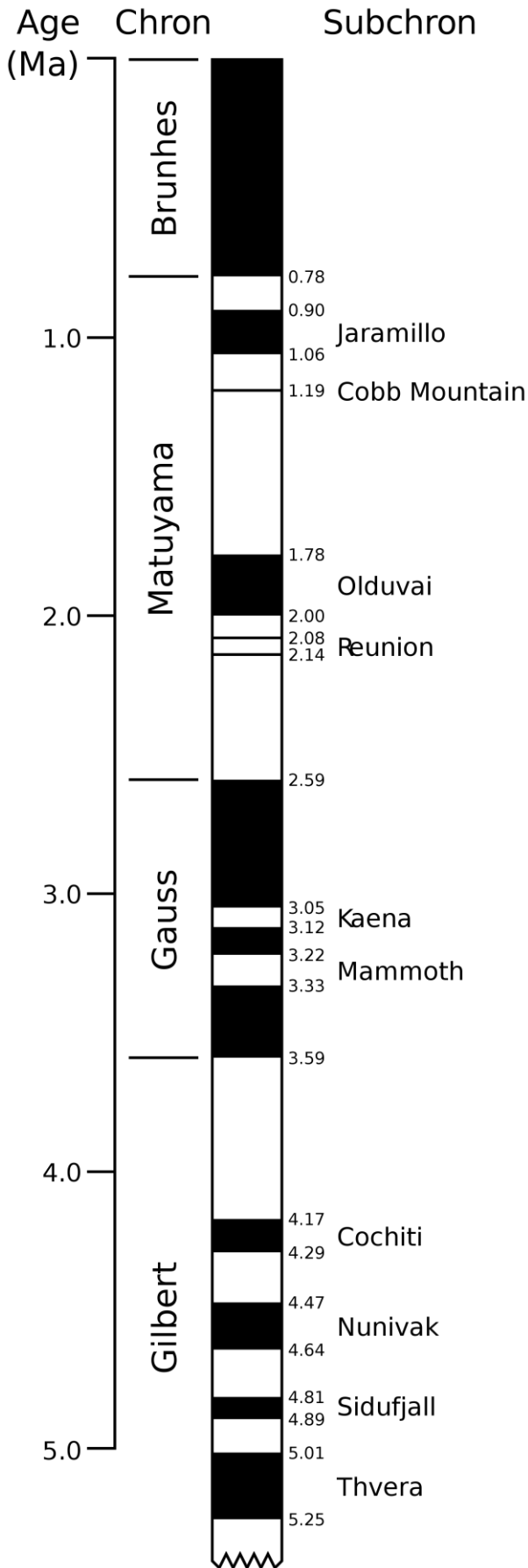


Geomagnetic Time Scale



Chrons are long periods of magnetic stability. Chrons can be interrupted by shorter periods of opposite-polarity magnetism called subchrons. The ages on this scale are shown in millions of years (Ma).

“Normal” magnetism (the way it is today) is shown in black, and “reverse” magnetic periods are shown in white.

Notice, for example, that the Cochiti normal subchron is in the middle of the Gilbert reverse chron. Cochiti began 4.29 Ma (or 4,290,000 years ago) and ended 120,000 years later.

The scale is arranged with the youngest rock at the top, the way it would be if you drilled down into a volcano on Hawaii where new lava flows pile up on older ones. This same pattern also shows up around mid-ocean ridges, but at the ridges the lava doesn't pile up, instead it moves horizontally away from the ridge as the plates move apart.