

Some Thoughts Regarding Dr. Wilson Wheatcroft's Overview of Orang Pendek Evidence

By Dmitri Bayanov



Fig. 6. — « Femme velue, appelée *Ourang-outang* par les Javanais »
(d'après BONNIUS, 1658).

Dr. Wheatcroft warns that his article *Orang Pendek*, *The Little Bipedal Hominid of Sumatra - An Anthropological Overview* "may appear controversial to any reader." To me it appears quite logical, just and informative. With the exception of two points, discussed later, I find this paper very useful and welcome, first, because it updates our information on Orang Pendek, and, second, because it takes to task "the Establishment scientists," "elitist academic, self-proclaimed experts", and "the status quo group-think" more strongly than they have ever been taken before for ignoring the subject.

An aside in this connection. What makes a scientist? Besides having professional knowledge and training, a scientist is no scientist without the intellectual courage and curiosity to seek the truth. I do understand that demand on a scientist's courage may be excessive if his or her finding and stating the truth are fraught with the risk of losing employment. But there are thousands of zoologists and anthropologists in the world who are not facing such a risk. I mean retired scientists. Have all of them lost courage and curiosity because of age? Improbable. So why don't some of them raise their voices for the reality of Bigfoot and Orang Pendek the way Dr. Wheatcroft has voiced? I think because they are misinformed by the tabloids and the academic self-proclaimed experts. How to open their hearts and minds? Just let them read Dr. Wheatcroft's paper. One of my intelligent BF contactees (who prefers to maintain anonymity) appraised his article with the words: "a ray of light, a ray of hope." I wonder if she sees the light and hope the way I see them.

I fully agree with Dr. Wheatcroft that Bigfoot and Orang Pendek are hominids (in the classification still widely used), not apes, because both are bipedal. And reading this article I realized once again with regret that we have far less evidence and knowledge about the little hominids of Sumatra and their counterparts in other habitats than about the giant hominids of North America. To borrow the term used by Tony Healy and Paul Cropper in their excellent book *The Yowie*, there are two clear-cut types of non-sapiens hominids on earth today: Littlefoot and Bigfoot. Inevitably, there are also specimens and populations in between.

The author says he is uncomfortable with Ivan Sanderson's name "proto-pygmyes". I am also uncomfortable if it means, or is taken to mean, that sapiens pygmies originate from non-sapiens littlefoots. This shouldn't be so. Size is the most natural and likely character for differentiation and speciation of life forms, so that giants and pygmies

appear independently in different taxons and at different stages of evolution. Note that there are pygmy elephants and pygmy hippos. Tigers are giant cats and common cats are "pygmy tigers". Note how quickly man created pygmy (and giant) dogs and pygmy horses. If there are pygmy chimps and pygmy humans, why shouldn't there be pygmy non- sapiens hominids? As a matter of fact, reports, rumors and folk tales of them are as wide-spread as those of their bigger relatives. Besides Southeast Asia, they are reported in Australia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas. Why then is so little known of them? Most probably because, due to their size, they are even more elusive and cryptic than giant hominids.

To quote the paper, "There has to date (January 2008), been no reliable photograph taken of the body, or face of the Orang Pendek, in spite of considerable efforts to get pictures...." The veteran investigator Deborah Martyr once sighted a Littlefoot at a distance of 30 meters. Says she: "I had a camera in my hand at the time, but I dropped it; I was so shocked!" I instantly imagined Roger Patterson and thought he wouldn't have dropped a camera in a situation like that. It's a good example of the human factor in our research.

As for the possible link between Orang Pendek and *Homo floresiensis*, I readily accept this hypothesis.

I concur with the author that much more information can be received from the eyewitnesses, provided they are properly interviewed. The leading Almaty investigator, Marie-Jeanne Koffmann, devised a special questionnaire for this purpose, consisting of some 20 concrete questions. We have also special instructions for taking photos of hominid footprints (e.g., it's a must to include a scale in the picture).

Being sure that Dr. Wheatcroft is not a young man, I am impressed with the news that he "hiked in the jungle for over 9 days, with native people from two rain forest areas, in January 2007".

Now some remarks concerning the author's following statement: "This article, for the first time, has gathered all known historical as well as contemporary evidence...." Actually, it lacks the most important piece of historical evidence. It has to be realized that we are not discovering, but re-discovering relict hominids. They were first described by early naturalists; mentioned by philosophers in the Middle Ages; and finally classified as *Homo troglodytes* (*nocturnus*, *sylvestris*) by Linnaeus in 1758 in his *Systema Naturae*. He based this mainly on the strength of the ancient sources and on the 17th century works and reports of Dutch naturalists traveling and exploring in Southeast Asia, called at the time the East Indies. I read references to these sources in *Systema Naturae*, both in the Latin original and in a Russian translation of 1804, and in a Russian translation (done in 1777) of *Anthropomorpha*, a dissertation that Linnaeus dictated in 1760 to his student Christian Hoppius. The Latin original of the latter is not available to me.

A source cited by Linnaeus and most relevant to our discussion of Orang Pendek is the work *Historiae naturalis et medicae Indiae orientalis* by Jacob de Bondt, alias Jacobus Bontius (1592-1631), a distinguished Dutch physician who came to Batavia (now Jakarta) in Java in 1625 and lived there until his death. His book was written in Java and published in Amsterdam in 1658. He claims in it that he saw, apparently in captivity, anthropomorphic hairy bipeds, termed by him *Homo sylvestris*, (i.e., Forestman, Man of the woods), one of which, a female, he drew a picture of and describes in detail.

Unfortunately, the Bontius book is not available to me, and here I give the information about the specimen, described by him, as mentioned by Linnaeus and academician Alexander Sevestianov in his work devoted to Linnaeus and published in 1804. The said female was hairy all over, except hands and face, head hair was long, fringing her face. Her features were quite humanlike and resembled those of a Hottentot. She was very shy, often sighed and wept, and running erect covered her genital part with a hand. She lived in a shelter of branches, slept on

a bedding and put her head on a pillow. She was so humanlike that it seemed she only lacked the capacity of speech to be called a human. She was sent as a rarity to Europe but died on the way at the latitude of the Cape of Good Hope. (What happened to the corpse my sources are silent about). The Javanese say that these forestmen can speak but hide this so as to avoid being forced to toil. According to Linnaeus, the troglodytes communicate by whistling, which is very hard for humans to learn, and of human language they can only learn to say "yes" and "no".

Bontius relates that many people believe these forestmen are hybrids of apes and humans, but Linnaeus rejects this opinion and classifies them as an original species of man, *Homo troglodytes* .

Their difference from apes is bipedal locomotion, and the dental system devoid of diastemata (always present in apes and monkeys); the differences from *Homo sapiens* include night vision, *membrana nictitans* (so called 'third eyelid'), and the arms relatively longer than in humans. In size they are not taller than human nine-year-old boys. (Apparently, Linnaeus had no news of Bigfoot). They live in forests and stay by day in caves.

Additionally, Sevastianov, referring to information from a merchant who stayed for some time in Borneo, relates that the island is habitat to a forestman who resembles a human to such a degree that he can hardly be distinguished from some African peoples. He is such a fast runner bipedally that he can hardly be overtaken. The king and great nobles often used to go hunting this animal. He has a wild appearance, his eyes are deeply set, the face is dark, and he looks fierce.

The above agrees with our present-day image of Orang Pendek and Sedapa. It remarkably parallels Mr. van Heerwarden's description of a Sedapa he observed during a hunt in Sumatra in October, 1923. The witness also mentions that it reminded him "a little of a Kaffir's" (i.e., S. African Negro's - Wheatcroft, p.10). At the same time it has to be stated that some bits of information, presented by Linnaeus regarding troglodytes, appear incorrect, which is not surprising considering the cryptic nature of these bipeds and popular myths and taboos connected with them - the difficulties quite conspicuous even today, in the age of information.

So I skip these dubious bits and return to the Bontius account, which looks consistent and valid. The question then is: Why is his testimony being ignored by modern science or presented as a bad mistake of a naturalist? First of all, because his account has a marvelous catch: writing in Latin, Bontius also applied the Malay language words to the anthropomorphic animals he described. These words were Orang utan ! How come? How on earth could he have used the name of an ape for the obvious hominid described in his text and shown in his drawing (see attachment)? But who said that Orangutan is the name of an ape in the Malay language? According to my information, it is NOT. What it means is just "man of the woods", not "ape of the woods". That's how the usual popular names of relict hominids in different parts of the world are translated into English. According to my information, Bontius was the first to introduce the Malay name Orangutan to European languages and the scientific community. What's more, the ape Orangutan is no longer found in Java, and it's an interesting question when this ape disappeared there: before or after Bontius.

In the 17th century, the Europeans were only beginning to learn about the great apes, and the first to be described were chimpanzees, though called then by different names. Probably following Bontius, scientists used at the time the name Orangutan for the chimpanzees brought to Europe. The famous English anatomist Edward Tyson published in 1699 a monograph devoted to his study of a chimpanzee and titled it: *Ourang-outang, sive Homo sylvestris: or the Anatomy of a Pygmy Compared with That of a Monkey, an Ape and a Man* . The ape we now call Orangutan was captured in Bornea and became known to Europeans more than a century after Bontius, about 1780, and was scientifically described in Europe in 1798.

Now let us look at the zoological names of Orangutan and Chimpanzee. Orangutan - *Simia satyrus* (formerly), today *Pongo pygmaeus*. *Pongo* means ape (the word comes from Africa). So the Latin scientific name for Orangutan means "Pygmy ape". Quite some pygmy, almost on par with the gorilla! Chimpanzee - *Pan troglodytes*, i.e., "Pan cave-dweller". What a mess of misnomers, isn't it? And what strange borrowings of ancient popular names of relict homins. In search of an explanation for this quirk of nomenclature we have to look deeper into the history of science.

All educated people are aware of two fundamental scientific revolutions in the history of modern civilization: Copernican and Darwinian. But few know that the latter was preceded by a revolutionary deed of Carl Linnaeus. To the dismay and anger of the Establishment, this deed was tantamount to three intellectual "outrages". First, he instituted a zoological taxon, which included apes and monkeys, and called them by the name used by churchmen for their seniors - Primates. Second, he placed man side by side with apes and monkeys in that taxon - the Order of Primates. Third, he invented a second species of man, *Homo troglodytes*, when it is known that God created a single man, Adam, and all people descend from him. *Homo troglodytes* was at the time a much greater pain in the back of the Establishment than Bigfoot or Orang Pendek are at present.

In the 18th century the fame and authority of Linnaeus were so great that his most unpalatable innovations in natural history were tolerated for some time. But a backlash was inevitable. It was led by Johann Blumenbach, "who in his *Manual of Natural History* (1775) established the Order of *Bimanus* for man and the Order of *Quadrumanus* for apes and monkeys. As for *Homo troglodytes*, Blumenbach discarded the species altogether as 'an unintelligible mixture of pathological cases and the orangutan.' He moved the term 'troglodytes' to *Simia* and established '*Simia troglodytes* or *Chimpanzi*', which implied that chimps were cave-dwellers. According to S.J.Gould, 'Historical changes in classification are the fossilized indicators of conceptual revolutions.' Blumenbach's monumental change in the Linnaean classification was then a conceptual counterrevolution, which lasted nearly a hundred years, until resisted and reversed by Darwin's 'bulldog', Thomas Huxley (1825-95), who with *Man's Place in Nature* (1863) restored the single Order of Primates, as well as the term itself. But *Homo troglodytes* stayed in limbo for another hundred years, until resurrected and vindicated by Boris Porshnev (1905-72), who proclaimed yet another conceptual revolution" (Bayanov, *Some Thoughts on the Origin of Speech*, 2002).

Thus, the reason for the above-mentioned terminological quirk in the nomenclature of primates was not linguistic but ideological, and its sway is felt even today. To conclude this theme and move ahead in the search for truth we have to locate the Bontius book, copy the original drawing (a copy I offer in attachment is borrowed from Bernard Heuvelmans and Boris Porshnev, *L'Homme de Neanderthal est toujours vivant*, 1974), as well as the relevant pages of the text and have them translated from Latin. I wish my foreign colleagues would be willing to tackle this task.

Another point in Dr.Wheatcroft's fine paper I wish to discuss is in his following words: "... it is erroneously assumed that 'only humans have language'. This is totally contradicted by studies of whales and dolphin species' exotic, high frequency languages (including communicative songs) most high frequency, underwater sounds of which are beyond the normal range of human hearing. Dolphins and whales, also, are profoundly intelligent aquatic species! Their intelligence may exceed humans, if comparative, non-verbal-based testing were to be done, objectively."

Though being no specialist on the cetaceans, I readily agree that dolphins and whales are "profoundly intelligent" animals. But if the word intelligence means the same to the author and me (i.e., mental capacity), I cannot agree that these animals may be more intelligent than humans. The existence of science is caused by and based on human intelligence. Humans have the science of zoology -- dolphins and whales have no science of anthropology. They have no science at all. One telling result of this is that humans are exterminating whales and dolphins -- whales and dolphins are not exterminating humans, and even cannot effectively defend themselves from the latter. Due to

intelligence, humans are unsurpassed exterminators. As is known, with their horrific weapons they can wipe out all life on earth. Should this happen, would the extraterrestrials say that dolphins and whales were more intelligent? I doubt. They would probably say: "As a species, those apelike naked bipeds were not intelligent enough to be designated Homo sapiens ."

It follows the praiseworthy name was given our species by Linnaeus not only in contrast to Homo troglodytes - the caveman, but also in advance, to be proved and justified in the future. Julian Huxley said that man "is not yet fully human." Whatever the limits of our intelligence, its existence is due to the uniqueness of human language. "In the beginning (of humanness) was the Word." Words are conceptual symbols that are absent in the communications of animals, no matter how subtle and complex they may be. It is thanks to human language and its verbal symbols that Dr. Wheatcroft is able to oppose and expose the Establishment. "Animals can 'argue' with paws and claws, but not with symbols." In consequence, the rule of animal life is status quo , the rule of human life is change and development. Animals are evolving, slowly and unconsciously. Humans, with language and intelligence (or lack of it!) are making history, consciously and in a hurry. Language is the means not only of human existence, but also of human reproduction. Therefore there is a fundamental difference, a difference of kind, between human language and communicative systems of animals. One staunch critic of Darwin said that language is the "rubicon of mind". That is why the question of linguistic ability of relict hominids is so crucial.

In conclusion, I want to express great appreciation of Dr. Wheatcroft's intellectual courage which is so stimulating for our research.

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