

found. *Australopithecus anamensis*, who lived 4.2 to 3.9 million years ago, is known from fossils first found by Bryan Patterson in 1965 and later by Meave Leakey in 1994 at Kanapoi on Lake Turkana in northern Kenya. *Australopithecus ramidus*, who lived 4.4 million years ago, is known from fossils found in the Middle Awash in Ethiopia. Both *anamensis* and *ramidus* represent forms intermediate between the later gracile australopithecines, *afarensis* and *africanus*, and the not yet palaeontologically attested earlier form which must have been the common ancestor of bonobo, man, chimpanzee and gorilla. It has been proposed that the *ramidus* type, which resembles the bonobo and chimpanzee particularly closely, be placed in a genus of its own named '*Ardipithecus*'.

The gracile australopithecines were ancestral to both the robust australopithecines and *Homo habilis*. The robust australopithecines lived about two and a half to one million years ago. The variety known as *Australopithecus robustus* is known from numerous finds in South Africa at sites such as Kromdraai and Swartkrans, dating from between 1.9 and 1.5 million years ago, whereas the variety *Australopithecus boisei* is known mainly from sites in East Africa such as the Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania, dating from between 2.3. and 1.4 years ago. The latter was first called '*Zinjanthropus boisei*' by its finders, Louis and Mary Leakey, before it was reassigned to the genus *Australopithecus*, whereby 'Zinj' is an old name for East Africa and 'Boise' was the surname of one of the Leakeys' sponsors. Because the robust australopithecines were not ancestral to us and differed so much in appearance from their contemporary, *Homo habilis*, some palaeontologists used to favour placing the robust australopithecines in a genus of their own named '*Paranthropus*'.

The other descendant of the gracile *Australopithecus afarensis* was our ancestor *Homo habilis*, who lived from two and a half to one and a half million years ago in East Africa alongside the much brawnier and ultimately less successful robust australopithecines. Their extinction was probably the direct result of their being outcompeted by our ancestors. In fact, I do not doubt that it is a good thing for the robust australopithecines that they died out when they did. The history of our own species makes it quite clear that a species so similar to ourselves would have been exploited with utmost ruthlessness, had it survived long enough to coexist with *Homo sapiens*. Palaeontologists differentiate between the more australopithecine-like early form of *habilis*, known as *Homo rudolfensis*, who lived 2.4 to 1.8 million years ago, and the later form, *Homo habilis* proper, who is attested in the period from 1.9 to 1.6 million years ago. The earliest *habilis*