995) which the authors suggest is significantly more primitive than *Australopithecus*. Judging from the size of the shoulder joint *Ar. ramidus s. s.* weighed about 40 kg. Its chewing teeth were relatively small and the position of the foramen magnum suggests that the posture and gait of *Ar. ramidus s. s.* were respectively more upright and bipedal than is the case in the living apes. The thin enamel covering on the teeth suggests that the diet of *Ar. ramidus s. s.* may have been closer to that of chimps/bonobos than to later hominins.

ARCHAIC HOMININS

This group includes all the remaining hominin taxa not conventionally included in *Homo* and *Paranthropus*. It subsumes two genera, *Australopithecus* and *Kenyanthropus*. As it is used in this and many other taxonomies *Australopithecus* is almost certainly not a single clade, but until sample sizes increase and methods of data capture and analysis are improved to the point that researchers can be sure they have generated a reliable hominin phylogeny there is little point in revising the generic terminology, but students and researchers should do as we have done, and seek a way of referring to this material that does not imply they form a natural group.

Taxon name: *Australopithecus anamensis* Leakey, Feibel, McDougall and Walker 1995

Temporal range: ca. 4.5-3.9 Ma.

How dated?: Mainly from absolutely dated layers of ash above and below the sediments bearing the hominin fossils.

Initial discovery: KNM-KP 271 – left distal humerus – Narin-gangoro Hill, Kanapoi, Kenya, 1965 (Patterson and Howells, 1967).

Type specimen: KNM-KP 29281 – an adult mandible with complete dentition and a temporal fragment that probably belongs to the same individual, Kanapoi, Kenya, 1994.

Source(s) of the evidence: Allia Bay and Kanapoi, Kenya.

Nature of the evidence: The evidence consists of jaws, teeth and postcranial elements from the upper and lower limbs.

Characteristics and inferred behavior: The main differences between *Au. anamensis* and *Au. afarensis s. s.* relate to details of the dentition. In some respects the teeth of *Au. anamensis* are more primitive than those of *Au. afarensis s. s.* (for example, the asymmetry of the premolar crowns and the relatively simple crowns of the deciduous first mandibular molars), but in others (for example, the low cross-sectional profiles and bulging sides of the molar crowns) they show some similarities to *Paranthropus* (see below). The upper limb remains are similar to those of, *Au. afarensis s. s.*, and a tibia attributed to *Au. anamensis* has features associated with bipedality.

Taxon name: *Australopithecus afarensis sensu stricto* Johanson, White and Coppens 1978

Temporal range: ca. 4-3 Ma.

How dated?: Mainly from absolutely dated layers of ash above and below the sediments bearing the hominin fossils.

Initial discovery: Garusi 1 – right maxillary fragment, Laetolil Beds, Laetoli, Tanzania, 1939 (Kohl-Larsen, 1943).

Type specimen: LH 4 – adult mandible, Laetolil Beds, Laetoli, Tanzania, 1974.

Source(s) of the evidence: Laetoli, Tanzania; White Sands, Hadar, Maka, Belohdelie and Fejej, Ethiopia; Allia Bay, West Turkana and Tabarin, Kenya.

Nature of the evidence: *Au. afarensis s. s.* is the earliest hominin to have a comprehensive fossil record including a skull, fragmented skulls, many lower jaws and sufficient limb bones to be able to estimate stature and body mass. The collection includes a speci-

men, A.L.-288, that preserves just less than half of the skeleton of an adult female.

Characteristics and inferred behavior: Most body mass estimates range from ca. 30-45 kg and the endocranial volume of *Au. afarensis s. s.* is estimated to be between 400-550 cm³. This is larger than the average endocranial volume of a chimpanzee, but if the estimates of the body size of *Au. afarensis s. s.* are approximately correct then relative to estimated body mass the brain of *Au. afarensis* is not substantially larger than that of *Pan*. It has smaller incisors than those of extant chimps/bonobos, but its premolars and molars are relatively larger than those of chimps/bonobos. The hind limbs of A.L.-288 are substantially shorter than those of a modern human of similar stature. The appearance of the pelvis and the relatively short lower limb suggests that although *Au. afarensis s. s.* was capable of bipedal walking it was not adapted for long-range bipedalism. This indirect evidence for the locomotion of *Au. afarensis s. s.* is complemented by the discovery at Laetoli of several trails of fossil footprints. These provide very graphic direct evidence that a contemporary hominin, presumably *Au. afarensis s. s.*, was capable of bipedal locomotion. The upper limb, especially the hand and the shoulder girdle, retains morphology that most likely reflects a significant element of arboreal locomotion. The size of the footprints, the length of the stride and stature estimates based on the length of the limb bones suggest that the standing height of adult individuals in this early hominin species was between 1.0 and 1.5 m. Most researchers interpret the fossil evidence for *Au. afarensis s. s.* as consistent with a substantial level of sexual dimorphism, but although a recent study argues that sexual dimorphism in this taxon is relatively poorly-developed (Reno *et al.*, 2003), others retain their support for this taxon showing a substantial level of sexual dimorphism.

Taxon name: *Kenyanthropus platyops* Leakey *et al.* 2001

Temporal range: ca. 3.5-3.3 Ma.

How dated?: Mainly from absolutely dated layers of ash above

and below the sediments bearing the hominin fossils.

Initial discovery: KNM-WT 38350 – left maxilla fragment, Lomekwi Member – 17m above the Tulu Bor Tuff, Lomekwi, West Turkana, Kenya, 1998 (Leakey *et al.*, 2001).

Type specimen: KNM-WT 40000 – a relatively complete cranium that is criss-crossed by matrix-filled cracks, Kataboi Member – 8m below the Tulu Bor Tuff and 12m above the Lokochot Tuff, Lomekwi, West Turkana, Kenya, 1999 (Leakey *et al.*, 2001).

Source(s) of the evidence: West Turkana and perhaps Allia Bay, Kenya.

Nature of the evidence: The initial report lists the type cranium and the paratype maxilla plus 34 specimens – three mandible fragments, a maxilla fragment and isolated teeth – some of which may also belong to the hypodigm, but at this stage the researchers are reserving their judgment about the taxonomy of many of these remains (Leakey *et al.*, 2001). Some of them have only recently been referred to *Au. afarensis s. s.* (Brown *et al.*, 2001).

Characteristics and inferred behavior: The main reasons Leakey *et al.* (2001) did not assign this material to *Au. afarensis s. s.* are its reduced subnasal prognathism, anteriorly-situated zygomatic root, flat and vertically orientated malar region, relatively small but thick-enameled molars and the unusually small M₁ compared to the size of the P₄ and M₃. Some of the morphology of the new genus including the shape of the face is *Paranthropus*-like yet it lacks the postcanine megadontia that characterizes *Paranthropus*. The authors note the face of the new material resembles that of *Homo rudolfensis* (see below), but they rightly point out that the postcanine teeth of the latter are substantially larger than those of KNM-WT 40000. *K. platyops* apparently displays a hitherto unique combination of facial and dental morphology. White (2003) has taken the view that the new taxon is not justified because the cranium could be a distorted *Au. afarensis s. s. cranium*, but even if this explanation is correct it would not explain the small size of the postcanine teeth.

Taxon name: *Australopithecus bahrelghazali* Brunet *et al.* 1996

Temporal range: ca. 3.5-3.0 Ma.

How dated?: Relative dating based on matching mammalian fossils found in the caves with fossils from absolutely-dated sites in East Africa.

Initial discovery: KT 12/H1 – anterior portion of an adult mandible, Koro Toro, Chad, 1995 (Brunet *et al.*, 1996).

Type specimen: See above.

Source(s) of the evidence: Koro Toro, Chad.

Nature of the evidence: Published evidence is restricted to a fragment of the mandible and an isolated tooth.

Characteristics and inferred behavior: Its discoverers claim that its thicker enamel distinguishes the Chad remains from *Ar. ramidus s. s.*, and that its smaller and more vertical mandibular symphysis and more complex mandibular premolar roots distinguish it from *Au. afarensis s. s.* Otherwise there is too little evidence to infer any behavior. It is most likely a regional variant of *Au. afarensis s. s.*

Taxon name: *Australopithecus africanus* Dart 1925

Temporal range: ca. 3*-2.4** Ma (N.B. *It remains to be seen whether the associated skeleton StW 573 from Mb 2 and twelve hominin fossils recovered from the Jacovec Cavern since 1995 [Partridge *et al.*, 2003] belong to the *Au. africanus* hypodigm, **and some researchers have advanced reasons for Sterkfontein Mb 4 being as young as 2.1 Ma).

How dated?: Mostly relative dating based on matching mammalian fossils found in the caves with fossils from absolutely-dated sites in East Africa. Samples of quartz grains from Mb2 and the Jacovec Cavern have been dated to ca. 4.0-4.2 Ma using ratios of the radionuclides ^{29}Al and ^{10}Be (Partridge *et al.*, 2003).

Initial discovery: Taung 1 – a juvenile skull with partial endocranium, Taung (formerly Taungs) now in South Africa, 1924.

Type specimen: See above.

Source(s) of the evidence: Most of the evidence comes from two caves, Sterkfontein and Makapansgat, with other evidence

coming from Taung and Gladysvale.

Nature of the evidence: This is one of the better fossil records of an early hominin taxon. The cranium, mandible and the dentition are well sampled. The postcranium and particularly the axial skeleton is less well represented in the sample, but there is at least one specimen of each of the long bones. However, many of the fossils have been crushed and deformed by rocks falling on the bones before they were fully fossilized.

Characteristics and inferred behavior: The picture emerging from morphological and functional analyses suggests that although *Au. africanus* was capable of walking bipedally it was probably more arboreal than other archaic hominin taxa, such as *Au. afarensis*. It had relatively large chewing teeth and apart from the reduced canines the skull is relatively ape-like. Its mean endocranial volume is ca. 460 cm³. The Sterkfontein evidence suggests that males and females of *Au. africanus* differed substantially in body size, but probably not to the degree they did in *Au. afarensis* s. s. (see above).

MEGADONT ARCHAIC HOMININS

We use the term 'megadont' to refer to the absolute size of the crowns of the postcanine teeth, but stress that the presumed adaptations to mastication in this group encompass much more than enlargement of the postcanine tooth crowns. This grade group includes hominin taxa conventionally included in the genus *Paranthropus* and one *Australopithecus* species, *Australopithecus garhi* (but note that some individuals assigned to other pre-*Homo* hominin taxa [e.g., *Au. africanus*] have teeth as big (or slightly bigger) than the taxa referred to here. The genus *Paranthropus* was reintroduced when cladistic analyses suggested that the three species listed in this section most likely formed a clade. Two genera, *Zinjanthropus* and *Paraaustralopithecus*, are subsumed within the genus *Paranthropus*.

Taxon name: *Paranthropus aethiopicus* (Arambourg and Copens, 1968) Chamberlain and Wood 1985

Temporal range: ca. 2.5-2.3 Ma.

How dated?: Mainly from absolutely dated layers of ash above and below the sediments bearing the hominin fossils.

Initial discovery: Omo 18.18 (or 18.1967.18) – an edentulous adult mandible, Locality 18, Section 7, Member C, Shungura Formation, Omo Region, Ethiopia, 1967.

Type specimen: See above.

Source(s) of the evidence: Shungura Formation, Omo region, Ethiopia; West Turkana, Kenya; Melema, Malawi.

Nature of the evidence: The hypodigm includes a well-preserved adult cranium from West Turkana (KNM-WT 17000) together with mandibles (for example, KNM-WT 16005) and isolated teeth from the Shungura Formation, and some also assign Omo 338y-6 to this taxon. No postcranial fossils have been assigned to this taxon.

Characteristics and inferred behavior: Similar to *Paranthropus boisei* (see below) except that the face is more prognathic, the cranial base is less flexed, the incisors are larger and the postcanine teeth are not so large or morphologically specialized, but remember there is only one relatively complete *P. aethiopicus* cranium, and the warnings of Smith (2005) about making taxonomic inferences based on small samples. The only source of endocranial volume data is KNM-ER WT 17000. When *P. aethiopicus* taxon was introduced in 1968 it was the only megadont hominin in this time range. With the discovery of *Au. garhi* (see below) it is apparent that robust mandibles with long premolar and molar tooth rows are being associated with what are claimed to be two distinct forms of cranial morphology.

Taxonomic note: If it transpires that Omo 18.18 belongs to the same hypodigm as the BOU-VP-12/130 cranium then *P. aethiopicus* would have priority, and the *P. aethiopicus* hypodigm would then expand to include the fossils presently assigned to *Au. garhi*.

Taxon name: *Australopithecus garhi* Asfaw *et al.* 1999

Temporal range: ca. 2.5 Ma.

How dated?: From absolutely dated layers of ash above and below the sediments bearing the hominin fossils.

Initial discovery: ARA-VP-12/130 – cranial fragments, Aramis, Middle Awash, Ethiopia, 1997.

Type specimen: BOU*-VP-12/130 – a cranium from the Hata Member, Bouri, Middle Awash, Ethiopia, 1997 (* the prefix “ARA” was erroneously used in the text of Asfaw *et al.*, 1999).

Source(s) of the evidence: Bouri, Middle Awash, Ethiopia.

Nature of the evidence: A fragmented cranium and two partial mandibles.

Characteristics and inferred behavior: *Australopithecus garhi* combines a primitive cranium with large-crowned post-canine teeth. However, unlike *Paranthropus boisei* (see above) the incisors and canines are large and the enamel apparently lacks the extreme thickness seen in the latter taxon. A partial skeleton combining a long femur with a long forearm was found nearby, but is not associated with the type cranium (Asfaw *et al.*, 1999) and these fossils have not been formerly assigned to *Au. garhi*.

Taxonomic note: The mandibular morphology of *Au. garhi* is in some respects like that of *P. aethiopicus*. If it is demonstrated that the type specimen of *P. aethiopicus*, Omo 18.18, belongs to the same hypodigm as the mandibles that appear to match the *Au. garhi* cranium, then *P. aethiopicus* would have priority as the name for the hypodigm presently attributed to *Au. garhi*.

Taxon name: *Paranthropus boisei sensu stricto* (Leakey, 1959) Robinson 1960

Temporal range: ca. 2.3-1.4 Ma.

How dated?: Mainly from absolutely dated layers of ash above and below the sediments bearing the hominin fossils.

Initial discovery: OH 3 – deciduous mandibular canine and molar, BK, Lower Bed II, Olduvai Gorge, Tanzania, 1955 (Leakey, 1958).

Type specimen: OH 5 – subadult cranium, FLK, Bed I, Olduvai Gorge, Tanzania, 1959 (Leakey, 1959).

Source(s) of the evidence: Olduvai and Peninj, Tanzania; Omo Shungura Formation and Konso, Ethiopia; Koobi Fora, Chesowanja and West Turkana, Kenya.

Nature of the evidence: *Paranthropus boisei s. s.* has a comprehensive craniodental fossil record. There are several skulls (the one from Konso being remarkably complete and well-preserved), several well-preserved crania, and many mandibles and isolated teeth. There is evidence of both large and small-bodied individuals, and the range of the size difference suggests a substantial degree of sexual dimorphism.

Characteristics and inferred behavior: *Paranthropus boisei s. s.* is the only hominin to combine a massive, wide, flat, face, massive premolars and molars, small anterior teeth, and a modest endocranial volume (ca. 480 cm³). The face of *P. boisei s. s.* is larger and wider than that of *P. robustus*, yet their brain volumes are similar. The mandible of *P. boisei s. s.* has a larger and wider body or corpus than any other hominin (see *P. aethiopicus* above). The tooth crowns apparently grow at a faster rate than has been recorded for any other early hominin. There is, unfortunately, no postcranial evidence that can with certainty be attributed to *P. boisei s. s.*, but some of the postcranial fossils from Bed I at Olduvai Gorge currently attributed to *Homo habilis s. s.* may belong to *P. boisei s. s.* The fossil record of *P. boisei s. s.* extends across about one million years of time during which there is little evidence of any substantial change in the size or shape of the components of the cranium, mandible and dentition.

Taxon name: *Paranthropus robustus* Broom 1938

Temporal range: ca. 2.0-1.5 Ma.

How dated?: Relative dating based on matching mammalian fossils found in the caves with fossils from absolutely-dated sites in East Africa.

Initial discovery: TM 1517 – an adult, presumably male, cranium

and associated skeleton, "Phase II Breccia," now Mb 3, Kromdraai B, South Africa, 1938.

Type specimen: See above.

Source(s) of the evidence: Kromdraai, Swartkrans, Gondolin, Drimolen, and Cooper's caves, all situated in the Blauwbank Valley, near Johannesburg, South Africa.

Nature of the evidence: The dentition is well represented in the hypodigm of *P. robustus*. Some of the cranial remains are well preserved, but most of the mandibles are crushed or distorted. The postcranial skeleton is not well represented. Research at Drimolen was only initiated in 1992 yet already more than 80 hominin specimens have been recovered and it promises to be a rich source of evidence about *P. robustus*.

Characteristics and inferred behavior: The brain, face and chewing teeth of *P. robustus* are larger than those of *Au. africanus*, yet the incisor teeth are smaller. What little is known about the postcranial skeleton of *P. robustus* suggests that the morphology of the pelvis and the hip joint is much like that of *Au. africanus*. It was most likely capable of bipedal walking, but most researchers subscribe to the view that it was not an obligate biped (but see Susman, 1988). It has been suggested that the thumb of *P. robustus* would have been capable of the type of grip necessary for stone tool manufacture, but this claim is not accepted by all researchers.

TRANSITIONAL HOMININS

This group contains the earliest members of the genus *Homo*. Some researchers have suggested that these taxa (*H. habilis sensu stricto* and *H. rudolfensis*) may not belong in the *Homo* clade, but until we can generate sound phylogenetic hypotheses about these taxa and the archaic hominins it is not clear what their new generic attribution should be. For the purposes of this review *H. habilis s. s.* and *H. rudolfensis* are retained within *Homo*. The

crania within this grade subsume a wide range of absolute and relative brain size (see below).

Taxon name: *Homo habilis sensu stricto* Leakey, Tobias and Napier 1964

Temporal range: ca. 2.4-1.4 Ma.

How dated?: Absolute dates from layers of volcanic ash and basalt above and below the fossil horizons.

Initial discovery: OH 4 – fragmented mandible, MK, Bed I, Olduvai Gorge, Tanzania, 1959.

Type specimen: OH 7 – partial skull cap and hand bones, FLKNN, Bed I, Olduvai Gorge, Tanzania, 1960.

Source(s) of the evidence: Olduvai Gorge, Tanzania; Koobi Fora and perhaps Chemeron, Kenya; Omo (Shungura) and Hadar, Ethiopia, East Africa; perhaps also Sterkfontein, Swartkrans, and Drimolen, South Africa.

Nature of the evidence: Mostly cranial and dental evidence with only a few postcranial bones that can with confidence be assigned to *H. habilis s. s.*

Characteristics and inferred behavior: The endocranial volume of *H. habilis s. s.* ranges from ca. 500 cm³ to ca. 700 cm³, but most commentators opt for an upper limit closer to 600 cm³. All the crania are wider at the base than across the vault, but the face is broadest in its upper part. The only postcranial fossils that can with confidence be assigned to *H. habilis s. s.* are the postcranial bones associated with the type specimen, OH 7, and the associated skeleton, OH 62. Isolated postcranial bones from Olduvai Gorge (for example, OH 10) could belong to *P. boisei s. s.* If OH 62 is representative of *H. habilis s. s.* the skeletal evidence suggests that its limb proportions and locomotion were archaic hominin-like. The curved proximal phalanges and well-developed muscle markings on the phalanges of OH 7 indicate that the hand of *H. habilis s. s.* was capable of the type of powerful grasping associated with arboreal activities. The inference that *H. habilis s. s.* was capable of spoken language was based on links between endocra-

nial morphology, on the one hand, and language comprehension and production, on the other, that are no longer supported by the comparative evidence.

Taxon name: *Homo rudolfensis* (Alexeev, 1986) *sensu* Wood 1992

Temporal range: ca. 2.4-1.6 Ma.

How dated?: Mainly absolute dates for volcanic ash layers above and below the fossil horizons.

Initial discovery: KNM-ER 819, Area 1, Okote Member, Koobi Fora Formation, Koobi Fora, Kenya, 1971.

Type specimen: Lectotype: KNM-ER 1470, Area 131, Upper Burgi Member, Koobi Fora Formation, Koobi Fora, Kenya, 1972 (Leakey, 1973).

Source(s) of the evidence: Koobi Fora, and perhaps Chemeron, Kenya; Uraha, Malawi.

Nature of the evidence: Several incomplete crania, two relatively well-preserved mandibles and several isolated teeth.

Characteristics and inferred behavior: *Homo rudolfensis* and *H. habilis sensu stricto* show different mixtures of primitive and derived, or specialized, features. For example, although the absolute size of the brain case is greater in *H. rudolfensis*, its face is widest in its mid-part whereas the face of *H. habilis s. s.* is widest superiorly. Despite the absolute size of its brain (ca. 725 cm³) when it is related to estimates of body mass the brain of *H. rudolfensis* is not substantially larger than those of the archaic hominins. The more primitive face of *H. rudolfensis* (though the polarity is difficult to determine, so it may actually be derived in some aspects) is combined with a robust mandible and mandibular postcanine teeth with larger, broader, crowns and more complex premolar root systems than those of *H. habilis s. s.* At present no postcranial remains can be reliably linked with *H. rudolfensis*. The mandible and postcanine teeth are larger than one would predict for a generalized hominoid of the same estimated body mass suggesting that its dietary niche made similar mechanical demands to those of the archaic hominins.

PRE-MODERN *HOMO*

This grade group includes two Pleistocene *Homo* taxa that exhibit modern human-like body proportions, and they are thought to be the first *Homo* taxa for which obligate bipedalism is strongly supported, but at least some individuals in these taxa possessed only medium-sized brains. The grade also includes *Homo floresiensis*, recovered from Liang Bua on the island of Flores, Indonesia. This taxon is most reasonably interpreted as a member of a population of a *Homo erectus*, or *Homo erectus-like*, taxon that has undergone endemic dwarfing. It also includes later taxa attributed to *Homo* such as *Homo antecessor*, *Homo heidelbergensis* and *Homo neanderthalensis*.

Taxon name: *Homo ergaster* Groves and Mazák 1975

Temporal range: ca. 1.9-1.5 Ma.

How dated?: Mainly absolute dates for volcanic ash layers above and below the fossil horizons.

Initial discovery: KNM-ER 730 – corpus of an adult mandible with worn teeth, Area 103, KBS Member, Koobi Fora, Kenya, 1970.

Type specimen: KNM-ER 992 – well-preserved adult mandible, Area 3, Okote Member, Koobi Fora Formation, Koobi Fora, Kenya, 1971.

Source(s) of the evidence: Koobi Fora and West Turkana, Kenya; possibly Dmanisi, Georgia.

Nature of the evidence: Cranial, mandibular, and dental evidence and an associated skeleton of a juvenile male individual from Nariokotome, West Turkana (and also from Dmanisi if that material proves to belong to *H. ergaster*).

Characteristics and inferred behavior: Two sets of features are claimed to distinguish *H. ergaster* from *H. erectus s. s.* The first comprises features for which *H. ergaster* is more primitive than *H. erectus s. s.*, with the most compelling evidence coming from details of the mandibular premolars. The second set comprises

features of the vault and base of the cranium for which *H. ergaster* is less specialized, or derived, than *H. erectus s. s.* Overall *H. ergaster s. s.* is the first hominin to combine modern human-sized chewing teeth with a postcranial skeleton (for example, long femora with large femoral heads) apparently committed to obligate, long-range, bipedalism. It lacks morphological features associated with arboreal locomotion. The small chewing teeth of *H. ergaster* imply that it was either eating different food than the archaic hominins, or that it was consuming the same food, but was preparing it extra-orally. This preparation could have involved the use of stone tools, or cooking, or a combination of the two. Although its dentition and postcranial skeleton are much more like later *Homo* than the archaic hominins, the absolute endocranial capacity of *H. ergaster* (Mean = ca. 760 cm³) does not reach the levels seen in later *Homo*, and when scaled to body mass it shows relatively little advance over the levels seen in the archaic and transitional hominins.

Taxon name: *Homo erectus sensu stricto* (Dubois 1893) Weidenreich 1940

Temporal range: ca. 1.8 Ma-ca. 30 Ka.

How dated?: A mixture of biochronology and a few absolute dates that are mostly tenuously linked with the fossiliferous horizons.

Initial discovery: Kedung Brubus 1 – mandible fragment, Kedung Brubus, Java (now Indonesia), 1890.

Type specimen: Trinil 2 – adult calotte, Trinil, Ngawi, Java (now Indonesia), 1891.

Source(s) of the evidence: Sites in Indonesia (e.g., Trinil, Sangiran, Sambungmachan), China (e.g., Zhoukoudian, Lantian) and Africa (e.g., Olduvai Gorge, Melka Kunture).

Nature of the evidence: Mainly cranial with some postcranial evidence, but little or no evidence of the hand or foot.

Characteristics and inferred behavior: The crania belonging to *H. erectus s. s.* have a low vault, a substantial more-or-less continuous torus above the orbits and the occipital region is sharply angu-

lated. The inner and outer tables of the cranial vault are thick. The body of the mandible is less robust than that of the archaic hominins and in this respect it resembles *Homo sapiens* except that the symphyseal region lacks the well marked chin that is a feature of later *Homo* and modern humans. The tooth crowns are generally larger and the premolar roots more complicated than those of modern humans. The cortical bone of the postcranial skeleton is thicker than is the case in modern humans. The limb bones are modern human-like in their proportions and have robust shafts, but the shafts of the long bones of the lower limb are flattened from front to back (femur) and side to side (tibia) relative to those of modern humans. All the dental and cranial evidence points to a modern human-like diet for *H. erectus s. s.* and the postcranial elements are consistent with a habitually upright posture and obligate, long-range, bipedalism. There is no fossil evidence relevant to assessing the manual dexterity of *H. erectus s. s.*, but if *H. erectus s. s.* manufactured Acheulean artifacts then dexterity would be implicit.

Taxon name: *Homo floresiensis* Brown *et al.* 2004

Temporal range: ca. 95-12 Ka.

How dated?: Radiocarbon, luminescence, uranium-series and electron spin resonance dates on associated sediments and faunal specimens and dated horizons above and below skeletal material (Morwood *et al.*, 2004).

Initial discovery: LB1 – associated partial adult skeleton.

Type specimen: See above.

Source(s) of the evidence: Presently, only known from Liang Bua, a cave 500 m above sea level and 25 km from the north coast of Flores. The cave is in a limestone hill on the southern edge of the Wae Racang valley.

Nature of the evidence: A partial adult skeleton (LB1) with some components still articulated, an isolated left P₃ (LB2), and a left radius. The partial skeleton preserves the skull, and other components include the right pelvic bone, femur and tibia.

Characteristics and inferred behavior: This hominin displays a unique combination of *H. ergaster*-like cranial and dental morphology, a hitherto unknown suite of pelvic and femoral features, a small brain (ca. 380 cm³), small body mass (25-30 kg) and small stature (1 m).

Taxonomic note: The researchers responsible for the find decided, despite the small brain size, to nonetheless recognize its morphological affinities with *Homo* and refer LB1 to a new species within the genus *Homo*. The shape of the LB 1 cranium as judged by six external linear dimensions is unlike that of any modern human comparative sample, even when it is scaled to the same overall size as LB 1 (Gordon *et al.*, 2008). The fossil hominin taxon closest in shape to LB 1 is early African *H. erectus*, or *H. ergaster*, and its wrist morphology shows little advance over that of archaic hominins (Tocheri *et al.*, 2007)

Taxon name: *Homo antecessor* Bermúdez de Castro *et al.* 1997

Temporal range: ca. 780-500 Ka.

How dated?: Biochronology.

Initial discovery: ATD6-1 – left mandibular canine, Level 6, Gran Dolina, Spain, 1994.

Type specimen: ATD6-5 – mandible and associated teeth, Level 6, Gran Dolina, Spain, 1994.

Source(s) of the evidence: Gran Dolina, Atapuerca, Spain and perhaps also Ceprano, Italy.

Nature of the evidence: The partial cranium of a juvenile, parts of mandibles and maxillae and isolated teeth.

Characteristics and inferred behavior: Researchers who found the remains claim the combination of a modern human-like facial morphology with the large and relatively primitive crowns and roots of the teeth is not seen in *H. heidelbergensis* (see below). The Gran Dolina remains also show no sign of any derived *H. neanderthalensis* traits. Its discoverers suggest *H. antecessor* is the last common ancestor of Neanderthals and *H. sapiens*.

Taxon name: *Homo heidelbergensis* Schoetensack 1908

Temporal range: ca. 600-100 Ka.

How dated?: Mostly biochronological with some uranium series and ESR absolute dates.

Initial discovery: Mauer 1 – adult mandible, Mauer, Heidelberg, Germany, 1907.

Type specimen: As above.

Source(s) of the evidence: Sites in Europe (e.g., Mauer, Petralona); Near East (e.g., Zuttiyeh); Africa (e.g., Kabwe, Bodo); China (e.g., Dali, Jinniushan, Xujiayao, Yunxian) and possibly India (Hathnora).

Nature of the evidence: Many crania but little mandibular and postcranial evidence.

Characteristics and inferred behavior: What sets this material apart from *H. sapiens* and *Homo neanderthalensis* (see below) is the morphology of the cranium and the robusticity of the postcranial skeleton. Some brain cases are as large as those of modern humans, but they are always more robustly built with a thickened occipital region and a projecting face and with large separate ridges above the orbits unlike the more continuous brow ridge of *H. erectus s. s.* Compared to *H. erectus s. s.* the parietals are expanded, the occipital is more rounded and the frontal bone is broader. The crania of *H. heidelbergensis* lack the specialized features of *H. neanderthalensis* such as the anteriorly-projecting midface and the distinctive swelling of the occipital region. *H. heidelbergensis* is the earliest hominin to have a brain as large as that of anatomically modern *Homo* and its postcranial skeleton suggests that its robust long bones and large lower limb joints were well suited to long-distance bipedal walking.

Taxonomic note: Researchers who see the African part of this hypodigm as distinctive refer to it *Homo rhodesiensis*. Others, who claim that the main European component of the *H. heidelbergensis* hypodigm already shows signs of *Homo neanderthalensis* autapomorphies, would sink the former into the latter.

Taxon name: *Homo neanderthalensis* King 1864

Temporal range: ca. 200-28 Ka (but if the Sima de los Huesos material is included ca. 400-28 Ka).

How dated?: A mix of techniques including radiocarbon, uranium series and ESR.

Initial discovery: Engis 1 – a child's cranium, Engis, Belgium, 1829.

Type specimen: Neanderthal 1- adult calotte and partial skeleton, Feldhofer Cave, Elberfeld, Germany, 1856.

Source(s) of the evidence: Fossil evidence for *H. neanderthalensis* has been found throughout Europe, with the exception of Scandinavia, as well as in the Near East, the Levant and Western Asia.

Nature of the evidence: Many are burials and so all anatomical regions are represented in the fossil record.

Characteristics and inferred behavior: The distinctive features of the cranium of *H. neanderthalensis* include thick, double-arched brow ridges, a face that projects anteriorly in the midline, a large nose, laterally-projecting and rounded parietal bones and a rounded, posteriorly-projecting occipital bone (that is, an occipital 'bun'). The endocranial volume of *H. neanderthalensis* is, on average, larger than that of modern humans. Mandibular and dental features include a retromolar space and distinctively high incidences of non-metrical dental traits. Postcranially Neanderthals were stout with a broad rib cage, a long clavicle, a wide pelvis and limb bones that are generally robust with well-developed muscle insertions. The distal extremities tend to be short compared to most modern *H. sapiens*, but Neanderthals were evidently obligate bipeds. The generally well-marked muscle attachments and the relative thickness of long bone shafts point to a strenuous lifestyle. The size and wear on the incisors suggest that the Neanderthals regularly used their anterior teeth as 'tools' either for food preparation or to grip hide or similar material.

Taxonomic note: The scope of the hypodigm of *H. neanderthalensis* depends on how inclusively the taxon is defined. For some researchers the taxon is restricted to fossils from Europe and the

Near East that used to be referred to as 'Classic' Neanderthals. Others interpret the taxon more inclusively and include within the hypodigm fossil evidence that is generally older and less derived (for example, Steinheim, Swanscombe and Atapuerca [Sima de los Huesos]).

Recent developments: Researchers have recovered short fragments of mitochondrial DNA from the humerus of the Neanderthal type specimen (Krings *et al.*, 1997; Krings *et al.*, 1999). The fossil sequence falls well outside the range of variation of a diverse sample of modern humans. Researchers suggest that Neanderthals would have been unlikely to have made any contribution to the modern human gene pool and they estimate this amount of difference points to 550-690 Kyr of separation. Subsequently, mtDNA has been recovered at other Neanderthal sites, including from rib fragments of a child's skeleton at Mezmaiskaya (Ovchinnikov *et al.*, 2000) from several individuals from Vindija (Krings *et al.*, 2000). As of November 2007, sequences are known from 13 Neanderthal specimens from sites in Western Europe and the Caucasus. The latest Neanderthal fossils to yield mtDNA are the left femur of the Teshik-Tash Neanderthal from Uzbekistan, and from the femur of the sub adult individual from Okladnikov, a site in the Altai Mountains in Western Asia (Krause *et al.*, 2007). The differences among the fossil mtDNA fragments known up until 2002 are similar to the differences between any three randomly selected African modern humans, but the differences between the mtDNA recovered from Neanderthals and the mtDNA of modern humans is substantial and significant (Knight, 2003).

ANATOMICALLY MODERN *HOMO*

This group includes all the fossil evidence that is indistinguishable from the morphology found in all populations of modern humans.

Taxon name: *Homo sapiens sensu stricto* Linnaeus 1758

Temporal range: ca. 200 Ka to the present day.

How dated?: A mix of techniques including radiocarbon, uranium series, ESR, and some $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ dates.

Initial fossil discovery: With hindsight the first recorded evidence to be recovered was the 'Red Lady of Paviland', Wales, 1824.

Type specimen: Linnaeus did not designate a type specimen.

Source(s) of the evidence: Fossil evidence of *H. sapiens* has been recovered from sites on all continents except Antarctica. The earliest absolutely dated remains are from Kibish in Ethiopia (McDougall *et al.*, 2005).

Nature of the evidence: Many are burials so the fossil evidence is abundant and generally in good condition, but in some regions of the world (for example, West Africa) remains are few and far between.

Characteristics and inferred behavior: The earliest evidence of anatomically modern human morphology in the fossil record comes from sites in Africa and the Near East. It is also in Africa that there is evidence for a likely morphological precursor of anatomically modern human morphology. This takes the form of crania that are generally more robust and archaic-looking than those of anatomically modern humans yet which are not archaic enough to justify their allocation to *H. heidelbergensis* or derived enough to be *H. neanderthalensis* (see above). Specimens in this category include Jebel Irhoud from North Africa; Omo 2, and Laetoli 18 from East Africa, and Florisbad and Cave of Hearths in southern Africa. There is undoubtedly a gradation in morphology that makes it difficult to set the boundary between anatomically modern humans and *H. heidelbergensis*, but unless at least one other taxon is recognized the variation in the later Homo fossil record is too great to be accommodated in a single taxon.

Taxonomic note: Researchers who wish to make a taxonomic distinction between fossils such as Florisbad, Omo 2 and Laetoli 18 and sub recent and living modern humans refer the earlier African subset to *Homo (Africanthropus) helmei* Dreyer, 1935.

LUMPING (LESS SPECIOSE) HOMININ TAXONOMY

We use the same grades for this taxonomy, but the taxa within them are more inclusive (Table 1).

POSSIBLE AND PROBABLE HOMININS

Only one genus and species, *Ardipithecus ramidus sensu lato*, is recognized in the more inclusive taxonomy. In addition to *Ar. ramidus sensu stricto* and *Ar. kaddaba*, *Ar. ramidus s. l.* also incorporates the hypodigms of *S. tchadensis* and *O. tugenensis*.

Taxon name: *Ardipithecus ramidus sensu lato* (White, Suwa and Asfaw 1994) White, Suwa and Asfaw 1995

ARCHAIC HOMININS

In the more lumping taxonomy one monospecific genus, *Kenyanthropus*, and two *Australopithecus* species, *Au. bahrelghazali*, *Au. anamensis*, are sunk into *Au. afarensis sensu lato*. Otherwise the taxa remain the same as in the splitting taxonomy.

Taxon names: *Australopithecus afarensis sensu lato* Johanson, White and Coppens 1978 and *Australopithecus africanus* Dart 1925

MEGADONT ARCHAIC HOMININS

In the more inclusive taxonomy two species, *P. aethiopicus* and *Au. garhi*, are sunk into *P. boisei sensu lato*. Otherwise the taxa remain the same as in the splitting taxonomy. Some researchers would sink all the *Paranthropus* taxa recognized in the speciose taxonomy into a single species, *P. robustus*.

Taxon names: *Paranthropus boisei sensu lato* (Leakey, 1959) Robinson 1960 and *Paranthropus robustus* Broom 1938

TRANSITIONAL HOMININS

In the lumping taxonomy *H. habilis sensu lato* subsumes *H. rudolfensis* and *H. habilis sensu stricto*.

Taxon name: *Homo habilis sensu lato* Leakey, Tobias and Napier 1964

PRE-MODERN HOMO

In the more inclusive taxonomy *H. erectus sensu lato* subsumes *H. erectus s. s.*, *H. ergaster* and *H. floresiensis*.

Taxon name: *Homo erectus sensu lato* (Dubois, 1893) Weidenreich 1940

ANATOMICALLY-MODERN HOMO

In the lumping taxonomy *H. sapiens sensu lato* subsumes *H. antecessor*, *H. heidelbergensis*, *H. neanderthalensis* and *H. sapiens s. s.* An even more conservative taxonomy (for example, Wolpoff *et al.*, 1994; Tobias, 1995) suggests that all taxa within *Homo*, including *H. erectus s. l.*, should be sunk into *H. sapiens sensu lato*.

Taxon name: *Homo sapiens sensu lato* Linnaeus 1758

CHALLENGES

The second part of this contribution considers some (but by no means all) of the challenges that confront those who study hominin taxonomy and systematics. The first challenge is how you tell an early hominin from an early panin, or from taxa belonging to an extinct clade closely related to the *Pan/Homo* clade? The second is how many species should be recognized within the hominin fossil record? The third challenge is how best to investigate relationships within the hominin clade. What methods should be used to break down an integrated structure such as the cranium into tractable analytical units? How many subclades are there within the hominin clade, and how reliable are hominin cladistic hypotheses? The final challenge we consider concerns the concept of a genus. Specifically, what criteria should be used for recognizing genera within the hominin clade?

How to tell an early hominin taxon from a taxon in a closely related clade?

The differences between the skeletons of living modern humans and their closest living relatives, common chimpanzees and bonobos are particularly marked in the brain case, face, and base of the cranium, and in the teeth, hand, pelvis, knee and the foot. There are also other important contrasts, such as the rates at which modern humans and chimps/bonobos develop and mature, and the relative lengths of the limbs. But the differences between the first hominins and the first panins were likely to have been much more subtle than the differences between contemporary hominins and contemporary panins.

The common ancestor of the hominin and panin twigs was almost certainly not like either a modern human or a living chimp/bonobo. Nonetheless, most researchers agree that the last common ancestor (LCA) of the hominin and panin twigs was probably more likely to have been chimp/bonobo-like than modern human-like. Why? Genetic and morphological evidence

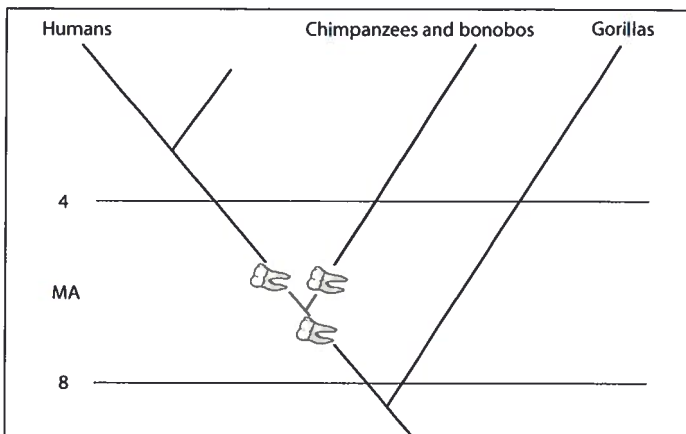
suggests that gorillas are the living animals most closely related to the combined chimp/bonobo and modern human twig of the Tree of Life (TOL). Gorillas share more morphology with chimpanzees and bonobos than they do with modern humans (gorilla bones are more likely to be confused with the bones and teeth of a chimpanzee or a bonobo than with the bones and teeth of a modern human). Therefore, the common ancestor of chimpanzees, bonobos and modern humans was probably more like a chimp/bonobo than a modern human.

If this logic is followed, then the skeleton of the LCA of modern humans and chimps/bonobos would most likely show evidence of adaptations for life in the trees. For example, curved fingers to enable it to grasp branches, and limbs adapted to walk both on all fours as well as on the hind limbs alone. Its face was most likely snout-like, not flat, like that of modern humans, and its elongated jaws would have had relatively modestly-sized chewing teeth, prominent canines and relatively and absolutely large upper central incisor teeth.

In what ways would the earliest hominins have differed from the LCA of chimps/bonobos and modern humans, and from the earliest panins? Compared to panins they would most likely have had smaller canine teeth, larger chewing teeth and thicker lower jaws. There would also have been some changes in the skull and skeleton linked with more time spent upright, and with a greater dependence on the hind limbs for bipedal walking. These changes would have included, among other things, a forward shift in the foramen magnum, adjustments to the pelvis, habitually more extended knees and a more stable foot.

But all this assumes there is no homoplasy (see below) and that the only options for a 8-5 Ma African higher primate are being the LCA of modern humans and chimps/bonobos, a primitive hominin, or a primitive panin (Figure 2A). It is, however, perfectly possible that such a creature may belong to an extinct clade that is the sister taxon of the LCA of modern humans and chimps/bonobos, or the sister taxon of the earliest hominins or panins (Figure 2B).

A



B

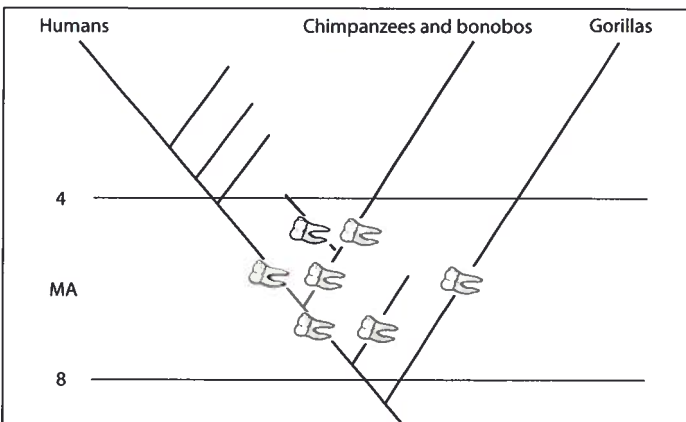


Figure 2: Options for an 8-4 Ma African higher primate taxon that is more closely related to *Homo* and *Pan* than to *Gorilla*. Scheme A assumes no homoplasy and the only options within it for such a taxon is that it is the LCA of modern humans and chimps/bonobos, a primitive hominin, or a primitive panin. Scheme B takes into account the probability of homoplasy, and in addition to the above options such a taxon could be a member of an extinct clade that is the sister taxon of the LCA of modern humans and chimps/bonobos, or a hitherto unknown clade that is the sister taxon of the earliest hominins or panins.

How many taxa are represented in the hominin clade?

Two questions have to be answered before any hypotheses can be generated about what Simpson referred to as the alpha taxonomy of the hominin clade (i.e., how many species are sampled in the hominin fossil record). First, what species definition should be used? Second, how should that species definition be applied to the hominin fossil evidence?

The definition of any taxonomic category is a vexed issue, but the problem of how to define an extinct species is especially contentious. The species is the least inclusive category in the Linnaean taxonomic system and since the species category was introduced the way it has been defined has been modified to reflect developments in our understanding of the living world. Smith (1994) provides a useful classification of the main contemporary species concepts. He suggests they can be divided into those that focus on the processes involved in the generation and maintenance of species, and those that emphasize the method used to recognize species. The species concepts in the former subcategory are called process-related, and the species concepts in the latter subcategory are called pattern-related.

The three main concepts in the process-related category are the biological species concept (BSC), the evolutionary species concept (ESC), and the recognition species concept (RSC). The BSC definition given below is a modified version of Mayr's original definition (Mayr, 1942). It suggests that species are "groups of interbreeding natural populations reproductively isolated from other such groups" (Mayr, 1982). Note that this is a relational definition in the sense that to define one species, reference has to be made to at least one other species. It also stresses mechanisms for maintaining genetic isolation, rather than emphasizing the features that conspecific individuals have in common.

The ESC was an attempt by Simpson to add a temporal dimension to the BSC. According to Simpson an ESC species is "an ancestral-descendant sequence of populations evolving separately from others and with its own evolutionary role and tendencies"

(Simpson, 1961). This ancestral-descendant sequence or lineage can be divided into segments called chronospecies. The boundaries of chronospecies can be discontinuities, or gaps, in the fossil record, and nowadays they are interpreted as representing cladogenetic events (but this was not part of Simpson's original formulation of the ESC). Alternatively, a lineage can be broken up into segments because the variation within the fossil sample from a particular segment, or time period, exceeds in either, or both, the degree or pattern of the variation observed within closely related, living, reference species.

Instead of emphasizing reproductive isolation, the recognition species concept (RSC), the third concept in the process-related category, emphasizes the processes that promote interbreeding. A RSC species is "the most inclusive population of individual, biparental organisms which shares a common fertilization system" (Paterson, 1985). Paterson refers to the fertilization system of a species as its specific mate recognition system, or SMRS. The latter is the system used by members of that species to recognize a potential mate. The signal(s) involved may be a distinctive external morphological feature (see below), a characteristic coloration, a distinctive call, or even an odor. Paterson claims that the RSC is, at least potentially, applicable to the fossil record as long as a species' SMRS fossilizes. This may well be the case in antelopes. The shape of the horns of antelopes is apparently crucial for mate recognition, and although the horns themselves do not fossilize, the bony horn cores do, and these are apparently distinctive enough to be useful for bovid taxonomy.

It is difficult enough to apply process-related species definitions to living taxa, let alone to the fossil record. So, what is the best way to recognize extinct species? Most paleoanthropologists use one version, or other, of one of the species concepts in the pattern-related subcategory. They are the phenetic species concept (PeSC), the phylogenetic species concept (PySC), and the monophyletic species concept (MSC). They all focus on an organism's phenotype (thus they are sometimes referred to as morphospecies

concepts), but they differ because each of the concepts emphasizes a different aspect of the phenotype. The PeSC as interpreted by Sokal and Crovello (1970) gives equal weight to all aspects of the phenotype. It is based on a matrix that records the expression of each phenotypic character for each specimen. Multivariate analysis is then used to detect clusters of individual specimens that share the same, or similar, character expressions. In contrast, the version of the PySC introduced by Cracraft (1983) emphasizes the unique suite of primitive and derived characters that defines each species. According to Nixon and Wheeler (1990) in such a scheme a species is "the smallest aggregation of populations diagnosable by a unique combination of character states." For the third species concept in the pattern-related subcategory, the monophyletic species concept (or MSC), the scope of the morphological evidence is narrower still, for under the MSC definition species are defined according to the unique morphology a species possesses (in cladistic parlance unique morphologies are known as autapomorphies). The problem with the MSC is that it assumes the observer knows which characters are autapomorphies. But in order to determine which characters are autapomorphic one needs to perform a cladistic analysis, and in order to do that one needs to have operational taxonomic units, and in order to determine what these are one needs an alpha taxonomy (i.e., one needs to be able to recognize species in the fossil record). The MSC is the product of circular reasoning.

SPECIES IDENTIFICATION IN THE HOMININ FOSSIL RECORD

In practice most researchers involved in hominin taxonomy use one or other version of the PySC. They search for the smallest cluster of individual organisms that is "diagnosable" on the basis of the preserved morphology. Because in the hominin fossil record most preserved morphology is craniodental, diagnoses of early

hominin taxa inevitably focus on craniodental morphology. Eldredge (1993) developed a proposal originally made by Ghiselin (1972), and suggested that species can be viewed metaphorically as individuals with a 'life' that has a 'beginning' (the result of a speciation event), a 'middle' (that lasts as long as the species persists), and an 'end' (either extinction or participation in another speciation event). A useful metaphor for understanding the problems facing paleontologists is that of a photographer taking still photographs of the running races at a track and field sports meeting. In one case she may take just a single photograph of several races, whereas on another occasion she may take several photographs of the same race, one at the start, one in the middle and one close to the finishing line. Each photograph is the equivalent of an individual fossil, and the races the equivalent of species. Without a caption to guide you it would be difficult to tell whether the series of three photographs is a comprehensive record of just one race, or single photographs of three different running races? In the same way paleoanthropologists must decide whether a collection of fossils spanning several hundred thousand years consists of several samples of the same hominin taxon, or samples of several different hominin taxa.

Another factor paleoanthropologists must take into account is that they have to work with a fossil record that is confined to remains of the hard tissues (i.e., bones and teeth). We know from living animals that many uncontested species are difficult to distinguish using bones and teeth (e.g., *Cercopithecus* species). Thus, there are sound reasons to suspect that a hard tissue-bound fossil record is likely to under-estimate the number of species. If a punctuated equilibrium model of evolution is adopted along with a branching, or cladogenetic, interpretation of the fossil record, then researchers will tend to divide the hominin fossil record into a larger rather a smaller number of species (Table 1). Conversely, researchers who favor a phyletic gradualism model, that emphasizes morphological continuity instead of morphological discontinuity, and who see species as longer-lived and

more prone to substantial changes in morphology through time, will inevitably divide the hominin fossil record into fewer, more inclusive, species (Table 2).

In Eldredge's formulation all species begin when they and their sister taxon (or conceivably, sister taxa) arose from their hypothetical common ancestor. A species may change during the course of its history, but its existence will come to an end when it becomes extinct, or is the common ancestor of two (or more) daughter taxa. Eldredge acknowledges the reality that the morphological characteristics of either a living (or neontological) species, or of an evolutionary lineage, are never uniformly distributed across its range, and he follows Sewall Wright in being prepared to recognize the existence of distinctive local populations or demes (in the fossil record these are called paleodemes, or 'p-demes'). Eldredge suggests that although related demes would share the same SMRS, in some cases their morphological distinctiveness could justify them being regarded as separate species. He also acknowledges that the same logic could be applied to subdivide chronospecies on the basis that cladogenetic events may not always be detectable from the fossil record, and that the number of such events is likely to have been underestimated rather than overestimated. Within the fossil record it may be possible to identify several paleospecies (*sensu* Cain, 1954) within the equivalent of a neontological BSC/RSC-type of species.

RETICULATE EVOLUTION

The species concepts considered thus far are all based on a model in which one species splits into two (or more) species, then each of those daughter species either becomes extinct, or undergoes its own furcation, and so on. In this bifurcating hierarchical model new species arise in geographically isolated subpopulations by a process called allopatric speciation (which literally means speciation "in another place"). These subpopulations gradually develop

distinctive combinations of genes, which result eventually in their genetic isolation from the parent population. Proponents of the recognition species concept argue that this occurs when the new species develops a distinctive SMRS.

Speciation is interpreted very differently in so-called reticulate evolution. This interprets speciation as a process whereby a new species can form by the hybridization of two existing species. In this model species are seen as components of a complex network (hence the term reticulation). This model of evolution is close to how some researchers interpret evolution in geographically widespread groups like baboons. There are peaks of morphological distinctiveness in contemporary baboons that are separated by a morphological distance that is equivalent to distances that in other taxonomic groups are interpreted as species differences. The troughs between these peaks are called hybrid zones, and in these hybrid zones the distinction between baboon groups is much less. Hybrid zones are dynamic, with the nature, location and height of the peaks, and thus the nature of the hybrid zones, liable to change over time (Jolly, 2001).

HOMININ TAXONOMY; PUTTING THEORY INTO PRACTICE

No two individuals in a species are alike (even monozygotic twins will have minor skeletal differences) so how different does a new fossil have to be from the existing fossil record before a researcher can safely assume it represents a new species? The answer is that the researcher has to make sure the new fossil is not different because of obvious factors such as preservation (deformation, distortion, or inflation or reduction in size due to matrix-filled cracks or erosion, respectively), ontogeny (comparing a young individual with an old individual), sex (comparing a male with a female), or within-species geographical variation (see Wood and Lieberman, 2001 for a brief review of these factors).

Once a researcher has made sure that the above factors can be excluded, then their decision about whether a new fossil represents a new species depends on the range of variation they are prepared to tolerate within a species. In practical terms, paleontologists usually use the extent of size and shape variation within closely-related living species as the criteria for judging whether the variation within a collection of fossils merits that collection being assigned to more than one species (see Wood, Li and Willoughby, 1991 for an example). For hominins the reference taxa would be modern humans, chimpanzees, bonobos, gorillas, and perhaps orangutans. Some researchers make the point that these closely related taxa, for one reason or another, may not be suitable analogues. For example, Jolly (2001) makes the case that because of their being widespread in Africa, baboons are a more suitable analogue than the extant great apes because the latter are impoverished taxa in the sense that, with only a few exceptions, they are confined to forest refugia.

So why do competent researchers subscribe to such different interpretations of how many species should be recognized within the hominin fossil record (Tables 1 and 2)? It is sometimes difficult to tell whether taxonomic disagreements between paleoanthropologists are due to genuine differences in the way researchers interpret a particular part of the fossil record, or whether they reflect different views about the nature of species and genera. Usually, close textual analysis of systematic wrangles reveals that both reasons play a part. Researchers who favor a more anagenetic (or gradualistic) interpretation of the fossil record tend to stress the importance of continuities in the fossil record and opt for fewer species. They are referred to as lumpers. Researchers who favor a more cladogenetic (or punctuated equilibrium) interpretation of the fossil record tend to stress the importance of discontinuities within the fossil record, and generally opt for more speciose taxonomic hypotheses. The researchers who favor these latter interpretations are referred to as splitters, and their

interpretations are called taxic because they stress the importance of taxonomy in their interpretation of evolutionary history. But, when all is said and done, a taxonomy is a hypothesis; it is not written in stone.

HOMININ SYSTEMATICS – CLADES

The third challenge is how to investigate and reconstruct relationships within the hominin clade. How many subclades are there within the hominin clade? How reliable are hypotheses about the internal branching structure of the hominin clade? The method that is now almost universally used to reconstruct relationships is called cladistic analysis, and it is usually abbreviated to just cladistics.

The logic and the mechanics of cladistic analysis were developed by the German entomologist Willi Hennig in the 1940s. The first German edition of his book was published in the 1950s, and Hennig's ideas were introduced to a wider audience when the book was published in English, as *Phylogenetic Systematics*, in 1966. In that book Hennig proposed several principles that today form the core of the methodology of cladistics. These include the expression of evolutionary relationships as hierarchical and genealogical, the importance of synapomorphies (or shared-derived characteristics – see below) as the only true support for evolutionary relationships, an empirical and logical identification of the most likely cladogram based on the largest amount of evidence in the form of congruent synapomorphies (see below), and an emphasis on monophyletic groups, or clades, in taxonomic classifications (see Figure 3).

Some of the important concepts used by cladistic theory are set out below. A monophyletic group, or clade, contains all (no more and no less) of the taxa derived from its most recent common ancestor. Sister taxa are two taxa more closely related to each

other than to any other taxon; they share a recent common ancestor that is not shared with any other taxon. A plesiomorphy is a primitive character for the group in question, so its possession does not help to sort taxa within that group. For example, the dental formula 2, 1, 2, 3 for the permanent teeth of the Old World higher primates would be a plesiomorphy for the higher primates; it has no valency for sorting taxa within that group. An apomorphy (also called a derived character) is a character peculiar to a subset, or subclade, of the group in question. Small canines in hominins would be an example of an apomorphy within the higher primates. Shared-primitive and shared-derived characters are called, respectively, symplesiomorphies and synapomorphies. It should be understood that the same feature can be both a plesiomorphy and an apomorphy depending on the level of the phylogenetic hierarchy under examination. An autapomorphy is an independently derived character seen in one branch within the group, or evolutionary lineage, which is not shared with any other branch. Extreme molarization of the mandibular premolars in *P. boisei* is an example of an autapomorphic hypothesis within the hominin clade. Autapomorphies are useless for establishing the pattern of relationships for classification purposes, although they are potentially useful for the diagnosis of a group or species. A cladogram is a branching diagram that reflects the relationships among taxa in a series of dichotomous branches. Outgroup taxa are distantly related to the group under study (which is called the ingroup) and they are used to establish the polarity of character evolution. It is preferable to include several outgroups in a cladistic analysis.

Cladistics rests on the axiom that homology is equal to synapomorphy (Patterson, 1988). Shared characters are only informative if they are shared due to inheritance from the most recent common ancestor, in which case they are called homologous characters. Symplesiomorphies are also homologous, but as they are primitively inherited in the groups being studied, they are not as relevant as synapomorphies for cladistic analysis. Shared

characters not inherited from the most recent common ancestor are one type of homoplasy. A second type of homoplasy consists of derived features, or apomorphies, that subsequently reverse, or revert to the primitive state. Similar characters should be considered homologous until proven otherwise, or until they have been demonstrated to be homoplastic (also called homoplastic) on a cladogram. It should be emphasized that cladistics indicates the relative degree of relationships between taxa, but does not specify any hypothesis about ancestry or descent (i.e., about phylogeny). This is particularly confusing because the alternative name for cladistics is phylogenetic systematics. In a monophyletic group, or clade, a taxon may be ancestral to its sister taxon, the sister taxa may share a common ancestor not on the cladogram, or a taxon may have evolved from its sister taxon.

HOMOPLASY IN THE HOMININ CLADE

There are many aspects of morphology that might represent homoplasy, or convergent evolution, or evolutionary reversals in the hominin clade. The definition and diagnosis of genus *Paranthropus* is based primarily on craniofacial characters that suggest an adaptation to feeding on hard or tough objects. These features include postcanine megadontia, thick enamel, and changes to the zygomatic and other cranial bones that result in an improved mechanical advantage for chewing on the postcanine tooth crowns. If these adaptations of the megadont archaic hominins were inherited from a recent common ancestor then a separate *Paranthropus* genus is justified, however if they occurred independently in the *P. aethiopicus* and *P. boisei* lineage in East Africa, and in the *Au. africanus* and *P. robustus* lineage in southern Africa, then a separate genus would not be justified.

Locomotor adaptations of the postcranial skeleton is another possible source of homoplasy, but thus far most hominin cladistic analyses have focused exclusively on the craniodental evidence. It

is generally assumed that bipedal locomotion, and the morphological changes it entails, arose only once during the course of hominin evolution. But there is no logical reason to exclude the hypothesis that bipedality arose more than once in the hominin clade (Wood, 2000). For example, there is evidence of more than one pattern of limb proportions among the taxa within the archaic hominin grade (Green, *et al*, 2007).

INTERNAL STRUCTURE OF THE HOMININ CLADE

The branching pattern of the hominin clade has changed substantially over the last several decades as new fossils have been discovered and new species and genera named for them. Space limitations preclude an exhaustive review of the results of hominin cladistic analyses, so this section merely summarizes the current consensus on the topology of the hominin clade, and points to the areas of agreement and disagreement. It should be emphasized that differences in the taxa and characters included mean that the analyses reviewed here are not strictly comparable. Nonetheless, areas of agreement in the results of studies that are based on slightly different data sets suggest that some aspects of our understanding of the topology of the hominin clade are likely to be reasonably reliable.

Chamberlain and Wood (1987) noted that up to 30 percent of characters used in phylogenetic studies of hominins (frequently craniodental characters) might be homoplastic. It is often the case that relatively few character state changes separate the most parsimonious cladogram from cladograms with a substantially different topology (e.g., Strait *et al.*, 1997). Thus the results of hominin cladistic analyses should be interpreted with care, for the vagaries of taphonomy mean that some aspects of morphology are consistently better represented in the hominin fossil record than others. The most parsimonious cladogram may not be more accurate than cladograms that are only a little less parsimonious.

POSSIBLE AND PROBABLE HOMININS

The relationships among *S. tchadensis*, *O. tugenensis*, *Ar. kadabba* and *Ar. ramidus* are unclear and because data are limited these taxa are only rarely included in hominin cladistic analyses. These are taxa that most likely occupy either a basal position on the hominin clade immediately above the root, or they may belong to one, or more, extinct clades closely-related to the hominin clade.

ARCHAIC HOMININS

Cladistic analyses of the hominin clade tend to show *Australopithecus* species not as a monophyletic group, but as a series of offshoots from the branch leading to *Homo* (Figure 3). A number of analyses have concluded that *Au. afarensis* is the sister taxon of all later hominins (e.g., Skelton *et al.*, 1986; Chamberlain and Wood, 1987; Skelton and McHenry, 1992; Strait *et al.*, 1997; Strait and Grine, 2004; Kimbel *et al.*, 2004). Until more information is available for the earlier possible and probable hominin taxa, *Au. afarensis* will probably continue to be viewed as the most primitive of the hominin taxa with hypodigms large enough to have the potential to provide reliable evidence about phylogenetic relationships. In most cladistic analyses *Au. africanus* is generally the sister-taxon of a clade that includes some combination of species typically attributed to *Homo* and/or *Paranthropus* (discussed below).

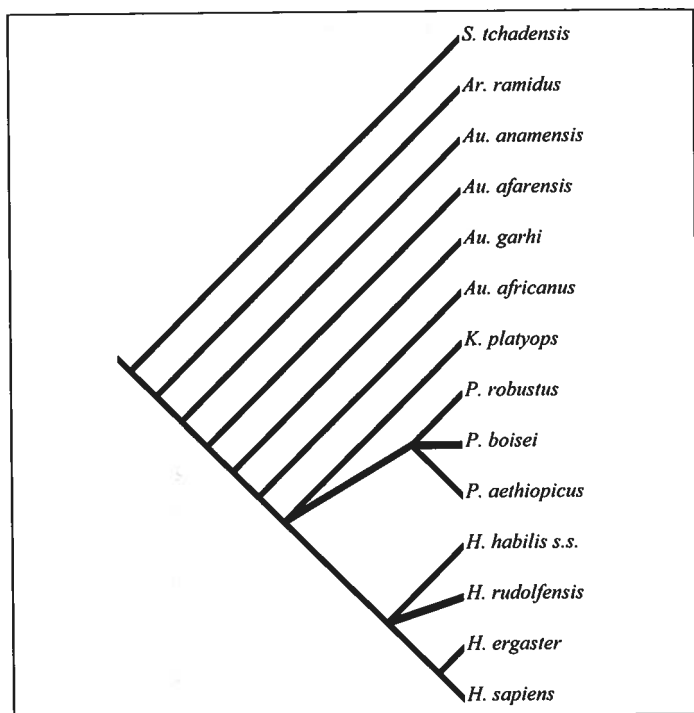


Figure 3: Hypothesis of the cladistic relationships among early hominins. This cladogram was determined to be the most parsimonious one in a recent comprehensive analysis of early hominins (adapted from Fig. 10 in Strait and Grine, 2004).

MEGADONT ARCHAIC HOMININS

Chamberlain and Wood (1987) identified the monophyletic group comprising *P. boisei* and *P. robustus* as the sister taxon of *Au. africanus*, but they did not include *Au. aethiopicus* in their analysis. Wood (1988) noted that 11 out of 18 major cladistic studies prior to 1987 identify *P. robustus* and *P. boisei* as sister

species, and the other seven did not differentiate between them. The composition of the *Paranthropus* clade in more recent cladistic analyses varies, but the results of subsequent analyses mostly differ in the location and relationships of *Au. africanus* and *Au. aethiopicus*. Such is the case in the analyses conducted by Strait et al. (1997) and Skelton and McHenry (1998). Whereas the former analysis supports *Paranthropus* monophyly, with *P. aethiopicus* as the stem taxon of the clade, the Skelton and McHenry (1998) analysis support a sister group relationship between a monophyletic group comprised of *P. robustus* and *P. boisei*, and *Homo*. In this latter analysis *P. aethiopicus* is the sister taxon of a monophyletic group containing *Homo*, the megadont archaic hominins, and *Au. africanus*. Strait and Grine (2004) found the three *Paranthropus* taxa consistently formed an independent clade, and in the same year, Kimbel et al. (2004) also found consistent support for a megadont hominin clade. If one is sanguine that hard-tissue morphology captured using traditional morphometric methods is capable of recovering phylogenetic relationships established on the basis of independent genetic evidence (e.g., Strait and Grine, 2004), then *Paranthropus* monophyly must be the hypothesis of choice. But if one is more skeptical about its ability to do so (e.g., Collard and Wood, 2000), then what many researchers interpret as overwhelming evidence for *Paranthropus* monophyly looks less compelling.

HOMO

A *Homo* clade, including at the minimum *H. sapiens* and *H. erectus* as sister-groups, with *H. habilis sensu lato* one step removed, is supported by the results of a number of cladistic analyses (e.g., Wood, 1994; Skelton and McHenry, 1992; Strait and Grine, 2004). Only a few analyses have focused on the relationships of the taxa in the pre-modern *Homo* grade. The taxa we have included within the transitional hominin grade retain a substan-

tial number of primitive character states, but they are generally located within the *Homo* clade, usually at its base. In some earlier analyses (e.g., Chamberlain and Wood, 1987) the transitional hominins are linked to the clade that includes *P. robustus* and *P. boisei*. See Wood (in press) for an evaluation of current thinking about the relationships of early *Homo*.

WHAT QUALIFIES A GROUP OF TAXA TO BE A GENUS?

The fourth challenge we discuss in this review of hominin taxonomy and systematics refers to the genus category. The genus has received comparatively little attention from evolutionary biologists, despite Simpson's statement that "it frequently appears that the genus is a more usable and reliable unit for classification than the species" (Simpson, 1961: 199).

At the present time there are two main competing definitions of a genus. The first, associated with Ernst Mayr and the 'Evolutionary Systematic' school of classification, suggests that "a genus consists of one species, or a group of species of common ancestry, which differ in a pronounced manner from other groups of species and are separated from them by a decided morphological gap" (Mayr, 1950: 110). Mayr went on to state that the genus "has a very distinct biological meaning." Species united in a genus occupy an ecological situation that is different from that occupied by the species of another genus, or, to use the terminology of Sewall Wright, they occupy a "different adaptive plateau" (*ibid.*: 110). Thus, a genus is interpreted as a group of species of common ancestry that are both adaptively coherent and morphologically distinctive. But it is implicit that common ancestry subsumes both monophyletic and paraphyletic groups. Thus, in a 'Mayrian' genus common ancestry is not synonymous with the component species all being more closely related to one another than to any other species.

The second definition of the genus is associated with the 'Phylogenetic Systematic' or 'Cladistic' school of classification, and it

can be traced back to the work of Willi Hennig (1950). In this cladistic, or 'Hennigian', sense a genus is defined as a group of species that are more closely related to one another than they are to species assigned to another genus (Stevens, 1985). In this definition a genus can only be monophyletic (i.e., only and all the members of a clade): it cannot be paraphyletic (i.e., a genus cannot contain just one part of a monophyletic group). But this definition makes no stipulations about adaptive coherence or about morphological distinctiveness (see above).

Wood and Collard (1999a: 201) proposed that a genus should be defined as "a species, or monophylum, whose members occupy a single adaptive zone." It is important to note that contrary to Leakey *et al.* (2001) this definition does not require the adaptive zone to be unique, or even distinctive. It just requires the adaptive zone to be coherent and consistent across the species taxa in the putative genus. Thus, for a species to be included in an existing genus Wood and Collard (*ibid*) suggest the following criteria. First, the species should belong to the same monophyletic group as the type species of that genus. Second, the adaptive strategy of the species should be closer to the adaptive strategy of the type species of the genus in which it is included, than it is the type species of any other genus. The operative word is 'closer'; the adaptive strategy of the species under consideration does not have to be identical to that of the type species of its genus. When Wood and Collard (*ibid*) applied these criteria to the genus *Homo*, they concluded that the condition of grade coherence was violated if *H. habilis s. s.* and *H. rudolfensis* are included in the genus *Homo*, and results of subsequent analyses (e.g., Tocheri *et al.*, 2008, and Ruff, 2009) have provided support for their assessment.

ADVANCES IN DATA CAPTURE

Obviously new fossil discoveries provide additional evidence for hominin evolution, but additional evidence can also be extracted

from the existing fossil record. For more than seventy years ionizing radiation has been harnessed to provide images of the internal structure of fossil hominins, but more recently clinical imaging techniques, in the form of CT and microCT, and other more experimental techniques such as synchrotron radiation microtomography (SR- μ CT) and confocal microscopy, have been used to image the internal macro- and micro- structure, respectively, of hominin fossils.

Jan Wind and Frans Zonneveld were among the first to exploit the use of CT imaging modalities to investigate the morphology of the bony labyrinth, and these images have provided an additional source of information for both taxonomic and functional analyses (e.g., Spoor *et al.*, 1994, 2003). MicroCT provides better images than regular CT of small structures such as teeth, and it is now being used to capture the detailed morphology of the surface of the dentine of undamaged teeth. This has a two-fold advantage. First, it provides morphological information about a structure (the enamel-dentine junction, or EDJ) that was hitherto inaccessible without destructively sectioning a tooth crown, and second, by focusing on the morphology of EDJ it means that worn teeth, which may preserve very little in the way of detailed outer enamel surface morphology, can be used to develop our knowledge of the range of intra-specific variation in hominin fossil taxa (e.g., Skinner *et al.*, 2008). Synchrotron radiation microtomography (SR- μ CT) uses the energy within very powerful beams of electrons to image the microstructure of enamel close to the surface of the tooth crown. (e.g., Smith and Tafforeau, 2008; Tafforeau and Smith, 2008).

All these imaging techniques can be used to access previously inaccessible morphology, but microCT and synchrotron radiation microtomography (SR- μ CT) are especially useful for helping to sort homoplasies from homologies. What may superficially look like a shared dental homology (e.g., thick enamel, or the possession of an apparently similar shared non-metrical trait on the outer surface of the enamel) may turn out to be a homoplasy if by

using microCT it can be shown that what looks to be the 'same' outer enamel surface morphology has in fact significantly different manifestations at the EDJ (Skinner *et al.*, 2009). Similarly, if information about dental microstructure (e.g., enamel secretion rates, extension rates, the lifespan of ameloblasts) can be obtained using non-destructive methods such as SR- μ CT, and confocal microscopy, then it might be possible to see if hominin taxa with thick enamel achieved that thick enamel via the same, or different, developmental pathways.

CONCLUSIONS

This review has tried to provide the consumers of taxonomy and systematics with some insight into the challenges facing those whose research focuses on those topics. These researchers do not always see eye to eye, but it is relatively rare for disagreements to be about the nature of the data; most of the differences stem from differences in analytical philosophy.

We hope these relatively simple explanations of the background to some of the main controversies involved in the taxonomy and systematics of the hominin clade will enable readers to apply a healthy dose of skepticism to announcements of new fossil evidence, with, or without, pronouncements about hominin taxonomy and systematics.

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