

Our Origins

-- In the 160,000-year-old fossilized skulls of three Ethiopians -- two adults and a child -- scientists think they see for the first time the faces of the immediate ancestors of modern humans. --

BACKGROUND:

Today the Bouri area is inhabited by the Afar people who are semi-nomadic pastoralists living in this harsh environment. Herto is one of their villages on the floor of the Afar rift valley. It had been temporarily abandoned when the new fossils were found in 1997.



The Middle Awash research team includes over 45 scientists from 14 different countries, specializing in geology, archaeology, and paleontology. The project operates under permit from the Ethiopian Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage of the Ethiopian Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture. The team conducts three months of field research each autumn.

STORY:

(NY Times) In the 160,000-year-old fossilized skulls of three Ethiopians -- two adults and a child -- scientists think they see for the first time the faces of the immediate ancestors of modern humans. Except for a few archaic characteristics, they are as recognizable as Hamlet's poor Yorick. They are longer than those of earlier ancestors or any contemporary Neanderthals in Eurasia. Their midfaces are broad, but the nasal bones are tall and narrow. The brow ridges are less prominent than the glowering visages looking down from earlier branches of the family tree. And the cranial vaults are higher and within modern dimensions.

The discovery of the oldest near-modern human remains is considered a major step in establishing the time and place for the emergence

of anatomically modern Homo sapiens probably about 150,000 years ago, as genetic studies have suggested, in Africa.

That had been impossible until now because of the frustrating gap in fossil evidence between 100,000 and 300,000 years ago, the presumed interval of transition from prehumans to modern humans.

The discovery team and other scientists said in interviews that the research appeared to confirm the idea that modern humans originated in Africa and then spread into Asia and Europe. In that case, they said, the enigmatic Neanderthals, which became extinct in Europe 30,000 years ago, could not have been direct forebears of today's humans.

In a background news release to the journal articles, the discoverers said that even if descendants of the transitional people from Ethiopia "interbred with surviving Neanderthal populations, the latter appear to have contributed very little to the modern human gene pool." The team concluded, "In this sense, we are all African."

The skull fossils were found in 1997 in an arid valley bordering the Middle Awash River near the village of Herto, 140 miles northeast of Addis Ababa. The fossils were buried between layers of volcanic ash, from which project geologists determined their age to be about 160,000 years. When the people the skulls belonged to lived there, paleontologists said, they hunted and fished on the shore of a shallow freshwater lake teeming with catfish, crocodiles and hippos.

The fossils were so badly fragmented, however, that it took years of cleaning, reassembling and analyzing before the discoverers felt they could report their findings. They also kept hoping they would gather more remains.

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They collected more than 600 stone tools, including hand axes. But they never uncovered the lower jaws to the skulls or any other parts.

Anthropologists suspect that the skulls had been deliberately removed from the bodies as part of some ancient mortuary practice. Close inspection revealed parallel incisions around the perimeter of



one skull, more cut marks on the other two. Similar modifications have been observed by anthropologists in societies, including some in New Guinea, in which the skulls of ancestors are preserved and worshiped.

The three skulls, all missing the lower jaws, were excavated a few hundred feet from one another. The most complete one, probably that of an adult male, especially impressed scientists with its humanlike size and shape, very nearly modern.

So the discoverers decided the specimen belonged in the same genus and species as modern humans, *Homo sapiens*. But there were just enough differences, the scientists concluded, that the fossils were probably a subspecies, *Homo sapiens idaltu*, to differentiate them from fully modern humans, *Homo sapiens sapiens*. *Idaltu* is a word meaning "elder" in the local Afar language.

"When we compared the cranium to thousands of modern human crania, several dimensions and characters were outside the modern range," Dr. White said in an interview. "If we just called it *homo sapiens sapiens*, that implied it's the same thing, and it's actually not the same, though very close."

In a commentary accompanying the journal reports, Dr. Stringer said this fossil "helps to clarify the pattern of early *Homo sapiens* evolution in Africa, as it shows an interesting combination of features from archaic, early modern and recent humans."

The second skull was of an even larger adult with modern human characteristics. The third was the skull of a child who died at the age of about 6 or 7 years. All the specimens are being studied at the National Museum of Ethiopia in Addis Ababa.

SIGNIFICANCE:

The differences described above are hugely significant because they echo features seen in some older African hominid fossils, such as *Homo heidelbergensis*, whilst at the same time displaying a very modern look we would recognize today. In essence, the researchers argue, the Herto skulls fill a gap between the more archaic humans who went before and the very modern people who came after. The Herto people could be our direct and immediate ancestors.

By looking at the genetic variation in all living populations today and in studying the errors that have arisen in our genome over time, molecular biologists have come to one conclusion: we diverged as a species less than 200,000 years ago in Africa. A recent study even narrowed the location down to Tanzania and Ethiopia. The Herto skulls therefore represent a confirmation of the genetic studies. They show the right features in the right place at the right time.

There are two major schools of thought on the origins of humans. One says *Homo sapiens* migrated out of Africa recently to supplant all the other human-like species around the world, such as Europe's Neanderthals; the "Multiregional" school says modern humans arose in many areas of Europe, Asia and Africa from other hominids who had migrated out of Africa at a much earlier time. Because the Herto fossils show anatomically modern features that pre-date most Neanderthals, it seems inconceivable that we could have descended from them, as some scientists have proposed.

The Herto skulls support the first school, the so-called "Out of Africa" hypothesis. In a report in new issue of the journal *Nature*, released online, Dr. White and his collaborators concluded

that the Ethiopian skulls "represent the probable immediate ancestors of anatomically modern humans" and that "their anatomy and antiquity constitute strong evidence of modern-human emergence in Africa."

The "out of Africa" hypothesis, forcefully advocated by Dr. Stringer among others, had gained wide support in the two decades since molecular research on the genetic diversity among human populations pointed to a common ancestor in Africa, which inevitably became known as the African Eve. The research was based on evolutionary changes in mitochondrial DNA, which is passed from mother to daughter. Other studies of the male Y chromosome reached similar conclusions.

But scientists had been unable to pin down the time of origin or find supporting fossil evidence. The earliest fossils of modern Homo sapiens, from Ethiopia, South Africa and Israel, are not much more than 100,000 years old.

If correct, Dr. White's group emphasized, the new research ruled out the alternative multiregional hypothesis, held by a minority of scientists. They proposed that modern humans evolved in different parts of Africa, Asia and Europe at roughly the same time from ancient local populations. The Homo erectus species, which had migrated out of Africa much earlier, were thought to have evolved into Asian humans and European humans, possibly through intermediate stages, including Neanderthals.

But Dr. White's group said the fossil skulls showed that Homo sapiens with almost entirely human characteristics had already evolved in Africa before Neanderthals evolved into their classic form. Soon afterward, fully modern Homo sapiens entered Europe, presumably from Africa by way of the Middle East, and the Neanderthals went into their fateful decline.

"We can conclusively say that Neanderthals had nothing to do with modern humans," said Dr. Berhane Asfaw, a co-leader of the discovery team from the Rift Valley Research in Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian capital.

POINTS OF INTEREST:

Records Detail a Senate of Affluence

(AP) From its multimillionaire majority leader, Sen. Bill Frist, to its members of more modest means, the Senate is dominated by people far more affluent than nearly all those they represent, lawmakers' financial disclosure forms show. Frist, R-Tenn., who lists blind trusts worth up to \$31 million, is surrounded by colleagues who enjoy substantial wealth from successful private careers, family riches or wealthy spouses.

Many should benefit from the recently enacted cut in taxes on capital gains and dividends paid by corporations. Among those listing substantial property holdings or income from stock dividends in 2002 are Sens. Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn.; Richard Shelby, R-Ala.; Bob Graham, D-Fla.; and Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif.

Alexander, chairman of a children and families subcommittee since joining the Senate this year, reported owning from \$1.5 million to \$6 million worth of stock in Bright Horizons Family Solutions Inc., a child-care company. Shelby listed ownership of an apartment complex and shares in a title company. Graham held several Florida properties worth from \$5 million to \$25 million, while Feinstein was part-owner of the Carlton Hotel in San Francisco.

Others with eye-popping numbers included Sens. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., who listed four family trusts worth up to \$45 million; John D. Rockefeller IV, D-W.Va., who reported three blind trusts worth from \$80 million to more than \$125 million; and banking heir Peter Fitzgerald, R-Ill., whose assets include up to \$50 million in Bank of Montreal stock.

Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, D-N.Y., got more than \$1.15 million as partial payment for her recently published memoirs, "Living History." Yet eclipsing that was her husband, former President Bill Clinton, who earned \$9.5 million for a global speaking tour making up to \$400,000 a speech.

Senators at the lower end of the spectrum included Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., who reported a cash account worth \$15,000 and a growth portfolio worth at least \$15,000. Joseph Biden, D-Del., listed an annuity account worth from \$6,000 to \$90,000 and life insurance policies worth from \$15,000 to \$50,000. His reported liabilities included loans and credit lines ranging from \$305,000 to \$715,000.

Senators' reports, covering 2002, were released on Friday, three days before the House makes its available. Members of Congress must report annually on their outside sources of income, assets, liabilities, travel paid by private interests and speaking fees, which must be donated to charity. Their congressional salaries were \$150,000 last year, though leaders earned more.

Some senators' creative instincts were profitable last year. Sen. James Jeffords, I-Vt., earned \$101,000 in royalties for two books, including "An Independent Man," which documents his 2001 departure from the Republican Party. Sen. Joseph Lieberman, D-Conn., reported \$16,460 in earnings on the book he and his wife, Hadassah, wrote on his 2000 vice presidential candidacy. And Daniel Inouye, D-Hawaii, received \$927 for an autobiography.

Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, earned \$18,000 in song writing royalties and \$2,123 for a voiceover for an animated religious film. Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., appeared in an episode of The WB's "Gilmore Girls" and donated the \$1,350 to the San Diego Police Athletic League.

It's the real thing: US Coke worker sacked for drinking Pepsi

(AFP) - A US truck driver who worked for the Coca-Cola Bottling Company has been sacked after being spotted glugging down a soft drink made by the rival Pepsi company, union officials said. Rick Bronson, who worked for the world's biggest soft drink firm for 12 years, was fired after

someone reported him for supporting the enemy, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters said.

"Coke is really grasping at straws on this one," said Jim Santangelo, principal officer of Teamsters' branch of which Bronson is a member in El Monte, east of the California hub of Los Angeles. "This is nothing more than an attempt to get rid of a pro-union employee. The Teamsters will fight every step of the way to get Rick's job back," he vowed. The Teamsters claim that Coke really sacked the worker because of his work three months ago in organizing Coke merchandising workers under the powerful union's aegis.

The dismissal came after he was allegedly spotted in the back room of a store where he was making a delivery swigging on a Pepsi. Bronson believes the person who reported him for publicly straying from his home brand had been hired by Coke to follow him and catch him off guard.

The union alleges that Coke fired Bronson under a company rule that bars "slander" of the world famous product after he was seen drinking the rival soft drink, Santangelo said. "Hey, Rick's a Pepsi drinker, what can he do?" he said. But it's not as if he was seen drinking a Pepsi in Times Square on live TV -- he was in the backroom of a store. "This wasn't slanderous, they just wanted him because of his union activity," he claimed.

A spokesman for the Coca-Cola Bottling Co. in S. California, Bob Phillips, declined to comment on the allegations and on the case citing California's privacy laws, but said the company would not resort to a pretext to fire an employee active in a union. "I can tell you that we have at this company a strict policy against retaliation and the company does not retaliate, nor do we tolerate any retaliation against employees," he said.

The Teamsters Local 848 has filed unfair labour practice charges against Coca-Cola over the incident, according to the union. Coca-Cola in California and the Teamster have been at loggerheads over labour-related disputes, including strikes, involving Coke workers in recent months and negotiations over other contentious issues are still under way.

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY:

June 16, 1963

FIRST WOMAN IN SPACE

On June 16, 1963, aboard *Vostok 6*, Soviet Cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova becomes the first woman to travel into space. After 48 orbits and 71 hours, she returned to earth, having spent more time in space than all U.S. astronauts combined to that date.

Valentina Vladimirovna Tereshkova was born to a peasant family in Maslennikovo, Russia, in 1937. She began work at a textile factory when she was 18, and at age 22 she made her first parachute jump under the auspices of a local aviation club. Her enthusiasm for skydiving brought her to the attention of the Soviet space program, which sought to put a woman in space in the early 1960s as a means of achieving another "space first" before the United States. As an accomplished parachutist, Tereshkova was well equipped to handle one of the most challenging procedures of a *Vostok* space flight: the mandatory ejection from the capsule at about 20,000 feet during reentry. In February 1962, she was selected along with three other woman parachutists and a female pilot to begin intensive training to become a cosmonaut.

In 1963, Tereshkova was chosen to take part in the second dual flight in the *Vostok* program, involving spacecrafts *Vostok 5* and *Vostok 6*. On June 14, 1963, *Vostok 5* was launched into space with cosmonaut Valeri Bykovsky aboard. With Bykovsky still orbiting the earth, Tereshkova was launched into space on June 16 aboard *Vostok 6*. The two spacecrafts had different orbits but at one point came within three miles of each other, allowing the two cosmonauts to exchange brief communications. Tereshkova's spacecraft was guided by an automatic control system, and she never took manual control. On June 19, after just under three days in space, *Vostok 6* reentered the atmosphere, and Tereshkova successfully parachuted to earth after

ejecting at 20,000 feet. Bykovsky and *Vostok 5* landed safely a few hours later.

After her historic space flight, Valentina Tereshkova received the Order of Lenin and Hero of the Soviet Union awards. In November 1963, she married fellow cosmonaut Andrian Nikolayev, reportedly under pressure from Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev, who saw a propaganda advantage in the pairing of the two single cosmonauts. The couple made several goodwill trips abroad, had a daughter, and later separated. In 1962, Tereshkova became a member of the Supreme Soviet, the USSR's national parliament, and she served as the Soviet representative to numerous international women's organizations and events. She never entered space again, and hers was the last space flight by a female cosmonaut until the 1980s.

The United States screened a group of female pilots in 1959 and 1960 for possible astronaut training but later decided to restrict astronaut qualification to men. The first American woman in space was astronaut and physicist Sally Ride, who served as mission specialist on a flight of the space shuttle *Challenger* in 1983.

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SPORTS:

College Baseball

The championship series for the college baseball title is coming to a close as the eight teams -- Stanford, S. Carolina, LSU, CS Fullerton, Rice, SMS, Miami and Texas -- battle to make it to the College World Series.

CHAMPIONSHIP GAMES:

- Saturday, June 21 Game 1 -- TBD, 7:00 p.m.
- Sunday, June 22 Game 2 -- TBD, 2:30 p.m.
- Monday, June 23 Game 3 -- TBD, 7:00 p.m. (x)

(x) - if necessary
(ALL TIMES EASTERN)

ENTERTAINMENT/BIOGRAPHY:

Actor Gregory Peck Dies in Los Angeles at Age 87

(Reuters) - Gregory Peck, one of the last great stars from Hollywood's golden era and a man who embodied on-screen heroism and dignity, died peacefully early Thursday at his home, his spokesman said on Thursday.

He was 87, and his films included some of Hollywood's most memorable: "To Kill a Mockingbird," in which he played a white lawyer defending a black man; "Roman Holiday,"



"Gentleman's Agreement," one of the first movies to confront the subject of anti-Semitism; and Alfred Hitchcock's "Spellbound."

His death came just days after the American Film Institute named his role as the idealistic Southern lawyer Atticus Finch in "To Kill a Mockingbird" as the greatest movie hero of all time. The role earned Peck an Oscar for best actor in 1963.

The tall, lean, square-jawed Peck began his film career in the 1940s and became a Hollywood symbol of moral strength and sincerity both on screen and off. At one point, Democrats tried to persuade him to run for governor of California -- a role that Republicans later succeeded in casting Ronald Reagan for.

Rarely in more than 50 films did he play anything but a "good guy," a notable exception being the Nazi villain doctor, Josef Mengele, in the popular "The Boys From Brazil" (1978).

Peck was active in the film industry, serving as founding chairman of the AFI and as head the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences from 1967 to 1970. In 1968, President Lyndon Johnson awarded him the Medal of Freedom, America's highest civilian honor.

Born Eldred Gregory Peck on April 5, 1916, his first name came from a telephone directory and was quickly dropped. Peck entered St. John's Military Academy in Los Angeles at the age of 10. There he received discipline and large doses of Catholic training, and briefly considered becoming a priest. Moving to New York, he was a barker at the 1939 World's Fair and soon started acting. His first Broadway appearance, in 1942's "Morning Star," earned him a test with movie producer David O. Selznick -- who turned him down. In 1944, however, he starred as a Russian guerrilla fighter in "Days of Glory," which led to a role the next year as a thoughtful priest in "The Keys of the Kingdom," a role that garnered his first Oscar nomination.



A bad back kept Peck out of World War II, and with many stars in uniform, Peck had his choice of studios but refused to sign long-term contracts or tie himself to a single studio. Among his early films were "The Yearling" (1946), "The Macomber Affair" (1947), "Duel in the Sun" (1947), "Yellow Sky" (1948), "Twelve O'Clock High" (1950), "The Gunfighter" (1950), "Captain Horatio Hornblower" (1951), "The World in His Arms" (1952), and "David and Bathsheba" (1951). In 1956 Peck starred in two of his most successful movies, "The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit" and "Moby Dick." In 1958, Peck co-produced and starred in "The Big Country," a success that was followed by the bigger ones of "The Guns of Navarone" (a 1962 war thriller) and "To Kill a Mockingbird." Peck's straight-backed style proved as perfect for the 1976 hit horror film "The Omen" as for "MacArthur" (1977) and the 1959 nuclear war parable "On the Beach."

Peck's marriage to his first wife, Greta Rice, ended in divorce in 1954. In 1955 he married French journalist Veronique Passani. In addition to her, he is survived by their son and daughter and two sons from his first marriage.

FEATURE:

Civil War:

Part II

STRATEGIES: As men poured into the armies, Northern and Southern leaders discussed strategies that would achieve victory. These strategies contrasted significantly because the two sides had very different war aims. The Confederacy sought independence and only had to defend itself. The North sought to restore the Union, which meant it had to compel the seceded states to give up their hopes to found a new nation. Northern armies would have to invade the Confederacy, destroy its capacity to wage war, and crush the will of the Southern people to resist. The Confederacy could win by prolonging the war to a point where the Northern people would consider the effort too costly in lives and money to persist. The South had a compelling example in the American Revolution of a seemingly weaker power defeating a much stronger one. The colonies had been at an even greater material disadvantage in relation to Britain than were the Confederate states in relation to the North, yet the colonies won, with the help of France, by dragging the war out and exhausting the British will to win. If the North chose not to mount a military effort to coerce the seceded states back into the Union, the Confederacy would win independence by default.

Lincoln and other Northern leaders, however, had no intention of letting the Southern states go without a fight. The most prominent American military figure in the spring of 1861 was Winfield Scott, the general-in-chief of the United States Army. Physically frail but with a brilliant mind, Scott conceived a long-range strategy to bring Northern victory. Subsequently named the “Anaconda Plan” (after the South American snake that squeezes its prey to death), Scott’s plan sought to apply pressure on the Confederacy from all sides. A combined force of naval and army units would sweep down the Mississippi River,

dividing the Confederacy’s eastern and western states. At the same time, the Union navy would institute a blockade to deny the Confederacy access to European manufactured goods. Should the South continue to resist even after the loss of the Mississippi and the closing of its ports, Scott envisioned a major invasion into the heart of the Confederacy. He estimated it would take two to three years and 300,000 men to carry out this strategy.

Except for underestimating, by about half, the length of time and number of men it would take to bring success, Scott had sketched the broad strategy the North would implement to defeat the South over the next four years. The United States Navy applied increasing pressure along the Confederate coasts, Northern forces took control of the Mississippi River by the middle of 1863, and large armies marched into Virginia, Tennessee, Georgia, and the Carolinas, eventually forcing a Confederate surrender in the spring of 1865.

The Confederacy pursued what often is termed a defensive-offensive strategy. Simply put, Confederate armies generally adopted a defensive strategy, protecting as much of their territory as possible against Northern incursions. However, when circumstances seemed to offer an opportunity to gain a decided advantage over Northern forces, the Confederacy launched offensives—the three most important of which culminated in the battles of Antietam (Maryland) and Perryville (Kentucky) in 1862, and Gettysburg (Pennsylvania) in 1863.

EFFECTS OF GEOGRAPHY:

Geography played a major role in how effectively the two sides were able to carry out their strategies. The sheer size of the Confederacy posed a daunting obstacle to Northern military forces. Totalling more than 1,940,000 sq km (750,000 sq mi) and without a well-developed network of roads, the Southern landscape challenged the North’s ability to supply armies that maneuvered at increasing distances from Union bases.

[Stay Tuned...](#)

Quote of the Week:

Truth is truth
Til the end of reckoning.

-William Shakespeare

Word of the Week:

Chowchow (chou'chou) *n.* A Chinese term for any mixture, but generally mixed pickles.

Fact of the Week:

The bald eagle's nest can weight as much as a ton.

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And
Have a Great Week!

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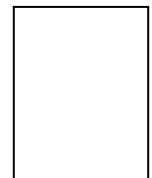
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