A new archaic Homo sapiens fossil from Lake Eyasi, Tanzania

Author(s)

M. Domı´nguez-Rodrigo a, A. Mabulla b , L. Luque c , J.W. Thompson d , J. Rink e , P. Bushozi b , F. Dı´ez-Martin f , L. Alcala

Abstract

Introduction and general stratigraphy The Kohl Larsen expeditions to Lake Eyasi (Tanzania) in the early 20th century discovered the remains of three hominid skulls, one of them fairly complete (Eyasi 1), of unknown Middle Pleistocene age (Mehlman, 1984, 1989). The lack of chronological control resulted in the exclusion of these remains from the mainstream of discussions concerning the emergence of Homo sapiens. Since then, a hominid mandible and occipital fragments have been discovered (Mehlman, 1989; Brauer and Mabulla, 1996). Recently a new frontal bone was retrieved from the lake sediments in association with a core and flake industry classified within the early MSA (Middle Stone Age) tradition (Domı´nguez-Rodrigo et al., 2007). All these specimens come from the areas of Northeast Bay and West Bay into which the fossiliferous Eyasi region can be divided (Mehlman, 1987, 1989; Fig. 1). Lake Eyasi is an asymmetric lacustrine basin in relation to the Tanzanian Divergence Zone of the Gregory Rift. It is situated south of the Crater Highlands and is formed by a tectonic step constituted by the escarpment resulting from a northwest fault. A flexure zone can be documented to the east where the Proterozoic and Archaean basement outcrops (Ebinger et al., 1997). The Eyasi lake basin adopted its modern form about 1 million years ago (Pickering, 1961; Mac Intyre et al.,