

Michel Brunet



Human Paleontology (2008-2011)
born April 6, 1940, in Magné (Vienne, France).
(profile: vide autem in «New Focus» in *Science*, **298**:1708-1711, 2002)

Career

Michel Brunet spent most of his childhood in a farm in Poitou (South-West of France).

He entered the Sorbonne in Paris where he studied Natural Sciences and paleontology.

He defended his doctorate in palaeontology in 1966. Then he went to the University of Poitiers to study Paleogene mammals and completed his Natural Sciences State doctorate in 1975 and became a tenured professor of palaeontology in 1989.

In 1976 his researches concentrated on hominid palaeontology in Afghanistan and Iraq. Due to the dangerous political situation in both countries, Michel Brunet turned his attention to Africa where he decided to explore Western Africa for ape and hominid fossils.

His first surveys took place in Cameroon in 1984 and in Chad in 1993 when he received a research permit from the Chad government to conduct excavations in the Lake Chad basin, today the Djurab Desert. He founded the Mission Paléoanthropologique Franco-Tchadienne (M.P.F.T.) to research the origin, the evolution and the environments of early hominids.

In 1995 Michel Brunet described a new hominid dated to 3.5 My, *Australopithecus bahrelghazali*, the first Australopithecinae known west of the Rift Valley. He nicknamed it “Abe” in honor to the memory of a Colleague and close friend who died during a field mission in Cameroon.

In 2002 & 2005, he published the earliest hominid yet found (7 My): a nearly complete cranium, lower jaws and isolated teeth from Toros Menalla, Djurab desert (Northern Chad). The fossil, nicknamed *Toumai* (meaning "hope of life" in the local Goran language), was classified in Nature by Michel Brunet as *Sahelanthropus tchadensis*.

More recently he has also led field surveys and diggings for fossil mammals and primates in Libya and Egypt (with the Al Fateh University of Tripoli & Cairo University).

Michel Brunet is Currently Professor of the Collège de France, Chaire de Paléontologie humaine, in Paris, and a Member of the Institute Internationale de Paléoprimateologie et Paleontologie humaine: évolution et paléoenvironnements (I.P.H.E.P.) UMR CNRS 6046 of the University of Poitiers.

Position

Professor of the Collège de France, Chaire de Paléontologie humaine (2007-2011), 11 Place Marcelin Berthelot, 75231 Paris Cedex 05, phone: + 33 (0)1 44 27 10 39 (Mme Christine Delangle, Assistante)

Member of the Institut International de Paléoprimateologie, Evolution et Paléoenvironnements (IPHEP), UMR CNRS 6046, Faculté des Sciences Université de Poitiers, 40 Avenue du Recteur Pineau, 86022 Poitiers CEDEX, phone: + 33 (0)5 49 45 37 53 (Mme Ghislaine Florent, secrétariat)

Previous positions

- Head UMR CNRS 6046 LGBPH (Géobiologie, Biochronologie et Paléontologie humaine) then IPHEP, University of Poitiers (from 2000 to 2007);
- Professor of classe exceptionnelle (PRCE), University of Poitiers since 2000;
- Professor of 1ère classe, University of Poitiers, 1992.

Degrees

- High School: Lycée Hoche (Versailles) - Baccalauréat Mathématiques élémentaires: 1958;
- Bachelor's degree in Life Sciences - University of Paris: 1963;
- Licence ès Sciences de Doctorat - University of Paris Sorbonne: 1964;
- Philosophical Doctorate (Ph. D.) in Paleontology - University of Paris Sorbonne: 1966;
- Doctorate (D. Sc.) in life Sciences - University of Poitiers: 1975.

Honors

- Chevalier of the Ordre de la Légion d'honneur;
- Officier of the Ordre National du Mérite;
- Officier of the Ordre des Palmes Académiques;
- Officier of the Ordre National du Tchad;
- Honorary citizen of urban community of Poitiers;
- Lamothe Prize of the Société Géologique de France: 2004;
- Laureat 2003 Dan David Prize (Paleoanthropology);
- Philip Morris Scientific Prize (Paleoanthropology): 1996;
- Prix Fontanes Prize of the Academy of Sciences: Paris, 1977.