

THE ORIGINS OF MAN

Norman J. Fernandez



I have never quite understood science and the continuous quest by some scientists to make the search for our origin their holy grail when in ordinary life we are least bothered to find out who our immediate neighbour is and we are quite contented to live in a state of ignorant bliss.

I have always asked does it really matter. Is the average man restless enough to wanting to know his origin. Exactly what immediate benefit is there to mankind by sacrilaging the grave of some poor soul who had peace and obscurity for hundreds of years has never been known. Then of course there is the indignity culminating in exhibiting him to all and sundry. My conclusion has always been this. Reduced to skull and bones we all look alike less one rib for the man and really it's not quite a sight

to behold unless you are a runner lawyer. Years ago while I was skiing in Zell-im-Zee in Austria there was a sensation of finding a man in a state of deep freeze found buried high up in the Alps. They said he lived up there. I say he was a skier who went the wrong way! Test later showed that he was 35,000 years old.

To tell the truth the origin of man has always fascinated me. First signs of curiosity came at an early age when I asked my parents where I came from. I was told that God made me. The answer was short and cryptic. Supplementary questions and request for further and better particulars was always denied and usually ended up with me being sent to bed before time. Still I was fairly contented with the answers I got compared to the answers my friends got. My good friend Leong was told by his mother that a stork brought him. His description of the stork or at least that was given by his mother sounded like the pesky geese in the compound. So we regularly checked on the geese to see if there were any other little Leongs. Ramu on the other hand was a sensation. He claimed that he has been coming around in various forms from elephant to female bicycle seat to the last being a coconut tree.

For we 13-Confusion reigned in Secondary school. In the morning the literature teacher made us read The Origins of Man by Charles Darwin and after school behind the Chemistry lab we devoured publications by Hugh Hefner. One deduced that the humankind evolved from apes and the other made us behave like excited apes. One was confusing and the other compelling. I was going bananas!

I rushed home for answers and asked my mother if we actually originated from apes. My good mother calmly answered that she could not really confirm for certain since she hasn't really met my fathers' side of people.

Nevertheless growing up I did entertain the possibility that man could originate from apes. If not why the annual student pilgrimage to Zoo Negara to pay homage to Wira the Orang Utan. Till Secondary 3 we visited him and each time he returned our gesture by throwing a handful of crap at the chosen few. We had no choice but to tolerate this cranky fella and his misdemeanor. The teachers must have known something we didn't.

Charles Darwin had quite an impact on me when I went to U.K. to study. I am not a racist but my observations brought about an honest conclusion. There are indeed some who may have really evolved from apes, some evolving and others remain trapped in between. I remember once sitting in the students TV lounge and watching Gorillas in the Mist, my eyes cast on many a student who matched the gorillas to the mole. In fact recently watching a female tennis match one star player really looked like a prancing circus ape.

Now in the new millennium and in the latest revelation scientist have discovered that we can all trace our origin to one woman in Africa. Our real Eve. Our great, great grandma.

Frankly its been difficult to accept that my great ancestor was Aunt Kumba who used to run buck naked in the African plains 100,000 thousand years ago and yes you guessed it we are all brothers and that includes Mukambe the recalcitrant black money scam man is yes, our brother. Until now I have happily accepted my origin to be from Adam and Eve and the good couple until eviction lived in the Garden of Eden which was located in Tasmania. But alas...the evolution of the origins of man continues to evolve and baffle.

All this brings to the \$64,000.00 question? Does this continuous search for our origins benefit mankind? What is the end result? What is the correlation between say the Peking Man and me? Would in years to come scientist dig me up and exhibit me to the world at large? I say leave the past, let the sleep sleep. What about meaningful and beneficial research? What about searching a cure for say breast cancer or for baldness.

So where do I think I originated from? Hmmmm. Well there was this celestial dragon.....

(Extracted from Info Johore Bar – May 2002)

