**A CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT FOR HOMINID EVOLUTION: PRELIMINARY BIOMARKER AND COMPOUND SPECIFIC ISOTOPE DATA FROM LAKE MAGADI, KENYA**

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The Hominid Sites and Paleolakes Drilling Project (HSPDP) seeks to understand the paleoclimatic and paleoenvironmental context of human evolution and development by analysis of paleolacustrine cores taken near key hominin fossil and artifact localities in Kenya and Ethiopia. Here, we present biomarker and compound specific isotope data from a ~200 m drill core from Lake Magadi, Kenya. Located 20 km from the Koora Plain in the southern Kenya Rift, and adjacent to the Olorgesailie basin, Lake Magadi is in one of the richest Early-Late Pleistocene archaeological localities in Africa, a region that has been key in debates about the relationship between climate and evolution. Preliminary biomarker work has shown promising abundances of leaf waxes, whose isotopic compositions of hydrogen and carbon are commonly used as proxies for paleoprecipitation and watershed vegetation composition, respectively. Present-day Lake Magadi is a saline pan, a descendant of a series of paleolakes that have occupied its drainage basin for approximately one million years. Hominid evolution milestones such as the mastering of fire as a tool, rapid encephalization, and the emergence of *Homo sapiens* all are thought to have occurred in the time frame encompassed by our record.

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