

## NEWS ANALYSIS

### **Time magazine's new ape-man**

### **Publication's latest evolution contention less-than-believable**

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By James Perloff

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In 1999, following the controversial de-emphasis of evolution in Kansas schools, Time magazine struck in its August 23 issue with an editorial denouncing creationists and a huge cover story called "How Man Evolved." The latter displayed man's supposed oldest ancestor – *Ardipithecus ramidus* – while neglecting to tell readers that its fragments had been found scattered over an area of about one mile, and put together to form a "missing link." Time's cover was of a reconstructed ape-man skull, yet well less than half the skull consisted of actual fossil fragments – the rest was plaster, molded by imagination.

The most recent issue of Time, dated July 23, takes no less liberty. On the cover is a painting of an ape-man called *Ardipithecus ramidus kadabba* with the headline "How Apes Became Human." Inside, the article begins: "Meet your newfound ancestor." The painting is based on some fragmentary bones recently found in Ethiopia by a graduate student named Yohannes Haile-Selassie. Time assures its readers that the creature walked upright. The evidence for this? A single toe bone. Time displays the bone with the unequivocal caption: "THIS TOE BONE PROVES THE CREATURE WALKED ON TWO LEGS." But not until the last page of the eight-page article do readers learn that the toe bone was actually found some *ten miles* from the other bones. What evidence exists that the toe bone belonged to Haile-Selassie's other specimens? None, other than speculation.

There is great danger in basing conclusions on a single bone. In 1922, paleontologist Henry Fairfield Osborn, an ardent evolutionist, was shown a single tooth found in Nebraska by geologist Harold Cook. After examining it, Osborn declared it belonged to an early ape-man, whom he named *Hesperopithecus haroldcookii* in Cook's honor. Popularly, it became known as "Nebraska Man."

Osborn hailed the tooth as "the herald of anthropoid apes in America." At the American Museum of Natural History, William K. Gregory and Milo Hellman, specialists in teeth, said after careful study that the tooth was from a species closer to man than ape. Harris Hawthorne Wilder, a zoology professor at Smith College, wrote: "Judging from the tooth alone the animal seems to have been about halfway between *Pithecanthropus* [Java Man] and the man of the present day, or perhaps better between *Pithecanthropus* and the man of the Neanderthal type. ..." In England, evolutionist Grafton Elliot Smith convinced the Illustrated London News to publish an artist's rendering of Nebraska Man. The picture, which appeared in a two-page spread and received wide distribution, showed two brutish,

naked ape-persons, the male with a club, the female gathering roots. All this from one tooth.

However, further excavations at Cook's site revealed that the tooth belonged neither to ape nor man, but to a peccary, a close relative of the pig.

Or take the Piltdown Man. It was declared an ape-man, 500,000 years old, and validated by many of Britain's leading scientists, including Grafton Elliot Smith, anatomist Sir Arthur Keith and British Museum geologist Arthur Smith Woodward. At the time the discovery was announced (1912), the New York Times ran this headline: "Darwin Theory Proved True." For the next four decades, Piltdown Man was evolution's greatest showcase, featured in textbooks and encyclopedias.

But what did the Piltdown Man actually consist of? A very recent orangutan jaw, which had been stained to look old, with its teeth filed down to make them more human-looking, planted together with a human skull bone, also stained to create an appearance of age.

Those who think such mistakes no longer occur need only consider the *Archaeoraptor*, promoted in a 10-page color spread in the November 1999 National Geographic as the "true missing link" between dinosaurs and birds. The fossil was displayed at National Geographic's Explorers Hall and viewed by over 100,000 people. However, it too turned out to be a fake – someone had simply glued together fragments of bird and dinosaur fossils.

Even if Time turns out to be correct, and *Ardipithecus ramidus kadabba* walked on two feet, would it prove he was our "newfound ancestor"? This assertion is based on a long-standing evolutionary assumption, usually stated something like this: "Humans are the only creatures that have evolved to the point where they can walk on two feet; therefore, if we can find the fossil of an animal that could walk on two feet, such a creature was our ancestor."

However, the assumption that two-footed mobility establishes human kinship is groundless. Gorillas occasionally walk bipedally; Tanzanian chimpanzees are seen standing on two legs when gathering fruit from small trees; Zaire's pygmy chimpanzee walks upright so often that it has been dubbed "a living link." Science News reports of the latter: "Like modern gorillas they tend to be knuckle-walkers on the ground, yet they seem to be natural bipeds, too, frequently walking upright both on the ground and in the trees." So even if a fossil creature did have some limited ability to stand on two feet, it doesn't make it man's ancestor any more than these modern apes. And man is *not* the only bipedal creature. Birds are bipedal; so was the *T. rex*. Therefore, are they human ancestors?

Time refers to "fossil discoveries as far back as Java Man in the 1890s" as validating the relationship between man and ape. But Time does not relate much of what is known about those finds.

The Java Man story began with Ernst Haeckel, the German zoologist who has become notorious for using fraudulent drawings of embryos to prove the theory of evolution (See the [July issue of WorldNet Magazine](#)). Haeckel was convinced that an ape-man must have existed, and he named it *Pithecanthropus alalus*: ape-man without speech.

One of Haeckel's students, Eugene Dubois, became determined to find *Pithecanthropus*. Haeckel believed men might have separated from apes somewhere in Southern Asia. So in 1887, Dubois signed up as a doctor with the Dutch medical corps in the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia), intending to hunt for fossils during all his spare time. Dubois, it should be noted, had no formal training in geology or paleontology at the time, and his "archaeological team" consisted of prison convicts with two army corporals as supervisors.

Years of excavation produced little of significance. Then, in 1891, along Java's Solo River, the laborers dug up a skullcap that appeared rather apelike, with a low forehead and large eyebrow ridges. Dubois initially considered it from a chimpanzee, even though there is no evidence that this ape ever lived in Asia. However, the following year, the diggers unearthed a thigh bone that was clearly human.

Dubois, like Piltdown's discoverers, presumed that an apelike bone somewhere near a human bone meant the two belonged to the same creature, constituting Darwin's missing link. Haeckel, who had not even seen the bones, telegraphed Dubois: "From the inventor of *Pithecanthropus* to his happy discoverer!"

In 1895, Dubois returned to Europe and displayed his fossils. The response from experts was mixed, however. Rudolph Virchow, who had once been Haeckel's professor and is regarded as the father of modern pathology, said: "In my opinion, this creature was an animal, a giant gibbon, in fact. The thigh bone has not the slightest connection with the skull."

The circumstances of Dubois' find were unorthodox. He had apparently been absent when the convicts dug up his fossils. Maps and diagrams of the site were not made until after the excavation. Under such conditions, a modern dig would be disregarded.

In 1907, an expedition of German scientists from various disciplines, led by Professor M. Lenore Selenka, traveled to Java seeking more clues to man's ancestry in the region of Dubois' discovery. However, no evidence for *Pithecanthropus* was found. In the stratum of Dubois' find, the scientists found hearths and flora and fauna that looked rather modern. The expedition's report also noted a nearby volcano that caused periodic flooding in the area. Java Man had been found in volcanic sediments. The report observed that the chemical nature of those sediments, not ancient age, probably caused the fossilization of *Pithecanthropus*.

Nevertheless, the Selenka findings and various deficiencies of Dubois' work were largely ignored, and Java Man became one of evolution's undisputed "facts."

Then there was Peking Man, worked on and validated by a number of Piltdown alumni, including Davidson Black, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Smith. In seeing textbook portrayals of Peking Man, few students learned that the skulls had been found in scattered little fragments, and that the reconstructions were actually composites taken from various individuals. Where fragments were missing, plaster substituted, and the famous final images of Peking Man were the creations of a sculptress named Lucille Swann. Later, all of the Peking Man fossils mysteriously vanished, except for a couple of teeth, preventing Peking Man from being subjected to the kind of checking that doomed Piltdown Man.

Neanderthals were long portrayed as ape-men, stooped over. This misconception was largely the result of a faulty reconstruction by French paleontologist Marcellin Boule, who mistook the skeleton of a man with kyphosis (hunchback) for an ape-man in the process of becoming upright. Another snag: Neanderthal skulls are larger than those of modern humans. This flies in the face of evolutionary tradition, which says that man evolved progressively from creatures with smaller brains and skulls. In any event, Neanderthals are no longer classed as "ape-men," and some evolutionists have even discarded them as human ancestors.

Which basically leaves us with australopithecines, currently in vogue as man's ancestor.

However, australopithecine fossils show that they had long forearms and short hind legs, like today's apes. They also had long curved fingers and toes, like those apes use for tree-swinging. This may pose a problem for Time's thesis, since it claims the toe bone of *Ardipithecus ramidus kadabba* was over 5 million years old, yet relatively human-like – implying that it was more evolved than the toes of australopithecines, who supposedly came 2 million years later.

The main substance to the claim that australopithecines are our ancestors is some evidence suggesting that the famed "Lucy" and her peers may have walked upright. But as noted, limited bipedality does not prove human ancestry, and a number of scientists – contrary to the impression created in Time – have disagreed that australopithecines are man's relatives.

Britain's Lord Solly Zuckerman, who was raised to peerage for his scientific achievements, was a leading authority on australopithecines, having subjected them to years of biometric testing. He stated:

For my own part, the anatomical basis for the claim that the australopithecines walked and ran upright like man is so much more flimsy than the evidence which points to the conclusion that their gait was some variant of what one sees in subhuman primates, that it remains unacceptable.

Charles Oxnard, former director of graduate studies and professor of anatomy at the University of Southern California Medical School, subjected australopithecine fossils to

extensive computer analysis. Stephen Jay Gould called him "our leading expert on the quantitative study of skeletons." Oxnard concluded:

[T]he australopithecines known over the last several decades are now irrevocably removed from a place in the evolution of human bipedalism, possibly from a place in a group any closer to humans than to African apes and certainly from any place in the direct human lineage. All of this should make us wonder about the usual presentation of human evolution in introductory textbooks, in encyclopaedias and in popular publications. In such volumes not only are australopithecines described as being of known bodily size and shape, but as possessing such abilities as bipedality and tool-using and -making and such developments as the use of fire and specific social structures. Even facial features are happily (and non-scientifically) reconstructed.

The July 23 Time includes a graphic showing the evolution of man, starting with the supposed *Ardipithecus ramidus kadabba*, with progressively more human figures culminating in man. However, it is very easy to arrange bones to demonstrate "evolutionary progress." In 1927, Osborn, along with other evolutionists, created a diagram of man's evolution. Skulls were displayed in progressive order. No. 1 in the sequence was the fraudulent Piltdown Man. No. 4 was a Neanderthal; No. 6 Cro-Magnon Man. No. 8 was labeled "Australian" (aborigine). No. 9? "Negro." No. 10? "Chinese." No. 11 (and last)? "Caucasian."

Because 99 percent of an organism's biology resides in its soft anatomy, it is very easy to invest a bone with imagination. For this reason – despite the protests of Darwinists – evolutionary anthropology is not a science like physics or chemistry. The laws of physics and chemistry can be demonstrated in a high school laboratory. Evolutionary anthropology, on the other hand, consists of speculations about unobserved events that supposedly occurred millions of years ago. Science cannot observe the past with the same authority as the present. As Lowenstein and Zihlman noted in New Scientist: "The subjective element in this approach to building evolutionary trees, which many palaeontologists advocate with almost religious fervor, is demonstrated by the outcome: There is no single family tree on which they agree."

There was a wealth of evidence concerning the assassination of John F. Kennedy: hundreds of eyewitnesses interviewed by the Warren Commission; the Zapruder movie that caught the actual slaying; the autopsy; fingerprint evidence; ballistics evidence. Nevertheless, controversy has never stopped raging about what actually took place. Scores of books challenged the evidence, offering widely differing explanations as to who killed Kennedy, from what angle(s) he was shot, etc. Even the autopsy results were challenged in a best-selling book.

Granted, the Kennedy assassination was a politically charged event. Nonetheless, if that much disagreement can occur over something that happened just 38 years ago, how can a paleontologist pick up a fragment of bone, supposedly 5 million years old, and declare its

meaning with a high degree of certainty? Unlike the Kennedy assassination, there are no eyewitnesses who saw this creature, no Zapruder movie of it, no soft tissues to examine.

Other weaknesses permeate the Time article. It states that Haile-Selassie's bones are known to be 5.6-5.8 million years old, because this "can be accurately gauged by a technique known as argon-argon dating." It says the result was "confirmed by a second dating method." However, argon-argon dating has been demonstrated in various studies to be *unreliable*, and Time doesn't mention what the second method was.

Time refers to the "astonishingly complete skeleton of Lucy"— but those words belie the fact that about 60 percent of Lucy's skeleton, including most of the skull, was missing.

In explaining why apes began to walk upright, Time quotes anthropologist C. Owen Lovejoy: "To walk upright you have to do so in synchrony. If the ligaments and muscles are out of synch, that leads to injuries. And then you'd be cheetah meat." But even fully coordinated, healthy human beings cannot outrun a cheetah!

Time also neglects the fact that species vary widely within themselves. Darwinian anthropologists use cranial capacity (skull size) to judge the evolutionary status of our supposed ancestors, but even in modern humans, cranial capacity ranges from 700 to 2200 cubic centimeters, and has no bearing on intelligence. People's bone structure varies greatly, based on heredity, age, sex, health and climate. Some are big-boned, some small-boned. There are sumo wrestlers and pygmies. Doubtless, our ancient forebears were also diverse in their looks. How, then, can one assign a single fossil bone to a distinct place in human history? Apes vary widely, too; australopithecines may simply be a type that became extinct. Science journalist Roger Lewin, though an outspoken evolutionist, has noted:

It is an unfortunate truth that fossils do not emerge from the ground with labels already attached to them. And it is bad enough that much of the labeling was done in the name of egoism and a naive lack of appreciation of variation between individuals; each nuance in shape was taken to indicate a difference in type rather than natural variation within a population.

Another oddity surfaces in Time's diagram of the evolution of humans, chimps and gorillas. Human ancestors are shown going back almost 6 million years. But no chimpanzee or gorilla ancestors are depicted before a million years ago. If chimps and humans really diverged about 7 million years ago, as Time asserts, then where are all the fossils of *chimpanzee and gorilla* ancestors? Why does every bone fragment turn out to be a *human* ancestor?

Perhaps that question was answered by Dr. Tim White, anthropologist at the University of California, Berkeley. Though quoted in Time, and noted as Haile-Selassie's thesis adviser, he has previously stated: "The problem with a lot of anthropologists is that they want so much to find a hominid that any scrap of bone becomes a hominid bone."

As creationist Marvin Lubenow notes, "No one will care if you discover the oldest fossil broccoli, but if you are fortunate enough to discover the oldest fossil human, the world will beat a path to your door."

*Editor's note: James Perloff covers the debate over evolution in more detail in his cover story for the July edition of WorldNet magazine, WorldNetDaily.com's offline companion. Entitled "EVOLUTION: The complex and profound basis of all life, or a fairy tale for scientists who reject God?" Perloff's investigative report is a must-read for anyone interested in the origins of life. Readers may [subscribe to WorldNet at WND's online store](#).*

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