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Aspects of Hominin Evolution

There are different understandings on the definition of hominin that have been put forth. As for the 21st century, hominin is comprehended to point to all the great apes. The tribe is composed of humans (genus homo), the gorillas, the chimpanzees (pan), the orangutans and their ancestors (Lowenstine et al. 250-276). During the Miocene, climate changes brought about the continental drift between Africa and the Middle East and this led to the migration of hominoids from Africa to Europe and Asia ca. post-17 mya. When it became colder in Europe apes became extinct as some migrated to Africa ca. 9-10 mya and became ancestors to chimpanzees and gorillas and after that the hominids (Gow, 573-574).

Hominids from early times developed tendencies of having an upright posture by sitting upright and standing on their legs under particular circumstances. Primates would stand to able to spot any food sources, carry with them or throw some things, to see any predators or to show their dominance. This desires led to the emergence of the bipedal ape that took advantage of a niche that was not occupied before. Bipedalism had countable advantages such as thermoregulation. Upright posture had a smaller surface area of the body exposed to the sun and sufficient flow of air across the body. Bipedalism led to the creation of tools as the hands were free. It was also energy efficient (Filler, 1-6).

Several observable traits such as interactions among animals, protection against predators and any harm of the species itself and its offspring, survival against competition, are some of the characteristics that have seen a species through natural selection over the many mutation traits. Australopithecus afarensis was the first and the earliest biped fossil to be discovered. It had evolved from Australopithecus anamensis around 3.9 million years ago and was found in the Kanapoi region of East Lake Turkana in 1965. D. Jonhanson and T. White named Australopithecus afarensis as a species in 1978. Australopithecus afarensis lived in northeastern Africa from around 4.1 to 2.7 million years ago (Johanson and White, 1104-1105).

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