

UNIT ONE

HISTORY, HISTORIOGRAPHY, AND HUMAN EVOLUTION

Historical Methodology and Historiography

1.1 History and Historiography

1.1.1 History as an Academic Discipline

History is the study of past events, actions, and ideas. It involves examining and interpreting evidence to understand how past societies functioned and how they have influenced the present and future. The term "history" comes from the Greek word "istoria," meaning inquiry or knowledge gained through investigation. As an academic discipline, history covers a range of topics from social, economic, technological, and political developments to change and continuity over time.

Key Aspects of History:

- **Understanding the Past:** Historians answer questions about what happened, when, how, why, and its consequences.
- **Learning from the Past:** Studying history helps us avoid repeating past mistakes and provides insights into present and future societies.
- **Establishing Identity:** History contributes to understanding the identity of families, social groups, and nations.

1.1.2 Historiography

Historiography is the study of how history is written and understood. It encompasses the methods and techniques historians use to research and write about the past. The development of historiography is marked by key figures like Herodotus, known as the "father of history," and Leopold von Ranke, who is considered the "father of modern historiography."

Key Elements in Historiography:

- **Sources:** Primary sources (e.g., documents, letters) provide direct evidence of historical events, while secondary sources (e.g., history books) interpret these events.

- **Objectivity:** Historians strive for unbiased writing, though complete objectivity is challenging. Reliable history is based on accurate and comprehensive evidence.
- **Methods:** Historians use techniques such as source criticism and interpretation to present history accurately. Modern technology has influenced these methods significantly.

Ethiopian Historiography:

- **Traditional Sources:** Indigenous Ethiopian historians and chroniclers have documented history since the 14th century.
- **European Contributions:** European scholars like Job Ludolf contributed to Ethiopian studies in the 17th century.
- **Imbalance:** Historical studies initially focused more on the northern parts of Ethiopia due to better record-keeping and fewer sources from the south.

1.1.3 Sources of History

Historians rely on various sources to reconstruct the past:

- **Primary Sources:** Direct evidence from the time period being studied, such as letters, artifacts, and eyewitness accounts.
- **Secondary Sources:** Interpretations or analyses based on primary sources, such as history books and scholarly articles.
- **Oral Sources:** Can be either primary or secondary, depending on their directness and reliability.

Importance of Critical Examination:

- Historians must critically evaluate sources to ensure their authenticity and interpret their meaning accurately to avoid misrepresentation.

1.1.4 Periodization in History

Periodization is the division of history into distinct periods to make studying and understanding past events more manageable. Various approaches include:

- **Human Behavior Approach:** Divides history into Savagery, Barbarous, and Civilization stages.
- **Tool Making Approach:** Classifies periods as Stone Age, Bronze Age, and Iron Age.
- **Economic Life Approach:** Segments history into Hunting and Gathering, Farming and Animal Husbandry, and the Age of Industry.

Notable Periods:

- **Prehistory:** Time before writing, including the Stone Age.
- **History:** Post-4000 BC, marked by the advent of writing.
- **African and Ethiopian Periodization:** Includes pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial periods in Africa, with Ethiopian history uniquely divided into ancient, medieval, and modern periods.

1.2 Origin of Human Beings

1.2.1 Theories of Origin

Two main theories address human origins:

- **Creationist View:** Belief in divine creation of humans and the universe by supernatural forces.
- **Scientific View:** The theory of evolution, popularized by Charles Darwin, posits that humans evolved from simpler forms through natural selection over millions of years.

Scientific Debate:

- Darwin's "Origin of Species" (1859) proposed that human beings evolved gradually from lower forms of life, shaping the modern understanding of human evolution.

1.2.2 Stages of Human Evolution

Hominids

- **Definition:** Hominids are members of the biological family that includes modern humans and extinct human-like ancestors. Key traits are enlarged brains and the ability to walk upright.
- **Closest Relatives:** Gorillas and chimpanzees are the closest living relatives of humans, classified in a separate family (Pongidae).
- **Common Ancestor:** Humans, gorillas, and chimpanzees share a common ancestor that lived between 8 and 5 million years ago.

Australopithecines: The First Humans

- **Meaning:** "Australopithecine" means "southern ape," referring to fossils found in South Africa.
- **Evolution:** Believed to have evolved around 6 million years ago in Africa.
- **Characteristics:**
 - Small canine teeth.
 - Bipedalism (walking on two legs).
 - Brain size: 390-550 cc.
 - Body weight: 27-49 kg, height: 1.1-1.5 m.
- **Fossil Sites:** Ethiopia, Tanzania, Kenya, South Africa, Chad.

Table of Australopithecine Species

Name	Place of Discovery	Age (Estimated Time)	Year of Discovery
Australopithecus anamensis	Kenya	4.2 - 3.9 million years ago	1994
Australopithecus afarensis	Ethiopia (Hadar, Afar region)	3.9 - 2.9 million years ago	1974
Australopithecus bahrelghazali	Central Africa (Lake Chad)	3.5 – 3 million years ago	1995
Australopithecus aethiopicus	Lake Turkana region, Kenya	2.9 – 2.6 million years ago	1985
Australopithecus africanus	Southern Africa	3 – 2.5 million years	1924
Australopithecus boisei	East Africa	2.5 - 1.5 million years	1959
Australopithecus robustus	Southern Africa	2.5 – 1.5 million years	1938

Genus Homo and Appearance of Modern Humans

- **Origin:** The genus Homo is believed to have originated in Africa about 2.5 million years ago.
- **Evolution from Australopithecus:**
 - Members of Homo had larger brains and smaller jaws compared to Australopithecus.

Key Species of Genus Homo:

1. **Homo habilis (Handy Human)**

- **Timeline:** About 2 million years ago.
- **Tools:** First stone tools (Oldowan technology).
- **Fossil Sites:** Olduvai Gorge (Tanzania), Sterkfontein (South Africa), Lower Omo Basin (Ethiopia).

2. **Homo erectus (Upright Human)**

- **Timeline:** 1.7 - 1.8 million years ago.
- **Features:** Slightly smaller brain and larger teeth compared to modern humans.
- **Tools:** Acheulian hand axes; first hominids to use fire.
- **Fossil Sites:** Ethiopia, Indonesia, Germany, China.

3. **Homo sapiens (Modern Humans)**

- **Archaic Homo sapiens:** Evolved from Homo erectus between 300,000 and 600,000 years ago.
- **Modern Homo sapiens:** First appeared around 100,000 years ago.
- **Fossil Sites:** Kibish (Ethiopia), Porc Epic (near Dire Dawa), various sites in Africa, Near East, Middle East, Europe.

Early Cultural Developments

- **Stone Age:** Began around 2.5 million years ago and ended about 5,000 years ago.
 - **Divisions:** Paleolithic (Old Stone Age), Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age), Neolithic (New Stone Age).

Paleolithic Period (Old Stone Age)

- **Key Developments:** Discovery of fire, cave dwelling, clothing from animal skins, and cave paintings.
- **Subdivisions:**
 - **Lower Paleolithic:** 2.5 million - 200,000 B.P. (Oldowan and Acheulean tools).
 - **Middle Paleolithic:** 200,000 - 30,000 B.P. (smaller, more refined tools).
 - **Upper Paleolithic:** 40,000 - 10,000 B.P. (standardized blade technology, microliths).

Neolithic Revolution

- **Transition:** From hunting-gathering to food production (domestication of plants and animals) starting around 11,000 years ago.
- **Impact:** Shift to sedentary life, development of villages and complex societies, technological advances (e.g., pottery, hatchets).

Neolithic Revolution in Ethiopia

- **Evidence:** Neolithic culture present from around 4,000 B.C. with ceramics, polished stone tools, and domesticated plants and animals.
- **Notable Sites:** Gobedra, Lalibela Cave, Lake Beseka, Akordat, Barentu.