

# Archeologists believe they have found the oldest example of tool use

April 16 2015, by Bob Yirka

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A team of archeological researchers, led by Sonia Harmand of Stony Brook University, has announced that they believe they have found tools used by human ancestors approximately 800,000 years before the current record holder. Harmand made the announcement at this year's Paleoanthropology Society meeting held in San Francisco.

Currently, the consensus in the archeology community, is that tools found at a site called Gona in Ethiopia, dated back to 2.6 million years ago, are the oldest—that timeline conforms neatly with theories that suggest modern humans first appeared on the scene approximately 2.8 million years ago, which would make us the first users of tools. But now, Harmand and her team are challenging that idea by declaring that they have found tools that have been dated as far back as 3.3 million years ago, which would make the first [tool](#) users one of our ancestors, not us—likely Australopithecus, or Kenyanthropus.

The recently discovered [tool](#) samples were found at a site known as Lomekwi 3 in Kenya. They found some of the stone tool samples actually lying on the ground, which of course led to an excavation. The tools the team found included cores (stones with flakes chipped off), flakes (chipped off material) and anvils (stones used to knock chips off another stone). The team claims the tools were clearly "knapped"—a term used to describe stone that has been intentionally chipped to achieve a desired effect, rather than being chipped by other incidental means—an analysis of the tools showed, for example, that some had clearly been rotated during the chipping process. The team used a dating

technique that involves noting changes in the Earth's magnetic field, as seen in soil samples, to date the tools. The dated age of the tools is significant also because back in 2010 another team of researchers found bone samples dated to 3.4 million years ago, that had what looked like markings made by someone using a tool of some sort. That claim was met with criticism, however, as there was no way to verify what had caused the marks—but now, it has taken on added significance, as the date is so close to the recently found tools—future research will no doubt focus on attempting to discover if the marks on the bones match closely with the tools.

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