

Current events

Mzalendo Kibunja

Department of Anthropology, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey 08903, U.S.A. and National Museums of Kenya, P.O. Box 40658, Nairobi, Kenya

Pliocene and Pleistocene archeological sites west of Lake Turkana, Kenya

Hélène Roche

National Museums of Kenya, P.O. Box 40658, Nairobi, Kenya and Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, ERA 28 du CRA, 92190 Meudon, France

Francis H. Brown

Department of Geology and Geophysics, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah 84112, U.S.A.

Richard E. Leakey

Kenya Wildlife Services, P.O. Box 40241, Nairobi, Kenya

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Geographical setting

The Nachukui Formation lies between present day Lake Turkana and the Murua Rith and Labur Ranges to the west. Sedimentary deposits in the area consist of patchy Miocene strata and fossiliferous Pliocene and Pleistocene deposits. Woody shrubs, acacia trees and doum palms presently exist along the ephemeral streams and the broad interfluvial plains are covered with short grasses and xerophytic forbs. The region is now dissected by west–east draining seasonal streams and this configuration may not have changed since antiquity, except that during Pliocene and Pleistocene times streams probably drained into a larger river system or into a different lake than today (Brown & Feibel, 1988).

The formation was deposited in the Turkana Basin, an integrated paleogeographic unit in which all Pliocene and older Pleistocene deposits are intimately related (Feibel *et al.*, 1991). These strata make up the Omo Group, which includes the Shungura Formation in the lower Omo Valley and the Koobi Fora Formation east of the lake. The Nachukui Formation has an aggregate thickness of 730 m and is subdivided into eight members using widespread volcanic tuffs as marker beds (Harris *et al.*, 1988*a,b*). These are (with the approximate age ranges given parenthetically), the Lonyumun (>4 Ma), Kataboi (4–3.35 Ma), Lomekwi (3.35–2.5 Ma), Lokalalei (2.5–2.35 Ma), Kalochoro (2.35–1.9 Ma), Kaitio (1.9–1.65 Ma), Natoo (1.65–1.3 Ma) and Nariokotome (1.3–<0.7 Ma) Members.

Archeological sites

The archeological sites of Lokalalei (GaJh 5), Kokiselei (FxJh 5) and Naiyena Engol (FxJh 6) are named for the ephemeral streams along which they occur. Stratigraphically, the