

Newly discovered jawbone fuels mystery of ancient human evolution

A fisherman who pulled in his nets 25 kilometers off the coast of Taiwan got a surprising catch: the lower jawbone of an ancient human. The bone (pictured)—dredged from a watery grave in the Penghu Channel—is robust and sports unusually large molars and premolars, suggesting that it once belonged to an archaic member of our genus *Homo*, according to a report published online today in *Nature Communications*. The Penghu jaw and teeth most closely resemble a partial skull of *H. erectus* from Longtan Cave in Hexian on the mainland of China, as well as earlier *H. erectus* fossils. Although it wasn't possible to date the jawbone directly, it was found with an extinct species of hyena that suggests this archaic human was alive in the past 400,000 years and, most likely, in the past 200,000 years. If so, the find suggests that *H. erectus* persisted late in Asia, or that there were several other types of humans still alive at the time in this region.

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