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A New Face to an Old Name: Recent Discovery of a Cranium of the earliest *Australopithecus* in Ethiopia.

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Thursday, September 24, 2020, 7:00 p.m. MDT-- Via Zoom Webinar

To register: https://unm.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_ap422-q6RBWjKw-hTdkVSw



Woranso-Mille, a paleoanthropological site located in the Afar region of Ethiopia, has become one of the most important sites for understanding the evolutionary history of early hominins during the mid-Pliocene. The geological sequence at this site (~150 meters-thick) samples almost one and a half million years, between >4.3 and <3.0 million years ago (Ma). It is the only site thus far that has provided incontrovertible fossil evidence showing that there were multiple related hominin species co-existing in close geographic proximity during the mid-Pliocene (3.5 – 3.3 Ma). Recently, a 3.8-million-year-old almost complete hominin cranium was discovered at the site and it was assigned to *A. anamensis* - the earliest known species of the genus *Australopithecus* – dated to 4.2 – 3.9 Ma. In addition to revealing the face of *A. anamensis* for the first time, the new cranium also challenged the long-held hypothesis of direct, linear evolution from *A. anamensis* to Lucy's species, *A. afarensis*, and added about 100kyr to the younger end of the *A. anamensis* time range. A new, more complex scenario for the origins of the human lineage is discussed in light of these latest finds and analyses.

Dr. Haile-Selassie was named by the prestigious journal *Nature* as one of the World's top 10 scientists for 2019. He earned his Ph.D. from the University of California Berkeley and has been leading expeditions in his native Ethiopia for decades, personally discovering and analyzing many important fossils of several Australopithecine & pre-Australopithecine species dating between about 5.8 and 2.5 million years ago, as well as a number of fossils of early forms of genus *Homo*.

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