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PALEOANTHROPOLOGICAL RESEARCH AND IN SITU EXCAVATIONS AT THE PLIO-PLEISTOCENE DEPOSITS OF THE GALILI AREA, SOMALI REGION, ETHIOPIA

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The Galili area represents a significant Ethiopian location of hominid discoveries, located in the Rift Valley east of the Awash river 10km from the small village Gedamyto. Research of the PAR Team under the direction of the Institute for Anthropology, University of Vienna began in 2000 and will be continued over the next years. The significance of the Plio-Pleistocene deposits is given by the discovered hominid and faunal remains, the time range, and the geographical position. Our sites within the Galili area (Galila and Satkawhini) are important sources of information because they are filling a gap between the known sites in the north like at Middle Awash and such in the south like Shungura at the Omo. The investigated sites are situated in the upper parts of the Stratoid Basalts of the Afar Group. The formations predominantly comprise sedimentary deposits and to a minor extent volcanic layers of basaltic and acidic chemistry. The sediments were settled in a lacustrine environment, interfingered by several fluvial facies. Biostratigraphical as well as preliminary absolute dating indicate an age of the hominid bearing sediments of 3.5 to 4.5 mya which gives Galili a temporal position among the oldest hominid sites in Africa discovered so far. Faunal remains (more than 1000 cranial and postcranial) of large mammals (Equidae, Rhinoceratidae, Dinotheriidae, Elephantidae, Bovidae, Suidae, Hippopotamidae, Giraffidae, Cercopithecidea, and Hominidae), reptiles (Crocodylia and Chelonia) and fishes indicate an environment that can be broadly summarized as a woodland with patches of grassland in the vicinity of lakes and rivers. The hominid findings comprise four isolated teeth from different localities and probably one postcranial element (clavicula). Size measurements and morphology of the teeth support a tentative classification into the taxa *A. afarensis* or *A. anamensis* which is in good correspondance with the preliminary dating of the deposits. The initial surface surveying of the area was supplemented by in situ excavations at particularly fossiliferous spots from 2003 onwards which yielded abundant primate findings. These excavations will be expanded into several promising localities descovered in 2004 where more complete specimens can be expected.

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