

**Project Title:** Revealing Transitions Toward Modern Human Behavior  
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**Department:** Anthropology

**Project summary:** In July-August of 2006, we excavated at the Middle-Late Pleistocene site of Erfkroon in South Africa. We worked in collaboration with Dr. James Brink (National Museum, Bloemfontein, South Africa) and Dr. Stephen Tooth (of Wales). Two Texas State graduate students and four students from the U. of the Free State (Bloemfontein) and Witwatersrand U. (Johannesburg) participated on the excavation. We recovered archaeological evidence dating from 165 thousand years ago (kya) until recent times. This was when anatomically modern humans had just evolved in Africa. Culturally, Erfkroon includes Middle Stone Age (MSA) occupations and very early evidence of Later Stone Age (LSA) use. Only three other sites in Southern Africa have early LSA materials from excavated contexts and Erfkroon will provide important new evidence of this behavioral transition. The current archaeological debate questions whether anatomically modern humans, first found at 195kya in Ethiopia, behaved in a completely modern fashion, or did modern behavior develop at a later date and correspond to the emergence of the LSA? We recovered direct evidence that can be used to help answer this question. Erfkroon has produced abundant artifacts and fossil bones in a well-dated geological context. From these materials, we can see that the transition from MSA to LSA took place at approximately 32kya and there does not appear to be any evidence of an extended transition. The change was very rapid. This is even more interesting when it is realized that the MSA was very stable and had been produced for over 200 thousand years. Future work is anticipated.