

HOMINID REMAINS DISCOVERED IN ANTARCTICA



ACCIDENTAL CAVE FINDINGS LEAD TO
BREAKTHROUGH: BONES AND MARKINGS BELONG
TO ANCIENT ICE-DWELLING COUSIN: NEWLY NAMED
«HOMO TEMPUS»

By Cori Tunsuns

SAN MARTIN, Antarctica – On the bitter cold coast, just under the Antarctic circle and about an hour’s sail from the Argentine research station, an excited frenzy of people milled about the entrance to a large cave. Professor Andrea Villares, a climate scientist, made it clear to all present that they were not to touch anything -- «This may be the most important archeological find of the century.»

The cave was discovered by climate scientists studying the melting Antarctic icecap. “The cave only appeared recently,” Villares said excitedly. “The melting ice is exposing many caves along this coast, but this one is very special”. The cave used to be more hospitable than the bitter cold would suggest: “geological, specifically volcanic activity kept the inside of the cave warm” explained Dr Tony Yung, a geologist on the team. In the cave’s once-damp air, moss and lichen would have been abundant. In the cave’s depths, the researchers found bones scattered about. The most remarkable thing however, were the markings. They were etched on almost every rocky surface, covering the cave walls, unintelligible and alien.

Initially believed to be human remains, paleo anthropologists conducted morphological analyses of the bones and found they were hominid, but not human. Rather, they suggest that the bones belong to an as of yet undiscovered hominid. Researchers christened our new cousin “man of time” – Homo Tempus. They lived in the networks of caves traversing the Antarctic peninsula, apparently for thousands of years. Compared to modern humans, Homo Tempus are believed to have been very stocky, with larger brains, feet and hands. Their large brains suggests that they were significantly more intelligent and dextrous than even we are today.



Some of the bones are very well preserved, allowing paleo anthropologists to sequence the genomes. Initial findings from the mitochondrial analysis of the genomes point to Homo Erectus as the earliest common ancestor between Homo Sapiens and Homo Tempus. This genetic lineage implies that prior to the northward migration of Homo Sapiens and earlier hominids from East-Africa, groups of Homo Erectus travelled southward towards the continent of Antarctica.

Two preliminary theories supporting the migration of hominids across the Southern Ocean separating the African and Antarctic continents have emerged. The first theory suggests that there may have been a hitherto unknown period in which the two continents were connected by a temporary land crossing, enabling the ancestors of Homo Tempus to cross.

“A wacky hypothesis to be sure, but the alternative is just as insane,” – notes Dr Jon Ólafson, the lead researcher in the team studying the migration and genetic lineage of Homo Tempus. The second theory posits that these early hominids mastered seafaring technology that enabled the crossing, implying that even the very early ancestors of Homo Tempus would have been as, or perhaps even more intelligent than Homo Sapiens. Both theories are currently baffling expert anthropolo-

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gists in the field.

Prof Atticus Attenborough, a paleo environmental geologist, for The Aleph Times: “there is a rush to find more hominids who existed sometime in evolutionary history between Erectus and Tempus.” He believes there must be a missing link somewhere between East and South Africa. “My team is starting excavations on the southern tip of the African continent as geologists and geographers all agree that it is the likeliest place from which this previously unknown hominid travelled to the Antarctic continent.”

For all the intrigue the bones can satisfy, the find that may provide the greatest lead in attempts to learn about this distant relative, is the writing on the walls. Linguistic Archaeologists, led by Dr Lui-bo Gese from the University of Buenos Aires, are on the case to decipher what these unusual patterns represent. With no known language with which to compare the patterns, translation seems impossible. “It is clearly some kind of written information, but unlike anything we have previously seen or studied,” remarks Gese. “It is non-linear, that much is certain, but to translate the syntax of a

language that has been dead for millennia would require a miracle: some kind of Rosetta stone.”

If a translation would ever come about it would provide crucial insights into the lives of these hominids, as well as crucial information about how they got to Antarctica in the first place and how they may have gone extinct.

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When pressed on possible theories as to the extinction of Homo Tempus, geologists on site stressed the importance of geothermal energy in maintaining a fragile balance. As per Dr Tony Yung: “Today the geothermal vents in the cave increase the ambient temperature by about 0.9 degrees Celsius per 100 metres. Not very substantial, but lab results suggest that at the time of the settlement, temperatures of 22-25 degrees Celsius within the cave would have been normal. They would have spurred the growth of plants, fungi and soil nourishing bacteria that would have been beneficial to an active ecosystem.” Before noting: “the abrupt change in the geothermal heating processes that kept the caves so warm probably caused a mass exodus, or an extinction event.” He then added with a smile: “but who knows, there are already theories of an extra-terrestrial migration and no one can see what’s buried under the ice...”

Prof Sara Beliza, a paleo geologist at Harvard University who reviewed the findings before publication, is hesitant to unequivocally say that the caves could have supported life. She is still sceptical that icy Antarctica could sustain the existence of an ancient hominid species. “All possibilities need to be explored before we can confirm anything.” When pressed about an alternative explanation for the findings: “The discovery is shocking, but for all we know now, the bones and tablets could have been placed by humans much later: more research must be done.” (continued on page 2)



Tell all the truth but tell it slant -

MORE AIRPORTS SHUT OVER ASH RISKS

By Juan Cardena

Thousands of passengers are facing long delays after airports in Scotland and Ireland closed because of a fresh cloud of volcanic ash from Iceland.

Last month, ash clouds from the same volcano grounded flights for six days. Now, flights will remain grounded until 0100 BST on Thursday at Glasgow and 0700 BST at Belfast, however Edinburgh re-opened at 1900 BST on Wednesday. (continued on page 11)

GREECE IS ‘ON THE BRINK OF ABYSS’

By Angnes Cielo

At least three people have been killed in the Greek capital as protesters set fire to a bank during a general strike over planned austerity measures.

Greece is «on the brink of the abyss», President Karolos Papoulias has warned, after three people died during protests over planned austerity measures. (continued on page 7)

RUSSIAN PRESIDENT ASKED TO INVESTIGATE ALIEN CLAIMS

By Richard Galpin

A Russian MP has asked President Dmitry Medvedev to investigate claims by a regional president that he has met aliens on board a spaceship.

Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, the leader of the southern region of Kalmykia, made his claim in a television interview. (continued on page 8)