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WHICH HUMAN ANCESTOR MADE FIRST STONE TOOLS?

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Along the shores of Africa's Lake Victoria in Kenya roughly 2.9 million years ago, early human ancestors used some of the oldest stone tools ever found to butcher hippos and pound plant material, according to new research (*Science*). Though multiple lines of evidence suggest the artifacts are likely to be about 2.9 million years old, the artifacts can be more conservatively dated to between 2.6 and 3 million years old. The study presents what are likely to be the oldest examples of a hugely important stone-age innovation known to scientists as the Oldowan toolkit, as well as the oldest evidence of hominins consuming very large animals, says a release. Excavations at the site, named Nyayanga and located on the Homa Peninsula in western Kenya, also produced a pair of massive molars belonging to the human species' close evolutionary relative *Paranthropus*.

The teeth are the oldest fossilised *Paranthropus* remains yet found, and their presence at a site loaded with stone tools raises intriguing questions about which human ancestor made those tools. The assumption among researchers has long been that only the genus *Homo*, to which humans belong, was capable of making stone tools. Whichever hominin lineage was responsible for the tools, they were found more than 800 miles from the previously known oldest examples of Oldowan stone tools — 2.6-million-year-old tools unearthed in Ledi-Geraru, Ethiopia.

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