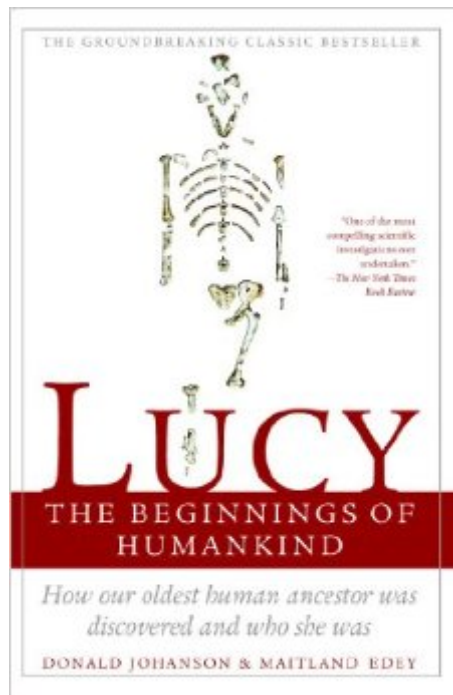


The book was found

LUCY: THE BEGINNINGS OF HUMANKIND



Synopsis

“A glorious success” [The science manages to be as exciting and spellbinding as the juiciest gossip] • (San Francisco Chronicle) in the story of the discovery of “Lucy” — the oldest, best-preserved skeleton of any erect-walking human ancestor ever found. When Donald Johanson found a partial skeleton, approximately 3.5 million years old, in a remote region of Ethiopia in 1974, a headline-making controversy was launched that continues on today. Bursting with all the suspense and intrigue of a fast paced adventure novel, here is Johanson’s lively account of the extraordinary discovery of “Lucy.” By expounding the controversial change Lucy makes in our view of human origins, Johanson provides a vivid, behind-the-scenes account of the history of paleoanthropology and the colorful, eccentric characters who were and are a part of it. Never before have the mystery and intricacy of our origins been so clearly and compellingly explained as in this astonishing and dramatic book.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The value of this book hasn’t diminished with the passage of time. It’s compelling story of the growth of paleoanthropology in the 20th Century remains unmatched. Johanson’s role should be known to most, but this personal relation endures as a landmark for those interested in the development of humanity. He’s given us a lucid story of the life and work of the paleoanthropologist both in the field and laboratory. He is candid in assessing other workers and himself in tracing the line of descent from ape-like creatures to modern humans. He opens with a peerless overview of the key figures in the field, their insights, prejudices, successes and failures. The field was dominated by British

research. The small German community of scientists held little challenge, and American researchers were nonexistent. Heady with victories that had left the Victorian Empire firmly established, the British stoutly maintained that intelligent humans were the product of the North European environment. Tropic peoples were torpid and apathetic. The harsher conditions of Northern Europe had forced increased cranial capacity, leading to intelligence. Brain growth, in their view, had preceded human bipedalism. If cranial enlargement was shown to be of British origins, so much the better. The Piltdown find was a prime example of that scenario, nearly universally accepted as fitting into the preconceived assumption. When a tiny skull found in 1925 in South Africa indicated that a human ancestor walked upright over a million years ago, there was consternation. Modern human roots couldn't be African and bipedalism before intelligence seemed outlandish. The Taung Child, however, couldn't be refuted, increasing the attention to African origins.

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