

The Botanic Age

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Background

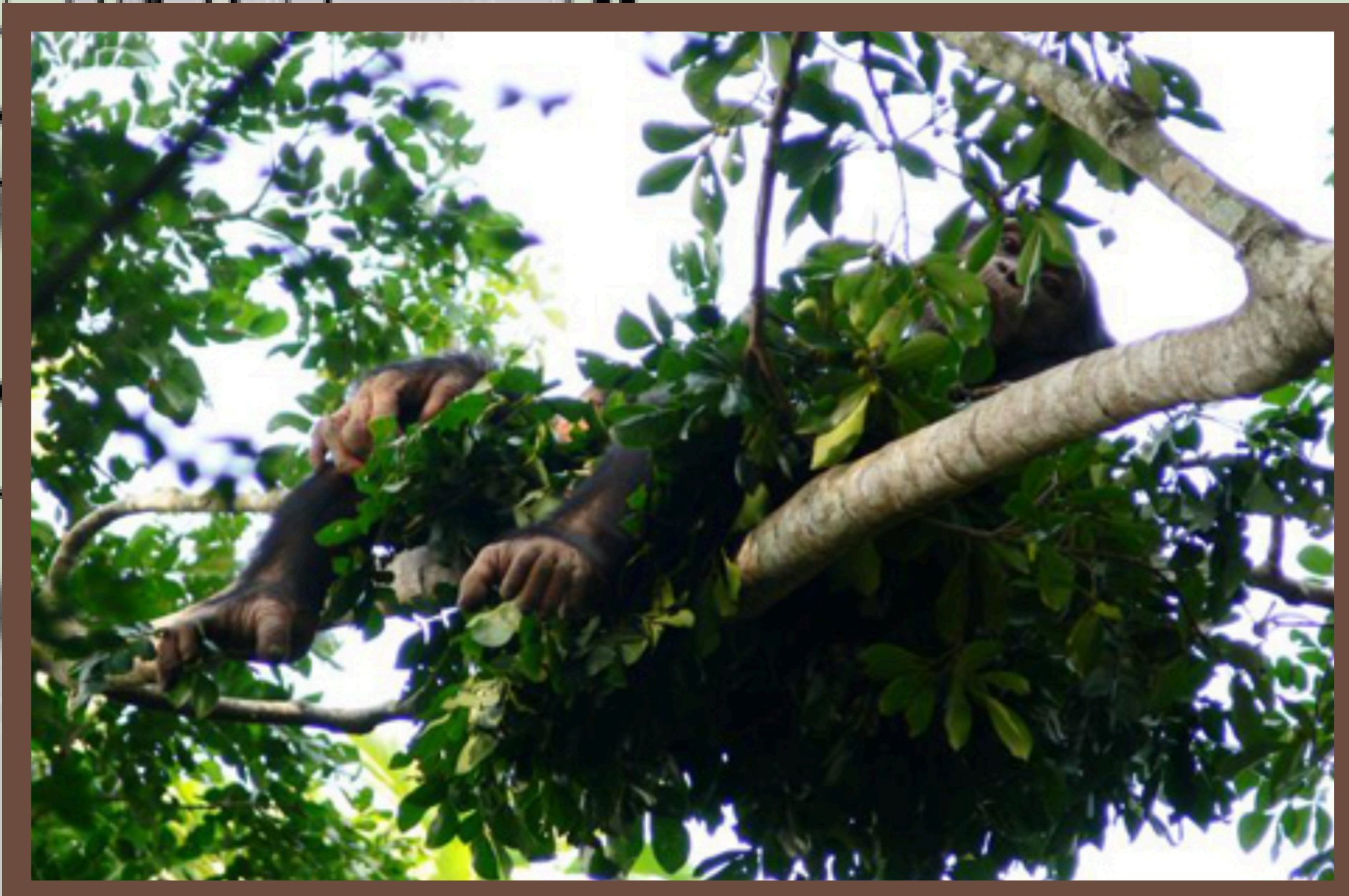
- Created in 1836 by Christian Jørgensen Thomsen, the Three-Age System divides human history into the Stone, Bronze, and Iron Ages, and continues to frame the creation of stone tools as humanity's first major cognitive leap.
- However, with hominins diverging from chimpanzees around 6.5 MYA and the Stone Age beginning only 3.5 MYA, a 3-million-year developmental gap remains. In her book *The Botanic Age: Planting the Seeds of Human Evolution*, Dr. Dean Falk counters the Three-Age system, theorizing that this gap marks an earlier cognitive leap, with humans developing botanic tools alongside bipedalism.
- Her research challenges archaeologists to look beyond Stone Age archeology, and will inform a future exhibit at the FSU Department of Anthropology.

Methodology

- Research was conducted through analysis and collection of current literature, focusing heavily on the work of Dr. Falk's *The Botanic Age*.
- Through reviewing her references and other relevant literature, a large selection has been made for the exhibit.
- Sources were reviewed for botanic tool use in humans, their cognitive and evolutionary development pre-Stone Age, bipedalism's impact on tool use, as well as potential counter-points.

Conclusions

- The cognitive leap for mothers to use similar weaving techniques as creating sleeping nests to create baby slings arose as humans became more bipedal, and mothers needed to adapt to the non-grasping feet of their babies who could no longer effectively cling to their bodies, preventing falls.
- Techniques handed down from the Botanic Age can be observed in the Hadza culture, whose women construct sleeping huts by weaving together flexible branches.
- Dr. Rebecca Gürbüz's research of the earliest Acheulean hand axes reveal that early stone tools were used to process wood and plant material, evidenced by the presence of phytoliths and mineralized vegetable fibers on the blade.



Chimpanzee in tree nest (Kathelijne Koops)



Hadza sleeping hut (Samson et al. 2017)



Woman using baby sling (Dean Falk)



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Sources:

