

---

# Early hominin predatory behavior in the African Early Pleistocene: a review of the evidence

Manuel Domínguez-Rodrigo\*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Complutense University of Madrid (UCM) – Espagne

## Résumé

The past 40 years have seen an increase in the taphonomic evidence for two million-year-old hominins acquiring animal protein of small and medium-sized animals through hunting. This increase in taphonomic knowledge has unveiled that most of the early Pleistocene archaeofaunal assemblages are either poorly preserved, result from the action of non-hominin mammalian carnivores or are mixed palimpsests produced by independent use of the same spaces by hominins and carnivores. This mix has produced confusion in the past and scavenging models are still based on the inability to separate agency in site formation. Of the classical African sites prior to 1.5 Ma, only FLK Zinj (Tanzania) and Kanjera (Kenya) have been argued to be fully or almost fully anthropogenic. It is only in these anthropogenic assemblages that primary access to carcass resources has been taphonomically confirmed. Lingering partisans of passive scavenging hypotheses are basing their interpretations on archaeological deposits resulting from "common-amenity" scenarios or on flawed assumptions of other more discrete assemblages as will be shown here. Recent discoveries of new anthropogenic sites in Bed I of Olduvai Gorge (PTK, DS) contribute to confirm and expand interpretations of early hominin hunting behavior. Here, we will show that much of the former scavenging models were artefacts of method more than empirical evidence of carcass acquisition strategies by hominins. New machine learning methods applied to taphonomic analyses of Olduvai's Bed I sites show a much better resolution than previous analyses. The scavenging hypothesis, which still enjoys some predicament among some researchers, is today more a reflection on academic dynamics than of heuristics.

**Mots-Clés:** Human evolution, Zooarchaeology, Taphonomy, hunting, scavenging

---

\*Intervenant